

## **Ecofeminist Paradox; The Double-Edged Sword: Unveiling Women's Role in Environmental Sustainability and Disruption through *The Heiress Gets a Duke and The Unicorn Project***

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### **Abstract**

*Ecofeminists have engaged in a critical examination of the exploitation of both nature and women by human individuals. The concept of Ecofeminist sustainability has emerged as a means to uphold harmony and ensure equitable treatment among men, women, and nature. Gaard (2017) defines this framework as one designed to secure rights for nature, women, and marginalised racial and social groups, while also ensuring sufficient consumption that does not jeopardise resource availability for future generations. The theory posits that "Economic Men" (Gaard, 2017) are responsible for the disruption of Ecofeminist Sustainability. This research adopts a qualitative approach and utilises Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis as a theoretical framework to fulfil the study's objectives. The current investigation reveals that Gaard's (2017) concept functions as a Male-Blame framework, which serves to obscure the contributions of women in the harm and manipulation of other women, men, and the natural environment by portraying them solely as victims. The technologically sophisticated decisions made by both male and female entrepreneurs, aimed at achieving financial profit, frequently overlook the detrimental effects they impose on the natural environment. The capabilities for decision making and problem solving are shaped by an individual's cognitive frameworks and emotional states, which are, in turn, informed by societal interactions, expectations, and personal experiences. Consequently, the phenomenon of disruption warrants examination not solely across different human genders but also within the same gender, incorporating significant dimensions of human society.*

**Keywords:** Eco-feminism, disruption, male-blame, sustainability, society

### **INTRODUCTION**

The examination of human history, culture, and civilization, alongside an understanding of humans as living beings, while critically analyzing the relationship between humans and

### **Background of the Study**

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non-human entities and the environment in literature, has facilitated the development of Eco-criticism (Garrard, 2004). Analyzing environmental issues in relation to literature is both relevant and logical, as literature encapsulates societal norms regarding living beings and their environments, historical events and their impacts on both human and non-human worlds, and the existence of multiple truths (Hoggart, 1966; Wilson, 1952). The complexity of the subject necessitates a multifaceted approach; thus, the human-nature relationship is examined by various Eco-critics across different contexts and domains, including Ecofeminism.

The commodification and exploitation of the earth result from scientific and technological advancements that position humans as a superior species, elevating them above the "earthothers" (Gaard, 2017; Plumwood, 2004). "Earthothers" (Gaard, 2017) refers to a non-human realm encompassing plants, animals, water bodies, the physical environment, and other ecological entities.

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human luxury contributes to the decline in the

quality of life for non-human entities (Gaard,

2017). Urbanization has obscured the ethical  
implications of harmful emissions and land

degradation, resulting in a

societal desensitization to the escalating  
threats facing the planet (Ross, 1994). The

relationship between humans and their  
environment is a focus of Ecology (Haeckel,  
1869), which examines an organism's interaction  
with its surroundings (Begon, Townsend and  
Harper, 2006). The topic's complexity allows for  
various perspectives, with some emphasizing  
nature's exploitation and others envisioning a  
mutually dependent relationship between humans  
and nature. Land ownership can be perceived as  
the subjugation of nature, while others may  
interpret it as a reciprocal relationship.

Human beings assume ownership  
of lands, necessitating their care and  
responsibility for the land's needs. They are

mutually dependent on one another  
(Plumwood, 2002).

### **Ecofeminism:**

Ecofeminism is a movement that brings together feminists and eco-critics around shared concerns, opposing various forms of domination while celebrating the uniqueness and diversity of all life forms (Lahar, 1991; King, 1989). Ecofeminism merges the ecological critique of subdued nature with the feminist critique of male domination, advocating for the elimination of all forms of domination in both human and non-human realms (Garrard, 2004). Warren (1994) refers to this as a shared "logic of domination" (Warren & Cheney, 1991). Ecofeminism addresses the issues of two significant movements: the position of women in human society and the opposition to the exploitation of nature. Both denominations are characterized as "morally wrong and ought to be eliminated" (Warren & Cheney, 1991). Gaard (2017) expands ecofeminism by moving beyond traditional male-female gender roles and nature concerns, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and addressing issues related to all genders, races, queer groups, trans species, and other environmental entities (Gaard, 2017). Gaard refers to an extensive study of

Ecofeminism as Critical Ecofeminism, which can be traced back to the works of Plumwood (2004).

### **Ecofeminist Sustainability:**

Sustainability calls for the technological and business sectors to achieve equilibrium among people, profit, and planet (Wagner & Andreas, 2012). A framework is necessary to achieve harmony among humans, their economic interests, and the "earthothers" (Gaard, 2017). This need has led to the concept of Environmental Sustainability, defined by scholars as development and technological advancement that serve current human interests while ensuring adequate consumption and the safety of nature. Brundtland (1987), Milne and Grey (2013), Gaard (2017).

Gaard (2017) seeks to integrate Environmental Sustainability into Ecofeminism by proposing the concept of "Just and Ecofeminist Sustainability," which she argues can be advanced through three distinct movements. Environmental justice and sustainability should be examined through the lens of ecofeminism. She further explains that environmental sustainability is based on the concept of the "triple bottom line" (Milne & Grey, 2013; Gaard, 2017), which considers the interests of Profit, People, and Planet. However, achieving and maintaining this sustainability has proven to be challenging (Gaard, 2017). The primary reason

is that entrepreneurs, or the "Economic Man" (Gaard, 2017), prioritise business profit over people and the planet. She discusses multiple spills from Alberta's Tar Sands Oil, arguing that achieving sustainability is challenging due to the resistance of white males and colonialists who prioritise financial gain over the adverse effects on indigenous communities and the environment. They are designated as "sacrifice zones." Advocacy for equality among all races, sexualities, and

"earthothers" (Gaard, 2017) is essential, and all forms of dualism should be rejected (Gaard, 2017).

### **Gaard's Male-Blame Notion:**

The pursuit of equality in opportunities and profits is concerning, as the "responsibility for the rest lies" (Anand, 1998) with the "Economic Man" (Gaard, 2017) or the White privileged male. The concept of the white privileged male as the Economic Man excludes women from the economic sphere. Furthermore, categorizing women with the victim group alongside nature and "earthothers" (Gaard, 2017) implies that they lack a position within the group responsible for the harm. Men are more frequently held accountable for disruptions in ecofeminist sustainability, whether

through the violation of women's rights or the pollution of the physical environment and nature. The question is whether men should be held accountable for subjugating both nature and women for business profit and financial gains.

However, are they solely to be held accountable? Do women are not involved in harming other women and the physical environment? In scenarios where men and women share equal responsibility, women are often marginalized when it comes to assigning blame, with the focus on men (Stemple & Meyer, 2017).

This study aims to counter Gaard's (2017) male-blame notion, which posits that economic men dominate the sustainability movement in business and are thus accountable for the resulting turmoil. The statement overlooks a sizable portion of the population in the economic zone, specifically women. This study aims to identify women's presence in the economic sphere and to highlight their role in Ecofeminist sustainability and its disruption, utilizing George's (2021) *The Heiress Gets a Duke* and Kim's (2019) *The Unicorn Project*. The aim is to encourage acceptance of responsibility for individual strengths, shortcomings, and the consequences of personal decisions, rather than engaging in blame-shifting.

### **Problem Statement:**

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An Ecofeminist perspective attributes the responsibility for the degradation of nature to male actions and attitudes. Gaard (2017) discusses the concept of Economic Man, characterizing this figure as white males, and posits that this demographic has significantly contributed to the challenges faced in achieving and sustaining Ecofeminist principles. This perspective invites critical examination of the extent to which women may contribute to environmental degradation, raising the question of whether men alone bear the responsibility for such harm. This study presents a counterargument to Gaard's (2017) male-blame perspective and seeks to investigate the contributions of women in both sustaining and challenging Ecofeminist sustainability.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To discern themes of male-blame, Ecofeminist Sustainability, and its disruption in the selected texts
2. To explore the role of women in disturbing the Ecofeminist sustainability implied in the selected texts

### Research Questions

1. How do the selected texts reflect themes of male-blame, Ecofeminist Sustainability, and its disruption?
2. What role do women play in disturbing the Ecofeminist sustainability as portrayed in the selected texts?

### Scope and Significance of the Study

Ecofeminist Sustainability has been difficult to achieve because the problem is being dealt with in half of the discourse, i.e., men's discourse, whereas women's presence in the economic zone in relation to sustainability, is ignored by Gaard (2017). The present study acknowledges women's part as an economic person in relation to Ecofeminist sustainability and its disruption. Thus, it offers a complete discourse for dealing with the issues that hinder Ecofeminist Sustainability. Moreover, literature that highlights "Blaming discourses addressed to men" is "scarce" (Schubert, Aguilar, Kim & Gomez, 2021). Therefore, the present research contributes to the area of study.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Ecofeminism

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Besthorn and McMillen (2002) examined the interaction between individuals and their environments through the lens of Ecofeminism to enhance the integration of Ecology within Social Work. An Ecofeminist framework was necessary because conventional ecological frameworks, while providing social workers with an integrated perspective on the complex relationship between humans and the environment, still exhibited ambiguity, partiality, and a general approach (Besthorn and McMillen, 2002). Power dynamics present in human society were also considered. Besthorn and McMillen (2002) contended that Spretnak (1990) identified three distinct aspects that have influenced Feminism throughout history. Initially, in addition to examining historical and political aspects, it formulated a theory of domination to address the oppression of women and nature. Secondly, ecofeminists drew inspiration from historical and archaeological sources, focusing on religions that acknowledged and honored both nature and women (Besthorn and McMillen, 2002). Lastly, the increasing interest of women in environmental studies and careers has contributed a new perspective to the development of environmental policies. Ecofeminism

offered Social Work a framework for comprehending individuals, their interpersonal relationships, and their connection to the environment, thereby allowing it to address a broader spectrum of human issues. This facilitated the identification of new techniques to meet human needs that are non-exploitative and non-manipulative, instead being rewarding and beneficial (Besthorn and McMillen, 2002). The reviewed article aimed to reject various forms of exploitation and manipulation within power dynamics among individuals and their environment. The present study seeks to challenge the tendency of some Ecofeminists and others to assign blame to men, while portraying women solely as victims and neglecting their contributions to environmental harm and the detriment of "earthothers" (Gaard, 2017).

Chakraborty (2015) examined Environmental Ethics by exploring the conflicting ideologies of deep ecology and ecofeminism. The deep ecology framework can be viewed as both progressive and deficient. It acknowledged and honored the richness, flourishing, and diversity of all life forms. The dimensions were subsequently adjusted to reflect antianthropocentrism (Chakraborty, 2015). Ecofeminists expressed concern that deep ecology failed to consider androcentrism in its approach to equality issues. Chakraborty

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(2015) examined ecofeminism in relation to Warren's (2005) viewpoint, which highlights the power dynamics among humans and draws parallels between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature. Individuals who rejected the link between these dual exploitations exhibited a bias in favor of men. Ecofeminists expressed significant concerns regarding partiality and inaccuracy in deep ecology, particularly in its treatment of inequality among nature, men, and women.



## Male-blame

Schubert, Aguilar, Kim, and Gomez (2021) assessed the attribution of blame to all men regarding violence and gender inequality. They addressed the issue by establishing three categories: Oppressed Traditional Masculinities (OTM), Dominant Traditional Masculinities (DTM), and New Alternative Masculinities (NAM) (Schubert, Aguilar, Kim & Gomez, 2021). OTM were held responsible for the violence and harm inflicted on women by DTM. NAM rejected the prejudice directed at men uninvolved in the harm being caused (Schubert, Aguilar, Kim & Gomez, 2021). The study included interviews with six participants, chosen according to defined criteria. Their engagement in social movements addressing gendered crimes, participation in feminism, and any association with NAM. Participants recounted various incidents from conferences and movements, attributing blame to men who are supportive of women. The responses to the blaming discourses varied among different men. OTM's submissive reaction contributed to the perpetuation of blame directed at

men. NAM chose to address the prejudice and employed various coping mechanisms, avoiding aggressive behavior, to manage the blame and distrust directed at women feminists. The outcome was a reduction in the hostile and combative attitudes of those women towards them.

Feminist contexts must be differentiated, as not all assign blame to men. Schubert, Aguilar, Kim, and Gomez (2021) noted the scarcity of literature on blame and prejudice against men and recommended further exploration of this area in future research studies. This study aims to identify a comparable blaming discourse directed at men in the context of Ecofeminist Sustainability disruption. Gaard (2017).

Recent studies indicate that male rape cases are rarely reported. A considerable number of males remained silent survivors, as the issue was not reported until recent times. Individuals exhibited less seriousness towards male rape incidents compared to female rape cases, resulting in the male perpetrator receiving less blame and being treated more leniently than the female perpetrator. The reviewed article and its findings addressed the male-blame issue in the context of male and female rapes, highlighting that more blame was directed towards males even when they were not accountable. Members of society tended to



attribute blame to men for various situations. In any unfortunate situation, blame should be assigned to perpetrators regardless of their gender or that of the victim. The reviewed article contributed to the current study's argument that, in addressing victimperpetrator situations, factors such as rape victims, nature's oppression, or eco-feminist sustainability disruption may render gender an inadequate consideration.

### **Sustainability**

O'Riordan (2004) established a relationship among geographers, political experts, and environmental specialists to promote sustainability. The pursuit of power and economic dominance outweighed concerns for environmental sustainability. Ecological and human social health declined due to a political framework that fostered antagonism and occasionally led to forced migrations. O'Riordan (2004) established that geographers could assist in harmonizing the relationship between government capital, private ownership, and civil associations for the benefit of environmental sustainability. The current study aimed to investigate the barriers to sustainability through the lens of ecofeminism, addressing the issue within an economic-political context.

### **George's (2021) *The Heiress gets a Duke***

Angela (2021) conducted a review of

George's work (2021). *The Heiress* features a Duke and presents a compelling romance with an intelligent and dedicated female protagonist. She started by analyzing the plot and subsequently examined the two main characters: August and Evan. The heiress expressed interest in her family's business and had no plans to marry. As the plot progressed, it became evident to other characters that she possessed skills, competence, and the capability to lead in business.

### **Kim's (2019) *The Unicorn Project***

Choudhuri (2020) evaluated and commended Kim's (2019) *The Unicorn Project* for its accurate representation of corporate life and culture. It demonstrated a solid understanding of technology, architecture, and software engineering. Effective corporate leadership is as crucial as the competencies of all its members. The decisions required for survival and success in corporate life, along with the challenges arising from those decisions, were embodied in the character of Maxine.

In education, business, and government, economic actors lead the sustainability movement and are consequently responsible for its disruption. This study challenges Gaard's (2017) theory and investigates Ecofeminist sustainability and its disruption

concerning women. The study focused exclusively on gender and suggested that future researchers investigate Ecofeminist sustainability concerning racial, educational, and political aspects (Gaard, 2017).

### **III- RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research study is qualitative. Qualitative research aims to understand, explain, explore, discover, and clarify the situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and experiences of a group of people (Kumar, 2011). The attitudes of economically active women regarding ecological health, human health, and "earthothers" (Gaard, 2017), as well as Ecofeminist sustainability, are examined. The study aims to provide a discussion on the collective perspectives of men and women regarding the disruption of sustainability, aimed at clarifying and rejecting the notion of male-blame.

#### **Research Method**

This study employs Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis to examine themes in the selected texts, aiming to explore the research objectives and questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) outline a six-step method for thematic analysis.

#### **1: Familiarization**

To study a text from all perspectives and approach it through all dimensions. It is to get a grasp of all meanings (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

#### **2: Generating Codes**

After collecting and analyzing the textual data, it is essential to organize the passages by generating codes. The primary aim is to reduce and categories (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The aim is to give purpose and meaning to the dispersed information, thereby enhancing its credibility (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

#### **3: Generating Themes**

Coded passages are then classified into identifiable distinct themes. Integrating disparate ideas and evidence, that in isolation might seem unintelligible, into significant theme patterns. They are constructed to identify similarities throughout the selected texts (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Categorizing in accordance with the thematic classification establishes a link between various fragments of coded passages (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000) and theoretical knowledge. An important aspect of this step is to identify whether inductive or deductive thematic analysis is the best fit for the research study. Inductive type stresses on theme formation by focusing on the texts without taking into consideration any pre-existing frameworks

(Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Deductive Thematic analysis is based on theoretical interests and objectives of the researcher set sorted in each code are sub-categorized into

prior to the text passages categorization (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The present research study follows the norms of Deductive Thematic Analysis. The selected passages multiple themes at this point each

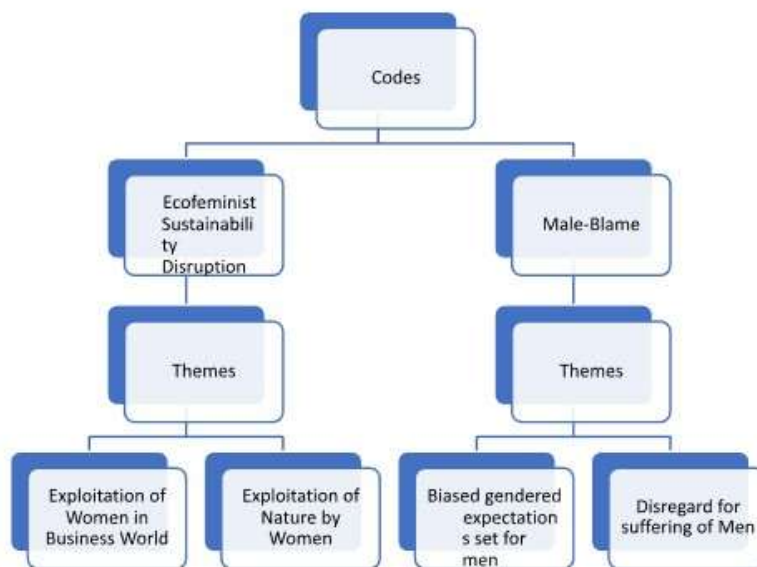
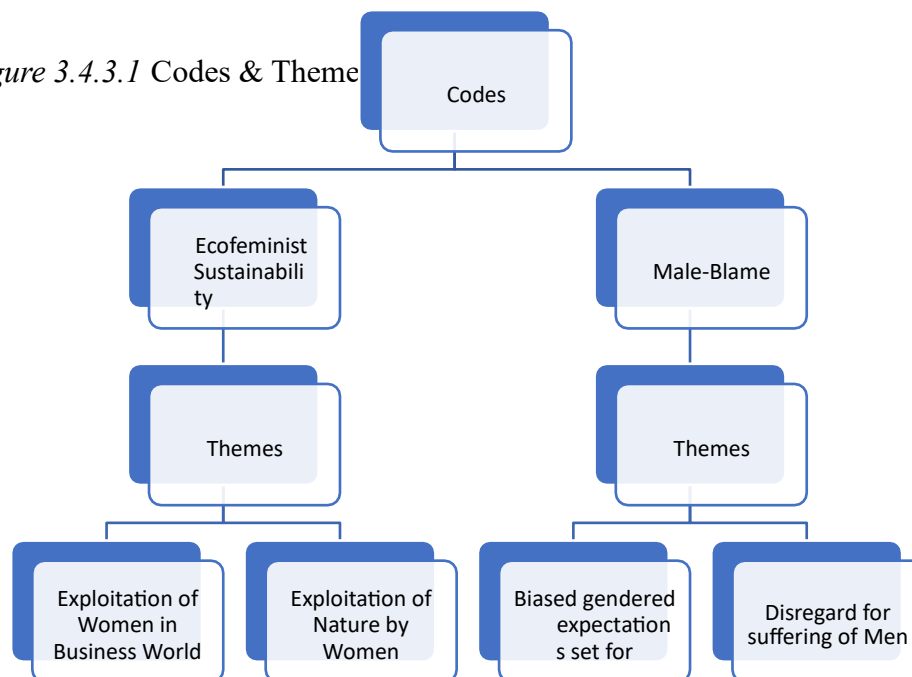


Figure 3.4.3.1 Codes & Theme



**: Reviewing Themes** designated thematic category is questioned. Reviewing themes is essential, as it assesses

the relevance between the theme and the text. Irrelevancies are identified, and modifications to the predetermined codes and themes are made, as necessary.

## 5: Analyzing Themes

Each theme requires detailed analysis to assess the implications of the selected texts. The theme's subject matter should be clear to the target readers from the outset (Braun &

Clarke, 2006). The chosen passages serve as evidentiary support for multiple themes, demonstrating a strong connection among the themes, the selected texts, and the research objectives (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This analysis examines incidents and evidence from George's (2021) *The Heiress Gets a Duke* and Kim's (2019) *The Unicorn Project*, focusing on themes related to Ecofeminist Sustainability, its disruption, and Male-Blame, to address the research questions posed.

## RESEARCH ANALYSIS

The alignment of passages with their designated thematic category is questioned. Reviewing themes is essential, as it assesses (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Inaccuracies and

Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis, the textual data after being reviewed multiple times, is classified initially into two categories of Codes:

1. Ecofeminist Sustainability Disruption
2. Male-Blame
2. These codes are then sub-divided into two themes each according to the similarity of ideas and thought patterns.
  1. The themes for the code Ecofeminist Sustainability are:
    - Exploitation of Women in the business world.
    - Exploitation of Nature by Economic Women.
  2. The themes for code Male-Blame are:
    - Biased Gendered Expectations set for Men.
    - Disregard the suffering of Men.

### 1: Ecofeminist Sustainability Disruption

The development of a lifestyle that ensures the flourishing of all beings, both human and non-human, promotes an ecosystem that fosters growth and progress for all life, rather than prioritizing human beings and perceiving "earthothers" (Gaard, 2017) merely as commodities for human use (Cuomo, 1998). Gaard (2017) defines "Earthothers" as all non-human entities, encompassing plants, animals, water bodies,

the physical environment, and other ecological entities. Establishing the connection among all life forms and recognizing the significance of food chains highlights that all beings rely on one another for consumption and resource utilization within an ecosystem. This must be done while ensuring safe, ethical, and adequate practices that do not compromise the quality of life and life expectancy of any beings (Bennett 2010). Ecocriticism focusses on understanding power dynamics among beings and seeks to eliminate instances of imbalance. Power dynamics are studied within human societies, particularly between genders, by Feminists who have sought equality among all genders for centuries (Gaard, 2012). Feminism collaborates with Ecocriticism to examine the domination-subordination dynamics between “earthothers” (Gaard, 2017) and humans, as well as among different genders within humanity. Ecofeminism examines the dominant-subordinate relationship among “earthothers” (Gaard, 2017), men, and women, aiming to advocate for the rights of those who are dominated and exploited (Plumwood, 2004). Ecofeminism addresses the maintenance of sustainability within its framework.

### **1.1: Exploitation of Women in Business World**

The initiation and maintenance of dialogue, along with the capacity for decision-making, raises concerns among some Ecofeminists regarding the notion of Gendered Communication (Gaard, 2017). Women are thought to employ hedges and tag questions more often in discussions, which may

convey a lack of confidence in their contributions. Consequently, their opinions are frequently overlooked, leading to feelings of being unheard and alienated from conversations, resulting in limited influence on decisionmaking. Furthermore, they are often overshadowed by dominant men in business environments (Gaard, 2017; Lakoff, 1975; Spender, 1980; Kramarae, 1981). Conversely, evidence from the literary texts indicates a different conclusion. Themes illustrating women's decision-making capabilities in the business realm are evident in George's (2021) *The Heiress Gets a Duke*, where female characters engage in business activities, participate in discussions, and make decisions. August Crenshaw, the female protagonist, is deeply involved in her family's business, Crenshaw Iron Works. She participates in meetings with her father, engages in discussions with the opposing party, provides her insights, and contributes to decisions that are esteemed by her father.

*I am afraid that we must insist on autonomy, if we agree to this August said, drawing attention back to her. We control our own operation, and that includes our relationship with our workers. We pay them a wage that we determine to be fair. (George, 2021)*

August is assured regarding the terms she seeks for the deal's finalization. The conversational traits characterizing a dominant man, as outlined by Gaard (2017), Lakoff (1975), Spender (1980), and Kramarae (1981), are evident in August's speech delivery. A dominant speaker can lead in "conversational innovation" (Gaard, 2017), as evidenced by August's speech. Speaking is associated with knowledge, power, and domination (Gaard, 2017). Thus, it can be inferred that August, who speaks effectively, demonstrates knowledge in her discourse, possesses the ability to influence discussions, and can dominate her audience. This is evident from the ease with which the opposing party concedes and accepts her terms following her earlier argument.

*Lord Farthington appeared to be on the verge of arguing, but then he gave a nod of agreement. Your contracts are your own to negotiate. She let out a quiet sigh of relief that she hadn't needed to fight harder. (George, 2021)*

August signifies the influential economic women capable of initiating and guiding discussions, impacting audiences, and asserting control over decisions through expertise or authority. This indicates the presence of economic women and their ability to make decisions impacting other individuals and "earthothers" (Gaard, 2017), which can either uphold or undermine Ecofeminist

Sustainability. August is prepared to "fight harder" (George, 2021) to ensure her opinion is acknowledged and valued, which contrasts with Gaard's (2017) assertion that women's viewpoints in conversation are "rarely taken up" (Gaard, 2017). Gaard's (2017) discussion on gendered communication in the business world raises concerns by exclusively referencing dominant Economic men, with no mention of dominant women, suggesting a potential absence of dominant Economic women.

To address the perspective that women's opinions are frequently dismissed by dominant men in business discussions (Gaard, 2017), August's situation serves as a counterexample, as the men in her life, including her father, are depicted as supportive of her business endeavors.

*My lord, although Miss Crenshaw is my daughter, she is also a trusted employee of Crenshaw Iron Works. I trust her discretion and her advice implicitly. You did say this was a business issue? ... Then I would very much like that she attend. (George, 2021)*

August's opinions are significant and valued in important meetings and discussions. Mr. Crenshaw is both her father and the owner of Crenshaw Iron Works. A dominant personality such as his recognizes the

capabilities of an economically empowered woman. The purpose is not to deny the historical subjugation of women; rather, the question is whether only men are to be blamed for exploitation or if all human beings, regardless of gender, can be held accountable. In situations involving a female victim of exploitation and manipulation, whether in business or non-business contexts, men can be categorized into three groups: Dominant Traditional Masculinities (DAM), which are responsible for the harm; Oppressed Traditional Masculinities (OTM), which do not engage in harmful behaviour but are held accountable for DAM's actions; and New Alternative Masculinities (NAM), which reject blame for actions they did not commit and actively support women (Schubert, T., Aguilar, C., Kim, K. & Gomez, A, 2021). In the context of female classification, Dominant Traditional Femininity (DTF) encompasses women who harm, manipulate, and exploit others in business. Oppressed Traditional Femininities (OTF) refer to women who face exploitation from DTF and DAM. New Alternative Femininities (NAF) consist of women who reject domination by

DTF and DAM, supported by NAM.

Instances from the selected literary texts are presented as evidence to support this situation.

In the event of DTF:

*If a betrothal isn't announced by the time we leave, your position at Crenshaw Iron will be eliminated...This marriage will be best for the family and the business – there is no mistaking that – but also for you. You will have opportunities you*

*cannot even imagine. Opportunities? I have all the opportunities I need. Now. With Crenshaw Iron. Mother shook her head. Not if you refuse this.*

(George, 2021).

In this scenario, August is an OTF being exploited by her mother, a DTF. Mr. Crenshaw serves as DTM in this case, providing support to DTF in the manipulation of OTF. This emphasizes that women also participate in the subjugation and manipulation of other women when profit or business is at stake. NAM, in this instance, refers to Evan Sterling, who supports and values August's feelings and opinions when she is manipulated by her parents regarding a marriage that benefits the family business.

*What disappointed Evan was how easily things seemed to be proceeding...he seemed willing to offer up his daughter – either daughter – to Evan on a silver platter, complete with a tumbler of whisky on the side. August was far more precious than that. The man should have been interrogating him on his plans for her future. (George, 2021)*

Given the conditions, it can be concluded that while certain men may oppress women, there are also men who oppose such suppression



and advocate for women's rights. Similarly, certain women in professional environments manipulate and exploit other women. In conclusion, dominant “Economic” (Gaard, 2017) women share responsibility for decisions that prioritize profit over the welfare of individuals and the environment in business contexts. The purpose of this argument is not to deny the historical oppression of women nor to defend the actions of certain men in contributing to that oppression. It is important to acknowledge the role of women in the exploitation of other women within business contexts and to emphasize their capacity to make business decisions that may undermine Ecofeminist Sustainability. In Kim's (2019) work, the female character Maxine faces discrimination when she is unjustly demoted by her male supervisor for a mistake she did not commit. However, there are supportive men like Kurt, who actively assist women in corporate environments by providing necessary files and relevant information to Maxine.

## **1.2: Exploitation of Nature by Economic Women**

The exploitation of nature by industrialists and business owners has been a persistent issue. The connection between humans and “earthothers” (Gaard, 2017) has existed since the beginnings of humanity and the planet (Gaard, 2017). Extensive histories produce various narratives, intricate viewpoints, and a multitude of enquiries: What characterizes this relationship? What are the dimensions of power? Who relies on whom? What measures can be taken to ensure a mutually

beneficial relationship? Eco-critics and Ecofeminists have analyzed the human-nature relationship to explore various enquiries (Garrard, 2004). The exploitation and manipulation of nature by humans is an undeniable viewpoint. The harm inflicted on nature by humans is compared to the feminist concern regarding the oppression of women (Gaard, 2017; Garrard, 2004; Plumwood, 2004). The human-nature relationship requires a comprehensive analysis within diverse humanist contexts, such as gender, social, racial, and economic factors.

Advocating against the mistreatment of nature and women is understandable, but attributing the blame solely to one gender appears exaggerated and debatable. Gaard (2017) attributes the exploitation of nature in business to “Economic Men,” asserting that women and nature are interconnected and perceived as commodities reliant on fulfilling human needs. The problem is that combining the topics of nature and women's subordination tends to obscure women's role in harming nature, portraying them solely as victims. The logic of domination is uncommon, as the victim of one domination/subordination group (male - female) also participates in subjugating the victim of another group (Human - nature). In

addition to “Economic Men” (Gaard, 2017), there are also dominant Economic women who prioritize business profits and economic gains, often overlooking the impact on other women, individuals, and the environment (Gaard, 2017). Thus, they can equally disrupt Ecofeminist Sustainability. Exploitation or disruption occurs when one person gains from others or nature without providing any benefit in return (Khalil, 2017). In a business context, when an economic individual develops a business plan or implements a project that negatively impacts others and the environment, it is termed exploitation. Some Ecofeminists argue that women possess a profound connection to nature and exhibit empathy towards humans, animals, and the environment (Garrard, 2004). Previous studies indicate that men and women experience similar emotions; however, their methods of expression may differ, which is influenced less by gender and more by other factors.

Emotions are recognized as an influential factor that impacts thought patterns (Remer, 2013). The emotions of both men and women concerning nature significantly influence their business decision-making related to it.

For example:

*He''s researched everything needed to make the farms more efficient. From newer strains of grain and corn resistant to mould and pests, to mechanized equipment that would make the farms more efficient, to a plan of annual investment for a small percentage of profits*

*meant to be an insurance against future failures. (George, 2021)*

The statement illustrates Evan's sympathetic nature towards farmers, farms, and nature overall. His business plan aligns with the principles of ecofeminist sustainability. He demonstrates a creative vision for the future and a sense of security for nature and its carers, such as farmers (Wagner & Andreas, 2012). Conversely, August exhibits emotional detachment by prioritizing her role in the family business over the welfare of extensive farming lands and the livelihoods of numerous farmers and their families. She articulates her rationale: “And leave Crenshaw Irons?” George (2021). Her lack of concern for nature results in decisions that adversely affect both the environment and other individuals. Evan demonstrates a sense of responsibility towards nature that is absent in August's interactions with it.

## **2: Male-Blame**

Feminists have historically promoted women's rights and aimed to enhance their status within social power structures. Addressing injustices faced by women is essential for societal progress; however, the empowerment of one gender may sometimes occur at the expense of another. Research shows that men are

often assigned blame, even when they are victims or uninvolved in the situation (Schubert, Aguilar, Kim & Gomez, 2021). When the genders of both the victim and perpetrator are anonymized, individuals tend to assume the victim is female and the perpetrator is male. The current social system fosters the assumption that all predators are male (Stemple & Meyer, 2017). Society frequently overlooks the fact that men can also face harassment or oppression. Higher gendered expectations of masculinity and the perception of women's physical weakness contribute to the belief that women cannot oppress those who are physically stronger (Schubert, Aguilar, Kim & Gomez, 2021).

Moreover, an often-neglected aspect is the oppression of women by other women, leading to the exclusive attribution of blame to men (Stemple & Meyer, 2017). In discussions of domination-subordination scenarios, harassment, oppression, and social order disruption, some feminists and ecofeminists depict women exclusively as victims, implying that they hold no responsibility for inflicting harm on humans or "earthothers" (Gaard, 2017). This viewpoint attributes all disruption solely to men, portraying them as a danger to both nature and humanity.

Gaard (2017) asserts that sustainability in business, government, and education has been a movement characterized by white, male, and middle-class

representation. Attributing responsibility for the sustainability movement to men results in blame being directed exclusively at them. This study shows that sustainability is not exclusively a male initiative; women are also actively involved in the process. Research indicates that women's equal participation in sustainability disruption suggests that elevated expectations for males may protect females from blame, given their contributions are frequently overlooked (Stemple & Meyer, 2017), as illustrated in the subsequent passage:

*He said it as if her writing was a mere hobby and not something to be considered a serious pursuit. But then far more insidious thoughts crossed her mind. Was this because Violet had been born a daughter? Did she have no other worth to him than something with which he could barter? If he was willing to part with Violet so easily, did that also extend to August? George (2021).*

August does not consider such thoughts when a woman, her mother, declares her intention to marry Violet to a duke. She is not held accountable for disregarding Violet's feelings as a daughter. The blame shared by her mother and father is solely directed at her father. The concept of Male-Blame is evident, as the male

gender is depicted as solely responsible for maintaining resilience in challenging negative events, while the female gender is portrayed as uninvolved in causing harm and is viewed exclusively as victims. Elevating expectations for men lead to the attribution of blame solely to them. This statement does not deny men's role in the overall disruption; rather, it emphasizes that both men and women are equally involved in the process. The code Male-Blame is divided into two themes: Biased Gendered

Expectations for Men and Disregard for the Suffering of Men.

## 2.1. Biased Gendered Expectations set for Men

Gendered expectations result from cultural norms and societal constructs. Numerous studies have examined the discriminatory expectations placed on women, including pressures related to physical appearance, a polite demeanor, and nurturing abilities.

Feminists and Eco-feminists criticize societal views that reduce women to mere objects, whose primary roles are to bear children and provide nourishment (Parker, Horowitz & Stepler, 2017). Men also face biased societal expectations, though literature on this topic is scarce (Schubert, Aguilar, Kim, & Gomez, 2021). Societal pressure and the fear of disappointment from same-gender individuals create elevated expectations regarding a man's strength, emotional expression, actions, treatment of the opposite gender, and familial responsibilities thus demonstrates emotional and physical support for partners while

circumstances, without anticipating reciprocal support; able to fulfil the role of primary provider for partners and family (Parker, Horowitz & Stepler, 2017). This study will identify the gendered expectations imposed on men regarding ecofeminist sustainability, as outlined in Gaard's (2017) work, and explore their disruption.

Gaard (2017) asserts that men lead the sustainability movement in business, thus bearing the responsibility for balancing financial profit with the welfare of people and nature. Maintaining sustainability is beneficial for the advancement of human society and the environment (Gaard, 2017). Given the established involvement of women in the ecofeminist sustainability movement, it is biased to expect only men to contribute to this effort. The propositions presented by Gaard (2017) are evident in the chosen literary texts.

*Hundreds of families are depending on me to save my estates. I have four houses that are threatening to crumble down around me. I have two sisters who must be launched into society next year, and a mother who must be cared for. Finding a woman I want to marry is a luxury I do not possess. George (2021).*

In a household with a mother, son, and sisters, the son is responsible for protecting the family from a crisis. Societal expectations for achieving financial independence are higher for sons compared to mothers. He is responsible for maintaining a good lifestyle for his partner, children, mother, and sisters, suggesting that the mother and sisters do not manage the family's finances. Men often sacrifice for their family's happiness, as shown in the case above. Women's emotional expression is seen as a vulnerability that positively impacts mental health and emotional stability. In contrast, men view such displays as signs of weak masculinity, irrespective of the situation's severity or loss. The expectation for men to internalize sadness has been established since childhood (Buck, 1977; Levensen, Carstensen & Gottman, 1994; Chaplin, 2015; Parker, Horowitz & Stepler, 2017).

*It was only in that moment that he realized he had never mourned his brother. He had gone through the emotions, but Father had always been there lurking in the background, waiting to swoop in on some perceived weakness. Evan had opted to hold the pain of William's loss inside, hoping that if he had held long enough, it would dissolve into nothing.*

### **Disregard for suffering of Men**

Certain ecofeminist theories exhibit a lack of consideration for male suffering, often

(George, 2021).

The passage highlights the influence of samegender pressure. Fathers significantly influence a son's behavior and expression of sadness and anger. The development of emotional expression is influenced by time and situational experiences shared by both girls and boys, significantly shaped by societal expectations (Chaplin, 2015; Shields, 2002; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Boys are often discouraged from expressing emotions during childhood, while studies indicate that parents tend to have a more emotional connection with girls, facilitating greater expressiveness in them (Chaplin, 2015; Adams, Kuebli, Boyle, & Fivush, 1995; Fivush, 1989). Furthermore, the internalization of sorrow results in an emotional accumulation that frequently contributes to depression in adult males. This is exemplified by Evan, who suppresses his grief over his brother's death to avoid appearing weak in his father's eyes.

*everything is wrong...No one who matters is being held responsible!... Kim (2019). 2.2.*

The overall management of the Phoenix

Project is deemed a failure; however, William

accompanied by an overemphasis on female is held accountable and loses his job due to victimization. Their assertion is that men the management's negligence. In situations possess sufficient strength to protect themselves and that male suffering is a “myth” adversely impacted by business decisions, (Stemple & Meyer, 2014). Gaard's (2017)

Gaard (2017) notes that they are regarded as theory specifically addresses suffering in “sacrifice zones” (Gaard, 2017). William can relation to nature, encompassing “other similarly be viewed as a scapegoat, serving to animals, women, people of color, queers, and mask the incompetence of the departments ‘others’” (Gaard, 2017; Probyn-Rapsey, managing the Phoenix project. Some Donaldson, Ioannides, Lea & Marsh, 2016).

Ecofeminists regard the sacrifices and The lack of representation for male victims sufferings of men as lesser than those of contributes to a perception that their suffering women; however, suffrage should not be is abnormal and indicative of weak categorized by gender but rather by the masculinity. Consequently, many hesitate to degree of injustice or harm inflicted on express or report their experiences of individuals (Stemple & Meyer, 2014). The harassment, often opting to remain silent. focus is primarily on the suffering of women This reluctance stems from the belief that and the involvement of men in their revealing such emotions will result in shame. subjugation. Klemp (2010) identifies two Corporate decisions impact not only women critical factors for assessing the use of but also men, who are equally subject to the emotional manipulation by individuals. First, influences of business decision-makers it represents an irrational method employed regarding job stability and security. Kim by an individual to sway the decisions of (2019) addresses the same theme in the others; second, it is typically executed with following passage:

intent (Klemp, 2010; Remer, 2013). For example, consider the following passage:

*Read the email that was just sent out. They fired William... I wasn't a huge fan of William, he says, but to blame him for I am so terribly sorry. Your father should have done better, but... Her voice drifted off. What was there to say? There had been no money set aside anywhere. He should know, because he had looked. Clark had looked. There was nothing. If you choose not to marry now, then the task will fall to your sisters. Only, I*

*shudder to think of the offers they shall receive next Season with no dowries. George (2021).*

In comparing Evan's situation to the elements of emotional manipulation outlined by Klemp (2010), it is evident that his mother attempts to sway his decision to marry a



wealthy heir by invoking his father's incompetence and death. She pressures Evan to marry by highlighting his responsibility for his sisters' marriages and the potential difficulty in attracting secure proposals. She references these points deliberately to persuade him to agree to marriage for the sake of her daughter's future. For her, the solution involves ending the family's financial crises are to manipulate her son into marrying a rich heiress.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the potential for a relationship between women and women, as well as between women and nature, characterized by domination and subordination dynamics. Ecofeminist sustainability is not solely a male movement; women are equally involved. Furthermore, literary texts indicate

that women are integral to the ecofeminist sustainability movement and contribute to its disruption. The characterization of women's approach to nature as sympathetic and innately connected may not be a verified fact. The relationship between women and nature, as well as men and nature, is primarily influenced by societal interactions and childhood psychological experiences. Men and women can both exhibit sympathetic behavior towards the treatment of humans, animals, and nature. Moreover, the present study doesn't justify the Male Part in Ecofeminist Sustainability disruption, rather it identifies the role that women play alongside men in causing the upsetting situation. The study also identifies two main reasons that often lead to male- Blame in the disruption cause: firstly, higher gendered expectations set by society for men and secondly, a disregard for the suffering of men.

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