Pro-Environmental Behaviors Among Black Environmentalists: A Critical Race Perspective

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A Critical Race Perspective

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by

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation in honor of my husband, Daniel Farrell, who passed away while I was working on my Ph.D. Daniel was the kindest human to ever walk the face of the Earth and I miss him fiercely every single day. I wouldn't be here without him.

I love you. I hope I've made you proud.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

Environmentalist narratives have left out the labor of Black environmentalists, mischaracterizing Black communities as disinterested in environmental problems or solutions. The purpose of this critical transformative exploratory qualitative study, guided by critical race theory, was to explore the meaning of pro-environmental behaviors among Black environmental advocates. Ten adult Black environmental advocates and organizers were interviewed using semi-structured interviews which were transcribed and analyzed using directed content analysis and thematic analysis. The findings demonstrated divergences between definitions of the environment and how that impacts what is considered pro-environmental behavior; the breadth of the pro-environmental behaviors in which Black environmentalists are engaged; racism's impact on Black visibility in environmental spaces in the past, present and future; and the need to address Black visibility in environmental spaces as a critical pro-environmental behavior going forward. Implications for those in environmental spaces, including funders, social workers, and researchers, are addressed as well as the methodological implications on reflexivity and emergence learned in the process of the study.

Keywords: Black environmentalism, pro-environmental behavior, Critical Race Theory, transformative research, reflexivity, emergence

Chapter 1: Overview and Significance of the Study

Problem Statement

Environmentalism has historically left out the pressing environmental priorities of Black communities as well as the labor of Black environmentalists leaving Black communities to continue to be disproportionately harmed by environmental issues, but also characterized as disinterested in understanding the problem or forming a solution. This *disinterest* is mischaracterized and misunderstood, at best; certainly understudied; and fraught with racism at its worst. The focus of this study is to develop a more robust and accurate conceptualization of what it means to be pro-environmental, guided by the moral imperative to build representation of Black experiences in the literature and to develop actions based on the evidence of these experiences.

Dissertation Overview

Chapter 1: Overview and Significance of the Study will provide an overview of the study including the purpose, aims, as well as the relevant research questions. This chapter will also recount a brief history of environmentalism to provide context for the study's questions and significance. The relevance of this study to social work will also be discussed.

Chapter 2: Situating Black Environmentalism reviews contrasting perspectives on environmentalism, the environment, the ways humans relate to the environment, and environmental justice, and will bring together the literature that reveals and gives further understanding to a lack of Black visibility in environmentalism. In this chapter, critical race theory is introduced and what is currently known of Black environmentalism is discussed.

Chapter 3: Methodology describes the methodology for this study in detail the aims and research questions, the study's design, and procedures for recruitment, data collection, and data

analysis. The decision points throughout the methodology are also discussed using reflexive reflections on the process and procedures, including reflections on the decisions to pivot during the process of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's attention to quality and credibility.

Chapter 4: Findings examines the study's findings. The findings on the meaning of the environment, comparing the different ways that environmentalism and environmental justice are in relationship with one another, and identifying the breadth of pro-environmental behaviors represented in this sample are presented in detail. The findings from additional thematic analysis are presented as well, which illuminate the context of Black pro-environmental engagement.

Chapter 5: Discussion situates study findings within the literature and speaks to how the findings in this study concur with, diverge from, and expand upon what is known about what it means to be pro-environmental. The chapter addresses the study's limitations and the lessons learned. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for environmental spaces, social work, and research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the meaning of pro-environmental behaviors among Black environmental justice advocates and to give better understanding to the benefits, limitations, and implications of the current understanding of what it means to be pro-environmental when diverse samples are included.

Study Overview

The current study centers the experiences of Black environmental justice advocates and organizers who have a focus on environmental justice issues impacting communities within the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study aims to expand upon current understandings of the

construct of pro-environmental behavior centering work of Black environmentalists. Pro-environmental behaviors are defined as the behaviors exhibited by individuals acting in ways that benefit the environment (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012), and have been used to identify who is advancing environmentalism and to what degree they are considered helping the environment. People who are motivated to engage in these behaviors are aware of the threat (Axelrod & Lehman, 1993), feel a strong commitment to the environment (Davis et al., 2011), and are willing to sacrifice for the environment (Oreg & Katz-Gerro, 2006; McGraw, Larsen, Kahneman, & Schkade, 2010).

Research Questions

The guiding line of inquiry that underscores this study is: how does what we know about pro-environmental behaviors and its relevance in diverse samples augment our current understanding of pro-environmental behaviors for anyone, in environmental justice contexts and beyond? It is an exploratory line of inquiry, given what little is known about pro-environmental behaviors in diverse samples. As a starting place for this line of inquiry, the primary and exploratory question in the current study is: in a sample of Black environmentalists in Virginia, what does it mean to be pro-environmental?

Methods

This study integrates an exploratory, qualitative study design and critical race theory to guide the research questions, sample selection, and to guide an analysis of the findings. Ten Black environmental justice advocates and organizers were interviewed using semi-structured interviews to explore pro-environmental behaviors and the meaning of being pro-environmental in an environmental justice context.

Study Context

This section aims to ground the current study within its historical context. This historical

grounding is important because this study investigates and critiques the dominant discourse on

Black environmentalism; examining history is a central requirement in order to amplify hidden

histories that are divergent from dominant narratives (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado &

Stefanic, 2010). The following represents a very brief history of environmentalism, or more

accurately, a brief history of environmentalisms. This history includes the way that

environmentalism emerged, how environmental justice diverged from mainstream

environmentalism, the ways that these two movements began to merge again and the importance

of the Black Power movement to this discussion.

A Brief History of Environmentalism(s)

The first known 'environmentalists' were not conserving forests, but were industry

workers and laborers who would not have adopted the title of 'environmentalist' at all (Bullard

& Johnson, 2000; Montrie, 2011). In Montrie's revisionist account, *People's History of*

Environmentalism, he asserts that the first environmental advocates were more closely aligned

with what might be considered environmental justice work; they were people who fought for

better living and working conditions for factory and industry workers in the Industrial Era

(2011). Further, the rise of what could be known as environmental justice in social work can

even be seen as early as the 1920s. Jane Addams, considered one of the founders of social work,

saw the conditions that people in poverty were subjected to in contrast to people of wealth.

Addams advocated for clean water and proper waste management around the tenements, as an

issue of social justice, but also as a factor that contributed to better health and community

(Kemp, 2011).

Environmentalism is paired, and nearly synonymous with the conversation and preservation narratives of white men like Madison Grant, Theodore Roosevelt, and John Muir (Britton-Purdy, 2015). This kind of environmentalism espoused the national urgency to preserve idyllic wilderness because of the intrinsic value of nature, stemming from an ecocentric perspective. Nature is inherently valuable, and thus worthy of preservation. At the same time, these "fathers" of the environmentalist movement were also espousing racist ideas like white supremacy (Grant), racism passing as patriotism (Roosevelt), anti-indigenous sentiments (Muir), and support for eugenics (all of them) (Britton-Purdy, 2015). It's not a wonder that colloquial knowledge will tell you that white people were so adamant about forest preservation because they were running out of trees [to lynch Black people] (Mock, 2017).

Civil Rights and Environmental Justice

The environmental struggles of Black Americans gained public awareness during the height of the Civil Rights era. During the Memphis sanitation strike in April of 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. came out in support of the sanitation workers, advocating for cleaner and safer working conditions (Bullard & Johnson, 2000). It was an important moment in history, not only because Dr. King was assassinated the next day, but also because it has been documented as the first organized and national-scale turnout by Black Americans in response to environmental concerns (EPA, 2021).

The events in the 1970s at Love Canal and in Warren County have been more often cited as signaling the beginning of the environmental justice movement and the coining of the term 'environmental racism' (Montrie, 2011). Love Canal in New York was an industrial chemical dump site that was poorly managed and eventually exploded and leached toxic substances into the surrounding residential area. The original intention of Love Canal in 1910 was to generate

inexpensive energy for the people of Niagara Falls, NY, however construction was stopped in 1920 due to economic downturn and it was then used as a dump site (Beck, 1979). In 1953, the land was sold for $1, then subsequently covered up and then developed. In 1978, the site exploded, and the leaching chemicals had deleterious effects on the residents, land, air quality, and subsequent birth rates and defects (Beck, 1979).

Perhaps most famous were the events in Warren County, North Carolina. In 1978, the community of Afton within Warren County, North Carolina was the proposed dumpsite for 6,000 truckloads of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) (Macey, Her, Reibling, & Ericson, 2001). Afton was a rural town with the highest percentage of African Americans anywhere in North Carolina. This prompted unprecedented outrage by communities nearby and nationally, with previously unseen outpourings of civil disobedience, protest, and demonstrations around environmental issues (Macey, et. al, 2001). Although these kinds of missteps had happened historically, the incidents at Warren County have been credited as the beginning of the environmental justice movement (Macey, et. al, 2001).

Rev. Benjamin Chavis was at the forefront of the movement. He was close to Dr. King in his youth, and has been a civil rights activist throughout his life. Rev. Chavis led the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice. In 1987, the Commission published *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States,* a report detailing the racial disparities in the distribution of environmental Hazards across the United States (United Church of Christ, 1987). Chavis is credited with the inaugural use of the term "environmental racism," which has been a cornerstone of environmental justice until today. Environmental racism is a phenomenon where the effects of environmental destruction disproportionately impact communities of color, and

there is a level of intentionality with it, where corporations and governments codify oppression

by allowing these hazards to continue in neighborhoods of color (Bullard, 1993).

Environmental justice is grounded in the work of environmentalists and civil rights

activists, and borrows tactics from both. Traditional environmentalist advocacy and litigation

involve using existing environmental policies to address environmental health risks (American

Bar Association, 2012). However, the birth of the environmental justice movement ushered in a

whole host of tactics employed by civil rights activists, including grassroots organizing, non-

violent direct action, and the use of Title VI of the Civil Rights act as a litigation technique to

challenge the discriminatory siting of environmental hazards in already marginalized

neighborhoods (American Bar Association, 2012; Bullard & Johnson, 2000; Montrie, 2011).

The tenets and tactics of environmental justice were somewhat formalized at the First

National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991. 300 people of color from

all 50 states gathered in Washington D.C. to "set in motion a process of redefining

environmental issues in their own terms ...to speak for themselves on some of the most critical

issues of our time" (Alston, 1991, p. 14). Enduring leaders of the environmental justice

movement were also key speakers at the summit, including Dr. Robert Bullard, who developed

foundational scholarship of environmental justice and racism, much of which is referenced in

this chapter and the following. Notably, those present at the First National People of Color

Environmental Leadership Summit developed the *Principles of Environmental Justice* which

continue to guide the movement today.

Tethered to Mainstream Environmentalism

Black environmentalists formed organizations that attended to local priorities and justice,

one of the first being in 1988: The West Harlem for Environmental Action (WE ACT for

Environmental Justice, 2021). Consistent with the trajectory of other social movements, the grassroots efforts of the environmental justice movement also moved to more partnership and ally building with mainstream environmental organizations with more resources and a wider constituency (Bonta & Jordan, 2007), although advocates insisted that these partnerships would never be built on paternalism, but instead could only be "be based on equity, mutual respect, and justice" (Alston, 1991, p. 17). But, while environmental justice links the environment and other forms of justice, mainstream environmentalism did not take into account social and human conditions alongside issues in the natural environment. This was not seen as an oversight by environmental justice advocates, but instead an outcropping of environmental racism even within the spaces where people were creating environmental solutions.

Before forming allies, Black, Indigenous, and other environmental justice and civil rights advocates of color called the work of mainstream environmental organizations and leaders into question in an effort to recenter the needs and experiences of people who are directly affected by toxic environments. The SouthWest Organizing Project became a hub where "environmental justice activists began questioning the whiteness of the traditional environmental movement and how environmentalism has failed to make social justice issues such as racism and poverty a priority alongside the environment" (Dickinson, 2012, p. 61). These leaders penned a letter in 1990, calling into question the diversity of the leadership and constituency of "the Group of 10" environmentalist organizations (Bonta & Jordan, 2007; SouthWest Organizing Project, 1990). These organizations, considered to be the most influential organizations in the environmentalism movement, were called on to do better: to be educated on and to advocate for the environmental needs of people of color and to address their lack of organizational diversity by hiring more staff that reflected these populations (SouthWest Organizing Project, 1990). Short term, this strategy

led to an increase in hires of people of color into these organizations and re-prioritizing of justice and race issues within environmentalism (Bonta & Jordan, 2007). However, these changes did not last into the present day.

Environmentalism and "Black Disinterest"

Today, communities of color are disproportionately affected by issues of the environment, however they have also been mischaracterized as uninterested in environmentalism (Macias, 2015; Medina et al., 2019; Mohai, 2003). The historical involvement of Black environmentalists as well as recent voting records, and cross-cultural research efforts have demonstrated that this is indeed an underestimation and undervaluation of the contributions of people of color to environmentalism and its goals (Arp & Kenny, 1996; Lazri and Konisky, 2017; Macias, 2015). Since the Civil Rights Era, Black environmentalists have been prioritizing issues like environmental hazards (Bullard & Johnson, 2000); however, these have not been included in mainstream discussions of what it means to be pro-environmental. White environmental priorities, like to conserve and preserve, have been venerated over the priorities and labor of Black environmentalists (Mock, 2017).

This perspective of "black disinterest" also paints a negative picture of Black environmental identity, where those who are defined as pro-environmental are aware of the threat, feel a strong commitment to the environment, and are willing to sacrifice for the environment. Conversely, those who are not defined as pro-environmental could be characterized as uneducated, uncommitted to the environment, and unwilling to sacrifice. This false narrative can further serve to exclude Black voices from environmental priority setting and erase the contributions of Black environmentalists in the past, present, and discourage future Black environmentalists. It can also relegate Black priority issues to continue to be the labor of Black

20

communities and those disproportionately affected by environmental hazards, while mainstream environmentalist organizations continue to enjoy the benefits of notoriety and vigorous funding streams.

The way that pro-environmentalism is conceptualized and then measured reinforces white environmental perspectives and priorities, and de-emphasizes behaviors that would alleviate hazards: an issue of paramount concern to Black environmentalists. The measures that we have to measure pro-environmental behaviors are potentially bound up in the historical de-emphasis of diverse approaches to environmentalism, focusing almost exclusively on private-sphere behaviors (Kaiser, 2000), which do not account for even little that is known of Black approaches to environmentalism. This lays the foundation for the significance of the current study.

Significance of the Current Study

The importance and relevance of this study is grounded in the moral imperative to amplify an alternative to the dominant narrative of what it means to be pro-environmental. Representation and acknowledgement are critical to anti-racist and inclusive research and practice. Critical Race Theory calls us to uncover and name racism, and to confront the cultural institutions that uphold racism. Critical Race Theory is intended to be applied not only to systems outwardly appearing as racist, but to critically evaluate systems where racism may be pervasive even if less observable; in the case of this study, Critical Race Theory is applied to the conceptualization of what it means to be pro-environmental.

In research, it is important to develop the most robust and accurate conceptualization of a construct. The focus of this study is to develop a more robust and accurate conceptualization of what it means to be pro-environmental; documenting and understanding the work that movement participants do builds representation in the literature and creates a more equitable starting place

for scale development to continue to understand and develop action based on the evidence of these experiences. An inclusive, collectivist, and community-level vision may advance pro-environmental goals faster than the current pro-environmental focus on individual behavior. So, to expand what we consider as collective pro environmental behaviors also expands what we know about the impact of behaviors on communities and what motivates people to engage. All of this is important for movement building, reaching timely and collective goals, and understanding how to authentically motivate people to engage in these environmental behaviors.

The imperative for better understanding pro-environmental behaviors in communities disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards also includes equity and justice in representation between perceived environmentalism and who is actually doing the work. This study could be an important first step to understanding not only the breadth of the work, but the antecedents (motivations) and the consequences (impact), which can contribute to further movement building, and ultimately has implications for achieving social and racial justice, in addition to environmental justice.

Significance for Social Work

The people who are most significantly impacted by toxic environments are also the people whose livelihoods, health, and wellbeing social workers care about. Environmental issues are of timely concern in a decade where we have our first climate refugees (Davenport & Robertson, 2016), a call to be independent of fossil fuel by 2050 (Paris Agreement, 2015), and crises of clean air and water (i.e., Flint) in cities across the United States. The ability to alleviate issues of the environment has importance to the livelihoods of swaths of people who live in coastal environments as well as anyone impacted by poorly managed and unprotected resources. Ameliorating environmental burdens has implications for the air, water, and land quality for

nearly the entirety of the planet, humans and non-humans alike. A modern *person-in-environment* perspective takes into account that environmental hazards form a foundation for physical health, mental health, social, and economic conditions that disproportionately affect Black and Latinx people in the United States, which is at least partly responsible for the issues that social work practitioners study and work to alleviate.

Jane Addams understood the need to advocate for already marginalized people who were literally dumped; sewage waste was disposed of in the poorest neighborhoods in inner cities (Kemp, 2011). However, social work has lagged behind in recognizing the importance of the work of Black civil rights and environmental activists, like Rev. Chavis and Dr. Bullard who advocated for addressing environmental issues as critical for the health of humans who experience environmental oppression.

This study is specifically relevant to critical social work knowledge building and action, and especially the importance of participation in both by those who are directly affected by an issue. Black environmentalists who are involved in alleviating environmental burdens on their communities are likely to be already overburdened with the stressors as a result of racism in the United States, including the consequences of living and working near environmental hazards. Yet, Black environmentalists who may be perceived as 'victims' of these stressors are actively involved in alleviating them even when their pro-environmental efforts are not acknowledged or valued. It is important, especially from a critical social work perspective, to amplify the contributions and accomplishments of Black environmental justice advocates that have persisted even in spite of a historical de-emphasis.

Further, as social work is reconciling its own history of racism and abuse, it is important that social work research not further the censorship of diversity that has occurred in the history of

the environmental and environmental justice movements. While the current environmental justice movement began with the activism of already low resourced, low capital communities in North Carolina, the movement's efforts have been conflated with mainstream environmentalism and the major issues have been co-opted by the environmental concerns of more privileged groups. Instead, this study returns to re-engaging the lived experiences and activism of those immediately impacted by environmental hazards as a matter of both practical application and social justice.

Conclusion

This chapter provided contextual grounding for the focus of this study. The history of environmentalism combined with the way that environmentalism is conceptualized leads the researcher to explore the development of a more robust and accurate conceptualization of what it means to be pro-environmental among Black environmentalists. The significance of this study has implications for broader research endeavors and for social work by building representation in the literature and creating a more equitable starting place for scale development to continue to understand and develop action based on the evidence of these experiences. The following chapter will consider the lack of Black visibility in environmentalism with a Critical Race Lens and situate Black environmentalism within mainstream environmentalism and environmental justice.

Chapter 2: Situating Black Environmentalism

This chapter will review contrasting perspectives on environmentalism, the environment, the ways humans relate to the environment, and environmental justice. Further, the purpose of this chapter is to bring together the literature that reveals and gives further understanding to a lack of Black visibility in environmentalism. Critical Race Theory. which is the foundational theoretical framework for this study, is applied to further investigate the meaning of pro-environmental behaviors to Black environmentalists in Virginia.

Pro-Environmental Behavior

The construct of pro-environmental behavior is defined as the behaviors exhibited by individuals acting in ways that benefit the environment (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). These behaviors are based on an assumption that human activities have harmed the environment, and thus also created harm for the humans inhabiting it (Arnold, Kibbe, Hartig & Kaiser, 2018). Generally, the literature agrees that there are three types of pro-environmental behavior: activism, non-activist behavior, and private-sphere (Stern, 2002). There is debate as to whether behaviors in the private sphere or those in the public sphere (activism and non-activist behaviors) are more impactful on the health of the environment (i.e., Stern, 2002; Lange & Dewitte, 2019). Private-sphere behaviors have been most studied, and are the basis for the measures most used in the pro-environmental and pro-ecological behavior literature.

Bamberg and Rees (2015) have divided the private-sphere pro-environmental behaviors into four major categories: "(1) the purchase of major household goods and services (e.g., cars, houses), (2) the use and maintenance of environmentally important goods (e.g., heating and cooling systems), (3) household waste disposal (e.g., composting), and (4) 'green' consumerism (e.g., purchasing organic food)" (p. 699). However, there is a great deal of heterogeneity in the

way that pro-environmental has been measured, prompting further study. As an example, in a review of 49 studies of pro-environmental behavior, 42 unique scales were used (Markle, 2013).

Studies that measure pro-environmental behaviors may focus more on the intent to engage in these behaviors or an assessment of the impact of pro-environmental behaviors, such as through a report of ecological impact via carbon emission calculations (i.e., Bleys et al., 2017). Regardless, the approach is typically that of self-report. Some studies ask for pro-environmental behaviors recalled at one point in time and others take a diary approach where it is measured at multiple time points. Beyond self-report, pro-environmental behaviors can be measured through field observation and remote data collection. This overcomes some limitations of self-report, although this can be intrusive and expensive (Lange & Dewitte, 2019).

General Ecological Behaviors

Because of its range of behaviors and robust psychometric testing, pro-environmental behaviors have been somewhat synonymous with the use of the General Ecological Behavior (GEB) scale to measure self-reported intention to engage in these behaviors (Corral-Verdugo et al., 2009; Kaklamanou, Jones, Webb, & Walker, 2015; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). The GEB treats pro-environmental behavior as a single dimension (ecological behavior), whereas other measures may treat each category as a separate dimension (i.e., separate dimensions related to home, travel, car usage) (Arnold et al., 2018). The full GEB scale is included in the Appendix.

The following section is a discussion of the way that environmentalism, the environment, and relationships between humans and the environment are conceptualized and the ways in which these different constructs are distinguished.

Environmentalism

Environmentalism is a movement focused on the welfare of the environment and the ecosystems contained within (Montrie, 2011). Environmentalism has been distilled into the two ideas of *conserve* and *preserve*. Both conserve and preserve are considered ways to protect the environment, but they have had divergent applications over time. Forester George Pinchot advocated for conservation, or the use of natural resources, but at the very least, in a responsible way. Wilderness advocate John Muir proposed preservation, or the protection of the environment from human activities (Westover, 2017). The two divergent ideas have been merged in today's environmentalism: a movement that values the perpetuation of natural resources, preservation of wilderness, and protection of all living things (Montague & Pellerano, 2012). Although all living things are included, it is unclear where the environment ends and humans begin, and therefore, in environmentalism, what is considered a natural resource or a living thing worth preserving?

What is the Environment?

Understanding environmentalism, environmental justice, and pro-environmental behaviors requires some discussion about the environment itself. The definition of the environment is ambiguous and may be responsible for conflicting attitudes about what is and is not environmentalism, and what is and is not concern for the environment (Dunlap & Jones, 2002). A simple dictionary definition from Miriam Webster (2021) highlights its relativity: "circumstances, objects, or conditions by which one is surrounded" ("Environment"). Similarly, the Environmental Protection Agency defines the environment (1997) as "the sum of all external conditions which affect the life, development, and survival of an organism" (p. 17). The environment is external to something, is influential on that same something, and is summative or encompassing. The definition of environment can be further narrowed into two categories: natural and built.

Natural Environment

In 1997, Johnson and colleagues published a brief reader on the *Meaning of Environmental Terms* across disciplines, and affirmed the confusion and lack of cohesion on what is meant by 'natural environment.' "Natural environments," they concluded, "are those relatively unchanged or undisturbed by human culture" (Johnson, 1997, p. 586). The qualifier *relatively* is used because it is assumed that there is very little left in the natural world that remains untouched by humans, and yet still, there are parts of the world that are considered *nature*. McIsaac and Brun (1999) responded, calling into question the idea of nature and natural which focused solely on the disturbance or not by humans. For example, they questioned: Is a tree, planted in an office park, natural? Is the tree natural, but the surroundings are not? If the tree is in an office park, but was not deliberately planted there, is it natural?

And still, the natural environment has been left remarkably undefined from then until now. Troves of literature have been dedicated to the impacts of the 'natural environment' on stress, mental health, and physical health, however, even in these studies, the parameters of the environment are left to be implied. In order to understand what is implied by the 'natural environment' in these studies, listed are a few of the proxies that researchers use to operationalize the 'natural environment.' Some examples of the range of proxy definitions of the natural environment include studies using wilderness (i.e. Hartig, Mang, and Evans, 1991; Norton, 2009); "country park within the city" or " footpath besides a canal with a range of natural vegetation" (i.e. Gidlow, et al. 2016, p. 23); outdoor camps; preserved forest land (Vining & Merrick, 2008); videos featuring natural vegetation (Ulrich et al., 1991); "areas containing elements of living systems that include plants and nonhuman animals across a range of scales and degrees of human management, from a small urban park through to relatively 'pristine

wilderness'" (Frumkin et al., 2017, p. 075001-1). The range of what can be natural includes

plants and non-human animals, places with degrees of difference from the human world (camps,

for example, are a bit more natural than playing video games on the couch), and whatever seems

to be considered 'nature.'

Built Environment

Natural environments, as undefined as they may be, are distinguished from built

environments. Whereas the natural environment is considered to be untouched by humans, it is

considered built when humans have intervened. Built environments are the "[human] modified

structures that provide people with living, working, and recreational spaces" (USEPA, 2021,

"What is the Built Environment?"). Some examples of the built environment are "the physical

parts of where we live and work (e.g., homes, buildings, streets, open spaces, and infrastructure)"

(CDC, 2011, "What Is the Public Health Issue?"). The built environment has been more

concretely operationalized in the literature to include "land-use patterns (how land is used);

large- and small-scale built and natural features (e.g., architectural details, quality of

landscaping); and the transportation system (the facilities and services that link one location to

another)" (Brownson, Hoehner, Day, Forsyth, and Sallis, 2009, p. 2).

The built environment is set apart from nature, however, it is still an important part of

how humans interact with their environment and access natural spaces. The built and natural

environments are difficult to distinguish in discussions of the environment. For example, the

built and natural environments can merge and be conflated in discussions of air quality in a city

center, disability access to national parks, and installation of a gas pipeline in a densely

populated neighborhood; yet, they are still identifiable as issues of environmental concern.

Human Relationships with Environment

Both definitions of the environment (natural and built) assume that humans are set apart from the environment; humans either touched (built) or have not touched (natural) the environment. Perceptions of where the environment ends and humans begin has implications for what actions humans would take to address issues in the environment (Davis et al. 2009). The more that humans see themselves as a part of the environment, the more apt they are to protect it (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959). Below a few perspectives on the role of humans in the environment are discussed: anthropocentric, ecocentric, person-environment relationship, and person-in-environment perspective.

Anthropocentric and Ecocentric

An anthropocentric perspective puts humans at the center of the universe. Anthropocentrism is "based on the belief that only humans have value and thus they have a privileged position in nature, that the environment exists only for the benefit of humans" (Park & Allaby, 2017, "Anthropocentric"). Humans are 'privileged' with the ability to dominate and subdue anything that is not considered human (i.e., Francis Bacon's perspective of *dominion*). The purpose of the environment is to provide value for humans and lacks intrinsic value in and of itself. Throughout history, people had to find ways to relate to the environment for survival, food, water, shelter, tribal space, and for ritual and sacred expressions (Ponting, 1991). In this perspective, the environment provides material, spiritual, and aesthetic benefits to humans (Levy, 2003).

An ecocentric perspective of the environment centers biotic (flora, fauna) and abiotic (rivers, rocks) nature as opposed to centering humans. Humans become part of nature, minimizing human-hierarchy over other elements of the environment. Ecocentrism is "based on the belief that all living organisms are equally important, that the environment exists for the

benefit of all of nature and not just people, and that nature has rights." (Park & Allaby, 2017, "Ecocentric"). The environment is intrinsically worth protecting, and should be protected "even if doing so is uncomfortable, expensive, or inconvenient" (Ciocirlan, 2016). This view of the environment draws on Indigenous knowledge of the ways that all things are related and even dependent on one another.

Ecocentrism was reinvigorated in the United States in the 1940s at a time when humans identified a new relationship with the environment--that of *protector.* Leopold's (1949) essay on the land ethic, where people would need to see themselves as equal with the environment in order to justify protecting it, drawing on an ecocentric perspective. If humans believed that they were somehow above or dominant over other elements of the environment as opposed to "fellow-voyagers" (p. 149) with them throughout the process of evolution, then there would be no reason to pursue justice for all, humans and environment alike.

Figure 1: A visual contrasting the anthropocentric perspective (left) where humans are at the separated and at the center of the natural world, and the ecocentric perspective (right) where humans are depicted in line with the rest of the natural world (Brownlie, Spears, & Sutton, 2014).

Person-Environment Relationship

The person-environment relationship perspective emerges from the Western discipline of social psychology and posits that if humans feel connected to the environment, then they will be motivated to engage in pro-environmental behaviors, or behaviors that will support the environment (e.g., Mayer & Frantz, 2004). The characteristics of the person-environment relationship are inclusion of nature in the self (Schultz, 2001), environmental identity (Clayton, 2003), connectedness to nature (Mayer & Frantz, 2004), and commitment to the environment (Davis et al., 2009).

Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) interdependence theory proposes specific elements of relationships that strongly affect motivations and behaviors. Interdependence theory, when viewed through an environmental lens, deepens our understanding of the nature of the person-environment relationship and what elements are important to understand in how it functions. According to interdependence theory, in a dyad, such as human and their environment, partners will become more dependent on the other to the degree that the other fills an important need of the partner, and the degree to which the other is needed to fulfill that need (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959).

When people perceive that there is an important need to be filled by the environment, and that the need can not be filled without the environment, then they will feel greater dependence on the environment and do more to protect that relationship. Humans that are more committed to the wellbeing of the environment, as a result of their perceptions of dependence will be more willing to make sacrifices and overcome the barriers necessary to engage in pro-environmental behaviors.

Person-in-Environment Perspective

Social work's person-in-environment (PIE) perspective offers a framework for understanding how an individual's context has an effect on their internal processes and behaviors (Kondrat, 2008). One of the founders of social work, Jane Addams, began by working on issues in the environment; the threat of sewage waste in neighborhoods impacted the communities it was in and was more pervasive in low-income communities (Kemp, 2011). With the rise of clinical practice, the *environment* in PIE has been understood more as the family environment that a person was raised within and the social environment surrounding an individual. Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model neglects the physical environment as an external influence on child development, a model which has been generalized to much of the practice of social work. These 'environments' impact the individual and can be impacted by the individual as well. Scholars and practitioners who have used this expansive and sometimes metaphorical idea of the psycho-social environment have led to further confusion as to what 'the environment' is.

African Eco-Philosophy

Because this study focuses on the contributions of Black/African-American perspectives on pro-environmentalism, this section explores African eco-philosophy or African traditional environmental knowledge as an alternative or expansion on western perspectives of the human-environment relationship. Myriad ways of explaining and understanding human-environment relationships exist in the nations that make up the African sub-continent, so to distill a single African eco-philosophy would be a disservice to the rich history and traditions of African environmentalism (Behrens, 2014). The following are the most visible attempts to compose a single African eco-philosophy.

In African eco-philosophy, human beings are co-occupants with other natural existence, including ancestors and other spirits (Tosam, 2019; Sindima, 1989), while also being caretakers of nature for present and future generations (Ikeke, 2018; Tosam, 2019). The universe is ordered but the differences between humans, plants, other animals, abiotic elements, spirits and ancestors is flexible, where elements of nature can be inhabited by the spirits of ancestors (Behrens, 2014; Ikeke, 2018; Tangwa, 2000; Tosam, 2019). In African eco-philosophy all nature is interconnected via a shared life-force, and "so a break or imbalance in one aspect has serious consequences in other aspects of the domain" (Sindima, 1989, p. 143). All of these elements have "moral considerability" or the ability to be wronged, and therefore should be considered in environmental decision-making (Behrens, 2014). Certain totemic plants and animals are sacred and should never be destroyed, and when there is destruction or a disruption in the order of the universe, environmental crises will happen like we see today (Ikeke, 2018).

Tangwa (2004) describes African eco-philosophy as neither anthropocentric or ecocentric, but instead as a moral eco-bio-communitarian stance which incorporates interdependence, moral duties, and peaceful coexistence with all things, spiritual and natural. "If you benefit from something then use it sustainably because you, as well as other members of the community, will always need it for your survival." (Tosam, 2019, p. 180). This conveys an eco-philosophy that centers humans and their duty to use resources in a way that is respectful to your future self and others who will also need it, and emphasizes the interdependence of humans on other humans, humans on nature, and nature on humans.

Environmental Justice

The United States Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national

origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies" (2018, "Learn about"). The term 'environmental justice' may have only been coined as recently as the 1980s, yet it has deep roots in the anti-racist work of the civil rights movement and even shares history with mainstream environmentalism. Robert Bullard, the Father of environmental justice, described environmental justice as a movement addressing "inequities that result from human settlement, industrial facility siting and industrial development" and "power imbalances, lack of political enfranchisement, and to redirect resources so that we can create some healthy, livable and sustainable types of models." (1999, "What is the environmental justice movement?")

Defining the *Environment* in Environmental Justice

How the environment is defined may be a key to understanding the ways in which environmentalism and environmental justice diverge, as well as how people see themselves as part of the environment and what would motivate someone to become a protector of the environment. The environment in environmental justice is more broadly defined than that which is or is not untouched by humans. In environmental justice, "...the environment is everything: where we live, work, play, go to school, as well as the physical and natural world. And so we can't separate the physical environment from the cultural environment" (Bullard, 1999, "What is the environmental justice movement?"). The environment, in addition to the natural, built, biotic, and abiotic, also includes the cultural. The way in which the natural and built environments are protected or harmed are a result of cultural decisions. In the case of environmental justice, power, participation, and race have all influenced how humans have shaped their environments and therefore shaped the environmental experiences of their fellow humans.

Principles and Tactics of Environmental Justice

Because the environment is defined more broadly to include the natural, built, and cultural environment, the tactics and tenets go beyond the traditional environmentalist focus of conserve and preserve. As Alston recounted from The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, "while the importance of saving endangered species is recognized, it is also clear that adults and children living in communities of color are endangered species too. Environmental issues are immediate survival issues" (1991, p. 17). Since the Civil Rights era, environmental justice advocates have developed core tenets and tactics to advance pro-environmental justice goals.

The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 produced the *Principles of Environmental Justice.* There are at least five overarching principles which guide environmental justice work: individuals have the right "to be protected from environmental degradation" (Bullard, 1991, p. 153); advocates prioritize "prevention (elimination of the threat before harm occurs) as the preferred strategy" (p. 154); "shifts the burden of proof to polluters/dischargers who do harm" (p. 154); "movement forward requires rethinking measures of hazard and what is acceptable in the court of law" (p. 154) ; and tactics include ""targeted" action and resources" (p. 155). The targeted action tactics used to address environmental injustice include demands of institutions to be involved in alleviating racial injustices; holding to hold perpetrators of injustice accountable, such as organizations that dump toxic waste illegally or over site hazardous sites in Black and poor neighborhoods; and civil disobedience, protest, and rallying (Dickinson, 2012).

The Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing also guide the practice and work of environmental justice. In 1996, the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice gathered in Jemez, New Mexico and drew up these principles as a way to guide the way that

white advocates and organizers would need to work in mostly low income and communities of color. The document defines six principles of democratic organizing:

1. Be Inclusive

2. Emphasis on Bottom-Up Organizing

3. Let People Speak for Themselves

4. Work Together in Solidarity and Mutuality

5. Build Just Relationships Among Ourselves

6. Commitments to Self-Transformation

(Jemez Principles, 1996, p. 1)

There is a pervasive youth and intergenerational component to current movement as well as a push to revisit the policy 'victories' from the 1970s and 1990s. At the second summit of the National People of Color Environmental Leadership in 2002, the youth created Principles of the Youth Environmental Justice Movement. Youth-focused environmental justice work is "deeply grounded in political education… blend[ing] organizing with long-term youth development and support" and is focused on the sustainability of the movement (Martinez, Wu, & Zimmerman, 2005). A youth-focused approach to conservation prepares youth with the skills for future environmental justice work.

Policy-centered approaches to environmental justice are now revisiting legislation such as the Clean Water Act of 1970. Although this Act, for example, was considered a landslide victory for environmentalism, crises like Flint, Michigan in 2014 show that majority non-white communities continue to bear the brunt of unequally enforced policies. Environmental justice advocates are pushing back on this application of this legislation because "it is insufficient to have strong regulations against environmental injustice if discretion in their application

effectively results in inaction or further injustice" (Beretta, 2012, n.p.). White communities were more likely to benefit from US EPA regulations that limit polluters in their neighborhoods than African American communities (Beretta, 2012).

Environmental Racism

Environmental racism is ''any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color'' (Bullard, 2001, p. 160). According to Bullard (2018), some people have the "wrong complexion for [environmental] protection" ("Learn about"). Environmental justice troubles the dichotomy that enforces that issues are either of the environment or of racism. Instead, they both come from the same systemic root issues (Moore, Kosek, and Pandian, 2003).

The effects of environmental destruction disproportionately affect communities of color. Black and low-income communities are more likely to be exposed air pollution, contaminated water, and polluted land than white and more wealthy communities (Boone, Fragkias, Buckley, & Grove, 2014; Morello-Frosch, Pastor, Porras, & Sadd, 2002; Pastor, Sadd, & Morello-Frosch, 2004). Poor health and social outcomes of living near dangerous environmental conditions include delayed cognitive development, mental distress, emotional disorders, low wealth accumulation, and low academic performance (Downey, 2006; Downey & Van Willigen, 2005; Pais, Crowder, & Downey, 2013; Pastor et al., 2004; Ross, Reynolds, & Geis, 2000). Further, Pastor and colleagues (2004) assert that the effects of living near environmental hazards may be cyclical: people exposed to environmental hazards have lower health and educational outcomes (Pastor et al., 2004), which can be accompanied by the inability to leave their neighborhoods (Pais, South, & Crowder, 2012). People who can not escape environmental hazards will continue

to be exposed, and the next generation, if they can not escape or eradicate, may be exposed to these hazards and poor health and social outcomes as well.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) proposes that race and racism are pervasive across the culture and institutions in the United States. The way that race has been constructed in the United States and upheld in these cultural institutions serves the interests of dominant groups and further subordinates people of color. CRT shares lineage with Critical Legal Studies, and much of CRT scholarship is centered on policies and laws that have shaped how race is viewed in the United States and therefore the experiences of people of color under those laws.

Key Tenets of Critical Race Theory

The key tenets of Critical Race Theory define the importance of race, the endemic nature of racism, the ways that systems codify racism, and ways that change can occur to reconcile personal, interpersonal, and systemic racism. The attribution of characteristics of people by race is pseudo-scientific, and constructed based on time and place (Stefanic & Delgado, 2010). However, race is a social construct (Stefanic & Delgado, 2010) that has had very real consequences on racial inequalities (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Lee, 1994).

Scholars of Critical Race Theory (i.e., Kimberle Crenshaw, Patricia Williams, and Robert Delgado) have used this lens to uncover the ways that racism is infused into texts, policies, laws, and other forms of cultural expression. Racism is embedded in social values, policies, and practices, and even if any obvious manifestations of racism have been removed, the way things operate is still racist. This covert codification of racism has taken something that is socially constructed and assigned power to it, where it has very real consequences for people who are not white. White dominance has meant that people of color have historically been excluded in the

decisions that affect them, and therefore texts, policies, laws, and other forms of cultural expression continue to serve white interests and fail people of color.

Racism is "business as usual" (Stefanic & Delgado, 2010, p. 7). It is endemic within American culture and policies (Delgado, 1995; Russell, 1992). Racism is difficult to identify and eradicate because it is ingrained, and it also is protected because it serves white interests (Stefanic & Delgado, 2010). Systems are not above racism. They are instead an "active instance" of how racism is codified (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). These systems have constructed race as it is seen today.

As far as change, there are attempts that have real potential to address racism, and those that obfuscate the problem. Objectivity, neutrality, and colorblindness do not serve to remediate racial inequity, but instead hide sources of racial oppression and privilege (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solorozano, 1997; Solorzaon & Yasso, 2002). Neither does liberal (white) ambivalence work towards addressing racism (Bell et al., 1985). Change can and must occur by exposing and confronting the multiple and intersecting layers of racial oppression embedded in the fabric of cultural institutions in the United States (Matsuda, 1991). Examining history is a central requirement for critical race investigations (Crenshaw et al, 1995). Storytelling from "voices-of-color" (Stefanic & Delgado, 2010, p. 10) is a way to expose dominant and alternative narratives based on experiences of racism and exclusion by people or systems.

Confronting racist cultural manifestations is not just about winning a single legal victory, policy change, or perspective shift, but it reinvigorates the imagination so much so that it is again possible for people of color to be full rights-bearing citizens (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Addressing codification of this magnitude requires swift and radical perspective shifts. CRT scholars are scholar-activists, using CRT methodologies and analysis to not only uncover racism, but to

confront it. CRT instructs us to confront present inequities with historical context and to use storytelling from voices-of-color to expose dominant and false narratives.

Counter Storytelling from a Different Standpoint

CRT is rooted in justice. One tactic CRT scholar-activists use to confront racism is producing scholarship that exposes and confronts dominant narratives since racism makes up the *fabric* of daily life; it is almost undetectable and hidden in narratives of colorblindness and white privilege (Delgado, 1995; Saddler, 2005). CRT activist-scholars can use counter-storytelling with alternative perspectives on the impact of objectivity, neutrality, and colorblindness in law, policy, education, and research.

CRT calls us to uncover and name racism, and to confront the cultural institutions that uphold racism. Counter storytelling is one of the ways to name and confront these dominant narratives of oppression. Participation and storytelling by people of color can serve to counter dominant narratives of oppression and provide a new epistemological standpoint necessary for liberation (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Solórzano & Yasso, 2002; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997).

Counter storytelling is "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (Solozano, 2002, p. 26) as a means of exposing racist dominant narratives and offer an alternative that invites a new perspective on the issue. Dominant narratives explain, hide away, and approach issues form a deficit mindset. In this context, it is a question of epistemology -- how do we know something and what does a different position, a counter story, teach us about the nature of knowledge and the importance of challenging dominant narratives?

Counter storytelling from the standpoint of a person experiencing an issue directly has the potential to offer information from this stance that is different from those who do not have

that experience. Data from this stance can lead to what has been termed *stronger objectivity*, or a truer picture of the problem that incorporates an experience-informed perspective of context (Crasnow, 2008). Standpoint is not just the place one holds in society, but in this context, a standpoint perspective is achieved through the combination of experience with an issue and a critical awareness of historical, social, and political forces related to that position (Crasnow, 2008). Participation and storytelling by people of color can serve to counter dominant narratives of oppression and provide a new epistemological standpoint necessary for liberation (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Solorozano & Yasso, 2002; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997).

CRT and Environmentalism

A curiously important parallel between CRT and environmentalism is that CRT emerged from thinkers who found themselves surrounded by almost entirely white departments and schools (Delgado, 1984). This provided a place for critique and defined the importance of investigating dominant narratives in primarily white institutions. Similarly, environmentalism has a diversity problem, where the constituency is overwhelmingly white and the dominant narratives have excluded the needs and labor of Black environmentalists. In white dominant spaces, contesting the dominant discourse is meaningful work, and examining history is a central requirement (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefanic, 2010). Using research as an act of counter-storytelling, it is possible that by re-researching traditional environmental narratives, the strengths and epistemologies of people of color can be amplified in an effort to identify parts of hidden histories.

CRT has a broader application than legal studies: endemic and covert racism in American is woven into the fabric of the cultural institutions and therefore plays a part in shaping the privilege and marginalization of people of color in all aspects of life. Critical Race Theory rejects

the notion that knowledge is objective, apolitical, or neutral (Crenshaw et al., 1995), and therefore its tenets are applicable to any knowledge building, such as that which is done in this study. CRT's insights on the function of racial objectivity, neutrality, and colorblindness are central to this area of study.

Any research around environmental justice can not move forward without people of color who are directly involved in environmental justice. According to CRT, past decisions about environmental policies have shaped present racial disparities (Anguiano, Milstein, De Larkin, Chen, & Sandoval, 2012; Cole & Foster, 2001; Price, 2010). Ultimately, the current distribution of hazards and resources would look different if Black people had voice and power in environmental decision-making (Anguiano et al., 2012; Cole & Foster, 2001; Price, 2010; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2014). Research and practice in this area must attend to the racialized nature of the subject, which is evidenced by the disproportionality of hazards across race. Racial inequality has persisted beyond the Civil Rights Era, and in environmental work, the disparities that Black communities face persist beyond the passage of the Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act.

A Critical Race Perspective on Pro-Environmental Behaviors

Kaiser and Wilson (2000) have tested and developed the GEB measure to be a cross-cultural scale, capturing the intent of people to engage in pro-environmental behaviors across "different communities and countries" (p. 956). However, in the development of the general measure, Kaiser and Wilson also recognized that this measure may not be generalizable across all communities, and that by finding differences, the definition of pro-environmental behavior also becomes redefined (2000). The GEB and a measure that has been augmented for a specific context are not statistically comparable, but in discussion, can offer nuanced knowledge of pro-environmental behaviors (Kaiser & Wilson, 2000).

Both general ecological behaviors and the construct of pro-environmental behaviors and have limitations. Although they have been used throughout the literature to define who is and who is not pro-environmental, which has shaped and been shaped by what is perceived as "environmentalism," both GEB and pro-environmental behaviors are limited to mostly private-sphere environmental behaviors like recycling and alternative transportation (Stern, 2002). This leaves public, activist, community, and other spheres unmeasured and unaccounted for. Further, studies of pro-environmental behaviors have not been conducted with samples of people living close to environmental hazards, and few studies conducted with samples representative of racial and ethnic minorities (Medina et al, 2019). This leaves a gap for further study of pro-environmental behaviors with people diverse racial groups and with people living near environmental hazards.

In its attempts to have cross-cultural application, Kaiser's (2000) GEB scale, based almost exclusively in private-sphere behaviors does not account for even the little that has been studied of Black approaches to environmentalism. There is reason to believe that existing measures such as the GEB or the construct of pro-environmental behaviors may not be valid in a different sample, and may even flip, changing the meaning of these measures in a new context. In another study on neighborhoods and environment, Ross, Reynolds, and Geis' (2000) found that contrary to other scholarship on neighborhood stability as a protective factor that contributed to a positive well-being, in communities where the environment is harmful, toxic, and disruptive, neighborhood stability contributed to mental distress. Participants who had neighborhood stability in bad environments had perceived *stability* as *being stuck* (Ross et al., 2005). This idea may be transferable to the experiences of Black communities living and working in toxic environments.

Environmentalism is not monolithic as evidenced by the diverse issues captured through a brief recounting of the history of environmentalism and environmental justice. A monolithic perspective on what it means to be pro-environmental and to act on these concerns fails to capture the issues and actions of interest of Black communities, and does a disservice to the rich history and future of environmentalism as a whole. Grounding this exploration in the existing theoretical work on pro-environmental behaviors may also provide a starting place to explore the potential of the construct's cross-cultural application. Critical Race Theory guides the researcher to question this measure and its objectivity and neutrality. In an effort to be the most accurate and inclusive of the most experiences, the way that pro-environmental behaviors are conceptualized must be interrogated, suggesting the need for an exploratory approach with a sample of Black environmentalists.

Where are Black Environmentalists?

"these populations have always been a part of nature's narrative whether old, white conservationists have acknowledged them or not"

(Mock, 2017).

Mainstream environmentalists hold conflicting ideas about the desired involvement of people who are directly affected by environmental injustices. On the one hand, there is a reigning belief that Black Americans are not interested in environmental issues, so much so that the term "Black disinterest" became a phenomenon of study (Macias, 2015; Taylor, 1989). Following the Civil Rights Era and the development of the environmental justice movement, Black Americans were facing myriad priorities—individually and systematically—to attend to, such as "improving access to educational opportunities and jobs, fighting crime in their neighborhoods, and overcoming racial barriers" (Mohai, 2003, p. 11), and it was perceived that

this is why there was environmental disinterest (Macias, 2015). While it is true that Black

Americans are overburdened with a host of systemic ills, voting and polling data over the last

two decades has demonstrated that people of color are concerned about environmental issues:

both mainstream environmental concerns as well as more local and neighborhood environmental

justice issues.

A study of the last 15 years of Gallup poll results found that people of color were

significantly more personally concerned about environmental issues than white people (Lazri and

Konisky, 2017). "Especially noteworthy is that the differences exist for both the issues that are

most often attributed to the environmental justice movement, as well as those that historically

have been a mainstay of the traditional environmental movement" (Lazri and Konisky, 2017, p.

1046). In a study of differences in environmental attitudes across race in Detroit, Black and

white respondents reported nearly identical support across all categories of environmental

concern: "pollution issues with implications for human health...nature preservation

issues...resource conservation issues...global environmental issues…; and neighborhood

environmental issues" (Mohai, 2003, p. 16). And when it comes to the pollution, especially at the

neighborhood level, "African Americans express significantly greater concern than do whites"

(Mohai, 2003, p. 19). When local environmental concerns are prioritized, studies show that

Black participants demonstrate more interest in the issue and are more likely to report taking

action (Arp & Kenny, 1996; Mohai, 2003).

This is consistent with environmental deprivation theory, which posits that one has

greater support for environmental protections when they have greater exposure to environmental

hazards (Whittaker, Segura, & Bowler, 2005). It would appear that there is and will be *more*

concern for pressing environmental injustices among Black Americans as long as environmental

hazards continue to be disproportionately cited in Black neighborhoods. But even this leans on potentially false narratives that Black Americans are more concerned with other social needs, and therefore mainstream environmental concerns would take less priority (Mohai, 2003). Polling data and studies in ethnic differences in environmental attitudes and behaviors simply do not align with this perspective.

Black Environmentalism is Underrepresented

Black concern and involvement in environmental issues continues to be underestimated in research and lay conversations, and underrepresented in organizations and their constituencies (Pearson et al., 2018). Dr. Dorceta Taylor of Yale University has developed a reporting procedure on diversity in environmental organizations (2018). Her work has made more transparent the diversity of more than two thousand environmental nonprofits since 2014. Black Americans do not make up a proportionate membership of or employment in environmental organizations. In 2018, Taylor found that "whites comprised more than 80% of the board members of the groups studied. Whites constituted more than 85% of the staff of environmental nonprofits" (p. 1). At present, there remains issues with diversity in mainstream environmentalism and mainstream organizations, which furthers a de-centering of the priorities of people of color and those directly affected by environmental hazards.

Black Americans, those who are most likely to be affected by environmental hazards in the United States, are involved in environmental issues to the same or more degree than white constituents. Yet, a narrative and a reality based on organizational diversity has persisted that Black Americans are not participating or do not want to participate in environmental efforts. This narrative may lead to mainstream environmentalists decentering the needs of Black communities and to refuse to engage Black Americans in environmentalist organizing. Critical race theory

would suggest that the way that environmental behaviors are conceptualized, and therefore in some way defining who is and is not an environmentalist, even in its attempts to be objective, have been racialized. It is possible that it does not meaningfully include the experiences of Black environmentalists, and if not critiqued and adjusted, the research will perpetuate these misrepresentations.

Informed by a critical race perspective, especially that racism is endemic, and therefore our knowledge research measures are also touched by racism, this study explores what it means to be pro-environmental among Black environmentalists/environmental justice advocates. "Advocacy and scholarship about protecting communities of color are rarely called environmentalism because those communities are still largely not considered places worthy of protection by environmentalists" (Purifoy, 2018). A critical race perspective opens up an opportunity to understand the existing research in a different way, and to expand the construct of pro-environmental to include Black contributions to environmentalism.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will present the methodology for this study in detail. The study aims and research questions will be reiterated. The transformative exploratory design will be explained and its appropriateness for the research question will be discussed. The procedures used for the study, including procedures for Institutional Review, recruitment, data collection and data storage are outlined. Finally, the procedures for coding and data analysis are detailed. Throughout the chapter, reflexive quotes taken from the qualitative journal that I kept throughout the process can be found in italics and block formatting. These reflexive quotes are critical reflections on the process and procedures, including reflections on the decisions to pivot during the process of the study. These quotes are interwoven to emphasize how these influenced methodological decisions congruent with the critical paradigm.

Study Aims

This study aims to expand upon current understandings of the construct of pro-environmental behavior when centering work of Black environmentalists. To that end, this study explores the meaning of pro-environmental behaviors with Black environmentalists in Virginia.

Research Questions

This is an exploratory study, and the questions below reflect that exploratory nature. The guiding line of inquiry that underscores this study is: how does what we know about pro-environmental behaviors and its relevance in diverse samples augment our current understanding of pro-environmental behaviors for anyone, in environmental justice contexts and beyond? It is an exploratory line of inquiry, given what little is known about pro-environmental behaviors in diverse samples.

As a starting place for this line of inquiry, the primary and exploratory question in the current study is: in a sample of Black environmentalists in Virginia, what does it mean to be pro-environmental?

Methods

This study uses an exploratory qualitative design and Critical Race Theory to guide the research questions, sample selection, and to guide an analysis of the findings. Ten Black environmental justice advocates and organizers were interviewed using semi-structured interviews to explore pro-environmental behaviors and the meaning of being pro-environmental in an environmental justice context. This design and the procedures are discussed in more detail below.

Transformative Exploratory Qualitative Design

The study integrated a critical and transformative approach with the exploratory qualitative design to meet the aims and answer the research question. In the critical paradigm of research, the ontological perspective is that historical, social, and political factors have structured reality and to know these is to understand the present (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Epistemologically, what can be known happens in the interaction between the researcher and the participant. The identities of the researcher and the identities of the participant shape what is and can be known. The critical approach to research is reflected in the approach to the literature, the theoretical orientation, the reflexivity and journaling throughout the study, the questions, and in the analysis approach. Critical studies can also be transformative, as this one is. In the transformative framework, findings are expected to be useful in transforming current understandings of practice, or to guide social change or advocacy (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003; Greene, 2007).

An exploratory qualitative design is an inductive approach to knowledge building, where the meaning of a phenomenon is explored when little about it is known (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The study is informed by a critical race theoretical orientation, which posits that racism is endemic and influences policies and practices intentionally and unintentionally (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefanic, 2010). One way to combat anti-Black racism is to amplify Black voices and experiences. An exploration dedicated to centering the voices of Black environmentalists when it is suspected that these voices have been excluded in the literature and in practice reflects the critical race and exploratory nature of this study.

Since this study is both transformative and exploratory, it is expected that by knowing more about what it means to be pro-environmental among Black participants, it could transform lay and scholarly perceptions of Black environmental engagement and potentially alter practice within environmental spaces. Centering the experiences and contributions of Black environmental justice organizers and activists has the potential to transform what we know about what it means to be pro-environmental and the ways that environmentalists and environmental justice organizers and advocates can work to further advance social movement building.

IRB Approval and Amendments

VCU IRB (IRB: HM20016021) approved this study as exempt. An amendment to the IRB submission was submitted to include an incentive for participants as a part of the compensation plan; the IRB approved this amendment on January 21, 2020. At the request of the IRB, the approved data handling and collection protocol was again amended on March 27, 2020 to include COVID-19 Contingency Protocol changes. The severity of COVID-19 led to restrictions on in-person interviews. Upon approval of the amendment, the study resumed with virtual interviews.

Recruitment

Recruitment began upon initial approval by the IRB. To recruit the sample to meet these aims, two non-probability sampling procedures were used: purposive and snowball sampling. Both sampling procedures are driven by the stated purpose of the research and allow the selection of participants driven by a targeted set of criteria to ensure appropriate inclusion in the study (Drake & Jonson-Reid, 2008). Participants were purposively recruited based on the following criteria:

- Aged 18 or older

- Identifying as Black/African-American.

- Engaged in environmental work in Virginia. Engagement was defined as action-based responses to environmental issues and/or hazards.

Using the template approved by the IRB, potential participants were emailed with the purpose and requirements for participation in the study. Prior to participation in the study, potential participants were briefed on the participant criteria and asked if they met each piece of the criteria. Participants were affirmed to be self-identified Black/African-American adults (aged 18 and older) engaging environmental work in Virginia. The following reflexive quote captures researcher positionality in relation to the participants.

> *I have previous work experience in environmental spaces in Virginia, although not extensive. At the time of this study, I was a white student researcher and a faculty member at VCU. I position myself in this way because when doing recruitment of Black participants, I was aware of these identities.*

> *As a white person guided by Critical Race Theory and one who is leaning into anti-racist practice and research, I felt both an obligation to prioritize and center the voices and*

experiences of Black environmentalists as well as a sense of interloping. I was aware that

I might be rejected based on my identity and that I was committed to emphasizing full

transparency in the research process.

As a researcher working with Black participants, I was also aware of the fully warranted

mistrust that some Black communities hold in regard to participating in research. I felt

the weight of the Tuskegee Study, even though I am not conducting medical research. I

felt the ache to do right. This paralyzed me at times, causing me to delay recruitment

until the process was perfected; however, it also emboldened me to make decisions about

recruitment that prioritized respect for potential participants.

In response, decisions about the study were made in an attempt to go above what is the bare minimum in an effort to protect and respect participants. Potential participants were provided with an Information Sheet on the study. This phase of the research had exempt status, where consent was not required, however participants were asked to consider their participation through reading the Information Sheet and/or in discussion with the researcher. Participants were asked to acknowledge their receipt and understanding of the study with a name, date, and signature on the Information Sheet.

This initial recruitment yielded six participants. Following interviews with these recruited participants, snowball sampling was used; current participants were asked to identify others who may be eligible for the study. The contact information for the researcher was provided. This process yielded an additional four participants. After ten interviews, saturation was suspected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Further, the snowball procedures yielded previously recruited participants and an additional recruitment push yielded no additional participants; therefore, recruitment was halted.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of one-hour interviews with participants either in person or over video. The format of semi structured interviews allowed for the exploration of the meaning of environment, the ways that participants are engaging in the environment, and what it means among Black environmentalists to be pro-environmental. The interview template is provided in the Appendix. Each participant gave their consent for the interviews to be audio recorded. Notes were documented in situ, and referenced during transcription and in the analysis. Participants were provided with a $20 incentive to participate in the interview which was provided from the award of the Robin McKinney Dissertation Honor Fund. Throughout the study, emergent reflections were documented in a reflexive journal. This journal was used over the course of the study for record keeping and then reviewed during data analysis. Audio recordings, interview transcriptions, notes, signed information sheets, and confirmation receipts of payment were all stored in RedCap, and were only accessible to the researchers.

Critical Reflections on Ethical Research in Unprecedented Times

The intended design for this project was a sequential transformative mixed methods design. In this type of design, the findings from the first phase inform the development of the second phase. The first phase was initially intended to be an exploratory qualitative design which would feed the questions and data collection in a second, quantitative. In a third phase, the data would be analyzed together. However, the events that unfolded in 2020-21 led to an alteration of the design because of an ethical obligation to not inflict undue harm. This kind of alteration is compatible with emergent approaches to design where the researcher remains open to change based on what is happening inside of the study or in the study's context (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008; Pailthorpe, 2017).

In March 2020, the United States went into various phases of lockdown amidst the coronavirus outbreaks. All of the new IRB protocol for research in the time of a pandemic were followed; the IRB application was amended twice and all interviews were continued online. In May 2020, George Perry Floyd Jr., a 46-year-old Black man from Minnesota was killed by a police officer kneeling on Floyd's neck. This sparked national outcry and protest against police brutality, and subsequently police responded with more brutality. In Richmond, Virginia, altercations between police officers and protesters continued for months. Activists from all sectors were being called in to help with community organizing in the wake of Floyd's murder.

In the United States, Black people are disproportionately contracting and dying from coronavirus (The Covid Tracking Project, 2020) and are significantly more likely to be killed by police than white people (Edwards, Lee, & Esposito, 2019). Black people are also the focus participants of this study. The convergence of these three facts left me, as the researcher wondering what the right next move was during data collection over the course of the pandemic and over the course of the summer of 2020. During the analysis phase, I reached out to my dissertation chair and committee, and in consultation with them, I decided to not move into a quantitative phase. The qualitative phase was underway and completed during the summer of 2020, but to continue on to do more recruitment of Black participants, especially those who are active in social movements during a time when that energy is coursing elsewhere did not seem ethical.

In response to these exogenous events and their impact on study recruitment, as well as out of respect for the work of participants during this time outside of the study and with these things weighed against the value of the research, the researcher convened the dissertation committee to discuss possible next steps. Convening after the close of the first qualitative phase

was congruent with the mixed methods design since it was sequential, and it was anticipated that the nature of the second phase would not be fully known until the first phase was complete. Deciding on the next step was not an easy decision, making it important to consult with the full committee. The following reflexive quote captures this uneasiness and the range of options for moving forward.

> *I went back and forth on what to do in response to the events that unfolded in 2020 as a researcher who also lives in Virginia, and who sees participants as more than research subjects. As a researcher, I knew that I could pause the research and return to recruitment when the world felt more stable. Or I could take the data that I had collected at that point and push forward into a quantitative phase, knowing that the work was not fully developed and would be limited by that. Or I could have pivoted and iterated with another qualitative phase with the same participants but with new research questions based on what had come about in the first phase for deeper understanding.*

In consultation with the committee, the study continued on using the data that were already collected. The study was amended to include an additional thematic analysis and member checking to further investigation the themes emerging in the data to support the initial research question. This meant that no additional participants were recruited; however, participants were asked to engage in member checking where they would become part of the analysis process while reviewing and reporting on the synthesized findings. The coding and data analysis procedures are described in detail in the next section.

Coding and Data Analysis

The ten interviews were transcribed verbatim and cleaned to remove typographical errors and utterances unrelated to the content of the interview. The transcriptions were stored in

RedCap, and then imported into MAXQDA (Verbi Software, 2019) to be analyzed using two analysis procedures: directed content analysis and thematic analysis. Directed content analysis was used to analyze the data for specific pro-environmental behaviors, which were then categorized to present the findings. Thematic analysis was used to uncover themes in the data that gave more context to the initial research question.

Directed Content Analysis

Directed content analysis begins with a framework and mostly collects units based on this constraint. However, in directed content analysis, it is not uncommon to expand or move beyond that framework. The findings from this type of analysis would support or not support elements of a theory or construct and potentially expand upon existing dimensions each (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Sandelowski, 2010). For this study, the constraint was to code for pro-environmental behaviors, with the intent of expanding on existing dimensions of what is known about pro-environmental behaviors. Directed content analysis was also used to explore meanings of select constructs in this sample: environment and environmental justice.

DCA begins with initial coding, coding units relevant to pro-environmental behaviors. Units were also coded as they related to the constructs of environmentalism and environmental justice. Initial coding in directed content analysis is more structured than conventional content analysis which begins with open coding (Esterberg, 2002; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). However, at this stage, any units that did not fit into the above were open coded with a new code.

Once all of the units were coded, the initial codes were reviewed and refined through a focused coding process. Given the breadth of behaviors that were conceptualized in this dataset, the researcher used focused coding to collapse the codes into meaningful categories of behaviors and re-coded units based on these categories: personal, interpersonal, community, education,

policy, aspirational behaviors, and anti-environmental behaviors. The constructs of environmental and environmental justice were also expanded to include perceptions of relationships between the two.

Thematic Analysis

Several units that were open coded did not readily fit in the categories of pro-environmental behaviors, environmentalism and environmental justice. Thematic analysis was used in this study to address these units, which give a richer description and understanding of the specific work being done in this sample and more context to what it means to be pro-environmental beyond the specific behaviors. Thematic analysis is a descriptive and interpretive approach; the process for thematic analysis is more inductive than directed content analysis, which is reading the transcripts, open coding the units, and anticipating patterns to develop in the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The first pass of open and inductive coding was completed during the directed content analysis. These inductive codes were then refined with another pass of focused coding, and further refined with a review of the literature and qualitative journal. The review of the literature and the qualitative journal provided additional insights that were memo-ed into the transcripts. This produced the final list of codes. Each of these codes received a memo with a description of the code, each unit was categorized using the final list of codes for consistency and clarity.

After coding the data through multiple passes, several relationships between the codes became clear. The literature review in *Chapter 2* provided theoretical and empirical context for final themes in the thematic analysis. Thematic analysis permits the researcher to be more responsive to the context of the interviews (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and to be aware of the

external influencing factors on the data and is able to interpret the themes based on this information (Creswell, 2007; Joffe & Yardley, 2004).

Presenting the Analysis

The results of the Directed Content Analysis are deduced from *a priori* assumptions in the literature, which lent a more straightforward write up of the findings. The findings were presented by ecological categories of the pro-environmental behaviors as well as writing up the analysis of the constructs and the relationships between them in the dataset. This analysis produced a rich understanding of the breadth of pro-environmental behaviors and of environmental justice. The results of the thematic analysis required more time for the patterns to develop in the data. To lend more credibility to the way the themes and relationships were conceptualized, the information from member checks (described in more detail below) was used to affirm and clarify.

Credibility

During the study, the researcher took several steps to ensure the study's credibility and trustworthiness especially in the areas of qualitative reflexivity, question development, design, data collection and analysis. Further, the researcher used peer debriefing throughout the study to reflect on the researcher process and member checking to validate and further dialogue about the content of the findings with participants.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the process of recognizing the varying socio-political identities, contexts, and power relationships, between the researcher and participants (Berger, 2015; Dodgson, 2019; Teh & Lek, 2018). Reflexivity builds trustworthiness in the study (Teh & Lek, 2018). Congruent with the critical paradigm of research, the researcher documented reflections on socio-political

identity, context, and power in a qualitative journal throughout the study and in peer debriefing

on the process (discussed more below). Some of those reflections have been included throughout

this chapter, as well as in *Chapter 5: Discussion.* The following reflexive quote demonstrates the

way that reflexivity can guide the literature review and lead to more relevant research questions

development and design.

> *I was chronically aware that I was a white researcher investigating the experiences of*
>
> *Black participants. Critical Race Theory and questioning my own white gaze on*
>
> *empirical studies of environmental engagement led me to also ask "Who is not being*
>
> *represented in these studies?" The evident absence of Black experiences with pro-*
>
> *environmental behaviors calls me to adopt a Critical Race lens as I continue to search*
>
> *the literature for Black environmentalism. What do we know and why is there so much we*
>
> *don't know? Where are the voices of Black environmentalists? Could it be that the very*
>
> *construct of pro-environmental is different? Does this construct measure what we think*
>
> *we're measuring? Is the current idea of 'pro-environmental' even relevant in Black*
>
> *environmentalism?*

Reflexivity makes apparent what is guiding the decision points in the research (Cannella, Pérez,

& Pasque 2015). In the critical paradigm of research, reflexivity makes obvious the socio,

political, identities, contexts, and power in the research study and in the relationship between the

researcher and participants.

Emergence

Emergence is the practice of allowing elements unanticipated by the researcher to

develop in the study, and even welcoming them (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2008; Pailthorpe,

2017). When combined with reflexivity on the researcher's social identity and the identities of

the participants, emergence can be a powerful tool leading to more trustworthiness of the study. Emergence lends further validity, or accuracy as understood by the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2007), when used to remain open to what is salient to the participants as opposed to centering the lens of the researcher (DeVellis, 2012). The following reflexive quote reflects the importance of emergence in this study.

> *Emergence is a key practice that I, as a white researcher, needed to use to ensure that the experiences of participants were centered. Remaining open to emergence is work and takes intention. There is pressure to set your path and to continue onto it regardless. This is positivism. This is white supremacy. This is research hierarchy and the expectation that we can tell the future and can control knowledge. This is* a priori. *Emergence asks me to be open to not knowing, but wide awake and responsive.*

The line of inquiry led to decisions about the design, data collection and data analysis. In the design, the researcher was also open to emergence in response to exogenous events. Even in the face of having to truncate the design, the research questions did not change. In data analysis, reflexive emergence was used in the thematic analysis as well as in the exploratory design. The researcher created the questions with the *a priori* assumption that there would be pro-environmental behaviors exhibited in this sample, however, the researcher also remained open to potential emergence with theoretical and study relevance of other themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hesse-Biber, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Pailthorpe, 2017), which allowed for deeper context and meaning to also emerge in the interviews. The constructs of pro-environmental, environment, environmentalism, and environmental justice, for example, are explored based on the realities and perceptions of the participants.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing is a debriefing process conducted with someone who is not involved in the research; however, they are familiar with the methodology (Given, 2008). In the critical paradigm of research, peer debriefing can be used over the course of the study at important decision points to give more credibility to the study's direction (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Peer debriefing can be used to discuss the substance and content (Given, 2008), however the researcher decided to use member checking for substantive review in this study and used peer debriefing to review the study's process. The following reflexive quote captures the metacognitions around peer debriefing, how it is related to epistemology, and how this is, again, a conscious and critiqued decision.

> *What is knowable? And who can know it? I briefly considered adding in a peer check on the substantive piece of this project - to have an outsider, but a substantive expert, verify the findings… To say what feels true and what feels new and what feels divergent. But then what does that say about the knowledge of the participants?*
>
> *What is true to the participants is what is true. It is valid. The member check can check my own gaze, but I do not need to check the gaze of participants. I asked them, they told me, I analyzed, we dialogue on the findings, and that is sound… that is credible. I should have known. I could beat myself up about almost making a decision that would be a threat to centering the voice of participants. Instead, I will take this moment to reflect on my growth. I am growing. Growth looks like undoing positivism that is socialized into me and my work. Growth looks like leaning into a critical perspective and running more towards what is sound. What is whole. Critical perspective doesn't have its own tools, necessarily, but instead is a perspective that guides methodological decisions. I choose voice and centering experience of participants, and that means limiting the peer*

debriefing to a check on my own gaze and decisions. It's a sounding board, and another

eye on my process. It builds my confidence in my process, so I can stand confidently

behind these findings. That is credibility. I am grateful for that.

There were three distinct opportunities for peer debriefing that happened throughout the study. The first was formative debriefing throughout the study with the dissertation chair. This was especially useful in debriefing and checking the soundness of the process of recruitment, development of the research question, design changes, and analysis decisions. The second opportunity was following the summer of 2020, when the dissertation committee was reconvened to debrief on the process up to that point, and the decision point which led to truncating the study design.

The final opportunity for peer debriefing was the most formal review and was summative. The researcher designated a peer debriefer to review the methodological approach and review the credibility and trustworthiness of the study after the data analysis was completed. The peer debriefer also reviewed the findings and the summary for the voice of the researcher, and places where the researcher may have decentered participant voices. The peer debriefer offered comments and questions that increased the confidence that the findings were indeed participant led and that also informed the discussion of the limitations of the study. The opportunities to further center participant voice (i.e., with the addition of a quote) were incorporated into *Chapter 4: Findings* and the comments on the methodological approach were incorporated into the discussions throughout *Chapter 5: Discussion*.

Member Checking

A study fully oriented in the critical paradigm would have involved collaboration of participants in the development of the research question, design of the study, data collection and

analysis to ensure critical credibility. The intention is to "[build] the participant's view into the study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 128). In the absence of co-researchers, this study includes member checking to further validate the findings. There are conflicting perspectives on the benefits and drawbacks of member checking. The benefits are that it provides an opportunity for participants to review the findings, correct any errors, and share any disagreements before the findings are finalized (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The drawbacks to member checking vary, but generally include debates over who is the expert (researcher and participant), different motivations between researchers and participants, and deficit perspectives of the capabilities of participants to understand the research (Birt et al., 2016; Sandelowski, 1993). However, when participants are viewed as competent and critical collaborators on the findings, these drawbacks are not as problematic or become irrelevant. The following reflexive quote encapsulates the tensions in using member checking and how it relates to the nature of knowledge in the critical paradigm.

> *I find no threat to my status or expertise or training by incorporating what I have learned in the member check. We are building knowledge together, and ultimately, I am a vessel to coalesce and thematize these perspectives. Consent is evolving, and so corrections are continually possible. I am grateful that participants trusted me enough to share so deeply. It is the very least that I can do to offer to continue the dialogue. What I am seeing in the data is not the end. I welcome participants to continue the dialogue.*

In the critical paradigm of research, knowledge is dialogic and transformational (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this way, member checking as a way to further a dialogue about the findings can be accepted as a part of critical research, building adding credibility and limiting any over-reach of the researchers' voice (Harvey, 2015). Member checking attends to issues of validity by

assessing the accuracy and any misrepresentation, but it also furthers the dialogue between researcher and participant where new knowledge can be created (Harvey, 2015; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this study, the affirmation, disagreements and opportunities for further clarification and discovery were incorporated into the analysis to further enhance participant voice and view in the study's findings. The following reflexive quote captures the critical importance of member checking.

> *Member checking allows me to check my own white researcher gaze. As a white researcher, I will center the perspectives and experiences of Black environmentalists. I felt and feel a responsibility to use my power as a researcher to elevate the experiences of Black environmentalists in the current literature and to represent the knowledge and perceptions of Black participants accurately and critically.*

The findings from the analysis were synthesized and summarized, and the participants who agreed to a follow up were contacted for an opportunity to review the summarized findings. During the member check, the researcher narrated the summarized findings and used review comments to document all affirmations, clarifications, and disagreements. Participants were asked:

- What do you agree with and affirm?

- What do you disagree with?

- What are points that need further clarification?

- Where can you envision these findings being disseminated?

The confirmations, divergences, and points of clarification were verified in the dataset, and are documented at the end of *Chapter 4: Findings*. In the critical paradigm of research, findings should have an action stimulus (Guba & Lincoln, 1994); therefore, the member

checking interview closed by asking participants about where they could see these findings being disseminated as a next step. These are documented in *Chapter 5: Discussion.*

Conclusion

This chapter described the methodological approach to the study in detail. The purpose, aims, and research questions were outlined and the study design and procedures for IRB, recruitment, data collection and analysis procedures were discussed in detail. Special attention was given to the role of credibility in this study as well as critical reflections on important decision points, which were woven throughout. The next chapter, *Chapter 4: Findings,* will present the results of the study as related to the research question.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the study based on the research question: in a sample of Black environmentalists in Virginia, what does it mean to be pro-environmental? The findings on the meaning of the environment, comparing the different ways that environmentalism and environmental justice are in relationship with one another, and identifying the breadth of pro-environmental behaviors represented in this sample are presented in detail. The findings from additional thematic analysis are presented as well which illuminate the context of Black pro-environmental engagement. The themes related to the past, present, and future of Black visibility in environmental spaces are presented and *supporting Black environmental visibility* is framed as a critical pro-environmental behavior.

About the Participants

What became clear throughout the analysis of the findings is that this is not a strictly outsiders' vantage point. Yes, this is the perspective of people who are employed or have been employed at some time to do this work; participants also engage in environmental issues outside of their employ. Further, participants are both insiders and outsiders which becomes apparent when they define themselves as part of the communities with whom they work. Although many of the participants engage in pro-environmental behaviors for their job as activists, organizers, and advocates, participants shared their experiences using the terms "us" and "we" when describing the people who were affected by environmental hazards and those who benefit from pro-environmental behaviors.

Each participant had a reason for caring about pro-environmental work. Some participants grew up being *"environmental enthusiast[s] (P8)"* and others had a more general calling towards social justice that was taught to them by their elders and those that came before

them. Another motivator was the impact of seeing government non-response or a response that prioritizes profit over people, especially for Black people in crises at a local and national level. Many participants grew up around environmental hazards like coal processing plants and flooding, and thought that the daily effects of those things were normal; only later in life did they put words to it as environmental hazards and an injustice since it was in a majority Black neighborhood.

Children as a Motivator

Several participants have children who were affected by environmental hazards and/or are motivated by children, generally, and their futures. Participants see how pollution affects children's health. For example, one participant shared a major motivation for engaging in pro-environmental behavior was that *"My children's lives were stolen from them because corporations and our government was putting people over profit (P2)."* Children represent innocence; to participants, it is unconscionable that corporations and governments would act irresponsibly in a way that affects children. Advocating for children's future is *"hard to argue with (P7)."* Children are also the locus of change: if you can get them to learn about caring for the environment and each other as early as kindergarten, for example, "*this will become second nature to them, and they'll grow up doing the things that are earth friendly (P2)."*

Environment, Environmentalism, and Environmental Justice

This section opens with the synthesized findings on what the boundaries of the environment are, which is a key to understanding the breadth of environmental justice and how it (potentially) differs from environmentalism. What was clear in the literature review was that there are many and varied definitions of the environment, without clear agreement on what is included. There are still myriad and divergent definitions of the environment, environmentalism,

and environmental justice, however the following attempts to describe these constructs in the words of participants and to demonstrate how they are connected through analysis.

Environment

Participants conceptualize the definition of ***environment*** to include the socio-political environment, not just the natural or built environment. This shift in thinking also shifts the locus of what and "*who is it really that we're fighting for (P9)."* When thinking about the boundaries of the environment *"a big piece of it is the people aspect (P9)."* The environment is expansive and inclusive; it includes the people, the built, the social, the historical, and the natural.

Because many participants have experiences in mainstream environmental spaces or came to environmental justice through mainstream environmentalism, they are very familiar with the conserve and preserve perspectives, however these ideas are reimagined to be about conserving and preserving human populations that are suffering instead of conserving and preserving natural resources and green spaces for recreation. For one participant, the shift seems almost completely off of the natural environment and the Earth, and the environment: *"It's not a matter of us hurting the planet... We want to be the stewards at the end of the day. We're really killing ourselves (P1)."*

Environmental Justice

Participants conceptualize the definition of ***environmental justice*** to mean that all people would have access to healthy environments. Participants emphasized that environmental justice could be better characterized as environmental injustice, since achieving environmental justice means that the world will look completely different than it does now. Achieving environmental justice would mean an end to environmental discrimination based on race and class, especially when it comes to being able to live in a healthy environment. "*Everybody deserves to live in a*

place that their environment is healthy and nurturing (P6)," but the placement of environmental

burdens falls along race and income lines where the financially "poorest and brownest"

neighborhoods have more of the burdens and less of the benefits (like vibrant parks or tree

plantings).

Among participants, the environment is a more expansive concept: a natural-socio-

political phenomenon, and environmental justice also carries a strong natural-socio-political goal

of working towards all forms of justice: "*the natural, the cultural, socio economic, and political*

portions of justice (P5)." Environmental justice goals are also expansive and shared across a

variety of intersections including public health, health conditions/healthcare, wealth building,

transportation, criminal justice, poverty, climate refugees, race, class, gender, and ableism.

Environmentalism versus Environmental Justice

Participants shared a variety of ways that environmentalism and environmental justice are

related. This variety is represented as it is in the interviews, and the agreement among

participants is that there is noticeable tension. For some, there was no difference between

environmentalism and environmental justice; they are the same and this work is to preserve and

conserve wildlife and people equally. For example, *"ultimately, we are talking about how we*

want to live as human beings and how we want to be … And so that's why I don't see that there is

a difference to address an environmental impact (P8)." Ideally, when these two movements

work together, they will reach more sustainable solutions quicker. For others, they are different,

but intertwined with complimentary goals, and needing to be able to coexist. They were also

described as on parallel tracks and starting to merge. Others saw them as in conflict, where *"just*

talking about recycling is an injustice to communities that are dealing with high levels of air

pollution (P3)." And in environmental justice, people outweigh the environment. Participants

identified a tension in environmentalism, where environmentalists are persistent around their goals, however environmentalism can be too solution focused. If you parachute into communities with your own solutions, you will lose the voice of the community members you are trying to help.

Some participants saw the differences between mainstream environmentalism and environmental justice as racialized. *"I think one of the big differences between mainstream environmental organizations-- it's a lot of, you know, middle class, normally white folks and their priorities (P10)."* The problems and solutions defined in mainstream environmentalism attract white people and the priorities of mainstream environmentalism benefit white people more than the problems, solutions and priorities of environmental justice. Mainstream environmental organizations do not recognize that *"the environment, you know belongs to all of us and it's a collective effort if it's going to get better"* which includes prioritizing *"specifically communities of color that are more impacted by environmental instances than others (P3)."* Participants perceive that this oversight is possible because of environmental racism, which is the idea that Black lives are insignificant to white people who make up the leadership and constituencies of mainstream environmental organizations.

EJ Communities

People who are affected by environmental hazards disproportionately (frequently referred to as ***environmental justice communities*** or ***EJ communities*** by participants) are defined across a range of identities, and even the all-inclusive *"all of us" (P2)*. Participants emphasized that EJ communities were composed of people on the margins of society, communities of color, Black communities, and *"everybody who is not rich (P9)."* This is not considered a matter of

coincidence, but something that is purposeful and racialized. For example, participants shared that past instances of injustices *"never would have happened in a white neighborhood (P8)."*

The Issues

Participants are concerned with a breadth of issues; the issues specifically mentioned in the interviews are summarized in Table 1. When people, history, the social environment, and politics are considered as an integral part of the environment (as discussed above), then the way that environmental issues are defined and solutions are approached also expands and becomes more holistic. Participants indicated that issues in the environment are affected by history, politics, and greed, and are therefore not neutral or just status quo. "*Even though you know, sea level rise might be a neutral issue to some degree, but when you get into the history of why sea levels rise in the environment, climate change, and all of that, you're still going back to capitalism and greed (P8)."*

Many issues that came up in the interviews relate to fossil fuel infrastructure and the way that it affects Black people and communities. As one participant stated, working on fossil fuel "*as a broad goal will give you flexibility to work on pipelines in one community and coal ash pits in another community (P4)."* These issues are referred to as environmental hazards. The historical and imminent danger of these hazards to Black communities combined with the multitude of issues leads to serious and competing priorities; "w*hether that be education, housing, economics, clean air, clean water, all of that is an environmental aspect (P2)."* Not only does this make working in this realm complex because there are so many issues to address, but those working on these issues may not all agree.

Table 1

Environmental Issues

Coal	Superfund Sites
Coal Ash	Pipelines
Solar Panels	Climate Change
Recycling Bins	Lead
Electric Buses	Mold
Resisting Fossil Fuel Infrastructure	Landfills
Pipelines	Distribution Centers
Divesting in Fossil Fuel Infrastructure	Gas Fire Plant
Access to Clean Water	Outdoor Access
Compressor Stations	Open Space/Parks
Incinerators	Kids' Health

Intersectional Issues

Existing manifestations of oppression (like racism, sexism, and ableism) are exacerbated when there are climate and environmental threats as well. Further, the intersection of history, the social environment, and politics makes issues of the environment more complex to understand and complex to solve. However, it is imperative that they are addressed as these complex issues go beyond mere inconveniences. They affect the health, wealth, and long-term advancement potential of communities, and especially communities of color. These issues are, as one

participant put it, the "*physical embodiment of oppression* (P7)." The participant explains more below:

> *That's what I see when I see a new pipeline or compressor station or power plant, or, you know, when I see these things, and especially new ones ... renewable... that there weren't cleaner, safer options available. And what I've seen, even in my own community, I live four blocks away from a brand-new pipeline that was installed last year. Four blocks. In a low-income neighborhood and people who look at those stats don't generally care about people like us and so yeah you can put your pipeline there you know. And if they say anything they ever felt empowered enough to say anything, no one will listen... it's fine... no one listened to us... now it's in the ground. So, but I do see it as oppression so when I see a pipeline or we see blatant racism or we see the patriarchy is real like all of it is about oppression and I believe that the tools that I have that fight or resist fossil fuel infrastructure those same tools can be used in any part of oppression any manifestation (P7).*

Access to green spaces like recreational parks are one of the issues that can be on the environmental justice agenda. Access to green spaces give access to the natural world, and represent access to clear air and land, but it's much more than that. Public access to recreational parks and other spaces was featured heavily on the agenda of the civil rights movement and was also the site of many of the civil rights protests and demonstrations in the 1960s. Further, today, one participant explains how public spaces still play an integral role in the social fabric of the community, where people can gather to celebrate and to mourn. *"These public spaces are that place where you can gather and heal or you can gather to protest. It's the importance that community spaces-- open space-- plays in a community, in the neighborhood. And it begins to*

anchor a community, and so the more that you pay attention to the small parks, to small places

to neighborhood community parks, the more vibrant the community is, the more open the

community is, the more engaged the community is, and it's kind of a basic fabric of civic life

(P6).''

Some environmental justice issues are not obviously issues of the natural environment,

and the solutions to them also might not seem so obviously tied to issues of the natural

environment. A poignant example of this was given by a participant working in a housing project

community. The children in this community were not going to school as often as their peers,

which causes disruption in their education, but also has ramifications for childcare when the kids

are not in school and the adults have to go to work. Here the participant explains how it is

connected to natural, social, and built environment issues in her own words:

When it rains, their community's like a bowl like New Orleans, and they're surrounded

by, like, there's a school on 17 acres, a post office with a flat roof in a parking lot, and a

major intersection. And at the bottom of it, it's an open field. And then on the other side is

their community. So, between where they live and where the children go to school is this

bowl of a field. So, every time it rains, the rain from the intersection, the school and the

post office… It's a nine-foot elevation difference. Nine feet. So, I happen to be at an event

for flooding and I heard some women who sounded as if they were very frustrated,

because no one was addressing their immediate needs and I never even heard of it. So,

we talked about it and I said, Yeah, so essentially ... when it rains, they don't send their

children to school. And the school knows that so they don't charge it as an excused

absence. Because their choices are sending my kids to school wet. And this is an

elementary [school] so these are the littles...So they walk in thigh-deep water to get to

school or stay home. Well, of course, because you know, social economic factors…

they're also a poorer school. Not as well funded. In addition to that, SOLs, they, they

struggle with it meeting their SOLs. Every day they miss of instruction that puts them

further behind with their education as well. So, they are intersectional... So, what we

decided: we were kind of like, okay, so probably can't do a whole lot about the flooding.

Okay, but how do we get the kids to school dry, safe and dry? How do we do that? (P7)

The cause of social concern was related to the amount of rain that this community receives, the

way that the land was shaped, and the urban planning, development, and architectural decisions

within the surrounding community. In this example, the flooding did not become the locus of

change, but providing alternative transportation for this community's children to get to school

was the solution.

Collaboration to Achieve Environmental Justice Goals

Collaboration is a necessary component of environmental justice especially since the

issues related to environmental justice can be intersectional and expansive. Those working on

environmental justice issues can feel that they are trying to take on more issues than they can

humanly handle. *"We tried to be Superwoman and Superman and take them all (P5)."*

Coalitions, collaborations, and never working alone are ways to find overlaps and combine

efforts with people with complementary strengths. Collaboration emphasizes common humanity

across differences. "*if we start to talk about humanity, you know, we get from those things that*

divide us and start talking about the commonalities of things that join us together (P2)."

Collaboration is especially important as a way of achieving environmental justice

because silos are a tactic that is used by corporations and governments to slow down

environmental progress. One participant called silos a "trick" and instead of focusing on one or

two siloed issues, a strategy in collaboration could be to frame the issue holistically: "*we're going to make this one whole thing and we need you to do this one whole thing (P2)."* Another participant recounted being told that they were not to address sea level rise because their commission was focused on emissions and greenhouse gas. However, the participant saw how the two issues were related and one could not be addressed without the other; they were intersectional, and collaboration is a way to embrace and address the intersectionality of pro-environmental work.

The Role of Corporations and Governments

Participants cited corporations and governments as major part of the cause of environmental injustices. For example, participants noted that during the process of developing fossil fuel infrastructure, corporations are able to avoid the permitting process via *right of way* permissions, which tended to be in financially poor and Black communities. Corporations and governments are perceived to know the harmful effects of fossil fuel development, but are not perceived to be taking measures to minimize exposures to communities; safe practices are considered to be too expensive. Primarily, governments are blamed for failing to protect communities by supporting corporations' interests though policy and permitting. Cities are blamed for racist and historical urban planning practices that privilege high asset communities, and use Black communities as a "doorstep" to meet their energy/profit needs. *"Those are the communities that they pick on because they feel you don't have any economic clout or political clout or voice (P5)."*

Participants cited that corporations and governments also suppress the voices and needs of people who are directly affected by environmental hazards. Even when governments do involve communities, they are characterized as misleading and slowing down processes

intentionally for people who trusted them. When communities need information about the development happening in their neighborhoods, it can be difficult to find the right person to talk to and localities are known to not share information for people to easily understand. Further, corporations and governments have been known to use physical intimidation tactics with their constituents. *They have the public comment sessions, you know, when we would go to, to stand up and speak against the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, it was militarized. And I mean, we would almost be afraid to go in there (P5).* These sorts of tactics are abusive and exacerbate long standing mistrust between corporations, governments, and the community.

Guiding Principles

In addition to the behaviors that these environmental justice activists engage in to achieve environmental justice goals (below), there are several principles guiding their actions. These principles are sometimes formalized, and sometimes informal or emergent. The formal principles mentioned by participants were the Jemez principles and the information that came from the Green 2.0 diversity studies, both of which are well known and used in environmental spaces. The following principles listed below were conceptualized from the ten interviews. Some of them may overlap with the Jemez principles or the Green 2.0 study (and possibly others), but were not attributed as such by participants. Although the behaviors listed in the interviews were not exhaustive, the principles provide a guide for ***generativity,*** where behaviors continue to emerge from these principles as needed to achieve environmental goals.

- **Not in Anyone's Backyard (NIABY):** The desire to have power in decision-making doesn't lead someone to have the power to decide which other neighborhood the landfill goes in, but instead to work towards a future where no one lives with these threats to their health and livelihoods.

- **POC are frequently overlooked:** POC have been left out of decision making. Not only are POC overlooked in solutions, but POC are not considered as the face of environmentalism. It's not surprising that POC's needs are overlooked in environmentalism because they are overlooked in all aspects of society. As one participant said, *"We didn't really matter in the first place (P1)."* Even still, POC are and have always been advocating for their community, even if it wasn't called "environmentalism."

- **Meet People Where They Are:** Engaging with people in an exploratory way versus in a prescriptive way requires going to them and is a way to not only initially connect, but to keep people engaged in the process. When you don't meet people where they are, then you are expecting them to come to you, which can require overcoming many barriers. Not only is it about going to the community, but also making sense of the immediate needs, even if they are not on your agenda. Meeting *you* where you are with who *I* am is a powerful connection where change can happen.

- **Community Knows Best:** Experiential community knowledge is respected. If you come in with preconceived ideas and solutions, then you risk losing voices of people who experience hazards on a daily basis, and who experience environmental injustice closer and sooner than outsiders. If *community knows best*, then education can be used to empower communities to advocate on their own behalf. Community members may define goals and successes differently than the broader environmentalist community, environmental organizations, or people working in these communities.

- **Intergenerational Power Building:** Youth and elders are special groups of people who, when brought together, build a strong intergenerational power base. We have an

obligation to youth since they have been failed by the generations who have come before. Elders are respected for what they have done before, and now it's time to re-frame issues that they have been working on as environmental issues.

- **Transformational Relationships:** Relationships where you're working together and not taking more than you're given are collaborative and transformational. They take time and you have to see more than the win/end goal. Regardless, these kinds of relationships are better than transactional relationships, which happens in a lot of different areas of their life.

- **Reciprocity:** Good solutions are those that are good for the environment and are good for humans.

Pro-Environmental Behaviors

In the directed content analysis, the pro-environmental behaviors were coded into categories which appear to span across multiple ecological levels. This chapter orders the findings at these ecological levels: personal, interpersonal, community, and policy. Aspirational behaviors and anti-environmental behaviors are also included at the end of this section. Table 2 lists the breadth of behaviors that were identified in the interviews across varying ecological levels.

Table 2

Pro Environmental Behaviors Across Categories

Category	Pro-Environmental Behavior
Personal Behaviors	Sharing Knowledge, Resources, and Petitions within Personal and Social Network
	Educating Self on Environmental Issues and Hazards
	Signing Petitions Against Anti-Environmental Activities
	Personal Recycling Habits
	Driving an Eco-Friendly Car
	Walking Instead of Driving
Interpersonal	Leveraging Friendships to Encourage Action
	Relating to People Individually about Their Direct Environmental Impacts
	Relating Intersectional Connections to Environmental Issues
	1:1 Dialogue with Peers about Environmental Issues and Solutions
Community	Going to the Community Directly
	Building Relationships with People Directly Affected by Environmental Hazards
	Connecting EJ Community Members to Ongoing EJ Movements
	Building Networks and Infrastructure in Community
	Alliance Building across Groups with Different Social Locations

Building Trust

Developing Leadership	Modeling/Mentorship of Future Environmental Community Leaders
	Preparing Women for Leadership Roles in Climate Movement
	Developing Existing Leadership in Communities
	Leading from the Back
	Personal Narrative Development/Storytelling Workshops
Addressing Needs	Meeting Immediate Needs (Housing, Food, Income)
	Spiritual Care for Frontline Communities
	Neighborhood Specific Needs Assessments
Skilling Up	Developing Environmental Skills
	Recruitment and Training
	Researching, and Collecting and Analyzing Data
Participation	Participatory Data Collection
	Participatory Mapping
	Serving as Liaison Between Community and Government Leaders
	Refuting Corporate Views on Neighborhoods
	Investigating Community Non-Involvement
Education	Relating EJ to Other Known Issues
	Education Relevant to the Learner

Teaching Kids about Recycling

Sharing, Casually

Non-Prescriptive Education Tactics

DEIJ Education in Organizations

Educating white Organizations on EJ

Educating to Hold Elected Officials Accountable

Educating to Show Links Between EJ and Racial Injustice

Educating from Faith Lens

Policy		Pro-solar
	Supporting Policy Topics such as:	Holding Corporations and Governments Accountable to EJ Values
		Establishing Environmental Committees or Councils
		Creating Green Jobs
		Creating Pollution Solutions like *Cap and Trade*
		Intersectional Policies
	Improving Policy Process	Improving Accessibility to Public Comment Periods,
		Educating about Policy Solutions to Hold Corporations Accountable
		Collaborating with Black and Brown Allies on Intersectional Policy Development
Aspirational		More Support for Frontline Communities Organizing Against Fossil Fuel Infrastructure
		Raising EJ Consciousness in HBCUs Especially

	Addressing Food Justice through Gardening and Farming
	Rebalancing Tax Credit and Conservation Funding Pools
	Get GA to Declare Racism as a Public Health Crisis
	Prayer Vigils for Frontline Communities
Anti-Environmental	Not Asking "Why?"
	Having Data that is Inaccessible to Communities Who Need it
	Using Disparaging or Derogatory Language to Describe Neighborhoods
	Co-Opting the Work that Communities Have Been Doing for Decades
	Telling People "This is what is going to happen" VS Asking "How can I help you?"
	Solution-Based Organizing Where Community Voice Gets Lost

Personal Behaviors

Personal pro-environmental behaviors are personal practices that govern people's individual expressions of environmentalism. These tend to be characterized as efforts that are expected to lead to a big impact if everyone were to engage in these same pro-environmental behaviors, *"Like small personal things that, you know, hopefully everyone does it's a larger benefit* (P3)*."* Participants are not outsiders to environmental hazards, so some are living in areas affected by environmental hazards and also engaging in personal practices working to alleviate those same hazards. Examples of these personal-level behaviors are listed in Table 2 and here as well: sharing knowledge, resources, and petitions within personal and social networks, educating self on environmental hazards, signing petitions against anti-environmental activities, recycling, driving an eco-friendly car, and walking instead of driving.

Interpersonal Behaviors

Interpersonal behaviors are behaviors that advance pro-environmental goals within a dyadic relationship. The initial behavior is initiated by one individual and intended to produce and change in the way the other person thinks or acts. Interpersonal behaviors are a vehicle for change going beyond the individual: the first step is a change in the person, but after that there is a ripple effect of change in the rest of their lives, their job, and the organization where they work. *"One thing that I've been trying to do is turn that, you know, those proud feelings that they have on me into...feelings of action for them...trying to get them to understand why I'm doing what I'm doing, and want to be a part of it."* The interpersonal behaviors from the interviews are listed in Table 2.

Intersectionality

Participants reflected on their own social identities and how the intersections of their identities affect how they interact with others in this work. Participants found a source of power and connection to people in EJ communities who are also experiencing intersecting oppressions. Awareness of one's own intersectional social identities makes one more prepared and better at environmental engagement by creating a breadth of opportunities for interpersonal connection. When trying to encourage change in another individual, the initial person has to be skilled to draw that connection for why someone should care. This requires one to have insight into what matters to the other person and knowledge of how that relates to pro-environmental goals. *"I think the fact that justice is such an intersectional conversation and issue that it's one way in which you can really actually bring in people into the conversation and get them to better understand why it's important (P9)."* This understanding of intersectionality works to further

encourage the person to understand the direct impact on them and therefore to engage in change.

Community Behaviors

Community pro-environmental behaviors are those that involve going to the community, developing leadership, nurturing frontline communities in their fights against environmental injustice, building trust, skilling up, and addressing community needs. The pro-environmental community behaviors specifically mentioned in the interviews are summarized in Table 2. Community is personal, and participants frequently referred to community as a part of us/we versus referring to community as *them*. The paragraphs below discuss addressing community needs, skilling up, and building community participation in further detail.

Addressing Community Needs

When working in communities, especially those that are overburdened by other injustices, not just environmental hazards, it is part of the long-term work to identify what they need in that moment. EJ communities face many issues besides environmental issues. People have other things to attend to, and environmental issues might not appear to be a top priority. Communities are overburdened already, and participants warned against parachuting in (i.e., keeping your own goals in the forefront of your mind versus the needs of the people in front of you) as it can add to the burden of their injustices.

Meeting people where they are makes explicit the needs that come with intersections of oppression: environmental hazards are one part, but not the only thing. Reciprocally, the environment is expansive, and so in some ways, everything is actually related to environmental issues. All needs are relevant to those working to achieve environmental justice. By meeting people's immediate needs of housing, income, or food security, you are helping people to be able

to participate more fully. Participants stressed the importance of knowing to ask the question, "How can I help?" and the importance of being willing, flexible, and able to meet the community needs that arise. These pro-environmental behaviors are summarized in Table 2.

Skilling Up

Community skilling up is a part of mobilizing communities while also meeting people where they are. People who are directly affected by environmental hazards may need skilling up to be able to more fully participate and contribute to environmental justice. Pro-environmental behaviors related to skilling up include needs assessments for community capacity and relationship and trust building. Some of the needs for skilling up could be anything from working with people to get their cloud-based storage set up to planning rallies.

Data literacy, collection, and dissemination are prominent skills that were conceptualized from the interviews. These data skills support and advance other pro-environmental behaviors. Some participants believe that engaging in pro-environmental actions should not happen without using data to support it. There is a strong belief that action should be data-driven and that data is an important piece throughout all of the other parts of the process. *"We're still not quite there, because we don't exactly have the tools that we need yet in order to truly evaluate needs, and especially in EJ communities (P6)."* This can get complicated because data can be contradictory: *"it feels like wherever you turn there's different data. So, people are saying different things (P10)."* There are also tensions between those who are self-proclaimed as data-driven and those they perceive to be strictly action-oriented.

Being exposed to and possessing data is an important motivator for why one would engage in pro-environmental behaviors at any level, especially data that shows the disproportionate exposure of Black communities to environmental hazards; *"that's why research*

and data is so important...there is an issue (P8)" or maybe *"The data paints the picture that*

black people ... I mean looking at Flint, Michigan: that never would have happened in a white

neighborhood (P8)." Collecting data supports narrative building around current environmental

issues, especially for those who are otherwise marginalized. Collecting data, like through

participatory mapping and needs assessments, is an integral part of building community.

Community members that are directly affected by environmental hazards should be involved in

gathering data. The community skilling up pro-environmental behaviors are summarized in

Table 2.

Community Participation and Voice

In the realm of behaviors that achieve environmental justice goals, getting more

participation in environmental justice by those who are most affected is viewed as a vehicle for

sustainable change. Pro-environmental community participation prioritizes the voices of women,

people of color, women of color, Black voices, and the voices of those directly affected by

environmental hazards, especially hard to reach communities. One participant put it as

prioritizing the voices (and needs) of the *"[financially] poorest and brownest (P1)."* When

specific voices are prioritized so too are those experiences, needs and solutions. When people are

not meaningfully involved (listened to), there are severe consequences: "*no one listened and now*

it's [the pipeline is] in the ground (P7)." Working to ensure participation and voice gives the

community the ability to frame their own issues and lend a different insight. The pro-

environmental participation behaviors specifically mentioned in the interviews are summarized

in Table 2.

Education

  Pro-environmental education permeates the different ecological levels of the broader framework, for example, education of the self, education of others (in a close relationship), community education, and ways that education and policy advocacy are blended. These pro-environmental behaviors are summarized in [Table 2](). Pro-environmental education focuses on educating Black and Brown communities about environmental hazards whereas corporations and governments fail to educate affected communities accurately or in a timely manner. Many community members do not know of or are misled about the environmental hazards that they are currently experiencing or those that are on the way to their neighborhoods. *"A lot of those people like they didn't inform the community on what the project was. A lot of those people thought it was water pipes. a lot and you know, like some people thought it was just like feeder gas lines like that go to your house, which are way smaller. They're like two inches and this one was two feet. ...the community was really misinformed. (P4)"*. Corporations are continuing to put people in danger even when knowing what is hurting communities: *"The science is there. They know the effects of Frack gas in communities. (P8)."* The effects of the hazards and the dangers are normalized (i.e., frequent flooding and black coal soot ever present on windowsills), and therefore education helps build a critical awareness amongst people affected by these hazards.

  Educating Black communities and especially focusing on elders and young people serves to build community capacity for action by "making the masses aware" and to build a base for a bigger movement with future action and advocacy. This kind of education involves political education about how to be involved in decision making processes. Educating young people on pro-environmental behaviors like recycling is a way to get kids to care about the environment and common humanity and the effects of their choices on others early on. Recognizing and

naming environmental hazards is still in practice for elders in the communities. *"Now, we also have to, in many cases, educate our elders who aren't even aware that these are issues that they grew up and faced because although they were facing them, it wasn't necessarily framed in that manner. (P1)"* Special emphasis is placed on educating elders on local issues that affect them directly as a way to re-name these issues as part of a larger structure of oppression and justice.

Education informs and also instills hope and inspires action. Hope and action-oriented education focuses on the urgency of the issues while also thinking about life for the next generation, or 100 years in the future. Inspiring hope lessens the despair of hearing about the state of the environment: *"If you don't go a step further, they'll just go to bed and hide and say, Oh, my God, we're all gonna die. We don't do that. So, the next thing is yeah, this is climate change and you can do something about it (P7)."* Generally, there is a positive perception of people who are being educated. You can not do better until you know better. Everyone actually does have the capacity to care, but they need to be educated about, not only the problems, but to be confident in working towards solutions.

Policy

Pro-environmental behaviors include developing, advocating for, and voting on policies that alleviate environmental hazards and put the needs of marginalized people first. Some examples of these kinds of policies are included in Table 2, and also listed here: policies that are pro-solar, hold corporations and governments accountable to environmental justice, establish environmental committees or councils, create green jobs, and pollution solutions like *cap and trade*. Some of these policies, like those supporting cap and trade, divide environmentalists, where some support it and some resist it.

90

Transforming the policy process also supports environmental goals, which requires political education to build a political base of people who are directly affected by environmental hazards. This kind of education involves political education about how to be involved in decision making processes. Since having the most marginalized voices at the table is important, activists are working to improve accessibility to public comment periods, educating about holding corporations accountable, and educating on the areas where policy arenas intersect. Other policy process pro-environmental behaviors are summarized in Table 2.

Aspirational Behaviors

Several behaviors were mentioned that the participants thought were important but were not yet being enacted. Even though they were aspirational, participants saw them as valuable to achieving environmental justice goals. These aspirational behaviors have a wide range, which further supports the idea that EJ issues and therefore the solutions are intersectional and expansive. The aspirational behaviors include giving more support to frontline communities that are organizing against fossil fuel infrastructure, raising environmental justice consciousness in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), more farming and work in the food system, rebalancing tax credit and conservation funding pools, more prayer vigils, and environmental reparations.

Anti-Environmental Behaviors

Examples of anti-environmental behaviors (the opposite of pro-environmental) also came up in the interviews. Participants used these bad behaviors as examples of why they engage in a different way or how trust is lost when working with other community members and within organizations. In these critiques of others' behaviors (other organizers or organizations), their behaviors are strongly contrasted with what is known about the formal and informal guiding

principles and values that accompany the other pro-environmental behaviors above. The anti-environmental behaviors specifically mentioned in the interviews are summarized in Table 2.

Others who attempt to engage in pro-environmental behaviors, but do not do it in a transformational or sustainable way will slow down progress towards pro-environmental goals.. *"It's, in my opinion, not the correct way to like get folks to buy in to try and help be the people power you need to run these campaigns to change these policies. I think oftentimes that leads to a transactional relationship and so you're not able to have that long term power building that you need ...you're not gonna have the support of them going back and so you're always gonna have to constantly reinvent the wheel and rebuild the trust there. (P3)."* Mainstream environmental organizations are guilty of this as well; they may say that they espouse grassroots approaches and community participation, but in practice, they are supporting work that is top-down and transactional.

Critical Reflection

Participants offered reflections on the ways that they engage in pro-environmental behaviors and reflected on their self and their roles. For most participants, they see their role as providing tools and resources, and to explore the many avenues that they can use to achieve environmental justice. Many use their own identity standpoint to get people to care, which is advantageous, but also makes pro-environmental engagement very personal. *"Being... who I am has been a really great advantage for me in this work because I'm someone of a lot of other sorts of identities, which, you know, makes this work, not only a little bit challenging, but fun (P9)."*

Almost all participants noted that they have questioned the label of "environmentalist" at some point and may have rejected it all together. *"I will tell you that when people say, Oh, this is my friend. She's an environmentalist. And I'm like, yeah, that's not environmentalism (P7)."*

Others wrestle with the title. They take it on, and still struggle to reconcile past and present errs that are tied to the label of environmentalist.

> *I'm an environmentalist. I'm a conservationist. I'm a recreationalist, you know what, and I struggle with this like how can we say that we're environmentalist, and we'll go strap ourselves to a tree in front of a bulldozer and live up in a tree stand for from somewhere else in the forest to stop the pipeline, but we won't do the same thing when they want to put a mega dome in a historically black community, or they want to put in a coal fired power plant in the EJ community? We're not standing out front, chaining ourselves to the fence, "no, you ain't gonna build". How do you reconcile that? (P6)*

Although there are challenges working in this space, especially as a Black person, the participant also notes: *"I can't give up just yet (P7)."*

Reflection on pro-environmental engagement while they are doing it is an important part of a cycle of behavior-reflection-behavior again. In the midst of pro-environmental engagement, participants also engage in critical reflection on what has come before (e.g., *"What is the historic perspective of the program? ... Who's been left out from the way that we've implemented it in the past? Has there been any direct or direct damages inflicted on communities because of the way that we've operated this program? (P6)"),* on the theory of change and purpose (e.g., "*we've got to continually look at what we're doing why we're doing it... how we're doing it (P6)"),* and on progress (e.g., *"Why are we still in this position? (P7)").*

Black Visibility in Environmental Spaces

At this point in the analytic process, the breadth of the behaviors across ecological boundaries is in stark contrast to what is represented in the literature about the nature and scope of Black environmentalism. The following findings are the themes from the data that give

context to what it means to be not just pro-environmental, but pro-environmental and Black. The term **_Black visibility_** is used in the findings very intentionally. What resounded through participant interviews is not just that more Black people need to be brought into environmental spaces, but even more so that the labor of those who are already in these spaces needs to be recognized as pro-environmental.

Racism's Influence on Black Visibility in Environmental Spaces

Participants identified that environmental spaces propagate racism in a variety of ways. Endemic racism permeates spaces everywhere, so these are not new issues, however, participants expressed disappointment: microaggressions, for example, are not supposed to be here, in environmental spaces: *"You would think they wouldn't exist but they do exist (P8)."* The racial inequities in the broader world are reflected in environmental spaces as well. Racism impacts who is seen in these spaces, and shapes what is seen as legitimate environmentalism and what is not.

At present, there are very few Black people visible in environmental spaces and even less in environmental leadership. Participants expressed a range of reasons for the lack of Black visibility in environmental spaces in the present and in the past. In the present, environmental organizations fail to hire, support, and retain Black leadership; Black people are removed from environmental spaces for speaking out against mainstream environmentalism; and Black pro-environmental approaches to environmentalism are not valued in environmental spaces. In the past, environmentalism did not acknowledge people of color in their goals which was likely tied to the idea that the founders and champions of the movement have been characterized as racist.

The ways in which environmental spaces have propagated racism has influenced Black visibility in the present, shaped the past, and will continue to influence the future of Black

visibility in environmental spaces if not addressed. They are each intertwined. For example, questions about the present and future engagement of Black people in environmental spaces can be answered using the past:

> *Why aren't there more people of color engaging outdoors? Well guess what? You disenfranchised those communities from coming into those spaces, in many cases, prevented them from coming into the spaces. Then didn't create spaces for them to be able to use, and when you did, you took the money and defunded those spaces and now they look like crap and nobody goes there (P6).*

The ramifications for Black visibility in environmental spaces in the present, past, and future is discussed in more detail in the paragraphs below.

The Present

One artifact of racism is that mainstream environmental organizations fail to hire, support, and retain Black leadership and employees. Participants spoke of the way that Black people are perceived and treated within organizations, if they even exist in these spaces. In the current scope of environmental organizations in Virginia, *"none of them are Black and Brown (P2)."* The representation of Black people in environmental spaces mirrors inequities in the greater world, meaning that environmental spaces lack proportionate representation of Black environmentalists at any level, much less in organizational leadership. This participant expresses the discrepancy: *"Virginia ... has one of the highest Black populations in the country... I'm the only Black person working there (P8)."* Given the experience and education of these participants and the lack of transparency of these processes, participants speculate why this is happening: *"They don't want us to bring the grill to the yard I suppose. I have no idea what is the holdup*

besides that they just don't like Black people because what other justifications would there be? (P2)."

Further, a few participants shared that Black environmentalists are wary of joining up with mainstream environmental organizations or being outspoken about the way things are done there. Participants shared that they have noticed a pattern of removing Black employees or 'blackballing' them for speaking out or for not playing by the rules set out by the organization. To alleviate this treatment, some participants working in predominantly white environmental spaces have noticed that other Black people choose to assimilate to white professional expectations. This comes from participants who adamantly refuse to assimilate, however noting that refusing to assimilate has consequences. When Black employees refuse to assimilate, organizations and other employees feel threatened, which can create more of a backlash. One participant has given up on working with organizations altogether and is seeking other avenues for engaging in environmental change.

Participants shared that their pro-environmental approaches are not valued in environmental spaces. Many do not feel supported to do the work that they know will actually help, which is frustrating and disappointing. Some participants shared that they were hired to do one thing, for example, pro-environmental engagement at a grassroots level, but that work was not respected or actually wanted when they arrived to do that work. *"I'm like, trying to get all these organizations to help me do this, because I'm like, 'You all have the capacity, the resources, the power, to help me spread this education, because if you all want to get your goals and missions completed, this is what you'll have to do.' (P4)."* This participant is expressing the frustration that came with working in a mainstream environmental organization, and feeling that they were left to pull along an organization that did not really want to make a difference in EJ

communities, even though they are knowledgeable and have the resources to do it right. *I found that I spent most of my time sitting at my desk doing nothing, because the things that I really wanted to do, they didn't want me to do and the things that I knew that would really get the community to get on board with their goals.... they didn't really support me in it (P4)."* People with passion and ideas are being told "no" and what they are doing is not recognized as work; participants expressed that they felt untrusted for their expert contributions to the organizations' pro-environmental missions.

The Past

Participants criticized historical environmentalists for not including discussions of people, racism, and community in the priorities for their work. To participants, environmentalism characterizes the environment as neutral, so that racism, disproportionality, and hazards were not even considered to be a part of the mission of environmentalism. People of color are an afterthought in environmentalism and environmentalists will not think to stand up for Black communities as a part of their work. However, the persistent existence of racism requires a new perspective on the environment and on environmentalism, and it lends a new urgency: "*the Earth is going to be just fine. We're the ones that are going to die. Earth will heal, it will recover. It may take a few millennia, but we don't have that kind of flexibility... we got to protect the people (P7)."*

Participants provided some insight into the historical roots of the connections between environmentalism and racism. The roots of the problems in environmental justice can be traced back to historic systemic racism and racist urban planning.

> *a lot of it is historical…. along with redlining which occurred throughout much of the*
> *20th century when black folks and some Latinos knows like in the western part of the*

country, when you have communities of color, or POC, people move into more affluent

areas, there were codes written to keep them out. And they had deeds written to keep

certain areas...neighborhoods, all white. So, in many cases, you had communities who

were relegated to certain sections of different cities and within that you had a lot of times

you know, you're going to have landfills every municipality... at least every area is going

to have landfills. You're gonna have toxic waste, toxic waste sites where you got dispose

of wastes is going to have to go somewhere. So, you got to look at where it's gonna go.

And in most cases, they're going to put it where they feel like people matter the least.

(P1).

The racialized lines separating the places where communities of color are situated today and the

current distribution of environmental hazards like landfills are influenced by historical racism

and a systemic devaluing for the lives of people of color.

The way that past racism also influences present visibility of Black people in

environmental spaces is also related to the segregation of environmental benefits, not just

hazards. This is exemplified in this participant's recounting of the way that it was acceptable to

use the labor of Black Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) members to build state parks, but they

were then not allowed to fully enjoy it because of racist perceptions related to Black men and

white women.

We as a state. I mean, we had black CCC groups build Seashore State park, only to be

told that nope, this ain't a space for African Americans. And then when lawsuits were

filed by the NAACP which then Virginia court said No, you can't.... You either have to

build something comparable or you have to let them in. They ended up building a State

Park, which was a Prince Edward State Park for Negros. Now, twin Lake State Park. But

during the same time again said no we are not going to let African Americans in to

Seashore State Park which is first landing State Park down in Virginia Beach, and

actually ended up closing the park, instead of allowing integration... closed it for eight

years. When they finally reopened and it did integrate but they only allowed camping. No

swimming, because you know you can't have Black men around white women. Especially

not in bikinis. ...I mean, so, yeah, that's where we get to for today. Right. You know, it's

why we have communities, you know that can't swim or are not very good at swimming.

Right. And it's not because they didn't want to learn how to swim, it's that you didn't build

a pool in their community. Yeah. Or if there was one, they could go to it. it's much deeper

than that for me and the environmental justice movement.. (P6)"

As is evident in this example, racial stereotypes about Black people and outdoor activities are

tied to past racist beliefs about Black people. It affected the past, but also has long lasting

implications for the present.

National Big Green environmental organizations have racist founders and histories, and

while some are working to reconcile that history, others are not. One participant highlighted

evidence of this locally, where the roots of the conservation and preservation movement in the

Commonwealth of Virginia are linked back to racist founders.

Joseph Bryan. Bryan Park. Super racists. And he started the Virginia Historical Society,

and he started the predecessor to Preservation Virginia. ...whose history are we

preserving? Is it American history, is it Virginia history or is it Southern Heritage?

Because that's where we started from with the conservation and preservation movement

here in VA (P6).

Because the founders of these movements were racist, the voices and needs of BIPOC folks were not considered. *"the founders and the greatest [environmental] leaders that came up during the 70s, you know, believed in Eugenics... So, they were inherently racist. ...which kind of goes back to, you know, why certain people were left out of different conversations (P9)."*

The Future

The future of Black visibility and engagement in environmental spaces is influenced by perceptions of the priorities of the past and the perceptions of the inclusivity of the present. Racism within the movement could affect the future involvement of Black environmentalists, and Black engagement with the environment all together. Mainstream environmentalism fails to have relevance to people and communities who are affected by environmental hazards, which has an effect on the future involvement of Black environmentalists. The solutions to the environmental problems today that mainstream environmentalists propose are irrelevant to the participants and to the EJ communities that they work with. On an interpersonal level, participants expressed that white environmentalists know how to interact with an animal better than they do with a person of a different race. Having your humanity not valued makes it difficult to collaborate and find common ground with mainstream and white environmentalists, which has ramifications on building a Black constituency who will care about environmental issues.

> *2045 looms large, it's the date range where America is expected to be majority minority. I care about the environment and I care about these public spaces. And if we haven't really done the work to get EJ, Black/brown communities and disenfranchised communities engaged in the outdoors, come that time, we're gonna lose the spaces, our power structures are still gonna be in place. They're still gonna want to take advantage*

of these type of things. They're still going to want to exploit the Earth the same way, but Now we have a majority population that doesn't care about these phases. So, you know Yosemite? you're gone. Go ahead and mine it for all the minerals, because we don't care, right? So again, you're gonna lose these spaces that we care about, (P6)

Mainstream environmental organizations, for example, cater to white constituencies and their needs. Many employees are white as well and therefore, are the ones working in communities of color. White workers in Black communities may not in itself be problematic; however, given the issues with racism in the organizations, and the questioning of the approach and care to/for communities, then it becomes more problematic. The racism within the organization, and therefore in the training and support of white workers, as well as personal racism can transfer to the work that is done in communities if not addressed.

Participants identified that the treatment and lack of trust for employees affects not only Black visibility in these spaces, but also affects the abilities of mainstream environmentalism to reach EJ communities in the future by damaging their capacities and rapport with communities. Participants see that mainstream environmentalists are moving too fast for authentic education and engagement. An example of this is when organizations need grant monies to survive, need to meet grant metrics, and so they rush the community building and organizing process to the detriment of trust building. *"They think you're supposed to do one education event and move on to the next step. And it's like, no, it's like we should be focused on education for at least a year, or maybe two. And, you know, no one's willing to take that time and dedicate that time into educating community. So, then you can turn that education into action. They just want to, you know, they want to go quick because they have to meet the grant, you know, outcomes that they promised. (P4)"*

Some other examples of the ways that mainstream environmentalists fail to build rapport with communities range from supporting policy goals over community interests, lacking community representation in the organizations and in decision-making, failing to meet people where they are, and even exploiting community members. Participants do not just see this as happenstance. Participants suspect that there is something happening that is on purpose: organizations don't really care about Black and Brown communities, but say that they do. *"I hate to hear them say Black and Brown communities because I know organizationally, how they really feel (P2)"*

Supporting Black Environmental Visibility as a Pro-Environmental Behavior

Given the context of racism in environmental spaces at present, in its past, and the way that it can affect the future of Black visibility in environmental spaces, ***Supporting Black Environmental Visibility*** can be conceptualized as a pro-environmental behavior. In other words, behaviors used to support Black environmental visibility in environmental spaces become an integral part of achieving pro-environmental goals.

Participants have proposed that mainstream environmentalists can support Black visibility and recognition in environmental spaces by addressing the issues that are most visible: ending disruptive and racist behavior, hiring, supporting, and retaining Black leadership and valuing a diversity of pro-environmental approaches, especially Black pro-environmental approaches by addressing funding streams and supporting Black-led environmental organizations.

Ending Disruptive and Racist Behaviors

Participants see that it is the job of the leadership of environmental organizations to be responsible for ending disruptive and racist behavior within those organizations. Leaders hold

power and status which protects them from backlash that an individual might face when bringing attention to racist incidents. For individuals, there are risks: you could lose an organizational partner or even your job for example.

Participants emphasized that organizations have to want racism to be undone in order to make any change towards it. There is a sentiment across participants that there are a few white leaders and community partners who do want racism to be undone and are working towards it, however for others, leaving racism unaddressed protects them *"and the way that they do things, you know, you know the cultural differences... whatever the stereotypes and biases are. You know, I guess they don't want us to bring the grill to the yard I suppose (P2)."* Leaving racism unaddressed means that the way things are would not have to change, but is this enough of a justification? What else is going on here? *"I have no idea what is the holdup besides that they just don't like Black people because what other justifications would there be? (P2)"*

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Initiatives

To address racism and the impact of racism on Black employment and leadership in environmental spaces, many spaces host Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) initiatives. DEIJ initiatives can prioritize hiring of people with a diversity of identities and support trainings, for example, that advance equity and inclusion within the organization. For example, some participants have indicated that the application process for environmental spaces (organizations, task forces, collaboratives, leadership positions), are difficult to navigate and therefore select out those who are already marginalized. Being aware of this and addressing these processes internally can be the work of DEIJ.

Organizations struggle to work on internal diversity, equity, and inclusion culture shifting when there are so few Black employees, which will require them to prioritize hiring

Black employees. *"We have to look externally, ...we're never going to bring in recruits from diverse backgrounds if we haven't done the work on the ground to engage the recruits. (P6)"* However, the work is cyclical, meaning that if organizations have not worked internally to make their *"spaces welcoming to [Black] communities... well then how are they [communities] going to want to engage it? (P6)"* Working solely on DEIJ could limit efforts to address racism and the impacts of racism on Black visibility in environmental spaces.

DEIJ is also controversial among participants, as it can be seen as a way to silo the issue of racism, instead of infusing it throughout the organization and its work. Even more so, DEIJ is seen as harmful to the goal of eradicating racism, and harmful to those with marginalized identities.

> *I hate diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. I think it is a sham. I think it is an excuse to allow maltreatment to continue. We're talking about adults here that said, 'Hey, I don't know how to treat you. So please give me some time to figure it out.' Um. No, you get no time. ... And I see a lot of Black organizations and Black organizers pushing this thing. And I'm like, stop it. Stop it. But it's because they feel like they have to, and by the nature of the work you have to do if you want to survive for your organization, and it's just gross (P2).*

In this way, DEIJ can perpetuate the dehumanization of Black, Indigenous, and people of color in environmental spaces by validating the inability of some to treat people of another race or social identity with respect.

DEIJ Alternatives

As an alternative to DEIJ, participants are using their own identities to diversify spaces, creating racial reconciliation pre-requisites to participation, and instituting critical equity reviews

looking at past harm. All of these are examples of going beyond the scope of traditional DEIJ initiatives. Participants are aware of how their existence in an environmental space brings a range of identities that may or may not already be visible.

> *I applied to be on this board ...and they asked me, why did I want to do this and I was like, because you have no Black people there. .... And so, it was important for me to be able to get in there because we're not there. (P2)*

Participants are using their own Black identity to diversify environmental spaces, especially those spaces where there are no other Black people visible.

Another example of a DEIJ alternative is how reconciling racism became a requirement of participation in an environmental justice collaborative of several environmental organizations and partners. If an organization wants to join the collaborative, they have to own their racism and reconcile past incidents of racism as a requirement for participation. Reconciling racism in this way is transformative; it leads to further collaboration, which is essential to advancing pro-environmental and intersectional goals.

Another alternative to the siloing of DEIJ is to institute critical equity reviews with buy-in across the organization. Equity reviews can be used to evaluate the programs and funding within an environmental space by asking these critical questions:

> *What is the historic perspective of the program? How has this program been used and implemented? Who has been left out from the way that we've implemented it in the past? Has there been any direct or direct damages inflicted on communities because of the way that we've operated this program? (P6)*

Both reconciling racism as a requisite for collaboration and a holistic look at the historical and damaging effects of one's own programming are examples of approaches that go beyond what is typically conceptualized as the scope of DEIJ.

Funding: The Big Greens Get the Big Green

Funding makes environmental work guided by the principles above possible and sustainable. Environmental programs are often underfunded as it is, however even more so, small, Black, and less established organizations struggle to get funding. These are in opposition to the experiences of Big Green organizations as established 'brands' with long track records of funding. *"They're considered big greens and they get the "big greens," the money to go along with it. (P5)"* Funders set the agenda for what environmental issues will receive the resources needed to address them. When they require specific metrics, benchmarks, and track records from the potential projects they are going to fund, they weed out small, Black, and less established organizations, perpetually centering the priorities of larger, white-led organizations.

Participants believe that funders are the ones responsible for addressing the funding equity gap by changing the scope of funded opportunities, building funding for Black organizational development, and changing funding so that it supports "real work." Funders can prioritize underfunded priority areas, especially those that benefit Black communities. This is critical to increasing Black visibility in environmental spaces. Not only is it prioritizing the issues that affect Black communities, but it's also a tangible way of supporting Black labor in these spaces as well. If not addressed, funders are perpetuating the racism of the past.

Create and Support Black-Led Environmental Organizations and Initiatives

Participants expressed that in addition to the work that white-led organizations need to do internally to build BIPOC representation within their own walls, the environmental landscape

needs more Black-led organizations and initiatives. Black environmentalism is happening whether it is visible and recognized historically and at the present time. Several participants are working to create these spaces across the state of Virginia. Educating Black communities facilitates building a base of knowledgeable and invested Black constituents which in turn will lead to more Black-led organizations. This is a kind of movement building. The logistics of starting an organization is still an access barrier including the availability of funding for newer organizations and initiatives.

Building community is essential to building a diverse base and a Black environmentalist infrastructure and brand. Many community members are doing pro-environmental work, but they're not calling it anything that's related to the environment; it's just being a good neighbor or elder, for example. So, part of building a Black environmentalist brand is building and mobilizing Black community members, meeting people where they are, skilling up, and ultimately supporting Black community participation and voice in environmental spaces, bringing environmental education into the community, and re-naming everyday hazards as "environmental injustice."

Success

There are a variety of indicators of success demonstrating improvements in Black visibility in environmental spaces, including that racism is improving (i.e., around microaggressions), seeing more Black environmentalists in different levels of environmental organizations, getting more media exposure, and noticing a changing political landscape. Overall, however, participants emphasized that the progress is slow and small (i.e., microsuccesses), but that slow and small change is also transformative and sustainable.

Member Checking

All of the participants were invited to participate in member checking. As of the writing of this chapter, the findings were checked with seven of the ten participants in the study. The major themes of the member check are addressed here. The first section presented was ***About the Participants.*** The seven participants shared additional demographic information and thought it was important for them and other people who read these findings to understand the range of social locations and identities of who is participating. Those are included in Table 3.

Table 3

Member Checking Demographics

Gender Identity	
Man	1
Woman	6
Ages	29, 29, 39 (M), 49, 42, 60, 65
Other identities	LGBTQ
	Virginia-native
	From Newport News
	Single parent
	Mixed race
	Human
	Cis-gender
	Mother
	Leader

Participants also affirmed that ***corporations and governments*** are both part of creating the issues laid out in the findings and clarified that they are working together as well. One provides the capital (corporations) and one gives the permits (governments). One participant clarified that in their experience, there are some governments that are doing the right thing, whereas in the ten interviews, this was not mentioned. This nuance is something worth investigating. This may also relate to the various microsuccesses in environmental spaces, which were not fully articulated in the member checks, but were included in the full write up.

Participants affirmed the use of the term ***visibility*** versus focusing on solely increasing Black people in the space. There *are* Black people doing pro-environmental work and that labor is not recognized. One member connected that Black visibility has to be transformative instead of tokenizing, similar to the way that the guiding principles emphasize transformative relationships. A few members amplified that Black communities are not the only ones lacking visibility in environmental spaces. The labor of Indigenous people in environmental spaces is also going unrecognized.

As evidenced in member checking, there are still individual discrepancies in identifying as environmentalists and what the boundaries of the environment are. Members reiterated their own positions in member checks on each, which is worth noting; however, the tensions were documented in the original analysis. Intentional investigation into the interplay between individual environmental identity and collective identity may be warranted (and is also discussed in Chapter 5: Discussion).

Members affirmed that building a Black brand of environmentalism is critical to addressing Black visibility in environmental spaces. One participant expanded, reminding

organizations that making spaced for Black-led organizations helps everyone to fulfill their missions: it is not taking anything away from the other organizations. They also affirmed that funding is a major problem and a change in it could be a huge catalyst of change. A new connection that a member made was how traditional funding streams are related to reparations: when there is a funding opportunity, Black led initiatives and projects with positive outcomes for Black communities should be funded first because Black people are bearing the brunt of environmental hazards. Members also emphasized the need to move from knowing and into action. Participants affirmed the relevance and timeliness of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will provide a discussion on how the study findings confirm, diverge from, and expand upon existing knowledge of pro-environmental behaviors and Black environmentalism. This chapter will also account for the study's limitations, and with those in mind, the implications are discussed. The chapter closes with a holistic approach to dissemination including the scholarly literature, back into the hands of Black environmentalists, in other environmental spaces, and through teaching and conferences.

Defining the Environment

Black environmentalists are working in the naturo-socio-political-historical environment, with special emphasis on addressing the impact of the environment and humans on other humans. The environment is defined with myriad and divergent definitions--some familiar and some that expand the current boundaries of what is known about the environment. The boundaries of the environment concur with environmental justice conceptions of the holistic environment as the natural, social and political (i.e., Dr. Robert Bullard's conceptualization of the *environment* in environmental justice). The way that the importance of people is conceptualized is going beyond anthropocentrism, where humans are dominant over nature (i.e., Francis Bacon's perspective of *dominion*), and beyond ecocentrism where humans are equal to all other parts of the environment (i.e., Ciocirlan, 2016). The natural, social, and political environment is in the care of humans, in a way, and can be beneficial to humans, however some humans have historically and at present weaponized the environment in the name of capitalism and greed. The environment is both the arena in which intersecting oppressions are exacerbated and it is the source of these oppressions, weaponized to inflict harm.

The way the environment is conceptualized expands on other definitions by adding the dimension of time; the environment also includes the historical environment. The historical environment, which is not just what was done to the land, water, and air in the past, but also the history of how the environment was conceptualized, *for whom the environment was protected*, and who was left out, defines the boundaries of environment and environmental problems present-day. Both the past and the present impact the future environment.

Extending What is Known about Pro-Environmental Behaviors

Understanding what *is* and what *is not* the environment has implications for what *is* and *is not* considered pro-environmental behavior; a limited perspective of the environment also limits the ways in which one can act to protect the environment. This study challenges the limited perspective of pro-environmental behavior as private-sphere (Stern, 2002) and extends that to include several categories of behaviors. The ecological breadth of pro-environmental behaviors brought forth in this study challenges the notion of *Black disinterest,* concurring with and affirming, for example, the work of Macias (2015) and the ongoing work of Taylor (2018).

Extending What is Known about Black Approaches to Pro-Environmentalism

This study begins to fill a gap in the literature by centering Black experiences of pro-environmental behaviors. The range and scope of issues being addressed in this study also challenge beliefs that Black environmentalism is restricted to local neighborhood issues related to pollution (Arp & Kenny, 1996). Some of the personal and interpersonal behaviors concur with what is known about private-sphere pro-environmental behaviors (i.e., Kaiser & Wilson, 2000; Stern, 2002). However, the range of behaviors across ecological levels suggests a view of pro-environmentalism that extends beyond rigid boundaries of private-sphere, activism, and non-activist behaviors (Stern, 2002); there is a profound collaboration necessary between all of them.

The findings of this study emphasized that those who are addressing environmental issues are also the ones who are affected by them. This affirms and also gives new meaning to the paradox of protection and participation, where vulnerable groups who are most affected by an issue are simultaneously overburdened and also absolutely needed in the process of identifying the issues that are most salient to them and creating solutions. In the case of environmental issues disproportionately affecting Black people in the United States, those same people are needed to lead the development of practices and policies to alleviate environmental hazards.

This debate is nuanced and should be handled with care and attention. This is reminiscent of Hare's (1970) theorizing of *Black ecology*, where Hare links environmental destruction and anti-Black racism, and resolves that both are caused by capitalist-white supremacy. Both must be solved in way that goes beyond "reformist solutions" (Hare, 1970, p.7), like more eco-friendly cars or a "fairer slice of the pie or a seat at the table" (Opperman, 2020, n.p.). These solutions are irrelevant to the plight of Black communities (American Society for Environmental History, 2020). Instead the solution is Black liberation, self-determination, and the resources "so that blacks can better solve the more serious environmental crises of blacks" (Hare, 1970, p. 8). When Black people labor inside of white dominant institutions and frameworks, it is within the constraints of white supremacy, but to support Black liberation and resources for self-determination would remove those constraints, making liberation for all possible.

Supporting Black Environmental Visibility as a Pro-Environmental Behavior

One of the major findings of this study is the impact of racism on Black visibility in environmental spaces. Racism and environmental issues are not separate issues, but instead come from the same root: the destructive power of white supremacy (Moore, Kosek, and Pandian,

2003). The focus of the intersection of race and environmental issues has been on addressing environmental racism that is harming EJ communities affected by environmental hazards, and disproportionately affecting Black and brown communities. This is distinguished, though from the findings in this study, but it may have a shared foundation.

The issue is framed as visibility in environmental spaces rather than strictly bringing in more Black environmentalists into these spaces. This requires a new approach to environmentalism within organizations, as well as outside of organizations, that demonstrates value and support of Black-led approaches to environmentalism. Supporting Black environmental visibility then becomes a critical category of pro-environmental behaviors where addressing racism within organizations, reimagining funding possibilities, and supporting Black brands of environmentalism is necessary for achieving environmental goals.

Accounting for the Study's Limitations

This is an exploratory study, which is limited in what can be deduced and applied from these findings alone. The sample size was adequate and the selection criteria were appropriate. Participants are Black/African American, so the findings in this study may be transferable to others with similar experiences, however the findings are limited in their application to diverse groups. Even in the findings' application to Black environmentalists, it's important to know that Black experiences are not monolithic; more Black voices across different regions would only enhance the research and knowledge base. Also, all of the participants are working in or have worked in environmental spaces; as mentioned in the interviews, many people are doing pro-environmental work, but do not identify as environmentalists or identify their work as environmental work. This limits recruitment opportunities, which will have to be considered in future studies.

The interview guide did not explicitly ask about experiences of race and racism in pro-environmental spaces. It is at once an oversight, a strength, and a learning opportunity. Race and racism came up in each interview, and the semi-structured guide allowed for probing questions relevant to the content of the interview and the research questions. This could be perceived as a missed opportunity to directly ask for deep reflections on the way that race and racism shows up in environmental spaces. The Critical Race lens could have been deduced by participants in recruitment, as recruits were aware that the study was exploring pro-environmental behaviors in a sample of Black people engaged in the environment. Member checking demonstrated that participants were affirming of the inclusion of the impact of racism on their pro-environmental engagement. Nevertheless, this oversight was discussed in the summative peer debriefing; however, the peer debriefer questioned whether or not this was actually a limitation. If this study were to focus explicitly on the impact of race and racism, the other narratives of the Black experiences of environmentalism may have been lost.

The events exogenous to the study of 2020 may limit the application of findings. The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic which highlighted racial disparities in healthcare, over the summer that George Floyd was murdered, which was also a year for a contentious Presidential election. What could be a strength and limitation of the data based on the context is that the exogenous events could have primed participants for speaking about racism's impact on environmental engagement more openly than in another setting. The findings are contemporary to the context, which limits their application to another time and place. However, the attention to context throughout the study was a learning opportunity about the importance of remaining open to emergence in study design.

Throughout the approach to and methodology of this study, including the decisions to pivot from the original design, the researcher has been attentive to the quality of the study, the study's findings and its relevance to the broader research and practice community. The limitations of the study help to frame to what extent the implications can be implied from these findings, and those implications are discussed below.

Implications as Transformative

Transformative research is not research to confirm what we think we know or to know for the sake of knowing. Transformative research is research that exists to break down what we think we know and to transform how we think and act in the process of data collection, analysis and the dissemination into practice and further research (Trevors, Pollack, Saier, & Masson, 2012). Implications take what is learned and suppose their utility in practice, which in a way could always be conceptualized as intending to be transformative. However, the following reflexive quote teases out the impact of naming implications explicitly as transformative.

> *It's a subtle shift with a big impact. When the goal is to re-shape, not just to know, then the implications are shifted towards praxis-level changes. The implications aren't to add a new program or an additional staff member, but they're to re-evaluate what we thought we knew: to reckon with the idea that the way we do things might not be the only way. The transformative implications become a vision for a world where the problems that participants named in the interviews are no longer a problem at all.*

The following sections highlight the transformative implications of this study for practice in environmental spaces, the field of social work, for further research, and for the way critical research is viewed and conducted.

Practice in Environmental Spaces

The practice implications represented in this section are drawn from the findings of the study and expanded upon here. The following sections highlight the implications across a range of environmental spaces, specifically: implications for (historically) white-led environmental organizations; implications for environmental funders; implications for environmental movement building.

Implications for Mainstream Environmental Organizations

Racism is endemic, undergirding environmental spaces and practices; ignoring the impacts of racism within environmental organizations will stall environmentalists from achieving environmental goals. Organizations that replicate racism within their walls through the poor treatment of Black employees will risk replicating racism outside of their walls with the individuals and communities whom they claim to want to protect. The municipal departments and corporations that are implicated in the causes of environmental issues harming low-income communities and communities of color have a transactional relationship with these communities. The Guiding Principle of transformational relationships over transactional relationships may be useful in the discussion of how to change practices within white-led environmental organizations, which will have implications for practices outside of the organization. If organizations were to adopt a transformational approach to their work internally and externally, then perhaps they would more quickly be able to achieve their goals.

A specific example of how to address racism within the organizations with a transformative approach would be to address how Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) initiatives are handled and to understand their limitations. DEIJ initiatives can prioritize hiring of people with a diversity of identities and support training that advances equity and inclusion within the organization; however, working solely on DEIJ could limit efforts to address

racism and the impacts of racism on Black visibility in environmental spaces and even perpetuate the dehumanization of BIPOC environmentalists by validating the inability of some to treat people of another race or social identity with respect. Mainstream environmental organizations can adopt a transformative approach to equity by enlisting and resourcing Black stakeholders to help reimagine a liberatory approach to diversity and equity with the organization.

Implications for Environmental Funders

Funding makes the work possible and sustainable, however funders also act as gatekeepers, creating issues for getting funding for small, Black, and/or less established organizations. Funders can transform the funding equity gap by changing the scope of funded opportunities, building funding streams specifically for Black and brown organizational development, and changing funding guidelines to filter for projects that prioritize authentic environmental engagement. This will include addressing long-held beliefs about metrics, benchmarks, outcomes, and embracing a reparation framework for funding Black-led work first. Reparations is an evolving discussion, and the thought and action leadership of Dr. William Darity Jr., Justice Funders' (2021) Regenerative Philanthropy Framework, and Southern Reparations Loan Fund (n.d.) is a starting place for funders looking for how-to models.

Implications for Environmental Movement Building

In addition to the work that white-led organizations need to do internally to build BIPOC representation within their own walls, the environmental landscape must transform to include more Black-led organizations and initiatives, which is happening whether it is visible and recognized or not. Education targeted towards Black communities is important for movement building; building a base of knowledgeable and invested Black constituents in turn will lead to more Black-led organizations. Of specific import is educating to re-name everyday hazards as

environmental injustice; many Black communities, and especially elders, are facing environmental hazards daily, but not naming them as such. Part of building a Black environmentalist brand is prioritizing the Guiding Principles laid out in these findings, especially meeting people where they are, and preparing to skill up communities, and ultimately supporting Black community participation and voice in environmental spaces.

A word of caution: some people may be resistant to taking on the environmentalist label for reasons embedded in generational and historical trauma related to the racist history of environmentalism. This will potentially call for some transformation of engagement and movement strategies. The solution is unclear and needs further investigation:

Would more education around the breadth of environmentalism help?

Does the label of environmentalist need to change?

Or does the entire movement need to shift?

Movement building may have to balance more Black representation and visibility inside of what is currently framed as environmental space, with creating new and liberated spaces that do not replicate white dominance or echo the racist past of environmentalism.

Implications for Social Work

Environmental Social Work theory, research, and practice is still developing, but certainly recognized by the major professional organizations as legitimate. Environmental justice, alongside social and economic justice are part of the EPAS competencies, for example, and several social work scholars and practitioners have dedicated their work to researching and practicing environmental social work (Council on Social Work Education, 2015; Grand Challenges for Social Work, 2021). The findings of this study can transform environmental social work practice, especially with Black communities.

As I considered the different implications for this research could be used in social work, I struggled. Environmental social work, as a field, has a lot to catch up on with other disciplines and would likely need a new approach, and to bring in new knowledge in order to really be a powerful collaborator. We have struggled to make progress in the fields that we have been a part of since our inception. What could we offer environmentalism?

Given the breadth of work that is already happening in environmental spaces, social workers can connect with those who are currently involved in these spaces, taking into account the Guiding Principles to guide their approach. Social workers can use their professional research and practice positionality to amplify and support the rich body of work already being done. White environmental social workers should be prepared to adopt a reparations framework when working with Black communities, and be aware of and remediate the way that they are replicating white dominance and white-washed environmental narratives in these spaces.

More tangential, but also transformational implications for social workers are based in the theoretical and empirical guide for this study. In this study, the way that *pro-environmental* has been conceptualized has shaped who is and is not considered environmentally engaged, and may have been missing the experiences of Black environmentalists. This furthers the gap in knowledge of Black environmentalism, which has been a part of perpetuating errant narratives about *Black disinterest*. The implication for social workers in any specialty is that the measures that we use in research and in practice deserve a critical look.

This is the transformational piece: no longer is it acceptable to name the limitations of a measure and not resolve to do something about it, lest we further exclude and marginalize people.

To ensure that what we say is true is inclusive of the experiences from a variety of social locations and identities, social workers must be able to speak to the limitations of the tools that they use. The next and needed step is to be prepared to address these limitations and to consider how continuing to use them can perpetuate suppression and exclusion.

Implications for Research

The findings of this study have implications for transforming beliefs about the line of inquiry proposed at the start of this study, and how to proceed with the new information garnered in this study. Further, the methodological approach to this study has implications for others who engage in critical research, and especially in research where the researcher and participants have different social locations. Finally, transformative implications for the researcher are discussed.

Future Research

The findings from this study concur with other studies, and provide opportunities for further divergences and gaps to be explored in future research. Given the variety of definitions of the environment, future research can further investigate the boundaries of the environment and how that impacts pro-environmental behavior. The relationship between people and the environment is a predictor of pro-environmental behavior, and understanding the way that this relationship is conceptualized in diverse samples could lend more insight to a whole model of pro-environmental behavior that encompasses people with diverse social locations. Finally, to further investigate the tensions around identifying as "environmentalist," future research could also investigate the interplay between individual environmentalist identity and collective identities, and how those impact what is conceived of as pro-environmentalism.

The initial design for the study proposed a mixed methods approach (QUAL-quant) to further expand on what it means to be pro-environmental and to work to develop a measure

inclusive of the experiences of Black environmentalists in this study. Further research could move forward with investigating using a GEB-type measure that is more inclusive of activist and non-activist pro-environmental behaviors. This would, perhaps, lead to more of the range of Black environmental behaviors captured in that measure. However, using a transformational lens that takes into account the wisdom of participants, perhaps the goal is not to amend the GEB, but to imagine different ways of capturing this involvement altogether.

> *Isn't this the work of the independent researcher? My own questions, beliefs, thoughts, knowings… all transformed through this process. What I thought was the direction of this research must shift in light of what I know now.*

Instead of working towards amending an existing measure to be more inclusive, what could be more valuable is exploratory approaches to re-define what it means to be pro-environmental. In other words, instead of adding and amending what is known, re-starting and expanding the idea of what this could be. This leads to the possibility of exploring more with different samples, like other groups of Black environmentalists, Indigenous environmentalists, and Latinx environmentalists, and to be open to the conceptualization of pro-environmentalism transforming when diverse perspectives are accounted for.

Transforming Perspectives and Knowledge of Critical Research

The study was conducted amidst a pandemic and over the summer of 2020 where the murder of George Floyd highlighted existing police brutality against Black communities. As discussed previously, this led to reflections at key decision points changing the course of the research. These exogenous events exacerbated the existing burdens on Black communities, and in further reflection on the tenets of Critical Race Theory, the implications of that come to light:

When are Black people in America, and therefore Black participants in research not feeling the weight of racism?

This has led to reflections on the way in which we conduct research can replicate oppression, and research into the possibility of a way to transform how we understand research with Black participants.

The implications of this for research with Black participants should not be overlooked and needs authentic reflection. Scholars should consider the need for co-investigation and emergent designs. Co-investigation is research with participants who are generating research questions relevant to their view of the world, and who are involved in study design, data collection and analysis. This would be more in line with critical and liberatory research strategies which are appropriate given the topic and what is learned from conducting research amidst the summer of 2020. This would also include people from the targeted population as decision makers who can help guide the design in a way that does the least harm.

Emergent approaches to study designs are an integral part of critical research because they are adaptive to information collected within the study as well as responsive to the study's context (Pailthorpe, 2017). The initial study design allowed for a processing pause after the first phase of data collection, however, the anticipated next phase had to be examined in the face of the context of the summer of 2020 and its impact on Black Americans. A widely accepted emergent approach to design could normalize and make clearer the rationale for altering or truncating a study's design that is responsive to both the people involved and the data collected in the study in qualitative studies and beyond. In addition to the current body of literature on emergent design (i.e. Hesse-Biber & Leavy's Handbook on Emergent Methods (2008)), approaches to study design could be informed by the thought leadership on indigenous

methodologies (e.g. Chilisa, 2020) and participatory designs (e.g. Chevalier & Buckles, 2019), where process, reflection, and collaboration are valued over prescriptive and linear designs.

Finally, the process of writing up the methodology and findings demonstrated the needed implications for representing what is known and what is done in the critical method.

> *I'm woefully underprepared for and also fully invested exploring critical methodologies in more detail. It, like environmental social work, is* becoming *as I write this. Scholars, especially BIPOC scholars, and the scholars who are trustworthy allies, are developing more robust* critmethods. *The more I explore, the more I see how these are paving the way for authentic and culturally responsive research.*

The work of Guba and Lincoln (1994) is an excellent primer on the ways that paradigmatic perspectives can affect methodological approaches, however education on critical methodology for doctoral students and others should include new approaches like the critical qualitative methods (i.e., Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, & Gildersleeve, 2012). This reflexive quote captures the spirit of exploring a new approach.

> *The designs and strategies aren't a free pass to research without reflection, but instead weave and integrate reflection throughout. Weaving in these quotes throughout are my own experimentation on display, hopefully paving the way for others to explore how to integrate and present the WHOLE process of critical methods.*

Scholar-practitioners working to advance new critical methodologies advocate for critical approaches that value reflexive and critical decision checkpoints over rigid method silos and methodological conservatism (Pasque, et al., 2012).

Lessons Learned and Future Studies

Going forward, future studies could include investigating the boundaries of the environment, and each dimension of the environment which emerged here: natural, social, political, and historical. Future studies could also investigate the person-environment relationship in diverse samples, which could also expand what is known about this relationship currently and how it predicts pro-environmental behavior. The tensions around identifying as "environmentalist," could also be investigated, as named above.

Part of what has come from this study is the transformation of what is to be investigated. Instead of continuing to work to amend the GEB, instead, the line of inquiry needs to change to re-define what it means to be pro-environmental altogether when the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and Latinx environmentalists are centered. *How* these ideas are investigated is as important as *what* ideas are investigated. So, the next step would be a critical co-investigatory study with Black, Indigenous, and Latinx environmentalists. Co-investigation could use this study as a starting place, and environmentalists would become co-researchers, where we define the questions and the design together, and co-researchers lead the analysis together. Co-investigation might also be used to research the impact of environmentalists of color. Since action is important, action research might be appropriate with mainstream environmentalist organizations, especially related to racism and inclusion of the labor of Black environmentalists.

<div align="center">

Dissemination

</div>

The research found in this study will be disseminated in scholarly arenas, however, several of these lessons must live and breathe outside of the literature. Some of those places include the places that can be the locus of change, which were identified in the findings, and

others are places that will lead into transformative action in communities directly affected by the topic of this study. The dissemination findings from the member checking interview are also incorporated into this section.

Journals

The findings of this study and methodological approach will be held up for peer review and disseminated to peer reviewed journals. This research would be most appropriate for the audiences of journals that have made a space for environmental, environmental justice, and/or qualitative research. These journals could include *Environmental Justice,* The 2021 Special Issue on EJ in *Sustainability,* or *Environment and Behavior.* This study also includes a rich discussion of the methodological approach which could also be appropriate for certain journals where this discourse is happening, such as *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies (CSCM)* or *Qualitative Research.*

Black Environmentalists in Virginia

It is imperative that this research is accessible to Black environmentalists in Virginia. The findings will be disseminated back to participants in their chapter form, which many have asked for directly, and will also be disseminated back in a report and/or slide deck that can be used to disseminate as desired. During member checking, two things became clear about the importance of dissemination. First, this research, in its synthesized and anonymous form can be useful for anyone who is interested in starting a conversation about Black visibility being affected in environmental spaces in Virginia and how that is in contrast to the expressed pro-environmental work that is being done. Second, some participants are interested in being connected to each other and to work in focus groups to continue to talk about how they could

lead the dissemination of these findings in a meaningful way, and to continue to act and garner action from others in response to these findings.

Environmental Spaces

The findings from this study need to be disseminated to the environmental spaces that were mentioned in the findings which are loci of change: mainstream environmental organizations including municipal departments, and environmental funders. Mainstream environmental organizations need to know that there are people having similar journeys and experiences in the environmental movement that are impacted by racism. For the longevity of this movement and to achieve environmental goals, mainstream environmental organizations, including municipal departments, will need BIPOC leaders and constituencies to identify critical issues and relevant solutions. Disseminating these findings to leaders and powerful people within organizations, even those who are trying to do the right thing, and to make connections where there is still a disconnect (i.e., around the function and impact of DEIJ versus DEIJ alternatives; the impact of internal racism on external movement practices).

The importance of funders can not be overlooked, and these findings must go to those funding environmental projects. Some funders have begun to use strategies such as Place-Based Funding (Delfin & Tang, 2006), where people within a targeted geographic area are funded to be included in problem-solving that affects that area, and nationally, some philanthropic organizations have adopted reparations-based frameworks for funding (see above: **Implications for Environmental Funders**). Presenting these findings with a focus on the importance of the work of funders to increase Black visibility in environmental spaces will be critical to transformative change in Virginia. During member checking, members offered several foundations and philanthropic organizations at the local and state level that they have

encountered and believe could benefit from this information as a starting place for updating their approaches to include non-extractive philanthropic approaches.

Teaching/Education

These findings can be disseminated into classrooms and to be used as a basis for updating curriculum to include critical perspectives on what we think we know about environmentalism, Black approaches to environmentalism, and the impacts of racism on the past, present and future of Black involvement in the environment. This content could be used to develop guest lectures which could be taught in schools of social work and departments of environmental science. These findings, and the methodological approach, would also be impactful if disseminated and discussed in conference presentations, such as the *International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry* and environmental conferences like the *River Management Symposium* and the *Environment Virginia Symposium.*

Conclusion

This chapter concludes the reporting on the dissertation. This study began from the perspective that environmentalist narratives have left out the labor of Black environmentalists, mischaracterizing Black communities as disinterested in environmental problems or solutions, with implications not only for Black environmentalists, but also for Black communities who are disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards. This critical transformative exploratory qualitative study, guided by Critical Race Theory, explored the meaning of pro-environmental behaviors among Black environmental justice advocates. The findings were relevant and timely, demonstrating the divergences between definitions of the environmental and how that impacts what is considered pro-environmental behavior. Further, the breadth of the pro-environmental behaviors in which Black environmentalists are engaged in this sample surpassed what has been

previously reported on Black environmental engagement. In environmental spaces, racism has impacted Black visibility in environmental spaces, and the need to address Black visibility in environmental spaces was framed as a critical pro-environmental behavior going forward. The implications of this study extend to environmental spaces, social work, and research, including further study and implications for how research is conducted. It is the hope that through a wide reaching and holistic dissemination plan, these findings will begin to transform environmental spaces and beyond.

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133

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Appendix

APPENDIX A: GENERAL ECOLOGICAL BEHAVIORS

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

APPENDIX C: INFORMATION SHEET

APPENDIX D: JEMEZ PRINCIPLES

APPENDIX E: SUMMARY FOR MEMBER CHECK

Appendix A: General Ecological Behaviors

General Ecological Behaviors - 74 items
From: Arnold, O., Kibbe, A., Hartig, T., & Kaiser, F. G. (2017). Capturing the environmental impact of individual lifestyles: Evidence of the criterion validity of the General Ecological Behavior scale. *Environment and Behavior, 50*(3), 350-372.

Please indicate how often you perform the behaviors below. Choose NA (not applicable) if you are unable to give an answer (for example when asked about your driving habits although you do not hold a license).	never	seldom	occa-sionally	often	always	NA
1 I ride a bicycle or take public transportation to work or school. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2 I buy meat and produce with eco-labels. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3 *I buy beverages in cans.* [2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4 *I use an oven cleaning spray to clean my oven.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5 *I drive my car in or into the city.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6 *In the winter, I air rooms while keeping on the heat and leaving the windows open, simultaneously.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7 I drive on freeways at speeds under 100 kph (= 62 mph). [2]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8 *If I am offered a plastic bag in a store, I take it.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9 In nearby areas (around 30 kilometers; around 20 miles), I use public transportation or ride a bike. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10 I collect and recycle used paper. [2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11 I bring empty bottles to a recycling bin. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12 I have pointed out unecological behavior to someone. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13 I contribute financially to environmental organizations. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14 I buy beverages and other liquids in returnable bottles. [2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15 *I buy bleached or colored toilet paper.* [2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16 *I buy convenience foods.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17 I buy products in refillable packages. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18 I buy domestically grown wooden furniture. [2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19 I boycott companies with an unecological background. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20 I buy seasonal produce. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

21	I talk with friends about saving electricity. [1,2]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	I read about environmental issues. [2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23	I talk with friends about environmental pollution, climate change, and/or energy consumption. [2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24	*For longer journeys (more than 6 hours of travel time by car), I take an airplane.* [2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25	*I keep the engine running while waiting in front of a railroad crossing.* [2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26	*At red traffic lights, I keep the engine running.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27	*I kill insects with a chemical insecticide.* [2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28	In winter, I turn down the heat when I leave my apartment for more than 4 hours. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29	*I drive to where I want to start my hikes.* [2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30	I drive in such a way as to keep my fuel consumption as low as possible. [3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31	I drive on freeways at speeds under 120 kph (= 75 mph). [3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32	I wait until I have a full load before doing my laundry. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33	I wash dirty clothes without prewashing. [2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34	*I use a clothes dryer.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35	I turn the lights off when I leave a room. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36	I turn the oven off early to finish cooking with the captured heat. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37	*I wash towels at 90° Celsius.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38	I use power strips to turn off electronics (e.g. my stereo system) between uses. [1,2]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39	*On hot days, I use a window unit air conditioner.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40	I turn the computer screen off when I take a break of more than 10 minutes. [1,2]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41	When a regular light bulb breaks, I replace it with an energy-efficient light bulb. [1,2]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42	*I leave my cell phone charger plugged in when not in use.* [1,2]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
43	I wait until I have a full load before I run the dishwasher. [1,2]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
44	I let warm foods cool down to room temperature before placing them in the fridge. [1,2]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

45	I shower (rather than to take a bath). [1,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
46	*I leave my TV in standby mode.* [1,3]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
47	*I preheat the oven.* [1]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Please indicate whether or not you engage in the behaviors below. Again, choose NA (not applicable) if you are unable to give an answer (for example when asked about owning an energy efficient dishwasher although you do not own any dishwasher at all).	no	yes	NA
1	I reuse my shopping bags. [2,3]	☐	☐	☐
2	*I use fabric softener with my laundry.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
3	*I put dead batteries in the garbage.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
4	*After meals, I dispose of leftovers in the toilet.* [2,3]	☐	☐	☐
5	*I use a chemical air freshener in my bathroom.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
6	*In hotels, I have the towels changed daily.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
7	I have requested bids for having solar panels installed. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
8	After a picnic, I leave the place as clean as it was originally. [2,3]	☐	☐	☐
9	I have invested in improving the heat insulation of my flat or house. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
10	I have a contract for renewable energy with my energy provider. [2,3]	☐	☐	☐
11	I refrain from owning a car. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
12	I am a member of a carpool. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
13	In the winter, I keep the heat on so that I do not have to wear a sweater. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
14	I am a member of an environmental organization. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
15	I am a vegetarian. [2,3]	☐	☐	☐
16	I own a fuel-efficient automobile (less than 5 liters per 100 kilometer). [3]	☐	☐	☐
17	I use an electric kettle. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
18	*I own an uplighter.* [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
19	I own an energy efficient refrigerator (efficiency class A+ or better). [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐

148

20	I turn the refrigerator off when I leave for a vacation. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
21	I own an energy efficient dishwasher (efficiency class A+ or better). [1,2]	☐	☐	☐
22	I use a lid on pots. [1,2]	☐	☐	☐
23	I have activated the power save mode on my computer. [1,2,3]	☐	☐	☐
24	My daily showers last three minutes or less. [1,2]	☐	☐	☐
25	I have looked into the electricity consumption of my appliances. [3]	☐	☐	☐
26	I own solar panels. [3]	☐	☐	☐
27	I have checked the electricity consumption of my appliances with a plug in power meter. [3]	☐	☐	☐

Interview Guide: HM20016021

Has the participant given consent to be a part of the study?
    Y / N _____(researcher initials)
Has the participant given consent to audio record?
    Y / N _____(researcher initials)

How would you describe the work that you do around environmental issues?

Tell me more about the environmental justice work that you do.
    Prompts for more understanding:
- How did you get started?
- What makes you want to be a part of this work?
- What does it look like now?
- Who all is involved?
- What are the issues?
- What are your goals for this work?

Script: I'm interested in what it means to be 'pro-environmental' in this context. To be 'pro-environmental' means to do things that benefit the environment.

What does 'pro-environmental' mean to you as someone involved in environmental justice efforts?
- How does this work benefit the environment?
- What does it mean to be pro-environmental in an environmental justice context?
    o What are the specific strategies that you use to promote environmental justice?

Is there anything else I need to know about to understand what it means to do the work you do or to be pro-environmental in environmental justice?

Information Sheet
& Consent Form for Participation
Virginia Commonwealth University

Researcher(s): Sarah Kye Price, PhD, MSW, MS, and Kimberly Compton, MSW

Study Title: Pro-Environmental Behaviors among Environmental Justice Advocates

This form is called an Information Sheet. There is also an optional place to give your consent at the bottom. It will give you information about the interview process and the research so you can make an informed decision about your participation. The Information Sheet and Consent Form will give you the information you will need to understand why this study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate and any known risks, inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating.

We encourage you to take some time to think this over and ask questions now and at any other time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will be given a copy for your records.

1. Who is eligible to participate?
You have been asked to participate in this study because you are directly involved with environmental justice efforts. Participants must be at least 18 years old to participate.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out and withdraw your interview before the data is interpreted. The researcher will notify you one week prior to the interpretation phase. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

2. Purpose of the study
The purpose of this research study is to explore the meaning of pro-environmental among environmental justice advocates.

4. Where will the study take place and how long will it last?
The researcher will contact the participant via email and/or phone for recruitment. The researcher will conduct a 1 hour interview with the participant and the place will be decided on by both parties.

5. What will you be asked to do?
If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. You will be asked to respond to questions around the purpose of this research. You are not obligated to respond to any questions and may leave at any time.

6. What are my benefits of being in this study?

If you would like, you will receive a report summarizing the findings at the conclusion of the study, to be used in whatever way is beneficial. Further, the findings will inform future organizing efforts and measurement.

7. What are the risks of being in this study?
We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, a possible inconvenience may be the time it takes to complete the study.

8. How will my personal information be protected?
Any personal contact information will not be attached to recorded data. Each participant will be assigned a number and that number will be used to identify data instead of personal information. All digital recordings will be stored in VCU REDcap, which is an online space that only the researchers will have access to. Handwritten notes will be kept in a locked cabinet in the VCU School of Social Work PhD office, which is a secure location with a card swipe entry.

At the conclusion of this study, the researchers may publish their findings. Information will be presented in summary format and you will not be identified in any publications or presentations.

9. Further Questions
We will be happy to answer any questions you have! If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the researcher(s):

> **Sarah Kye Price, PhD, (804) 828-0579 or**
> **Kimberly S. Compton, MSW, comptonk2@vcu.edu.**

If you have any general questions about your rights as a participant in this or any other research, you may contact:

> **Office of Research**
> **Virginia Commonwealth University**
> **800 East Leigh Street, Suite 3000**
> **P.O. Box 980568**
> **Richmond, VA 23298**
> **Telephone: (804) 827-2157**

Contact this number to ask general questions, to obtain information or offer input, and to express concerns or complaints about research. You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or if you wish to talk with someone else. General information about participation in research studies can also be found at
http://www.research.vcu.edu/human_research/volunteers.htm.

Statement of voluntary consent:
When signing this form I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this study. I have had the opportunity to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I use and understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. A copy of this signed Consent Form has been given to me.

Participant Signature: _____   Print Name: _____   Date: _____

Appendix D: Jemez Principles

Jemez Principles for democratic organizing

by Rubén Solís, Southwest Public Workers Union; and Chair of the SNEEJ Border Justice Campaign

Activists meet on Globalization

On December 6-8, 1996, forty people of color and European-American representatives met in Jemez, New Mexico, for the "Working Group Meeting on Globalization and Trade." The Jemez meeting was hosted by the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice with the intention of hammering out common understandings between participants from different cultures, politics and organizations. The following **"Jemez Principles"** for democratic organizing were adopted by the participants.

#1 Be Inclusive

If we hope to achieve just societies that include all people in decision-making and assure that all people have an equitable share of the wealth and the work of this world, then we must work to build that kind of inclusiveness into our own movement in order to develop alternative policies and institutions to the treaties policies under neoliberalism. This requires more than tokenism, it cannot be achieved without diversity at the planning table, in staffing, and in coordination. It may delay achievement of other important goals, it will require discussion, hard work, patience, and advance planning. It may involve conflict, but through this conflict, we can learn better ways of working together. It's about building alternative institutions, movement building, and not compromising out in order to be accepted into the anti-globalization club.

#2 Emphasis on Bottom-Up Organizing

To succeed, it is important to reach out into new constituencies, and to reach within all levels of leadership and membership base of the organizations that are already involved in our networks. We must be continually building and strengthening a base which provides our credibility, our strategies, mobilizations, leadership development, and the energy for the work we must do daily.

#3 Let People Speak for Themselves

We must be sure that relevant voices of people directly affected are heard. Ways must be provided for spokespersons to represent and be responsible to the affected constituencies. It is important for organizations to clarify their roles, and who they represent, and to assure accountability within our structures.

#4 Work Together In Solidarity and Mutuality

Groups working on similar issues with compatible visions should consciously act in solidarity, mutuality and support each other's work. In the long run, a more significant step is to incorporate the goals and values of other groups with your own work, in order to build strong relationships. For instance, in the long run, it is more important that labor unions and community economic development projects include the issue of environmental sustainability in their own strategies, rather than just lending support to the environmental organizations. So communications, strategies and resource sharing is critical, to help us see our connections and build on these.

#5 Build Just Relationships Among Ourselves

We need to treat each other with justice and respect, both on an individual and an organizational level, in this country and across borders. Defining and developing "just relationships" will be a process that won't happen overnight. It must include clarity about decision-making, sharing strategies, and resource distribution. There are clearly many skills necessary to succeed, and we need to determine the ways for those with different skills to coordinate and be accountable to one another.

#6 Commitments to Self-Transformation

As we change societies, we must change from operating on the mode of individualism to Community-centeredness. We must "walk our talk." We must be the values that we say we're struggling for and we must be justice, be peace, be community.

Appendix E: Summary for Member Check

Summary

A little bit about who participated:

- Participant criteria: Age 18+, identifies as Black and/or African American, and is engaged in environmental issues in Virginia.

- Not a strictly outsiders' vantage point: Although many of the participants engage in pro-environmental behaviors for their job as activists, organizers, advocates, the terms "us" and "we" came up often when describing the people who were affected by environmental hazards and those who benefit from pro-environmental behaviors.
- Motivations: Drawn to the issue for a variety of reasons, mostly personal and educational. Children and children's future are an important motivator. Many have children that are affected by environmental hazards or they themselves grew up around environmental hazards. Children are perceived as innocent victims of corporate and government environmental negligence.

Environment, Environmentalism, and Environmental Justice

Different definitions of the environment	Environmental Justice
• The environment is defined differently in environmentalism (natural environment) and EJ (natural-socio-political-historical), which leads to some of the major differences between the two fields.	• EJ Communities • Issues - mostly related to fossil fuel infrastructure, green space access, water, air quality, lead and mold, and/or impact of rising sea levels (full list below).

• Therefore, the issues and also the solutions are different. Environmentalism focuses on conserve and preserve, whereas EJ includes people as a prominent part of the holistic environment. In EJ, environmental solutions are also holistic and prominently feature human-centered issues.	• Corporations and Governments
	   o Corporations use and misuse Black communities to make headway on their infrastructure and development. Corporations do not communicate to community members clearly or in a timely manner.
	   o Governments act negligently when they give corporations

	a "pass" to abuse communities.
•	Guiding Principles
	○ Formal (Jemez, Green 2.0) and informal (see below)
	○ Generative

Pro-environmental Behaviors

- Personal
- Interpersonal
- Community
- Education
- Policy
- Collaboration
- Aspirational
- Anti-Environmental Behaviors

Black Visibility in Environmental Spaces

- Participants agreed that there are very few Black people visible in environmental spaces and leadership.

- Why? Environmental organizations fail to hire, support, and retain Black leadership; Black employees are removed for speaking out; Black pro-environmental approaches are not valued in environmental spaces. These are all connected to a belief that racism is endemic and has permeated environmental spaces as well.

Racism's Influence on Black Visibility in Environmental Spaces

- Racism influences Black visibility in the present, shaped the past, and will continue to influence the future of Black visibility in environmental spaces if not addressed.

Present
- Mainstream environmental organizations fail to hire, support, and retain Black leadership.
- Black environmentalists are wary of joining up with mainstream environmental organizations or being outspoken about the way things are done there. There is a pattern of 'blackballing' employees for speaking out
- Participants shared that their pro-environmental approaches are not valued in environmental spaces. Many do not feel supported, respected, and valued to do the work that they know will actually help, which is frustrating and disappointing.
- The racism within the organization, and therefore in the training and support of white workers, as well as personal racism can transfer to the work that is done in communities if not addressed.

Past
- Historically environmentalism did not include discussions of people, racism, and community in the priorities for their work. Lots of historical connections to racist founders at the state and national levels
- Environmentalism characterized the environment as neutral, so racism is irrelevant.
- People of color are an afterthought in environmentalism and environmentalists won't think to stand up for Black communities as a part of their work.
- However, the persistent existence of racism requires a new perspective on the environment and on environmentalism, and it lends a new urgency:

Future
- The future of Black visibility and engagement in environmental spaces is influenced by perceptions of the priorities of the past and the perceptions of the inclusivity of the present.
- Racism within environmentalism affects the future involvement of Black environmentalists, and Black engagement with the environment all together.
- Mainstream environmentalism has lost its relevance to Black communities, which has an effect on the future involvement of Black environmentalists.
- The current treatment and lack of trust for employees affects not only Black visibility in these spaces, but also affects the abilities of mainstream environmentalism to reach EJ communities in the future by damaging their capacities and rapport with communities.

Addressing (Eradicating) Racism as a Pro-Environmental Behavior

- … Therefore, addressing racism is a pro-environmental behavior, where behaviors used to address racism in environmental spaces become part of moving towards pro-environmental goals.
- It can happen at all of the levels (personal, interpersonal, community, policy)

Supporting Black Environmental Visibility

- Mainstream environmentalists can support Black visibility and recognition in environmental spaces by addressing the issues that are most visible in environmental organizations:
  - Hiring, supporting, and retaining Black employees and leadership (DEIJ and DEIJ alternatives)
  - Addressing funding streams
  - Create and Support Black-Led Environmental Organizations and Initiatives: Building a Black Brand of Environmentalism