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Revolutionary Talk: Communicating Climate Justice

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by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the role that story-based strategy and narrative oriented communications play in the Climate Justice Movement's counterhegemonic struggle against neoliberal discursive hegemony. As more and more people come to accept the reality of the climate crisis a new struggle is emerging, a discursive struggle over what the crisis actually means. This project identifies an ideological polarization in which climate justice represents a socially transformative bottom up approach to climate change, while hegemonic neoliberal elites advocate for market solutions, technofixes and minimal social change. My project therefore places emphasis upon the role that ideology, norms and values play in shaping attitudes towards climate change solutions and societal transformation. I use Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse and hegemony to provide a framework for studying the rhetoric and implications of climate change discourse. I examine two case studies in the United States: The Our Power Campaign in Richmond, California and the Fossil Free UC fossil fuel divestment campaign as sites of clear hegemonic struggle over how climate change is understood. Together these sites provide a valuable cross-section of climate justice organizations in the US. I discuss the implications of their communications strategies, and in particular what Reinsborough and Canning call story-based strategy. I pay close attention to how reframing narratives help restructure public discourse, as well as the successes and limitations of these discursive interventions. I have found that the strategies

discussed in these case studies are beginning to shift discursive conditions around solutions to climate change and can be refined, reworked and applied to many other climate justice campaigns.

Key terms: Climate Justice, Hegemony, Discourse, Laclau and Mouffe, Climate Change Communication, Counterhegemony, Climate Change, Story-based Strategy, Reframing Narrative, Fossil Free, Our Power Campaign, California, Global Studies

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Introduction

Twenty-one years too late, the Paris climate talks in 2015 finally agreed that climate change is happening and that it is anthropogenic – the age of climate change denial is drawing to a close (if only insofar as acknowledgement of its existence goes). Despite governments' best efforts to suggest otherwise, however, the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) achieved little more of substance. Put simply, COP 21 failed to produce a treaty that will mitigate the climate crisis. Current estimates suggest that the pledges made in Paris set global warming on track for a rise of at least three degrees Celsius. Meanwhile the climate science reveals that any increase above one and a half degrees is dangerous and above two degrees is disastrous. Delegates in Paris pledged to review their commitments in five years' time. Moreover, any language on historic responsibility, human rights, intergenerational equity and gender empowerment – all key principles of climate justice – was removed from the body of the treaty and relegated to its preamble. Nevertheless the very fact that every country in the world collectively agreed to address the climate crisis is remarkable and a historic milestone. What comes after Paris, however, is far more interesting.

An ideological, material and discursive struggle over the terms on which the climate crisis must be addressed has been escalating for at least a decade. In fact, we have already witnessed several overt skirmishes but COP 21 has forced this struggle into the open. The next decade will see outright climate denial in decline and in its place the rise of fierce confrontation over what climate change means

and the response with which it must be met. COP21 does not signal the end of the climate debate, nor even the beginning of the end, but perhaps it is the end of the beginning. It is here, at the end of the beginning, that my thesis makes its intervention.

The terms of the ensuing struggle are profoundly ideological and highly polarized. On the one hand are the enlightened neoliberals and ecomodernists, aligned with what Hardt and Negri might term the forces of *Empire*, or as I understand it, militarized economic globalization. On the other is the network of social movements and activists comprising the Climate Justice Movement (perhaps an example of Hardt and Negri's *Multitude*). The solutions each side presents to the crisis are radically different. While it is important to regard the dualism I have set up with some skepticism and recognize that climate politics are far messier and more complicated than this binary, I have generally found it an accurate and useful heuristic for the purposes of my thesis. Neoliberal elites recognize climate change as a challenge for the market to resolve and an opportunity for both green economic growth and also increased spending on military and security. The approach widely favored by elites everywhere is to allow market mechanisms to cut emissions and to commodify the ecosystems upon which we depend, as well as to rely upon "bridge fuels" derived from fracking and fantasy technology to sequester carbon and store it under ground. Some of the more radical climate conservatives are seriously considering geo-engineering the climate to ensure business as usual continues (Ecomodernist Manifesto, 2015; Giddens, 2011). Should these mechanisms fail and inevitable conflict and instability ensue, these

elites will intensify military and security infrastructure to combat the fallout (Mirowski, Walker, and Abboud, 2013). Central to the neoliberal solutions is the belief that carbon emissions are ultimately the responsibility of each individual consumer and it is up to the individual to buy new sustainable products and to make small changes in lifestyle choices, thereby reducing individual emissions. In essence climate change is not considered a threat to the established order but rather as an opportunity to expand and consolidate it.

The Climate Justice Movement, meanwhile, interprets climate change as a moral crisis that is deeply rooted in the Global North's colonial legacy, neoliberal capitalism and contemporary structures of power. Arguing that these must be overturned to address the climate crisis many rally behind the slogan "system change not climate change." Constituents of the Climate Justice Movement envision solutions to the climate crisis that are radically democratic, context specific, and intersectional (Bullard and Müller, 2012). A few examples of this are energy democracy, decentralized cooperative economics, opposition to free trade deals, recognition of climate debt and historical responsibility, and massive government investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency (Bond, 2012; Klein, 2014). The term many activists use to encompass this response is a "just transition." Climate justice is a counterhegemonic project antithetical to neoliberal ideology and the security politics it depends upon.

Solutions to the climate crisis are proposed on the terrain of hegemony and counterhegemony. More specifically the struggle can be understood discursively,

as both sides seek to articulate a set of solutions and vision of the future that is legitimized through public discourse. Hegemonic and counterhegemonic projects alike must constantly structure discursive conditions to legitimize their actions and their ideologies (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014). Using narratives and frames to affect value systems and successfully engage with diverse audiences is crucial. Therefore, when coupled with a careful analysis of power, communication strategy is an essential component to any hegemonic or counterhegemonic project[1]. This thesis integrates the findings of climate communications scholars with discourse theory and the empirical evidence counterhegemonic communications strategists have brought back from the field. In this way the project tests a theory of change against empirical evidence. It asks how climate justice activists across the globe can structure discursive conditions such that climate justice solutions to climate change are recognized as urgent and legitimate amongst audiences stretching far beyond the Climate Justice Movement itself. In other words, *how can the Climate Justice Movement successfully challenge hegemonic climate discourse while engaging with, and appealing to, a larger and more diverse array of audiences?*

In many cases climate justice activists have so far "failed to establish an anti-capitalist climate justice discourse that [is] understandable beyond the subculture of activists and policy wonks" (Bullard and Muller quoted in Tokar, 2014, 82). This thesis discusses possible avenues for climate justice discursive interventions

[1] I do not wish to overemphasize the discursive side of power. While discursive and cultural hegemony is by no means the only way in which power manifests itself, this thesis concerns its self primarily with an analysis of this manifestation of power.

that reach far beyond subcultures of activists and policy wonks. In fighting climate change denial, theorists of climate communications have come to recognize that "the facts" are rarely persuasive tools on their own. To gain legitimacy facts must be framed and assembled into narratives that fit with an audience's preexisting (or evolving) system of values (Marshall, 2014). Many climate communicators have used this understanding to engage with traditionally conservative audiences whose value systems very often screen out the facts of climate change. They have used frames and narratives, however, that present climate change as a non-threatening business opportunity, or a very threatening excuse for increased securitization and militarization. In this way neoliberal and conservative approaches to climate change have been reinforced. While both effective and undeniably useful, missing from the work of many climate communication scholars has been an adequately sophisticated understanding of power and discursive hegemony. My thesis brings the climate communication literature into contact with the literature on social movements and discourse theory to address these gaps. I then apply these to improving the understanding of climate justice communications.

While certainly responding to the climate change communication literature, this thesis makes its intervention in the broader field of global climate politics. It weaves Laclau and Mouffe's theory of hegemony and articulation into a set of ideas applicable to climate justice counterhegemonic strategy. *This thesis argues that the Climate Justice Movement must recognize itself as being in the midst of a discursive struggle over the meaning of climate change and that it can then draw*

upon the power of framing and narrative to articulate a compelling challenge to hegemonic neoliberal climate discourses and restructure popular discursive conditions. Paying particular attention to local context and specificity this argument is tested through two case studies. These case studies suggest some of the fundamental values to which movement communicators must appeal and how movement activists have sought to appeal to them. My thesis provides readers with a few generalizable propositions that could be integrated into a global climate justice strategy, while remaining sensitive to the contextual specificity of different place-based struggles.

The first case study examines the Fossil Free campaign at the University of California, Fossil Free UC. It is part of the global fossil fuel divestment campaign and provides an important instance of young people's vital contribution to climate justice activism. The campaign offers a very clear example of the role framing and messaging can play in shaping public discourse. While many instances of climate justice activism are examples of defending communities from fossil fuel infrastructure, the Fossil Free campaign takes the fight to those it deems directly responsible for the climate crisis, the fossil fuel industry. It seeks to change the story of climate change by delegitimizing the fossil fuel industry and the perpetuators of climate inaction in the eyes of the public. The campaign targets the investment portfolios of universities, foundations, and religious, city councils and other public or cultural institutions. It calls upon them to publicly distance themselves from the practices of the fossil fuel industry by divesting from the 200 fossil fuel companies with the most carbon in their reserves. The Fossil Free UC

campaign is made up of a coalition of Fossil Free groups on the different UC campuses. Rather than targeting the investment portfolios of individual campuses, Fossil Free UC makes its demands directly to the UC regents and therefore fights for a much larger prize. This case study shows how social movements can go on the offensive to shape and change public discourse.

The second case study applies my theory of change to climate justice activism in Richmond, California. For almost 100 years Richmond has been home to a Chevron oil refinery. During that time Chevron has become one of the largest oil companies in the world and has come to dominate local political discourses and decision-making in Richmond. In this chapter I claim that while a non-state actor, Chevron's influence is such that the company has for a long time acted as a hegemon in the city – that is to say the company's relationship with Richmond has been a hegemonic one. Recently, however, its hegemonic grip over Richmond's politics has waned as the Richmond Progressive Alliance has taken control of the city council. Climate justice campaigns have successfully inserted counterhegemonic discourses into public consciousness. Richmond is an important site because it demonstrates how even where a hegemon's power should arguably be strongest it can be challenged. This case study assesses the nature of that challenge and shows that narratives and framing again played an important role.

The Climate Justice Movement is a network of individuals and campaigns bringing together a large array of backgrounds and privileges, but as a global

phenomenon it is led by the exploited, the underrepresented and the oppressed. Juxtaposing my two case studies offers a more accurate cross section of the movement and offers useful opportunities for comparison and contrast. Moreover, the inclusion of two case studies is an attempt to recognize that different communities experience climate change and fossil fuel extraction in very different ways. Where the Fossil Free campaign is comprised mostly of reasonably privileged and predominantly white college students, the climate justice campaigns in Richmond are, to a large extent, comprised of low-income people of color. Students fighting for divestment tend to have a very different stake than those fighting on the frontlines; communication strategies will therefore be different. Like the climate justice campaigns organizing there, Richmond is largely composed of low-income communities of color often with quite a different set of oppressions, frames, and sometimes values to those of the divestment campaign and its respective audiences.

My research has found that what Reinsborough and Canning call "story-based strategy" is an excellent descriptor for the kind of successful communication demonstrated in these two case studies (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010). It has also found that climate justice in Richmond and fossil fuel divestment at the UC have both used story-based strategy with great success. We all rely upon stories to make sense of the world around us; they are incredibly powerful tools for maintaining the established order and for undermining that order (Selbin, 2010). These case studies present campaigns undermining dominant stories about climate change and replace them with compelling alternative stories. These turn climate

change into a moral crisis with clear antagonists and protagonists, and offer solutions that demand systemic change. The stories they tell balance loss with hope, polarize audiences forcing them to chose a side, and prefigure a better world that can be fought for and won. They are unashamedly utopian yet grounded in the enormity of the challenges we all face, while being inclusive, credible and relatable; in the end they are both deeply personal and also universal. Social movement theorists and communications scholars alike have documented the persuasive power of stories. The two case studies are excellent examples of powerful counterhegemonic stories and how they can best be deployed. Ultimately, the stories and framing narratives evinced in the two case studies support my argument because they help to shape the discursive conditions within which climate change is understood.

The findings presented in this thesis are important but by no means complete. Moreover, they are not entirely original. Activists on the ground, and the strategists supporting them, have taught me a great deal and they already know much of what my research has uncovered. My work has been to synthesize, analyze and articulate them in the context of discursive power and climate justice, both for an academic audience and for movement strategists. The purpose of this research is therefore twofold: it responds to gaps in the literature, filling theoretical holes with empirical evidence, while at the same time providing movement strategists with an image (though certainly imperfect) of the work they have done so far and the kind of work they must continue to do. I hope it helps to

contribute to the burgeoning field of inquiry pertaining to the theory and practice of climate justice strategy.

The theory of change my research seeks to vindicate is embedded in several overlapping sets of literature and their corresponding disciplines or fields. Specifically, the theory developed and extended in this paper is derived from Communications, Critical Discourse Theory, Social Movement Studies, and Environmental Sociology. From Communications, I draw upon theories of persuasion, and particularly the literature on climate communication through framing and narrative. Key thinkers in this area are George Marshall, George Lakoff, the Climate Outreach think tank, and Weintrobe et al. From Discourse Theory I draw on Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe, and Kevin DeLuca on ideology and postmodern politics. These thinkers have helped me add a much need analysis of power into climate communications and strategy. They also allow my research to address counterhegemony in a meaningful way. From Social Movement Studies I use Haiven and Khasnabish, Eric Selbin and John Foran to explore the development of counterhegemonic cultures of resistance and regeneration. Finally from Environmental Sociology, and the nascent sociology of climate change, I draw upon Patrick Bond, Michael Dorsey, Naomi Klein, Brian Tokar, and John Urry. These authors have been vital to articulating climate justice into a coherent set of principles and discourse, as well as exploring the relationships amongst climate, politics and society. Finally, Reinsborough and Canning's field handbook for activists, *Re:Imagining Change,* successfully bridges much of this work and

has been essential to embedding counterhegmonic theory in practical climate justice activism.

The theory of change derived from these thinkers starts with a discussion of who the Climate Justice Movement is, what it strives for, and then works backwards to understand how it can get from here to there. The global Climate Justice Movement (CJM) is really a network of local, regional or national movements and campaigns. Despite the inevitable differences in political analysis, tactics, and theories of change, the movement coheres around a vision of a more democratic, equitable and sustainable society that challenges the neoliberal order. Climate justice is comprised of a highly diverse, uneven and yet potentially united front of those who resist and reject the logics of neoliberalism. This front presents solutions to the climate crisis that necessitate abandoning the neoliberal social and economic model, and the security apparatus upon which it depends.

The neoliberal order is hegemonic. I understand hegemony in the neo-Gramscian sense and adopt Raymond Williams's articulation of hegemony as the extension of politics into daily life, into culture and into what constitutes "common sense" (Williams, 1977, 108-114). Asef Bayat calls this the "politics of culture" (Bayat, 2010, 51). The CJM must engage in and win a counterhegmonic struggle against the hegemonic discourse of neoliberalism and its climate solutions. It must redefine what constitutes common sense. As Laclau and Mouffe have argued, counterhegemony is not only a material struggle but also an ideological and discursive one. Therefore the CJM must win the discursive struggle and reshape

the terms upon which climate change is understood and approached. The CJM must build what Foran calls vibrant and effective "political cultures of opposition and creativity" and globalize them into what Paul Routledge has termed "Translocal Climate Justice Solidarities" (Foran, 2014; Routledge, 2011). These political cultures would need to undermine the legitimacy of the established order and instead bequeath legitimacy upon, and draw people into, climate justice solutions. Thus political cultures of opposition and creativity are, at least in part, engendered through Reinsborough and Canning's "story-based strategy." Compelling stories that redefine the terms of the climate crisis help to bring audiences into these new political cultures. Deploying the most compelling and affect-oriented stories depends upon strong communications strategies which help to displace dominant narratives and appeal to the values of diverse audiences. Understanding how to construct and use these requires that agents of social change recognize the power of persuasive communications. In this way several fields of inquiry must be synthesized to serve my research project.

Heavily influenced by all of the aforementioned thinkers I have developed a theory of change rooted in a Global Studies perspective. As a Global Studies scholar, I am well positioned to bring these fields of inquiry together and examine what they bring to bear on one another and on climate justice strategy through a global lens. For example, both of my case studies, while located in California, have global and transnational dimensions and scope. If my project is to have significance in Global Studies, its case studies should reflect the complex dynamics of hegemony and resistance as they shift between global and local

contexts – and indeed as the local appears the in the global and vice versa. Moreover, this is a Global Studies project not only because it deals with the global threat of climate change and the global response of the CJM, but also because its epistemology is fundamentally informed by Global Studies scholarship and intersects with some of Global Studies' essential characteristics. Borrowing from Foran's political cultures of opportunity and creativity with regard to global climate change, requires theorizing the possibility of global citizenship, solidarity and ethics. For this I have drawn on Giles Gunn's work and what he calls "The Cosmopolitan Challenge" (Gunn, 2013). Gunn asks, "How are we to learn to think and feel not simply about others, or even for them, but with others in the face of global architectures that have become ossified, callous, or obsolete" (Gunn, 2013, 13)? His guiding question provides the skeleton for my own. In its most essential form, my project is about getting people to take responsibility for the consequences of their socio-economic system (consequences that are very often perceived to occur far away in time and space), and to act based on a sense of obligation to the people these consequences affect the most. A concern with global citizenship is an explicit or implicit strand of almost all Global Studies research and is integral to my own project. Through my enquiry into the ways in which climate justice activists can appeal to values and norms that transcend ideological boundaries, my research question is very much engaged in debates surrounding the potential for global ethics, citizenship and Gunn's cosmopolitan challenge.

I will close this introduction with a few words about my method and approach to the research question. Much of the theory developed in this thesis depends upon a close reading of literature from the many fields described above. Rather than compartmentalizing each discipline, approach or perspective, and simply taking from each what I require, I am trying to synthesize theories, arguments and tools from all these into a new framework of analysis, specifically designed to explore my research question as completely as possible. I test my theory with empirical evidence drawn from two ethnographic case studies. This data has been gathered from newspaper articles, reports from cutting edge think tanks, activist blogs and testimonies, in-depth interviews with movement organizers, and also the relevant research papers within traditional academia. In these case studies I have followed a method that scholar-activists before me have pioneered and continue to develop called Participatory Action Research. As an active member of the Fossil Free UC campaign I have been able to carry out Participatory Action Research, gaining a fascinating insider's perspective on the work Fossil Free does. I consider myself a scholar-activist and believe my work lives up to that label.

My thesis is developed in four chapters. I first embed my work within the relevant literature, responding to it as well as building a theory of change out of it. In the following to case studies I test this theory with empirical research on Fossil Free and climate justice activism in Richmond, respectively. In my final chapter I discuss the implications of these two case studies for the theory I have sought to develop, and examine its potential for generalizing my findings. I conclude the thesis by arguing that climate justice activists can and must enter into this

discursive struggle to win legitimacy and I describe some of the tools that can help them prepare for this epic existential struggle.

I. Communication, Discourse and Counterhegemony: A Literature Review

As the potency of climate change denial has gradually begun to wane, the struggle over what climate change will *mean* is taking its place. An ideological, material and discursive struggle over the terms on which the climate crisis must be addressed has been escalating for at least a decade and by the end of the Paris climate talks in December 2015, that struggle was forced into the open (Fenton, 2016). The conflict can be characterized by a clash between, on the one hand neoliberal climate discourses and solutions, and on the other, the discourses and solutions of the Climate Justice Movement. Ecomodernism is the most genuine attempt to address climate change within the framework of economic growth and neoliberal capitalism. I therefore (perhaps too generously) describe the neoliberal climate discourses and solutions as Ecomodernist (Ecomodernist Manifesto, 2015). Their discourses and solutions are hegemonic insofar as they dominate media public discussion and the interpretation of climate change that passes for "common sense." This is particularly true within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and their annual Conference of the Parties (COP) of which the 2015 Paris accord was a part. The Climate Justice Movement (CJM), meanwhile, rallies around the slogan "system change not climate change," claiming that climate change is a product of neoliberal ideology, the legacy of colonialism and the highly militarized state that protects both. The CJM is a counterhegemonic project challenging the logic defining what constitutes common sense in neoliberal society and seeks to replace this with its

own logic, or perhaps, sets of logics. To win this struggle it is clear that, among other things, the Climate Justice Movement must make a discursive intervention in hegemonic climate change discourse. This requires the development of communication strategies capable of bringing together the largest and most diverse social movement the world has ever seen.

This chapter explains and develops a theory of counterhegemonic communications strategy that case studies in my following chapters will test empirically. This review of the literature demonstrates that narrative communication is a vital component of counterhegemonic movement strategy and that campaigns within the CJM must deploy compelling and engaging narratives to challenge hegemonic climate discourses. I claim that such narratives help to establish what John Foran calls "political cultures of opposition and creativity," which he argues are essential to radical social change (Foran, 2014). Narrative is by no means the only component of counterhegemonic strategy, and the extent of its efficacy depends upon the context in which it is deployed. Moreover, there is no guarantee that better told stories will reach larger and more diverse audiences or even necessarily lead to system change. However, narratives are an essential intervention in what Asef Bayat calls "the politics of culture"(Bayat, 2013, 51). The politics of culture, and by extension cultural hegemony, cannot be truly understood without recognizing the power of narratives.

This chapter synthesizes the theories and authors that have shaped my argument, revealing how they complement one another and also exposing some of the

tensions between their works. I begin with the authors writing about, and to a certain extent defining, the CJM and the hegemonic neoliberal climate solutions that it challenges. I go on to show how climate justice activists can draw upon more mainstream climate change communications theory to help challenge hegemonic climate discourse. In doing so, though, I recognize that much of the climate change communications work excludes a sophisticated analysis of power. Therefore I have integrated a more robust analysis of power into the findings of climate communications scholars. Lakoff's seminal work on political communication, and particularly framing, is instructive, but here too I find an oversimplified account of power and society. To remedy this I have drawn upon Laclau and Mouffe, discourse theory, subject positions, and a neo-Gramscian approach to hegemony. Laclau and Mouffe's work is crucial but it is also too abstract to be directly applied to climate justice activism. Kevin DeLuca has shown me how to "enmesh" discourse theory within quotidian struggles for climate justice. However, DeLuca generally abandons Laclau and Mouffe's vital theorization of subject positions, chains of equivalence and their emphasis upon discursively articulating solidarity out of difference. Therefore, I claim that if the CJM is to establish a far larger and more diverse base of power then it must recognize that its greatest strength lies in difference and linking differences to the broader framework of climate justice. Foran's work on establishing political cultures of opposition and creativity (PCOCs) helped me incorporate social movement building with DeLuca's more practical account of discursive struggle. Constructing broad and far reaching PCOCs that undermine the legitimacy of the established order and confer legitimacy upon climate justice solutions depends

upon activists making a successful discursive intervention that organizes audiences around the principles of climate justice. Meanwhile, larger and more diverse PCOCs help to strengthen and extend that discursive intervention further. Narratives, which convey meaning and therefore hold enormous power, are very effective discursive tools that hegemonic and counterhegemonic forces alike can use to legitimize or delegitimize the established order. Compelling narratives that redefine the terms of the climate crisis can help to bring diverse audiences into these new PCOCs or help audiences recognize their position within them. To understand exactly what constitutes a compelling counterhegemonic narrative I finish this literature review with a discussion of Reinsborough and Canning's indispensible concept: "story-based strategy."

Climate Justice and Neoliberal Discourses on Climate Change

The Climate Justice Movement (CJM) is a transnational social movement, or more accurately a global network of many movements, that challenges hegemonic neoliberalism and its solutions to climate change. It presents alternative, egalitarian and non-hierarchical solutions driven by grassroots organizations that would radically alter economics, politics and societies across the globe (Bond, 2012). Central to climate justice is the belief that the climate crisis cannot be solved within the framework of neoliberal capitalism in a just way. They mobilize for radical social change and moving away from what many call the "extractive economy" – which is perceived as unsustainable, exploitative and unjust for the vast majority of the world's population. The movement embraces participatory

democracy and an economy and society capable of nurturing and empowering those who have historically been marginalized, exploited and colonized (and who are most threatened but least responsible for the climate crisis) (Klein, 2014). Climate change is perceived not only as an existential threat but also, in dealing with the crisis, as an opportunity to overturn hundreds of years of oppression and exploitation.

The Climate Justice Movement is an incredibly diverse movement of movements, encompassing enormous differences in geographies, ideologies, cultures, wealth, access to power, and relationships to the state (Tokar, 2014). Despite this diversity, climate justice activists have made incredible headway articulating and defining what climate justice means for them and their communities across the globe. In the past five years Naomi Klein, Brian Tokar, Michael Dorsey, Patrick Bond and several others have documented these articulations and formed them into a lucid set of frames, principles and central ideas for public and academic audiences (Bond and Dorsey, 2011; Bond, 2014 Klein, 2014; Tokar, 2014). Klein's book, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (2014), and the accompanying film of the same title (2015), is a very popular articulation of climate justice. Here Klein argues for the reviving and reinventing of the public sphere, economic planning, reining in corporations, abolishing free trade agreements, relocalizing production, "ending the cult of shopping," energy democracy, economic democracy, "taxing the rich and filthy" and striving towards a regenerative rather than extractivist economy (Klein, 2014). Other activists talk about a "Just Transition." As Movement Generation, a climate

justice organization based in Oakland, explains: "To usher in a just and equitable transition towards local living economies, leadership must come from communities on the frontlines of ecological disruption" (Movementgeneration.org, 2016). This entails investing in community-owned energy development, ensuring former fossil fuel industry workers have secure, sustainable and meaningful employment, or protecting local economies and community ventures from multinational corporations (Ourpowercampaign.org, 2016).

The CJM's struggle against neoliberal hegemony challenges an ideology that legitimizes both the continued extraction of fossil fuels and also neoliberal climate solutions and discourse. In fact, the two cannot really be separated. Continued fossil fuel extraction is legitimized in much of neoliberal climate discourse because its pollution – it is claimed – can be offset through carbon markets and reduced through technological innovation. Advocates of climate justice argue that this is neither just nor effective. Fracking is a good example of a technofix that was supposed to reduce carbon emissions from other sources but has actually increased overall greenhouse gases and had severe negative impacts on local economies and communities (McKibben, 2016a). So while we may be entering what Cam Fenton has called "the post climate change denial era" (Fenton, 2016), fossil fuel companies and the neoliberal decision-makers they fund are certainly still in denial about the need to keep the vast majority of fossil fuel reserves in the ground (McKibben, 2016b). The climate justice activists described in this thesis are very clearly fighting against fossil fuel extraction but they are also fighting

against the neoliberal climate discourse that would impose a series of unjust and in many cases ineffective solutions on communities that are already marginalized and disempowered. Instead they are fighting for climate solutions that empower those communities, that are just and equitable, that emphasize cooperation over competition, that reclaim democracy from corporate interests through a Just Transition or ecosocialism or solidarity economies, or one of the many other alternatives that are being experimented with.

In her book's most influential chapter, *Blockadia,* Klein describes the different forms of resistance already underway against the fossil fuel industry, resource extraction projects, and climate technofixes that neoliberal elites have forced upon disenfranchised communities. Klein connects these struggles to the all-encompassing framework of climate justice. Significantly, she recognizes the intersectional nature of the resistances. For example, the mindsets fuelling the crisis, and proposed solutions to it, are as much a product of racism and colonialism as they are of neoliberalism (and those isms in themselves are hard to disentangle). Bond adds to this analysis, demonstrating how, on a global scale, climate change cannot be decoupled from its colonial context. He also emphasizes the extent to which environmental racism, land theft, and disregard for indigenous ways of life are tied to climate change, extractivism and proposed neoliberal solutions (Bond, 2012). Finally, climate justice recognizes that the Global South owes the Global North an enormous ecological debt.

According to Bond, some representatives of climate justice propose that "the linkage of red and green struggles under the climate justice banner will require society moving from a fossil fuel dependent capitalism to ecosocialism" (Bond, 2014, 142). Indeed, ecosocialism is very much what Klein's own climate solutions look like. However, ecosocialism does not define climate justice, and indeed ecosocialism can itself seem a confusing and alienating term to many. There are many indigenous activists who might reject the term, as might anarchists, racial justice activists, land rights activists, and all who rally around the principles of climate justice but may not ascribe to a singular, prescribed ideology. As part of the CJM they do, however, identify with many of the tenets Klein, Bond and Tokar associate with climate justice. Climate justice, therefore, is comprised more of cultural or popular idioms like justice, equity and democracy than a specific ideology (Foran, Ellis, Gray, forthcoming). This means that a diversity of paradigms and ideologies are embraced under the broad umbrella of climate justice and moreover that that difference is often celebrated. As such the CJM, in all its diversity, is not and cannot seek to replace neoliberalism with a singular dominant ideology. To be clear though, climate justice is as Bond puts it "anathema to mainstream climate politics" and is a counterhegemonic project (Bond, 2014, 133).

Much of the urgency underpinning the Climate Justice Movement is not only the injustice and exploitation its members have experienced (which cannot be underestimated but have also existed far longer than the climate crisis) but is also based upon climate science and emissions modelling. Relations of production,

capitalist or otherwise, predicated upon the possibility of infinite economic growth, are incompatible with the speed and scale at which greenhouse gas emissions must be cut – and, indeed, the physical limits of the planet (Martinez-Alier et al., 2014). Mainstream political consensus is that a stable climate is one in which global temperatures do not exceed a rise of two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels (Anderson, 2012, 17).[2] According to these climate scientists, remaining below two degrees requires greenhouse gas emission reductions on an enormous scale, with climate scientists like Kevin Anderson calling for a ten-percent decrease in emissions year on year from 2020 onwards (Anderson, 2012, 25). As Bows-Larkin explains, the neoliberal ideology, politics and economics pervasive throughout societies in the Global North are simply unable to initiate, let alone survive intact, such massive and rapid emissions cuts (Bows-Larkin, 2015). Anderson writes that growth-based economics has "abjectly failed to secure any control over emissions," leaving little choice but a turn towards radical societal transformation (Anderson, 2012, 17). For Anderson the necessity of emissions reductions on this scale mandates the "total reorganization of economic and social life" (Anderson, 2012, 16). Finally, the Carbon Tracker report shows that up to four-fifths or eighty-percent of all known fossil fuel reserves must remain below ground and unburned to ensure warming remains below two degrees and humanity avoids the most calamitous impacts of climate change (Carbon Tracker, 2012). The Climate Justice Movement has seized upon all of

[2] Anderson and Bows-Larkin's research suggests that even a two degrees rise is dangerous, but now an almost inevitable reality. They argue that two degrees is a number agreed upon by politicians not scientists. At the 2015 Paris climate talks delegates agreed to strive towards a one and a half degrees limit - but the Paris Treaty puts temperatures on track for a three Degrees rise.

these numbers as a vindication of their political claims. System change is not only ethically imperative but also urgent according to the climate science.

Economic deregulation, privatization, minimal state intervention, the primacy of market forces, low taxation, individualism, and above all else growth, defines the neoliberal paradigm (Harvey, 2005; Newell and Paterson, 1998). The most genuine neoliberal commitment to tackling climate change is articulated in the Ecomodernist manifesto. According to the Ecomodernists climate change is not a contradiction to neoliberal capitalism or to the growth paradigm, but rather a technical challenge for these to overcome (Ecomodernist Manifesto, 2015). They reject the "limits to growth" thesis (Meadows, 1972), and argue that "green growth" must be the direction toward which the global economy transitions. Ecomodernists seek to mitigate capitalism's negative impacts on ecosystems and climate while maintaining free markets and capitalist development. While the Ecomodernist Manifesto at least recognizes that some reform to capitalism is necessary, the more mainstream neoliberal positions do not. Ecomodernists therefore must compromise their already diluted positions with mainstream neoliberalism that encompasses a spectrum of differing politics ranging from liberal-centrist to conservative. The hegemonic framing of climate change is therefore an uneven mix of neoliberal laissez-faire economics combined with some reforms such as carbon pricing and taxation and some government incentivising of green technology. This framing embraces technofixes including capturing carbon from the atmosphere and sequestering it underground (Carbon Capture and Sequestration or CCS), "clean coal," hydroelectric dams, massive

scale solar production, and in some cases fracking and nuclear power. At their most extreme many neoliberals even entertain the possibility of geoengineering (Mirowski, Walker and Abboud, 2013).

Neoliberalism's ideological hostility towards government intervention permeates the attempts of global governance institutions to mitigate the climate crisis. For example, delegates, particularly from the Global North, refused to sign an agreement that would have made emissions reductions pledges legally binding at the United Nations' COP 21 in Paris. Instead, the only politically possible outcome of the COPs was a diluted treaty containing only voluntary emissions reduction pledges. Moreover, at the level of global governance and law, WTO rulings and free trade agreements like NAFTA or the European Free Trade Association will always trump climate agreements (Klein, 2014). Indeed, most neoliberal elites would rather see government removed from emissions regulations altogether so as to maximize the potential for the market to correct itself (Ballonoff, 2014; Knappenberger and Michaels, 2013). The free market and innovation can correct for climate change – thus market mechanisms like carbon offsetting and carbon trading have become very popular (Paterson, 2014). As governments are unable to properly regulate greenhouse gas emissions but remain committed to technofixes like CCS or fracking, the fossil fuel industry continue to extract, burn and search for more coal, oil and gas (McKibben, 2012). Climate justice advocates claim that Ecomodernist and neoliberal solutions do not challenge systems that created the climate crisis in the first place or the fossil fuel industry's enormous influence over governments. The neoliberals' meanwhile

argue that their challenge is to decouple rising economic growth from environmental degradation and rising emissions – Ecomodernists in particular relish this challenge.

Within neoliberal climate change discourse four significant conservative framings are discernable. The first is that climate change is a technical problem not a political one. Second, and a corollary of the first, markets and more advanced technology can solve the problem without government intervention. Third, emphasis should be placed on the lifestyle changes that individuals can make rather than on changes to contemporary social, economic and political regimes. The fourth and perhaps most disturbing neoliberal and conservative framing of climate change is as a security threat. Climate change is indeed a threat to stability and security. It is already fuelling conflicts across the world and will only continue to do so as access to food and resources are more severely impacted (Kelley et al., 2015). However, to frame climate change as a security issue first and foremost may help legitimize increased militarization and expenditure on ever more invasive security regimes. Each of these framings reinforces neoliberal values and has significant policy implications and are wholeheartedly rejected by climate justice activists.

Climate Communications Theory

The Climate Justice Movement's counterhegemonic climate solutions have the potential to attract much larger audiences, and moreover, the movement needs to

do so if its cause is to be legitimized widely enough and won. However, activists often fail to capture the hearts and minds of potential supporters because their appearance and language can be alienating and their ability to communicate in relatable, accessibly ways is sometimes limited (Boyd, 2012; Smucker, 2012). For example, Shellenberg and Nordhouse famously challenged environmentalists' highly disengaging framings of global warming and environmentalism, arguing that their rhetoric was divisive and failed to mobilize US voters against the re-election of President Bush in 2004 (Shellenberg and Nordhouse, 2004). Meanwhile, conservative philosopher, Roger Scruton makes a fair point when he condemns climate campaigners, writing that "Their schemes, their cries of alarm, frighten the ordinary citizen without recruiting him" (Scruton, 2012, 2). Adam Corner illustrates the climate activists' poor communication further, claiming "20 years of 'awareness raising,' grandiose pleas to save the planet, lots of talk about sacrifice, apocalyptic messages and photos of polar bears have trapped climate change in a niche that it urgently needs to break out of" (Corner, 2013, 5). For a long time climate campaigners' rhetoric appealed to people like themselves but did little to remove climate change from what Clare Saunders calls "the activist ghetto" (Saunders, 2013, 3). The same is true of many climate justice activists. Climate justice communicators are much better at "telling the story of the battle" than they are at fighting the "battle of the story" (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010). In other words, many (particularly those without formal communications training) use language and frames that mobilize supporters they already have but fail to resonate with larger, more diverse audiences. Climate activists, and environmentalists in general, tend to be unattractively stereotyped as a subculture

of ascetic hippies, forgoing material comforts and personal hygiene (Saunders, 2013). The appearance and language of many activists does little to dispel such prejudices (Corner, 2012). In the activist manual, *Beautiful Trouble*, Boyd explains that when communicating to audiences beyond activist communities it often helps not to look and sound like an activist because the image of an activist can trigger unhelpful assumptions and frames in the minds of their audiences (Boyd, 2012). The point here is not to criticize the hard work so many campaigners have put into climate justice activism, nor is it to demand that activists buy into crude respectability politics, but rather to hold a mirror up to that activism and explain why it may fail to engage or resonate with the values of some of its potential audiences. When climate justice activists communicate in ways that are neither relatable nor accessible, they alienate audiences from their cause, isolating it and themselves to an activist echo chamber.

Jon Christensen has documented a few of the ways that climate campaigners have failed to communicate climate change and foster the necessary urgency to deal with it over the past 20 years (Christensen, 2016). They do this by:

- Making it distant
- Making it global
- Making it about Antarctica
- Making it about polar bears
- Making it something audiences can do nothing about
- Making it something only the UN can solve
- Making it a problem beyond solving
- Making it about who's right and who's wrong
- Debunking myths and making corrections
- Giving audiences more facts

Climate communication scholars recognized these failures when mainstream climate spokespeople sought to convince "the public" of the reality of climate change. Thanks in part to their scholarship, the fight against climate denial is slowly being won and I believe climate justice activists can learn a great deal from the mainstream climate communications scholars that helped turn the tide against denial. One of their most important contributions is that the "facts" of climate science do not persuade audiences of the reality of climate change. As Adam Corner, from the communication think tank Climate Outreach, notes "facts are filtered through ideology and preconceived values" (Corner, 2013, 9). Facts have little purchase if they do not fit into the value systems of their audiences. Intervening at the level of culture, ideology, and particularly through narratives, is often more effective (Corner, 2013, 12).

Working at the intersection of climate change, psychology and communication, Sally Weintrobe has shown that scaring audiences with nightmare scenarios can result in anxiety and anxiety can lead to the psychological state of denial (Weintrobe et al., 2013). Paralyzing an audience with fear or antagonizing them with guilt-based appeals makes the work of persuasion much harder. These are very negative ways to frame the urgency of change and serve to alienate people rather than convince them. Framing action on climate change as a question of sacrifice and guilt is unhelpful because individuals are left feeling both resentful and disempowered (ibid.). Too often climate activists communicate the need for social change by focusing upon what will have to be sacrificed, the things we will have to stop doing, and the things we're doing wrong.

Recognizing these mistakes, climate communications theorists are now studying what works instead. They show that framing, narratives and appealing to a target audience's values can be much more successful communication methods (Corner, 2013). George Marshall argues that "everyone, experts and non-experts alike, converts climate change into stories that embody their own values, assumptions, and prejudices" (Marshall, 2014, 3). Stories are how human convert the world around us into meaning. This gives stories a great deal of persuasive power. Marshall makes the case for narrative communication writing that

> The cognitive systems require that complex issues be converted into narratives which become the primary medium by which the issues and the social cues that guide attention are transmitted between people. Meaning is therefore created by the way we talk about [climate change]. (Marshall, 2014, 227)

While it important to be wary of sweeping statements about the process of the human psyche and also to understand that meaning is not *only* created through narratives, clearly, narratives are incredibly effective communication tools to speak to and engage with the values of larger and more diverse audiences. As I will use the term, a narrative is "a story or account of events, sequenced over time and space… [it is] a fundamental cognitive structuring process for the human mind to make meaning and relate with the world" (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 122). Activists seek to change the way their audiences see the world. People largely understand the world through narratives, so activists must seek to change the narratives that organize their audiences' worldview and provide audiences with stories that attribute alternative or different meanings to the world. There is a lot of potential for communicating climate justice by changing narratives that

structure meaning and using new narratives to organize people around the principles of climate justice. These narratives must help to lower the barriers people have to taking action, they must respect people's cultures and be relevant to those cultures, they must be constructed with the communities for whom they are intended, they must show how climate change fits into the concerns of their specific audiences, and they must tie climate change into local discourses and phenomena. Above all, communicators must first listen to their audiences before constructing new organizing narratives. In fact, to the degree possible, new narratives should be constructed by, with and for their intended communities. This both empowers community organizers and also gives the whole community a stake in that narrative (Christensen, 2016; Corner, 2013; Marshall, 2014; Reinsborough and Canning, 2010).

Collaborators on the Yale Project on Climate Communication have put together a report documenting "Global Warming's Six Americas." The report details the six different types of audiences' attitudes towards climate change that climate communicators in the US will encounter (Maibach et al., 2009). The six audiences are "The alarmed" (18%), "The Concerned" (33%), "The Cautious" (19%), "The Disengaged" (12%), "The Doubtful" (11%), "The Dismissive" (7%) (ibid.). This is significant work because assuming one's audience is a monolithic entity called "the general public" is a mistake that many climate communicators have made. This work reminds readers that different audiences will be receptive to different messaging, if at all. However, I think their work can be taken further in the context of climate justice. Within each of these six categories there are thousands

of different subjectivities, lived experiences, and local contexts. Climate justice activists cannot just focus on moving "The Alarmed" or "The Concerned" into a climate justice orientation. Climate justice encompasses far more than climate change and there are ways that climate justice communicators can make climate justice relevant to communities within all these categories, even when climate change itself isn't.

Climate communications scholars have also critiqued the polarization and politicization of climate change and argued that communicators should use frames that either appeal to conservative values or are apolitical (Corner, 2013). George Marshall argues that climate activists and communicators must give conservatives some ownership over climate change to bring them out of denial:

> Above all it is crucial that we close the partisan gap between left and right by opening up conservative framings and ownership. This should start with affirming wider values, which, it is well establishes experimentally, makes people far more willing to accept information that challenge their worldview. (Marshall, 2014, 237)

In climate justice discourse, however, neoliberal capitalism, exploitation and colonialism are at the root of the climate crisis – thus using conservative framings only reinforces the ideology that led to massive ecological disruption in the first place. Communicators argue that the polarization of climate change that climate justice activists create could end up excluding a lot people from the overall belief that climate change exists and must be dealt with (Saunders, 2013). As Adam Corner writes, "Most climate solutions involve the state and tax, and that automatically sets you up against most conservative-thinking people" (Corner,

2013, 9). If climate change activists present themselves specifically as anarchists, socialists or anti-capitalists, so the argument goes, they risk excluding all those who do not identify the same way, thus alienating themselves from broader support on climate action. Many climate communicators therefore take the opposite approach and create narratives that are depoliticized or that fit climate change into the frames and values of conservative audiences. It is here, however, that I part ways with the more mainstream climate communication scholars.

Though clearly influenced by George Lakoff's work on framing, these thinkers have rejected one of his core principles: use your frames with conviction and never use your opponent's frames (Lakoff, 2014). In doing so many climate communications theorists have implicitly rejected the notion that climate change is a *political* problem and as Kenis and Mathijs have shown, this is not only bad for democracy but reinforces neoliberal frames (Kenis and Mathijs, 2014). Patrick Bond writes that "Climate justice only arrived on the international scene as a coherent political approach in the wake of the failure of a more collaborative strategy between major environmental NGOs and the global capitalist managerial class" (Bond, 2012, 185). The failure of those collaborative strategies should be read as a warning against the neoliberal approach to climate change. The rejection of climate change as a political question reinforces the neoliberal position claiming that climate change is solvable through technological innovation and market forces, not political change. For example, framing climate change as an opportunity for green growth may help neoliberals acknowledge the existence of climate change but it also reinforces the frame that growth is an inherent good and

that green growth is even possible. Alternatively, climate change is also framed as a threat to national security, which could appeal to conservative values that focus on security or patriotism, but it could also justify the expansion of the state's security apparatus and increased militarization. Both of these undermine principles of climate justice. Appealing to your opponent's values can be dangerous if those values are not ones you share because it legitimizes your opponent's frames in public discourse. In accordance with Giles Gunn's work on shared values, I am not suggesting that climate justice activists should give up on people who have different values, but instead that they must find areas where values are shared and emphasize those in climate justice narratives (Gunn, 2013). Crucially, however, abandoning the idea that narratives exist in a contested political terrain defined by relations of power shores up the neoliberal articulation of climate change and undermines the climate justice articulation. Lakoff himself best clarifies this position in his theory of framing.

Lakoff claims that progressives and the left have for too long tried to win over support by seeding ground to the conservative right and moving towards the center of the political spectrum. Lakoff argues that this does not work because using the rhetoric of your opponents only reinforces their message, their frames and their values (Lakoff, 2014, xiii). He provides an excellent counter example to Corner and Marshall; rather than encouraging activists to use language that appeals to the values of their perceived opponents, he argues for speaking with the conviction of your own values. According to Lakoff, "Framing is about understanding those we disagree with" but not conceding to them (ibid.).

Lakoff's communications work does therefore take power relations into account. Lakoff studies how ideology structures the human subconscious according to frames, norms and values. As he puts it, "Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world" (ibid...). Their relation to communicating climate justice is obvious. Frames, according to Lakoff, define our political preferences and policies; thus "when we successfully reframe public discourse, we change the way the public sees the world" (Lakoff, 2014, xii). This is precisely the kind of work that the Climate Justice Movement must do. Unfortunately, Lakoff's work is difficult to apply to climate justice activism because it does not challenge the hegemonically constructed binary of Democrat vs. Republican that climate justice activists (and increasingly the American public) reject. Lakoff's work on framing operates within and pertains to this construct. Therefore, deploying Lakoff's framing theory on its own limits the possibility of theorizing counterhegemonic framings and discursive interventions. Understanding the power rooted in cultural hegemony, and the discourses that legitimize and delegitimize it, helps build a communication strategy that employs framing but is not limited to Lakoff's political context. I draw upon Laclau and Mouffe to bring discourse theory and hegemony back into my analysis.

Identity, Hegemony and Discourse

Solutions to the climate crisis are proposed on the terrain of hegemony and counterhegemony. As climate denial loses potency the conservative right are finding new ways to articulate the meaning of climate change. Meanwhile, the

CJM has already moved to articulate its own terms upon which climate change should be understood and engaged. The ensuing struggle can be understood discursively, as both sides seek to articulate a set of solutions and vision of the future that is legitimized through political culture and public discourse. When I refer to hegemony, I do so in a neo-Gramscian sense and mean cultural hegemony. I adopt Raymond Williams' definition of hegemony as the extension of politics into daily life, into culture and into what constitutes "common sense" (Williams, 1977, 108-114). As Stephen Duncombe explains "the power of cultural hegemony lies in its invisibility. Unlike a solider with a gun or a political system backed up by a written constitutions, culture resides within us" (Duncombe, 2012, 222). Drawing from Laclau and Mouffe I extend this view of hegemony to discourse and argue that hegemonic and counterhegemonic projects alike must constantly structure discursive conditions to legitimize their actions and their ideologies (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014). I recognize the neoliberal order as both hegemonic and thoroughly contested by subaltern groups. Accordingly, this thesis studies climate justice activists' interventions in the politics of culture and common sense. While I fully accept Gramsci's caveat that struggles for cultural hegemony must go hand in hand with struggles for traditional political and economic power, cultural hegemony has been undertheorized in the context of climate justice and so this is where I focus my research.

Hegemony is constitutive of common sense. This seems to align well with Lakoff's understanding of frames that shape the way all humans interpret the world. Lakoff's work, however, ceases to be as useful once we recognize that all

meaning is articulated into discourses. This is because Lakoff's work operates within strict binaries that he fails to recognize as themselves being discursively articulated. [3] The binary between Democrat and Republican that Lakoff uses is a hegemonic articulation. Because Lakoff works within this binary, his work can only really have significance within the context of the discursively constructed ideological polarization of contemporary US electoral politics: namely the limited choice between Democrats and Republicans. There is no possibility of politics operating outside of this binary and no possibility of discourses constructing other realities, other common senses. Everyone is either Republican, Democrat or somewhere in the middle. This does not help my work much. Climate justice exists within neither camp and neoliberal ideology permeates both parties, so while Lakoff's theory is excellent, his findings are limited to the context in which he operates. Lakoff does recognize the messiness within the binary, however, and comes up with the category of the "biconceptual." He argues most people live within this category. The biconceptual's values and frames exist in various blends of Republican and Democrat ideology. The very word biconceptual still suggests the binary, though, and for my work I need a concept that fully recognizes that messiness and complexity of political alignments in US society. Therefore I have settled upon Laclau and Mouffe's "subject positions" and the discursive theory derived from it.

[3] The same accusation could be leveled at my work: Climate Justice vs. Neoliberalism looks like a binary too. However, I do not see climate justice as operating as a strict ideology in the same way that Lakoff sees Republican and Democrat ideologies. Climate justice is far more fluid and malleable; so too is neoliberalism in some ways. The delineations of each are far less certain.

Laclau and Mouffe state the purpose of their work very clearly: "Our central problem is to identify the discursive conditions for the emergence of a collective action, directed towards struggling against inequalities and challenging relations of subordination" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, 137). They recognize that the project of counterhegemony in the Twenty-first century is not to concern itself only with identity politics but neither is it to go back to Twentieth century preoccupations with class. Rather, it is to find "chains of equivalence" between subject position's forms of resistance, to recognize the vast array of those subject positions, and to find ways to build alternatives that fit them all. In other words, the project is to build solidarity out of difference and use this to challenge systems of oppression (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, xvii). Climate justice, which is an expression of resistance at the heart of so many oppressions, as well as a response to the crisis that will define the 21st century, can be an essential part of this project. The first step is to abandon the notion of siloed, singular identities and to recognize individuals as discursively constructed subject positions into and out of which identities flow, form and disassemble (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, 48). As Laclau and Mouffe explain "every social identity becomes the meeting point for a multiplicity of articulatory practices, many of them antagonistic" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, 125). The idea of a subject position allows Laclau and Mouffe to avoid the kind of binaries inherent to Lakoff's work and leads them to declare: "The discourse of radical democracy is no longer the discourse of the universal… it has been replaced by a polyphony of voices, each of which constructs its own irreducible discursive identity" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, 175). Similarly, the Climate Justice Movement cannot be reduced to a universalizing discourse

because it is comprised of so many resistances, in so many places, locked into a struggle for the very survival of the human species – it must embrace difference. Subject positions are shaped by (sometimes competing) discourses and often by prevailing discursive conditions. If the CJM must make a discursive intervention to change narratives around climate change then appealing to people as Democrats or Republicans will be less effective than recognizing their complicated composition as subject positions. Therefore, I find Laclau and Mouffe's work on subject positions and discursive conditions a more useful lens while being able to maintain much of Lakoff's thoughts on framing and values.

The Climate Justice Movement must recognize that it is in a counterhegemonic discursive struggle over the meaning of climate change. Discourse attaches meaning to, and shapes the ways in which people interpret, external (or objective) reality. The prevailing discourses are hegemonic. For Laclau and Mouffe, hegemony is relational; it is a constant struggle over the discourses that will define reality, meaning and common sense. They write that "The political meaning of a local community movement, of an ecological struggle, of a sexual minority movement, is not given from the beginning; it crucially depends upon its hegemonic articulation with other struggles and demands" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, 77). For example, climate justice attaches a specific meaning to climate change that the CJM must insert into public discourse to supplant the ecomodernist and neoliberal discourses on climate change. Shaping or "conditioning" discourse plays an essential role here and can be achieved through narrative interventions. Hegemonic forces rely upon discourses to shape a

society's "shared reality" and legitimize relations of power. Laclau and Mouffe provide an instructive example that is worth quoting in full:

> The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the idealism/realism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends upon the structuring of the discursive field. (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, 94)

An event occurs in objective reality but humans cannot make sense of that event without it being mediated to us through a discursive lens. Furthermore, to give that event meaning we construct a narrative around it. As such ,struggles over the discursive lens used to interpret the external world and its meanings are sites of intense competition for power. Which lens is adopted depends upon the conditioning or "structuring of the discursive field." How the discursive field is structured depends upon what Laclau and Mouffe call "articulatory practice" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, 91). Articulatory practice is the process of aligning into a particular discourse elements or events in objective reality that have not had a singular meaning or interpretation successfully fixed to them. To use the example above, the earthquake would be the event in objective reality and the competing interpretations could be a geologist's and a Christian fundamentalist's. The hegemonic struggle would be over which discourse, Christian or scientific, is able to fix meaning to the earthquake so that their meaning becomes common sense for everyone else. Laclau and Mouffe call these elements or events

"floating signifiers" because meaning has not been attached to them, they are floating and unfixed.

Through articulation meaning is attached to elements and is fixed into a coherent discourse. This has important implications for attaching meaning to climate change. Climate change is a floating signifier with contested meanings. If its meaning becomes associated with climate justice the actions taken to deal with it should follow the principles of climate justice. However, there are also dangers in attaching meaning to floating signifiers. As Marshall and Corner might argue, if climate change were to become fixed to the CJM it may be only associated with the movement and the kind of politics its members represent. This could alienate people from climate change action altogether. This is why, as I will show later, stories that resonate with their audiences and relatable communicators should always accompany articulations of climate justice (Smucker, Boyd and Mitchell, 2012).

Counterhegemony and Climate Justice

Laclau and Mouffe present a beautiful theory but its value lies in its application. I have found it somewhat unwieldy when applied to the daily struggles of climate justice activism. However, Kevin DeLuca's work contextualizes Laclau and Mouffe within environmental justice activism in the 1990s and shows how to apply their work to climate justice more effectively. DeLuca writes that social movements can "deconstruct the established naming of the world" by engaging in

discursive struggles (DeLuca, 1999, 25). He goes on to explain how these movements exploit "antagonisms," which makes possible "the questioning, disarticulating, and rearticulating of a hegemonic discourse" (DeLuca, 1999, 40). An antagonism, according to DeLuca, "occurs at the point of the relation of the discourse to the surrounding lifeworld and shows the impossibility of the discourse constituting a permanently closed or sutured totality" (ibid.). In other words, an antagonism highlights an inconsistency, contradiction or flawed generalization in the discourse. DeLuca gives the example of a toxic waste dump that makes possible the disarticulating of the hegemonic discourse of "progress" when environmental justice activists show how the siting of the toxic dump is rooted in environmental racism and dynamics of oppression (DeLuca, 1999, 42). The antagonisms within the concept of progress are exposed. Progress, therefore, is no longer a win-win net positive category, but is rearticulated. Progress means progress for some and toxic waste dumps and poisoning for others. Meanwhile, those experiencing the poisoning are those whom the hegemonic elite and their discourses construct as expendable. Antagonisms can mobilize people into a counterhegemonic movement against oppressive hegemonic relations.

Antagonisms also allow movements to insert counter discourses into public imaginaries. First though, those antagonisms must themselves be articulated as antagonisms. For example, the toxic waste dump is just a toxic waste dump - a small but necessary price to pay for progress - in the same way that Laclau and Mouffe's earthquake is just an earthquake – an act of god - until they are articulated into a counter discourse and new meaning is ascribed to them. This is

where communications, framing and narrative become essential – *meaning* is ultimately the subject of contestation. As Marshall has argued narrative is an excellent medium through which to transmit meaning, and as Lakoff adds, framing can help that meaning fit into an audience's existing values (Marshall, 2014; Lakoff, 2014). To successfully restructure discursive conditions, social movements must construct narratives that resonate with the communities in which they are articulated and highlight antagonisms in dominant discourses. This does not necessarily mean undermining the argument of your opponents but rather telling a different story that shows up the antagonism in the dominant story but also fits more easily into the frames and values of your target audience. Climate justice communicators have to produce narratives that do just this.

Hegemony and the Media

Before moving forwards, a few words should be said about social movements' access to resources and the institutional apparati that mediate discursive struggles. Clearly, one side of this struggle has overwhelming access to, and influence within, mainstream media – and it is not the Climate Justice Movement. The neoliberal framing of climate change is not hegemonic because the polity has autonomously decided that the neoliberal approach makes the most sense based on witnessing a grand battle of ideas in the public sphere, with full access to, and unbiased mediation of, the different arguments. Rather, neoliberal climate discourse is hegemonic, at least in part, because neoliberal elites have greater access to mainstream media and so are more able to frame the public conversation

in their interests. In Gramscian terms their ideology is hegemonic because they control many of the institutions within civil society that shape and mediate discourse.

Countering discursive hegemony is not simply about gaining greater access to the different means of discursive mediation, however. I am not suggesting that if the Climate Justice Movement's communicators simply had the same access to resources and media their narratives would automatically sway public discourse in favour of climate justice. Certainly, representation in established media institutions matters and it is true that mainstream media very often set the terms of public debates and choose whose voices get represented and whose are spoken for or silenced. It is also true though, that the mainstream media is not a homogenous entity and its relationship with public opinion is far from simple. For example, media outlets, rather than imposing or generating a set of values for their audiences, tend to reinforce their specific target audiences' pre-existing values and politics. In addition, Kevin DeLuca has explored how activists can subvert mainstream media discourse when the media framing is hostile (DeLuca, 1999). In the context of television, he argues that images are far more powerful than words and so even when the media environment seeks to undermine agents of change the images that accompany stories about activists can often contradict the media's framing. Moreover, online media and alternative media are beginning to pose a very serious threat to the legitimacy of the mainstream media and the stories it chooses to tell. Thus, to a certain extent, alternative media is democratizing the dissemination of information because it is far more accessible

to people with fewer resources. The fact that activists have been taking advantage of this forum has been well documented (Meisel, 2012).

A hostile and unbalanced media environment sets the scene for the uphill battle that the Climate Justice Movement's discursive intervention faces. The counterhegeominc communication strategies and tactics I have observed in my research tend to be sensitive to the disproportionate ability hegemonic voices have to frame public debates; however they are not crippled by it. Meanwhile, others have documented how communications strategists can confront this disparity far more comprehensively than I can within the scope of this thesis (DeLuca, 1999; Quiroz, 2013). As such, this thesis is not about how activists can overcome limited access to resources and mainstream media. Instead it is about the actual substance of contemporary climate justice narratives and how they might shift discursive conditions. That being said, the discursive interventions I discuss in these pages will certainly be understood within the context of unbalanced access to representation.

The Politics of Culture and Political Cultures of Opposition and Creativity

Laclau and Mouffe's theory of articulation is directly connected to their work on subject positions and chains of equivalence and helps show how the articulation of climate justice can legitimize counter discourses and opposition to neoliberal hegemony. As DeLuca elaborates, "Articulation is a way of understanding how, in a postmodern world with neither guarantees nor great soul of revolt, diverse

groups practicing an array of micropolitics can forge links that transform their local struggles into a broad-based challenge" (DeLuca, 1999, 82). In cultural theory, articulation means to connect specific and often very different interest groups into broad and diverse assemblages through discourse (Hall, Morley and Chen, 1996). Here, I use the term to discuss the very different subject positions that climate justice discourses seek to address and mobilize into action. The counter discourses that climate justice generates and inserts into the public imaginary must forge chains of equivalence, making them relevant to an array of very different groups resisting very different oppressions. John Foran takes up this challenge in more explicit terms stating that climate justice communicators must "articulate the discourses that will bring together the broadest coalitions ever seen onto a global stage" (Foran, 2014, 20). Drawing upon discursive opportunity structures can facilitate articulation. Discursive opportunity structures can be shared idioms, references to popular culture, or commonly held sentiments that can communicators can tap into to evoke a particular understanding of their message. According to Holly McCammon, discursive opportunity structures are reference points in "broader political culture believed to be "sensible," "realistic," and "legitimate" and whose presence would thus facilitate reception of specific forms of collective action" (McCammon, 2013, 1).

Counterhegemonic communication strategies that tap into these discursive opportunity structures, for example, the common but differentiated experience of extractivism throughout much of the world can lead to the building of what Foran's political cultures of opposition and creativity (PCOCs). In this way the

Climate Justice Movement can both become and help construct a PCOC. PCOCs are an essential component of radical social change because as Foran puts it they are ”how people make political sense of the social settings that constrict and enable their lives, in ways that can sometimes lead to the formation of strong social movements” (Foran, Ellis, and Gray, forthcoming). Moreover, they represent a much more contemporary and appropriate understanding of how collective resistance to hegemony is legitimized and enacted in the Twenty-first century. Rather than being formed out of singular ideology, PCOCs are configured through cultural idioms, and shared experiences and values that mobilize diverse communities into confrontation with hegemonic forces (Foran, 2014, 7). PCOCs therefore align with Laclau and Mouffe's chains of equivalence, embracing "the plurality and indeterminacy of the social," and forming the "fundamental bases from which a new political imaginary can be constructed" while rejecting the privileging of "points of rupture" or specific antagonisms over others[4] (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, 136). In this way diverse, local and highly contextualized struggles can be encompassed within the broader framework of a political culture of opposition and creativity. Through articulation, narrative interventions, reframing, and discursive conditioning climate justice could become a framework around which diverse campaigns and social movements organize, resist, imagine and build.

[4] There is a danger within climate justice discourse of privileging climate change as the point of rupture *sin qua non*. The Climate Justice Movement must avoid this trap and PCOCs as Foran has imagined them may help the movement do so. However, perhaps the very name Climate Justice privileges climate change or climate injustice as the principal antagonism.

Asef Bayat, in his work on *social nonmovments*, has warned against expecting radical social change to emerge from organized resistance, while Laclau and Mouffe have argued for chains of equivalence to link dissimilar subject positions into a broader discursive framework of resistance and solidarity. This is not exactly a contradiction but I think the two can be brought together fruitfully with the category of PCOCs. According to Bayat, "*nonmovements* refers to the collective actions of noncollective actors; they embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change" (Bayat, 2009, 14). Bayat's theory of nonmovments rests upon these ordinary people operating in a context in which they are by and large atomized and siloed from one another – particularly in urban settings of the Global South. Laclau and Mouffe's chains of equivalence seek to link different struggles in collective resistance by reshaping in the discourses that originally separated those struggles. Reshaping discursive conditions is therefore a precursor to a truly intersectional movement. Bayat's work describes the conditions that vast number of disenfranchised people experience everyday, thus their organzing experiences are essential to building solidarity and a broad-based and diverse Climate Justice Movement. While respecting difference between subject positions, chains of equivalence call for a more organized form of resistance to challenge hegemonic power. As Bayat explains, in many circumstances such organization simply isn't possible.

Using PCOCs to bring these two important contributions together is helpful in the context of climate justice because, as George Marshall writes, humans "have

virtually unlimited capacity accepting things that might otherwise prove to be cognitively challenging once they are supported within a culture of shared conviction" (Marshall, 2014, 229). Once a discourse is supported within a culture of shared conviction it gets legitimized through social norms (ibid.). Political Cultures of Opposition and Creativity can provide the loose imaginaries and organizing principles that links atomized individuals with very different struggles and subject positions into a collective form of action. Meanwhile PCOCs are not formally organized into discernable ideological units or mobilizing logics. PCOCs are fluid, loosely demarcated by adherence to a set of idioms advocating for resistance and imagined alternatives. Therefore they could be much more attractive to a larger and more diverse section of society. The meaning the CJM attaches to climate change can be nourished and legitimized within a PCOC. One strategic goal for the Climate Justice Movement, therefore, is to use discursive interventions that tap into discursive opportunity structures to expand these political cultures and develop chains of equivalence within and between them.

Story-Based Strategy

Finally, I will discuss the elements of narrative intervention I have encountered that might successfully shift discursive conditions, compel different subject positions to align with a political culture of opposition and creativity, and engage in collective action to challenge hegemonic elites. Patrick Reinsborough and Doyle Canning have developed some important insights in their field guide for activist communicators entitled *RE:Imagining Change – How to use story-based*

strategy to win campaigns, build movements, and change the world. They place the theories of discourse, hegemony and communications discussed throughout this literature review into very specific campaign contexts and show how it is narrative intervention that synthesizes all of these into a coherent strategy.

Reinsborough and Canning agree with Lakoff when he writes that, "Effective reframing is the changing of millions of brains to be prepared to recognize a reality" (Lakoff, 2014, 33). However, their emphasis is upon the stories activists and "change agents" tell in order to reframe particular issues and prime people's value systems' to accept and recognize new realities. Importantly, their work is much more inclusive than the Democrat/Republican binary that Lakoff sets up. Their thoughts and practice also reflect the ideas of Laclau and Mouffe, at least implicitly if not explicitly. For Reinsborough and Canning, stories are the means by which the discursive field is structured and floating signifiers articulated into discourse. In words evocative of Laclau and Mouffe's analysis of cultural hegemony, they write that "popular culture is an ever-evolving, contested space of struggle, where competing voices, experiences, and perspectives fight to answer the questions: whose maps determine what is meaningful? Whose stories are considered true?" (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 19). They add that "humans understand the world and our role in it through stories, and thus all power relations have a narrative dimension" (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 20). Just like Lalcau and Mouffe they recognize that meaning, and therefore power, is dependent upon (hegemonic) discourse but argue that it is shaped through narrative.

According to Reinsborough and Canning, "Story-based strategy views social change through the lens of narrative power and positions storytelling at the center of social change strategy" (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 12). I will apply this to my case studies and examine the extent to which climate justice activists successfully deploy this strategy and where it could be developed or improved upon. I am particularly interested in what Reinsborough and Canning call winning the "battle of the story." The battle of the story is about persuasion but more accurately it is about providing compelling narratives that engage diverse audiences and push them into Political Cultures of Opposition and Creativity. Reinsbrough and Canning argue that "Since an audience's existing stories will filter new facts or information, change agents need to offer a new story" (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 46). The goal of my research, therefore, is to analyze effective and persuasive narratives and stories concerning climate justice that "structure information in a way that convinces people who are not already actively supporting the cause" (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 45).

In recognizing that communications are ultimately about power, Reinsborough and Canning's story-based strategy provides an excellent modification to the supposedly apolitical climate communication theories described in this literature review. Reinsborough and Canning remind activists of the five elements of story: Conflict, characters, imagery, foreshadowing, and assumptions (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 38). These apply just as much to story-based strategy as they do to a good novel. They encourage communicators to ask:

> What is the conflict upon which the story rests, who are the characters supposed to represent, are they relatable?, how does the imagery engage with people's values, what promises or future does the story give to the resolution of the conflict, what are the underlying assumption that must be accepted in order to believe the narrative is true? (ibid.)

The stories that climate justice communicators tell have to do all these things well if they are to successfully reshape discursive conditions. They must also resonate with a target audience, they must engage with their values, they must make climate change personal and urgent yet not so terrifying that action on it seem impossible. These stories must be told by relatable spokespeople, embedded in the concerns and idioms of communities with whom they are constructed and for whom they are intended (Reinsborough and Canning, 2014). Finally, they must help audiences envision a future they want to see and show how fighting climate change can get them there. In the following chapters I show how the Fossil Free and Our Power campaigns both exemplify successful discursive interventions and use narrative to counter hegemonic neoliberal climate discourse.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Climate Justice Movement is now fighting a discursive struggle over the very meaning of climate change. It can counter hegemonic neoliberal solutions to climate change by disarticulating the meaning of climate change away from the neoliberal and Ecomodernist discourses and rearticulating it as a fundamental contradiction to neoliberalism and the systems of oppression upon which it rests. Climate change communications theory has paved the way for

climate justice communicators to learn from and adopt many of the communication strategies that helped overcome climate change denial. However, these strategies have avoided a sophisticated analysis of power. Lakoff introduces the concept of power into communications theory through his work on framing. Lakoff's methodology depends upon ideological binaries that simply do accurately not define contemporary American political identities and furthermore fails to recognize that this binary is itself ideologically constructed. As such it is difficult to apply to politics and political cultures existing outside of the binary. Therefore, I have used Laclau and Mouffe's analysis of hegemony, identity, discourse and solidarity to bring to climate justice communication what Lakoff and the climate communication scholars couldn't: a sophisticated and malleable concept of power rooted in cultural hegemony. I have argued that climate justice communicators can exploit antagonisms within dominant discourse to insert their own counter discourses into public imaginaries. I showed how discursive interventions can help articulate different groups and subject positions into a broad-based confrontation to neoliberal hegemony. I went on to claim that this can help construct the political cultures of opposition and creativity which are essential to radical social change. This literature reviewed in this chapter shows how the Climate Justice Movement's discursive interventions can establish a broad and diverse base of resistance. This theoretical work led me to ask what it might look like in practice. It is the work of Reinsborough and Canning, which, more than any of the other authors, combines theory and praxis into an excellent example of narrative communication strategy. Finally, I have used their work to successfully reintegrate power into climate communications, making it applicable

to climate justice activists. Therefore, I will be testing Reinsborough and Canning's strategy accompanied with Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory through the case studies described in the following chapters.

II. Case Study One: How Fossil Free UC uses framing narrative to reshape discursive conditions surrounding climate change

Introduction

Context

This case study applies the theory of counterhegemony developed in Chapter One to Fossil Free, the fossil fuel divestment campaign that, since 2012, has captured the collective imagination and passion of thousands of students at over 500 college campuses in the US and internationally. The divestment campaign has picked up momentum in religious institutions, city councils, charitable foundations and hundreds of public institutions as well, but for precision's sake this case study provides an indepth account of just one example, Fossil Free UC. Fossil Free UC is a coalition of divestment campaigns operating across the ten campuses of the University of California (UC). Concentrating on Fossil Free UC provides both an illustrative example of the purpose, nature and possible future of the broader fossil fuel divestment campaign, while also offering an acutely contextualized and intimate account of divestment activism in practice. The case study tests the counterhegemonic communication strategies discussed in my literature review against the empirical evidence of a concrete example of climate change activism. It finds that in many important ways the divestment campaign epitomizes the kind of discursive interventions emphasized in this thesis.

Purpose

Fossil Free has helped lead a narrative shift that has inspired a generation of activists to resist the fossil fuel industry and fight climate change. This case study contends that, unlike previous climate discourses that focused on guilt and self-sacrifice, the divestment narrative provides campaigners and observers alike with a clear external enemy whose culpability far outstrips that of any individual. The purpose of this case study is to furnish readers with a detailed and critical analysis of what the divestment campaign reveals about story-based strategy and counterhegemonic discourse in the framework of climate justice. In the broader context of this thesis, the purpose of the study is also to evince the real urgency behind integrating discursive understanding and narrative strategy into the Climate Justice Movement's organizing strategy. In so doing, the case study exhibits a fascinating instance of discursive theory being put into practice, exemplifying what John Dewey has called *intelligent praxis*. Throughout this study it is argued that the narrative divestment seeks to insert into public discourse is legitimized not only when institutions commit to divestment but also through the public struggle with institutions over whether or not they will in fact divest.

Relevance

As perhaps the most influential example, and certainly the most coherent articulation, of youth activism on climate change in the Global North, fossil fuel divestment is an extremely relevant case study (Rast, 2015). Boasting active

campaigns on over 500 college campuses and total assets now withheld from fossil fuels valued at $3.4 trillion, fossil fuel divestment has become very popular amongst young people and student-activists (Fossil Free, 2016). The divestment movement has had its rhetoric adopted by everyone from President Obama to Senator Bernie Sanders (Obama, 2013; Goldenberg, 2015). At the Paris COP 21 hundreds of young people abandoned the COP and instead publicly rallied around the Indigenous Environmental Network's *Keep It In The Ground Declaration,* again invoking divestment's rhetoric (LeQuesne, 2016). As the most widespread and prolific climate campaign on college campuses today, examining Fossil Free's discursive implications for climate justice is incredibly important. Fossil fuel divestment has captured young people's imagination like no other climate campaign and this case study grants readers a fascinating insight into why the campaign has attracted so many young climate campaigners where others have ultimately failed.

Where this case study is situated is also significant. The university is undeniably a site of discursive competition so its relevance to the parameters of this thesis cannot be overstated. Haiven and Khasnabish put this into perspective writing that:

> A huge proportion of the population in the Global North now passes through university, rendering it an acute site of struggle… Numerically speaking, more people may today pass through the doors of a university (as students, as workers, as contractees, etc.) than ever passed through the gates of a factory in years gone by. (Haiven and Khasnabish, 2014, 38)

With such influence, college campuses are sites of intense hegemonic struggle. This is true not only in the classrooms and lecture halls, or even all the publications of its academics, but also when we understand the university as a site in which young people learn about themselves and their relationship to other people, discover their own agency, and make choices that may define the rest of their lives. Analyzing the impact that divestment's discursive intervention has had on this stage is therefore very important.

Finally, as this case study will show, fossil fuel divestment demonstrates a very deliberate attempt to cultivate new stories and reframe existing ones surrounding the climate crisis. When used intentionally, divestment can be a potent tool that can reshape discursive conditions so that space for climate justice solutions may be opened up. Fossil Free UC is one campaign that has been intentional about incorporating climate justice into their organizing. Fossil fuel divestment, particularly at the University of California, is therefore an excellent example of the narrative and framing strategies elaborated upon in Chapter One and an extremely relevant elucidation of the argument presented in this thesis.

Contents

The divestment campaign is only four years old and continuing to unfold. Consequently little in the way of analysis or even histories of the campaign exists. As such this study depends upon primary resources. The evidence presented in this case study is drawn from a series of interviews with prominent campaign

spokespeople, experience directly participating in the campaign, and an extensive review of the contemporary journalism, scholarly articles, blogs, and reports pertinent to the campaign. In discussing Fossil Free UC's discursive impact, the study also relies on a textual analysis of media reactions to the UC's decision to divest from coal and tar sands industries.

The case study takes the following format: First it explains exactly what fossil fuel divestment is, its purpose, its driving logic, as well as providing a brief history of the Fossil Free and Fossil Free UC campaigns. Then it explores the ways in which divestment constitutes an example of framing narrative strategy before placing that strategy in the context of confrontational climate politics. Next, it asks the all-important question "is divestment working?" and explores the complex contours of answering that question. And finally, it looks at divestment's future in terms of solidarity, reinvestment, prefiguring climate justice solutions and its linkages to this thesis's second case study in Richmond, California.

Fossil Free and Divestment

What is divestment?

In simplest terms divestment is the opposite of investment. To divest means to take investments out of a particular institution or industry – in this case the fossil fuel industry. Interestingly, to divest also means to deprive someone or something of their power or rights. The Fossil Free campaign seeks to do both. Fossil Free

UC, like most fossil fuel divestment campaigns operating on universities and institutions with public influence, targets the 200 most polluting fossil fuel companies (Fossilfreeuc.org, 2013). Fossil fuel divestment campaigns call upon the managers of these institutions to pull their endowments, pension funds and foundations' investments out of the fossil fuel industry. Fundamentally, divestment campaigns are moral campaigns; therefore an act of divestment responding to pressure from divestment campaigns is supposed to reflect a moral judgment upon the industry or institution that has been divested from. It is true divestment is ultimately a symbolic act, but symbols have enormous power.

One classic example is the highly successful South Africa divestment campaign targeting companies operating in South Africa under conditions of Apartheid (Phinney, 2015). So successful was this campaign that upon visiting the US after his release from prison Nelson Mandela's first stop was not to the White House but to UC Berkeley to thank students there for the role their divestment campaign played in turning the international community against the Apartheid regime (McKibben, 2012). Another excellent example of the divestment tactic's success was against the tobacco industry. The Centre for Responsive Politics reports "The tobacco industry, once a lobbying juggernaut, has watched its political influence wane as its cancer-causing products became increasingly toxic, politically speaking" (Opensecrets.org, 2016). The tobacco industry's influence over politicians and public consciousness has severely declined since the campaign to delegitimize their brand through divestment took hold. As will become apparent in this case study, divestment is essentially a narrative tool to

intervene in public consciousness and shift understanding of a particular issue or condition. It is important to remember that divestment is a tactic; it is not a solution to the climate crisis in and of itself. As the California divestment campaign director, Silver Hannon, explains "divestment is a tactic, climate justice is the goal" (Hannon, 2015).

The Logic Driving Divestment

350.org cofounder Bill McKibben's famous phrase "If it's wrong to wreck the planet then it's wrong to profit from that wreckage" has come to define the basic logic defining the divestment campaign (Fossil Free, 2016). However, as many divestment campaigners were keen to assure me, the logic is far deeper and more complex than pithy one-liners (Rast, 2015; Hannon, 2015). The traditionally accepted logic driving fossil fuel divestment is as follows: to avoid catastrophic climate change global warming must be kept below a two-degree Celsius rise on pre-industrial levels. Humans can therefore only burn 565 gigatons of carbon or equivalent green house gases before exceeding the two-degree limit (a gigaton is one billion tons). At current emission rates this means the world has about 15 years until that "carbon budget" is reached (350.org, 2015). Fossil fuel companies and countries that act like fossil fuel companies currently have over 2795 gigatons in their reserves which they have committed to burning. They are also spending millions of dollars searching for new reserves to develop (Carbon Tracker, 2012). The fossil fuel industry therefore has at least five times more coal, oil and gas in its reserves than even the most conservative climate estimates say is safe to burn

and maintain a reasonably stable climate (McKibben, 2012). At least financially, however, those reserves may as well be above ground as they are included within the asset value of fossil fuel companies. As such the industry spends millions on political campaigns, and lobbying to guarantee a weak regulatory environment and ensure its ability to extract and burn everything in its reserves (ibid.). Its interests are diametrically opposed to maintaining relative climate stability. Therefore, divestment activists argue that it is unconscionable for institutions to remain invested in an industry whose business plan relies on the wreckage of the climate upon which human civilization depends (Fernandez, 2015).

Recently, an additional refrain has been introduced to account for what some divestment campaigners argued was an oversight of the logic derived from the first phrase. The second axiom corrects this: "if it is wrong to poison communities then it is wrong to profit from that poisoning" (Fossil Free USA, 2016). This second formation suggests a more human-centric as opposed to statistic-centric approach and is better aligned with the principles of climate justice. Derived from this axiom is the logic that it is morally unconscionable for institutions that claim to operate in the public good to undermine that commitment by investing in industries –like the fossil fuel industry – that threaten public health, safety and vitality. In the case of universities, so the argument goes, the institution's commitment to the education and future of their students is undermined by investments in the fossil fuel industry (Soiffer, 2015a). In all cases the act of divestment distances these institutions from the actions of the fossil fuel industry and helps delegitimize them in the eyes of the public. In this way, the industry's

influence over political decision-making wanes and room can be made for alternatives to fossil fuels (McKibben, 2012).

What is the Purpose of Divestment?

Delegitimizing the fossil fuel industry may drive the logic behind fossil fuel divestment but the question remains – Why is it strategic to delegitimize the fossil fuel industry? Yes, fossil fuel companies are responsible for an inordinate amount of destruction but surely politicians with regulatory power or even those who actually consume the industry's product are more sensible targets? In fact, the delegitimizing of the industry is by no means the sole or even primary purpose of the campaign. As the following excerpts from interviews with Fossil Free activists and organizers demonstrate, a more complex and far more interesting dynamic is underway:

> The purpose of divestment is to clearly articulate a common enemy in the fight against climate change and polarize public opinion away from the fossil fuel industry to create space for popular and political demands to be met. (Rast, 2015)

> The purpose of divestment is to [get] large communities like those at universities or churches to become aware of who are the perpetuators of climate change, who funds it, and what aspects of our society uphold that, and in doing so create space for many other fights. (Anonymous, 2015)

> For me the point of divestment is to… uplift the narrative publicly and push for climate legislation and other avenues for a just transition in our energy. (Hannon, 2015)

> Divestment names an enemy. It helps reframe the narrative around climate change as not just one of individual consumer-based decisions like recycling or changing your light bulbs… it names climate change as a collective struggle. (Soiffer, 2015a)

The purpose of the campaign, therefore, is not simply "to turn a generation against the fossil fuel industry" as divestment critic Rachelle Peterson would have it (Peterson, 2015, 1), but also to insert a reframed narrative about the very nature of the climate crisis into public discourse. It is trying to change the story about who is responsible for climate change and what the solutions must be. It is establishing a narrative in which responsibility is allocated proportionately and thereby changes dominant perceptions about where solutions should come from and what those solutions should be. In the hopes of galvanizing political and social momentum, the divestment campaign creates a new story complete with plot, conflict, good guys and bad guys, foreshadowing, and imagery to help rearticulate the terms upon which climate change is understood. When institutions divest they help legitimize, publicize and reproduce this new story. The purpose of fossil fuel divestment is therefore to generate a discursive shift that opens up possibilities for the rearticulation of climate change solutions. Before discussing exactly how the campaign does this, the case study will first provide evidence of the extent to which divestment has become an influential force in climate politics through a brief history of the campaign and its accomplishments to date.

History of Fossil Fuel Divestment

Divestment veteran and Divestment Student Network organizer, Jess Grady-Benson has written the most comprehensive early history of the campaign in her senior year dissertation: *Fossil Fuel Divestment: The Power and Promise of a*

Student Movement for Climate Justice. Here she argues that divestment as a climate justice tactic first emerged in early spring of 2011 at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania (Grady-Benson, 2014). It began with Swarthmore Mountain Justice, a student group organizing with communities adversely affected by the coal extraction process known as mountain top removal. They decided they could most effectively act in solidarity with those communities by urging their college to divest from coal companies carrying out the process in the local Appalachian Mountains. Grady-Benson quotes Will Lawrence, a founding member of the divestment campaign at Swarthmore saying:

> We felt really strongly that peoples' awareness of mountaintop removal and the issues would be greatly enhanced if there was a struggle happening at our school and we could find a way to make it relevant to the policy at Swarthmore… The financial connections were a way to do that. (Lawrence, quoted in Grady-Benson, 2014, 26)

The Sierra Club picked up this simple logic with the Sierra Students Coalition's *Campuses Beyond Coal* campaign and the fledging campaign spread to the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (Grady-Benson, 2014, 26). The California Student Sustainability Coalition (CSSC) adopted the campaign soon afterwards, and with support from the Divest Coal Coalition comprised of several foundations and NGOs, the campaign ballooned into a targeted strategy against the "Filthy Fifteen" – the fifteen most polluting coal companies. As of the spring of 2012, however, the nascent divestment campaign had yet to extend its influence beyond more than a dozen or so campuses across the US.

This was to change in the summer of 2012. On July 19th Bill McKibben published a highly influential article entitled "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math – Three simple numbers that add up to catastrophe and make clear who the enemy is." This article laid out the fundamental logic that drives the divestment campaign. The article appeared in *Rolling Stone* magazine and was immensely popular. It was the issue with pop icon Justin Bieber on the cover and, as McKibben is fond of reminding audiences, his article got ten times more likes on Facebook than Justin Bieber's (350.org, 2013). The article has been liked and shared on social media thousands of times and it is no exaggeration to say that it is now one of the most influential pieces of climate journalism ever written.

In fall 2012, riding on the waves of success and popularity of the article, climate change NGO 350.org adopted the campaign, launched it under the name Fossil Free and deployed the revamped strategy against the 200 most polluting fossil fuel companies (Fossil Free, 2016). With impressive funding and resources, Fossil Free has become the face of the now global divestment campaign calling upon publicly visible institutions like universities to divest their holdings from oil, coal and gas companies. Accompanying the campaign's launch McKibben and the 350.org team set off on a tour of college campuses around the US, helping to establish some of the first Fossil Free campus campaigns. In 2013 recently graduated alumni and student activists set up the Divestment Student Network (DSN) to support campaigns across the US with trainings, organizing convergences, and most importantly bringing a specifically climate justice orientation to the forefront of the movement (Fossil Fuel Divestment Student

Network, 2016). As of this writing there exist more than 500 hundred Fossil Free campaigns on college campuses across the US, Europe, and Australasia (Fossil Free, 2016).

The approximate value of assets that have now been withheld from coal and/or gas, and/or oil stands at $3.4 trillion, with several billion having been directly divested from coal, oil or gas companies (ibid.). Worldwide a total of 503 institutions have committed to divestment, primarily in the United States. Notable divestment commitments include the Rockefeller Brother's Fund, The World Council of Churches, the British Medical Association, the Guardian Media Group, the University of Warwick, Oxford University (coal and tar sands only) and Stanford University (from coal only) (ibid.). In the summer of 2015 the University of California withdrew its direct holdings from coal and tar sands development. However it did not establish a policy preventing reinvestment in these companies in the future (Gordon, 2015). A report from The Smith's School of Environment and Enterprise at Oxford University found that the fossil fuel divestment campaign is the fastest growing divestment campaign ever (Ansar, Caldecott and Tilbury, 2013). The influence this campaign has had on youth climate activism in the global North is clearly formidable; as such it is important that the campaign's contribution to climate politics and discourse is understood fully and systematically.

Fossil Free UC – Background and History

This case study is primarily concerned with the example of the fossil fuel divestment campaign operating on campuses throughout the University of California system. Fossil Free UC is a particularly illustrative and interesting example not only because it is one of the oldest and hard fought divestment campaigns in the US but also because the ambiguity of its apparent success to date forces observers to ask critical questions about the actual influence and power the broader campaign has had. As an example of a campaign very intentionally oriented around climate justice (Rast, 2015), it also offers readers a glimpse of the complicated relationship between climate justice and fossil fuel divestment.

Managing funds worth around $91 billion, representing 10 campuses, 238,000 students, 190,000 faculty and staff, and 1.7 million living alumni, the UC is undoubtedly an institution with enormous political clout and public influence (University of California, 2016; ucop.edu, 2016). Fossil Free came to the UC in late 2012 and early 2013 and campaigns are most active at UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz and UC Santa Barbara. These campaigns tend to have a membership of between 10-20 students and all have the backing of their respective student bodies (fossilfreeuc.org, 2016). UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, and UC San Diego Fossil Free campaigns have the backing of their respective faculty senates as well. The UCLA and UC San Diego campaigns have taken longer to establish themselves but are currently growing. The campaign at UC Davis lost momentum when its more experienced organizers graduated, while attempts to organize

campaigns at UC Irvine, UC Merced and UC Riverside have been made but have had difficulty gaining traction (fossilfreeuc.org, 2016).

The Fossil Free UC campaign is comprised of student organizers coordinating divestment campaigns on all of the operational UC campuses. Fossil Free UC operates on two fields; the first is the individual campus level. At each campus student activists lobby local stakeholders and officials, organize events and actions, educate the student body, and build a broad base of understanding and support amongst the campus population. On the second field they specifically lobby the UC Regents, their advisors and particularly the Chief Investment Officer (CIO). These are the people with the power to actually divest the UC endowment from fossil fuels but students believe they will only do so when they are under enough pressure from students and other UC stakeholders. This kind of pressure can include anything from having lunch with Regents or lobbying them in committees, to escalatory actions such as sit ins, mike checks, walk outs, as well as full scale protests and embarrassing publicity stunts at the quarterly Regents' meetings (Hannon, 2015).

There is a Fossil Free UC core team that mediates between the two very different fields and plans UC-wide strategy. More general strategy and campaign direction is then agreed upon at campus convergences and retreats. Fossil Free UC currently operates with a core-organizing group comprised of student representatives from UCLA, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Barbara and UC Santa Cruz. The Fossil Free UC campaign director from the California Students Sustainability Coalition (CSSC)

tends to facilitate the core group. CSSC also employs two field organizers to help train campus activists and take care of administration. The campaign strategy has been to open the door for negotiations with power-holders while increasing pressure through building student power, gaining endorsements from influential stakeholders, and holding campus demonstrations. While some have argued for a more antagonistic strategy, for legitimacy's sake it is seen as important to ensure that the democratic channels of communication are exhausted before escalating with more confrontational tactics (Soiffer, 2015a).

Fossil Free UC first took divestment to the UC Regents in May of 2013 where, after presenting in public comment, they were by and large ignored. Undeterred and inspired by each other's presence students went back to their respective campuses to build a movement that the Regents could not ignore. Eventually the campaign was rewarded with the Regent's promise of a taskforce committee to investigate the question of divestment and advise the Regents' Committee on Investments (COI). Despite their own report finding that divestment would have negligible to no impact on investment returns the taskforce decided against divestment (Soiffer, Fernandez and Brodie, 2015). The taskforce met in person for a total of four hours over the five months of its existence and disbanded after the CIO, Jagdeep Bachher, made a decision on divestment without consulting it. In the spring of 2014, Fossil Free UC's core team discovered that Mr. Bachher would not wait for the taskforce's recommendation and would make a recommendation to the Regents himself, advising them to reject divestment (Hannon, 2015). He was only forced to back down when dozens of angry

students, professors and alumni telephoned the CIO's office to demand an explanation.

Perhaps in the hopes of appeasing the student campaigners the UC Regents voted to ignore divestment and instead introduce an Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) investment framework along with committing $1 billion towards "climate solutions" in September 2014 (Leuty, 2014). Far from appeased, students were inspired by the seemingly direct impact of their lobbying on the UC's investment policy. Divestment campaigners committed to redoubling their efforts in the knowledge that their actions were able to influence UC decision makers. At roughly the same time divestment campaigns around the US where students had had their divestment demands denied, began escalating their own campaigns with civil disobedience and several arrests (Fossil Free Yale, 2016; Divest Harvard, 2016). Finally, in September 2015, at a meeting divestment campaigners had not even been told about, Jagdeep Bachher announced that the UC had finished "dis-investing" from direct holdings in coal companies and tar sands development (Bachher, 2015a). As of writing, the Fossil Free UC campaign is redoubling its efforts on campuses, urging the UC to "divest the rest" and go 100% fossil free as well as laying the foundations for a push towards reinvestment campaigning too.

Reading Divestment as a (Re)Framing Narrative in the Context of Climate Discourse:

> To revoke public support from the fossil fuel industry, we need to win the **battle of the story**. The public usually hears two different narratives – one from our movement, and the other from our opponents. Their story says that everything is okay, the industry and the government will take care of this crisis. Our story says that this crisis can only be solved if we break the power of the fossil fuel industry, which is incompatible with a just and stable future. (Fossil Free, 2016)

It is this case study's contention that fossil fuel divestment can and should be read as a reframing narrative strategy. As argued in Chapter One, structuring discursive conditions through narrative, and stories more generally, is a potent form of maintaining social control or mobilizing social change (Selbin, 2010). This section exposes the Fossil Free campaign's narrative qualities before demonstrating their significance in the context of climate politics.

The Climate Discourse that Divestment's Narrative Seeks to Change

Divestment deliberately seeks to change narrative and public discourse around climate change to one that is perceived as more suited to the crisis at hand by forming a new narrative. This narrative legitimizes a particular set of climate solutions Fossil Free activists believe to be both necessary and just (Soiffer, 2015a). The divestment narrative helps creates a major shift away from the climate discourses of the 1990s and early 2000s and the false solutions divestment activists argue they legitimized (ibid.). Divestment campaigners recognize that individual changes in lifestyle are not going to solve the climate crisis. Instead

they argue that not only do the attempts to encourage changes in individual consumption fail to excite or inspire audiences, but they also trivialize the crisis by matching it with inadequate, individualistic solutions (Fernandez, 2015). Moreover, these atomized individualist solutions let the real culprits off the hook (Soiffer, 2015a). To paraphrase one UCSC divestment campaigner, there are systemic factors, like the inordinate amount of power fossil fuel companies have over politicians, which must be resolved to solve the systemic crisis of climate change (Phinney, 2015). Divestment campaigns therefore reproduce, legitimize and disseminate a narrative that turns climate change into a collective political, economic and moral crisis, one that cannot be solved by changing light bulbs, or buying a Prius, or becoming a vegan. The narrative represents a broader shift away from mainstream environmentalism and towards a hybrid movement of movements demanding systemic change. In this sense, then, it is a counterhegemonic climate justice narrative.

The Divestment Narrative

In the divestment narrative climate change ceases to be an apolitical abstraction, devoid of agency and appeased only by the individual's sacrifice of their consumerist lifestyle, and instead becomes a socially mediated force unleashed upon the world by a group of wealthy elites and politicians in the pocket of fossil fuel lobbyists. Their interests must be resisted through galvanizing social momentum and mobilizing an almighty political struggle. Needless to say, the trope of the big greedy corporation screwing the little guy is hardly original but

the popularity with which this narrative has already met suggests that divestment's narrative has more to offer.

Reinsborough and Canning at the Centre for Story-Based Strategy (CSS) argue that social change narratives, just like any other narrative, must include five key elements: Characters, conflict, imagery, foreshadowing and underlying assumptions (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 38-9). They encourage agents of social change to ask the following: What is the conflict upon which the story rests? Who are the characters supposed to represent, are they relatable? How does the imagery engage with people's values? What promises or future does the story give to the resolution of the conflict? What are the underlying assumptions that must be accepted in order to believe the narrative is true (ibid.)? The narrative that the divestment campaign seeks to legitimize exhibits all of these components as demonstrated through the subsequent examples.

What is the Conflict Upon Which the Story Rests?

The conflict upon which divestment's narrative rests is a simple one of good versus evil. Like most good stories the conflict is an intensely moral one. There is no ambiguity as to who represents the "good guys" and who represents the "bad guys." The conflict transforms climate change into a profoundly moral question. As 350.org's divestment organizer Becca Rast says, it forces a "choice point" (Rast, 2015). Those engaging with the story must choose between the fossil fuel industry and frontline communities whose lives and livelihoods they threaten, or

between the fossil fuel industry and young people whose future and security they threaten. In this story audiences must choose whether they will support and fight along side the climate movement against the fossil fuel industry or whether they will remain complacent and submit to the industry's interests. At the local level the conflict is over the morality of remaining invested in fossil fuel companies while being fully aware of the destruction they have and are prepared to unleash. At the macro level, however, the conflict is over whether or not the fossil fuel industry will be prevented from extracting and burning five times more coal oil and gas than even the most conservative estimates say is safe to burn. It is a civilizational and existential conflict in which only one outcome may guarantee survival.

Who Are the Characters Supposed to Represent, Are They Relatable?

The characters, already alluded to, represent those whom the fossil fuel industry and the climate crisis threaten most: young people and frontline communities – particularly indigenous communities and low-income communities of color. Students therefore play a central role in representing young people resisting the fossil fuel industry's extractivism as well as drawing attention to the resilience of communities fighting the injustice of fossil fuel infrastructure located in their neighborhoods and which render their lives and livelihoods expendable (Hannon, 2015). These are clearly the protagonists of the story while the fossil fuel industry is just as obviously the antagonist. The role of politicians and university decision makers, for example, is more ambiguous, however. Politicians are the ones who

take the money from fossil fuel industries yet divestment is also supposed to create the political cover for politicians to enforce more ambitious climate legislation. Similarly decision makers like the UC Regents or the CIOs are often construed as colluding with the fossil fuel industry while also being the ones who will ultimately make the decision to divest.

How Does the Imagery Engage With People's Values?

The metaphors and symbolism that the divestment narrative employs are carefully constructed to demonize and delegitimize the industry and make those fighting it more relatable. The crucial image, however, is not a portrayal of either the good guys or the bad guys but of the climate crisis itself. Rejecting the emaciated polar bears and distant melting ice caps of the old environmentalism, the divestment narrative deploys imagery evoking the human face of climate change and the human face of the struggle against extractivism. This imagery is integral to the moral claims that make divestment and its sub-imagery all the more tangible. "The resistance" to fossil fuel infrastructure, for example, is a consistent image that the divestment narrative evokes. Those fighting on the frontlines are portrayed as heroes but their resistance is also humanized to the extent that everyone at national divestment convergences knows the name of Crystal Lameman and her tribe, the Beaver Lake Cree, fighting tar sands extraction in Alberta, Canada (Klein, 2014). Meanwhile, the fossil fuel industry is dehumanized, lumped in with the amorphous, ill-defined but very definitely malevolent "system" against which the resistance is targeted. To a certain extent

the university's endowment and investments could also be an example of imagery. These investments represent the direct link between the institutions students pay for and study at and funding of the climate crisis. One of the divestment campaign's most basic slogans is "stop funding the climate crisis." Student activists often demonstrate the hypocrisy of attending an institution that is supposed to prepare them for the future while also having that future destroyed for them thanks to the investment decisions of that very same institution.

What Promises or Future Does the Story Give to the Resolution of the Conflict?

The divestment narrative foreshadows two futures: one in which, as McKibben puts it "the planet tanks" (350.org, 2013), and one in which climate catastrophe is not only averted, but, when a climate justice lens is added, a more just and sustainable society is established. Again audiences must choose, this time between these two futures – which will they support and fight for? Fossil Free has also begun experimenting with the inclusion of a reinvestment campaign to accompany the narrative (Fernandez, 2015). This makes foreshadowing an even more prominent feature of the campaign. For example campaigns are likely to begin challenging their institutions to "move a portion of [their] money into community-owned energy projects" (Rast, 2015). Divestment from fossil fuel and reinvestment in community-owned energy projects is an excellent example of the kind of foreshadowing of solutions that climate justice-oriented divestment activists want to see.

What Are the Underlying Assumptions That Must Be Accepted in Order to Believe the Narrative is True?

The divestment narrative rests on several assumptions that its audience must accept in order to believe it is true. The first and most obvious is that climate change is real and is caused by humans. The divestment narrative doesn't make much sense to those who do not believe in climate change. Another assumption is that investors should make investment decisions in alignment with their morals. Many investors try to keep the two separate so the divestment message has little purchase on them. Finally, the audience must buy into the assumption that preventing the climate crisis and preventing the fossil fuel industry from burning all of its reserves is the morally right thing to do. Many of the narrative's sub-frames help audiences accept these assumptions but it has to be noted that narratives exist in contested environments and are rarely simply accepted.

Fossil fuel divestment includes all the classic elements of narrative. Reinsborough and Canning also explain social change narratives need to do more: "Organizers rely on storytelling to build relationships, unite constituencies, name problems, and mobilize people" (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 12). Therefore it is important to examine the extent to which the divestment narrative accomplishes these. Divestment has built relationships through a message that unites constituencies. Student campaigners are united with frontline communities and the broader climate justice movement through confronting the same crisis. The divestment narrative also names the problem very explicitly as the fossil fuel industry's willingness to let warming exceed two degrees. Finally, the divestment

movement mobilizes people, particularly students, by showing them their stake in the crisis and a clear path to confronting it. The divestment narrative clearly includes all the elements of a successful social change narrative.

Divestment is a (Re)Framing Narrative

George Marshall writes that "we interpret climate change through frames, which focus our attention but limit our understanding" (Marshall, 2014, 233). Divestment's narrative seeks to persuade its audiences that responsibility for the climate crisis lies first and foremost with the industry doing most to cause it and the politicians letting them get away with it. This reframes the climate crisis. "Frames," according to Marshall, "define battle grounds" and as George Lakoff famously remarked "whoever frames the debate tends to win the debate" (ibid.; Lakoff quoted in Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 38). Framing theory is incredibly important to the divestment context because reframing climate change is precisely what divestment's narrative does.

George Marshall best describes the situation divestment seeks to reframe when he writes: "The early focus on tailpipe emissions rather than wellhead production became a meta-frame that influenced all subsequent narratives concerning the definition of the problem, moral responsibility, and policy solutions" (Marshall, 2014, 228). The focus on tailpipe emissions, or individual responsibility, is the meta-frame that divestment seeks to displace. The tailpipe represents pollution from cars' exhaust fumes and so emphasizes consumption. The "tailpipe

emissions" frame has reinforced neoliberal individualism, atomized responses, and ultimately seen the rise of many false solutions to the crisis. The wellhead production represents an emphasis on the responsibility of producers of fossil fuels, i.e. fossil fuel companies. The shift from tailpipe emissions to wellhead production shifts responsibility. It moves climate narratives away from the unsuccessful fear and guilt-based appeals of mainstream environmentalism that serve only to anger or paralyze their audience and sends them toward a critique of the industry and the power that the existing political order upholds (Weintrobe et al., 2013, 36, 93; Marshall, 2014, 227).

The divestment narrative contains three core frames and several sub-frames that can be found in the Fossil Free online communications toolkit:

- "Frame: The fossil fuel industry is incompatible with a just & sustainable future.
    - Message example: "If it is wrong to wreck the planet, then it is wrong to profit from that wreckage."
- Frame: Social, racial, & economic justice
    - Message example: "The fossil fuel industry perpetuates racial & economic injustice."
    - Message example: "If it is wrong to poison communities, then it is wrong to profit from that poisoning."
- Frame: Our social & moral responsibility as institutions for the greater good.
    - Message example: "Investments in fossil fuels are a denial of climate science"" (Fossil Free USA, 2016).

They list some of the campaign's sub-frames more briefly:

- Urgency of climate crisis
- Fiscal responsibility

- Social responsibility & moral imperative
- The future of our generation
- Historical importance of student movements
- The fossil fuel industry's business plan is incompatible with life on this planet
- Reinvestment in just & sustainable solutions (ibid.).

These frames lead into some of the fundamental arguments divestment campaigns deploy to convince a wide range of audiences. Crucially, different frames can be deployed and emphasized depending on different audiences (Soiffer, 2015a). For example when lobbying a UC Regent campaigners tend to emphasize fiscal responsibility or how divestment will impact the university's legacy. When engaging with media, however, campaigners emphasize the moral imperative and social responsibility driving divestment decisions. All these framings help undermine the legitimacy of the fossil fuel industry and shift the terms of the debate.

Reinsborough and Canning explain that "since an audience's existing stories will filter new facts or information, change agents need to offer a new story" (2010, 46). It is therefore necessary to reframe the terms of understanding. Reframing undermines assumptions of the old story and presents issues in a different, more persuasive light (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 52). By offering a new story with new characters, new frames and new terms of understanding, divestment activists are deploying what could be called a *reframing narrative*. According to Reinsborough and Canning, "frames operate as pre-existing narrative lenses in our minds" (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 121). Divestment as a story creates a new lens through which to see the climate crisis, and, as such, is both a frame and

a narrative at the same time. George Lakoff writes that "Facts are all-important. They are crucial. But they must be framed appropriately if they are to be an effective part of public discourse" (Lakoff, 2014, 154). The divestment narrative reframes the facts of climate change within an accessible and engaging story and displaces previous framings which have been alienating, boring, or counterproductive (Anderson, 2012; Marshall, 2014; McKibben, 2012; Weintrobe et al., 2013). This counter narrative is capable of creating discursive opportunities for counterhegemony and radical social change.

How Does Divestment Counter Hegemonic Climate Discourse?

That divestment is a counterhegemonic strategy is not immediately obvious and indeed, as many interviewees with Fossil Free UC activists made clear, divestment only truly confronts dominant power structures when intentionally deployed to do so (Hannon, 2015; Phinney, 2015; Rast, 2015). Divestment is not necessarily counterhegemonic because simply undermining the power of the fossil fuel industry (or "big oil" which could just as easily be replaced by "big solar") arguably leaves contemporary structures of power and discursive hegemony mostly intact. However, it is also the case that much of the divestment movement's leadership has embraced a climate justice lens and is intentionally moving the campaign in the direction of confronting deep-rooted power structures (Rast, 2015). When divestment campaigns align themselves with the principles of climate justice and work to create discursive space for alternative climate solutions they can be considered counterhegemonic. More importantly, most

divestment campaigns are oriented towards climate justice (ibid.). As the addition of "If it is wrong to wreck the planter, it is wrong to profit from that wreckage" to "If it is wrong to poison communities, it is wrong to profit from that poisoning" in the Fossil Free communications tool kit shows, climate justice and an emphasis on the communities most effected are being institutionalized in the campaign's messaging. This is also something the Fossil Free UC campaign has very deliberately cultivated.

The divestment narrative can be used to construct counterhegemonic climate discourse in several ways. Firstly, its framing shifts the terms of the debate from Marshall's "tailpipe to wellhead" narrative. Secondly, as Rast puts it, it forces a "choice point" – the construction of a clear enemy persuades audiences to choose the side of resistance. Thirdly, it helps create discursive space for subaltern climate solutions. And finally, it shifts the broader climate movement's orientation toward embracing the climate justice lens. Together, these four processes undermine prevailing climate change narratives and position climate justice as a contending alternative. When institutions with a large public audience divest from fossil fuels they are helping to legitimize this counter narrative and subaltern solutions.

From Tailpipe Emissions to Wellhead Production

As explained my literature review, Kevin Anderson's research shows that the climate crisis cannot be resolved within neoliberalism's growth paradigm

(Anderson, 2012). Naomi Klein has gone farther to make the case that capitalism itself is incompatible with a stable climate (Klein, 2014). Changes in individual consumer choice are not going to stop the climate crisis, nor are market forces on their own, nor a reliance on future technologies (ibid.). Chapter One also argued that climate communications, and particularly climate justice communicators, must catch up with this reality. Divestment can and does help communicate this reality. The previous section showed how the divestment framing narrative shifts emphasis away from the atomized individual and onto the social causes of climate change. It places particular emphasis on the inordinate amount of influence the fossil fuel industry has over political decision makers but also more generally the role that economic elites and neoliberal globalization have played in eroding democracy (Fernandez, 2015). This exemplifies the framing shift from tailpipe emissions to wellhead production.

Leading activists in the Fossil Free UC campaign regard this element of the narrative as integral to divestment's overall purpose. As Victoria Fernandez put is "the way we're talking about climate now is that there are certain actors who are in positions of power … and those actors aren't held accountable to the decisions that they've been making" (ibid.). Alden Phinney is more blunt: "I think divestment has opened this giant conversation about "what the fuck are we doing?!" "How have we let this happen?!"" (Phinney, 2015). These two former student members of the UC Regent's taskforce on divestment provide some of the more biting critiques based on confronting the tailpipe emissions narrative and how divestment challenges it. The extent to which divestment is tied to a systemic

critique of the power allotted to economic elites and the positioning of economic growth as an unquestionable imperative is revealed in interviews with each of the Fossil Free UC activists. However, the critique is also implicit in Fossil Free's frames. Fossil Free's critique may be of the fossil fuel industry but it draws upon a discursive opportunity structure that has etched an understanding of economic elites corrupting democracy into public consciousness since at least the Occupy Wall Street protests (Gitlin, 2012; Rast, 2015). In this way the fossil fuel industry and its lobbying power is inherently attached to a broader understanding of corporate power and the hijacking of democratic institutions.

The tailpipe emissions narrative and the emphasis on individual consumption have excluded an enormous segment of the population (Fernandez, 2015). As many critiques of the popular film *Cowspiracy* point out, going vegan to reduce one's personal contribution to agricultural emissions is certainly important but many people cannot afford a healthy vegan lifestyle, and many frontlines communities depend upon hunting and fishing for their livelihoods (Chivers, 2016). Similarly, condemning those who drive pick up trucks is alienating, calling for people to install solar panels fails to recognize it as an option available only for the relatively wealthy, and demanding everyone change their light bulbs is both farcically inadequate and downplays the severity of the crisis. Meanwhile just 90 fossil fuel companies are responsible for two-thirds of all fossil fuel emissions since 1750, just seven are responsible for almost fifteen-percent of global emissions, and according to the IMF, the world's governments subsidize this at $10 million a minute (Clark, 2013; Carrington, 2015). Scrolling through the

different Fossil Free UC social media pages yields all this information very efficiently. The wellhead frame that divestment reinforces thus helps audiences reprioritize solutions, engage with them sensibly, and demonstrates how the real problem is not only the fossil fuel companies but also a political establishment that enables them to do what they do (Fernandez, 2015). This all serves to undermine the legitimacy of that establishment and create discursive space for climate justice solutions.

Creating an Enemy and Choosing Sides

The subtitle of McKibben's crucial article reads: *Three simple numbers that add up to global catastrophe - and that make clear who the real enemy is.* In this opening salvo McKibben sets the tone of an important element that has helped define the divestment campaign – the creation of an enemy. In reframing the terms of the debate, divestment forces a choice point (Rast, 2015). It seeks to establish a simple dualism – the audience must choose between siding with the fossil fuel industry or those resisting it. The characters and conflict in the narrative are obviously constructed to persuade audiences to side with the latter. Clearly matters are more complicated than this dualism, particularly with regards to oil field workers or coal miners who stand to lose their livelihoods if the fossil fuel industry collapses. Moreover, audiences, like the UC Regents for example, can always choose to reject the premise of the story altogether and therefore reject this dualism. However, for the less critical audience the reasons for siding with the resistance are compelling and it is not difficult to portray an industry with an

environmental injustice and human rights track record as abysmal as fossil fuel companies' as the "bad guys." By siding with the resistance against fossil fuel infrastructure the audience bolsters their support and provides cover for politicians and decision makers to turn against fossil fuel interests, as well as legitimizing a set of solutions that the resistance to fossil fuels presents.

This choice point also exposes the relationship politicians have with industry and seeks to break it (Fernandez, 2015). This is essential if divestment is to work. Politicians must be seen as siding with the enemy when they take money from the industry, subsidize it, or support its infrastructure (Rast, 2015). If this reaches critical mass, at least according to the logic of divestment (and certainly supported by previous campaigns and Oxford's Smith's School report), then politicians will be less likely to risk association with the industry, thereby undermining its political influence. This is significant for climate justice firstly because when the power of the fossil fuel industry decreases, frontlines resistance to fossil fuel infrastructure will become easier. It is also important because while the ultimate objective of climate justice is radical system change, having politicians in power who will not contest climate justice solutions – or who might even facilitate a just transition – is more likely when they are not under the influence of the fossil fuel industry. An important caveat is of course, that just because fossil fuel lobbyists are no longer able to influence politicians doesn't mean other corporate sponsors whose interests do not align with climate justice won't influence them. While true, removing the fossil fuel industry as an impediment to climate justice solutions would still be an important victory for climate justice.

Creating Discursive Space for Subaltern Solutions

Reinsborough and Canning write that "popular culture is an ever-evolving, contested space of struggle, where competing voices, experiences, and perspectives fight to answer the questions: whose maps determine what is meaningful? Whose stories are considered true?" (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 19). Divestment intervenes in this struggle to provide a piece of one such map. The dominant discourses in which prevailing climate narratives are embedded legitimize solutions that reproduce and reinforce contemporary dynamics of power. Divestment undermines prevailing climate narratives and in so doing undermines the solutions and power structures these narratives legitimize. In a Gramscian sense the legitimacy crisis in hegemonic climate discourse that divestment creates could help subaltern solutions break into public consciousness. As activists from Fossil Free UC make clear they are very intentionally trying to create the discursive space for climate justice analysis and solutions to be accepted into popular culture. For example, one activist who wished to remain anonymous remarked, "I see divestment as opening up spaces for those fights to be heard and to be uplifted;" divestment is "rooted in using your position at the university to create space to share these stories" (Anonymous, 2015). In this way Fossil Free both magnifies struggles that for too long have fallen under what Rob Nixon would call *slow violence* and draws attention to the solutions frontline communities have pioneered.

Divestment campaigns and narratives can also provide an excellent base from which to launch a more critical analysis. Alden Phinney explains this well, stating that:

> You're never really going to end the capitalist system with a tactic that relies on capitalism…It really provides a space that's not too scary to jump into…[to] get involved in divestment and see that there is a lot more wrong with the world than just fossil fuel subsidies." (Phinney, 2015)

Activists and audiences alike engage with the divestment narrative and connect it to many of the systemic problems that have led to the climate crisis. In time a more radical critique can be cultivated and the credibility of subaltern solutions is strengthened. Moreover, through nascent reinvestment campaigns Fossil Free seeks to consolidate upon the discursive space it has won for the movement by directing investments towards climate justice solutions that frontline communities are developing (Rast, 2015). Investments in the subaltern solutions, or even just the struggle to get institutions like the UC to invest in them, could have a huge discursive impact in terms of bringing them into the public eye and legitimizing them.

Changing the Climate Movement From the Inside Out

Finally, divestment helps to counter hegemonic climate discourse by shifting the terms of debate within the mainstream climate movement. This is perhaps where Fossil Free has been most successful. Transforming climate change into the moral crisis that it is also undermines the technocratic and managerial approach of

hegemonic climate discourse. As Jake Soiffer puts it "people who joined the movement with a very whitewashed perspective now get climate justice a lot better and are much more committed to long term organizing" (Soiffer, 2015a). He went on to say that:

> Ten years ago the youth environmental movement was very much controlled by capitalists, middle and upper middle class white folks who didn't share political analysis, who were not committed to confrontation or long term organizing. Divestment has started to change that. (ibid.)

Divestment has helped politicize the movement. Becca Rast affirms this and adds that there has been a "narrative shift to humanize the impacts of the climate crisis and weave that into divestment over the past three years" (Rast, 2015). Divestment's role in humanizing the climate crisis has been significant. The divestment narrative draws attention to the fossil fuel industry's abuses and the frontlines communities resisting fossil fuel infrastructure as well as the changes in climate the industry is already causing. In giving its climate narrative relatable characters and a worthy struggle divestment helps humanize the crisis. Almost all the interviews with the Fossil Free activists demonstrate that it was this humanizing frame that brought them into the divestment campaign. Abandoning the polar bears and melting ice caps imagery for frames that encapsulate the human cost of climate change has been a vital shift key to the climate movement's survival.

The impacts of divestment's humanizing rhetoric, its call to "*keep it in the ground"* and the educating role it has played in bringing the struggles of

indigenous communities to the heart of youth climate organizing were all on display at the COP 21 in Paris of 2015 (LeQuesne, 2016). On the final day of the COP hundreds of youth climate activists from all political spectrums of climate activism – many of whom were active in divestment campaigns – marched out of the conference centers, rejecting the false solutions being forced through the COP and instead embraced the Indigenous Environmental Networks' *Keep it in the Ground Declaration* (ibid.). The declaration is ultimately a climate justice manifesto and to see some of the youth climate movements' most active members endorse it is testament to the shift that has changed the movement from the inside out (IEN, 2015). In this way the broader, better funded, and more visible climate movement may be beginning to adopt the lens of climate justice. When institutions like the UC divest from fossil fuels for moral reasons the humanized climate narrative is popularized and reinforced. This is all very well, but the question we must now ask is, "is it working?"

Is Divestment Working?

The answer to whether on not divestment is successfully shifting discursive conditions is the lynchpin upon which this case study depends. If, despite all its intentions, Fossil Free has had no discursive impact upon its intended audiences then encouraging other climate justice campaigns to adopt similar narrative strategies is not justifiable – at least on these terms. If on the other hand, this case study can show that Fossil Free has either galvanized or reinforced a discursive shift through narrative strategy, then it may set an example that other climate

justice campaigns could draw upon. Unfortunately, tracing a particular narrative shift in the space of less than five years back to a single campaign is exceedingly difficult. Also, while one of the most significant examples, Fossil Free is by no means the only climate campaign experimenting with rhetoric and narrative of the kind discussed in this thesis. Moreover, how to actually measure discursive shifts is a problem that for brevity's sake must remain outside the remit of this work. To make matters more simple, this case study asks a series of questions that may help readers arrive upon a more satisfactory answer. In answering these, the study finds strong evidence suggesting that divestment is indeed working but also that the campaign must do much more to affect larger and more diverse audiences.

Why Should it Work?

Divestment, understood as a narrative strategy, should work for all the reasons outlined in the previous section. According to the theory presented in Chapter One and the testimonies of activists presented throughout this case study, reframing the story, reorienting the climate movement, creating a clear enemy, presenting a clear struggle and humanizing the crisis should all work to displace dominant climate narratives and insert subaltern ones. Moreover, the much alluded to report from Oxford University – the one that found that the fossil fuel divestment campaign is the fastest growing divestment campaign ever – provides some more tangible analysis of the direct impact divestment is having on the fossil fuel industry (Ansar, Caldecott and Tilbury, 2013). First and foremost, it must be noted that the purpose of divestment is not to bankrupt the fossil fuel industry. As

McKibben himself has said, the fossil fuel industry is "the wealthiest industry in the history of money," divestment commitments will not hurt their profits at least in the short term (350.org, 2015; Grady-Benson, 2014, 119). The Oxford report concurs:

> Even if the maximum possible capital was divested from fossil fuel companies, their share prices are unlikely to suffer precipitous declines over any length of time...sizeable withdrawals are likely to escape the attention of fossil fuel management since oil and gas stocks are some of the world's most liquid public equities. (Ansar, Caldecott and Tilbury, 2013, 70)

In other words, even a few hundred divestment commitments do not do much to dent the industry's profits because other, less scrupulous, investors simply buy up the sold off assets (Although it is feasible that the price of those shares could fall). Rather, the direct threat fossil fuel divestment poses to the fossil fuel industry is public stigmatization (Ansar, Caldecott and Tilbury, 2013, 12).

In a quotation that Fossil Free activists have shared dozens of times since it was published the Oxford report exposes the power of divestment:

> The outcome of the stigmatisation process, which the fossil fuel divestment campaign has now triggered, poses the most far-reaching threat to fossil fuel companies and the vast energy value chain. Any direct impacts pale in comparison. (Ansar, Caldecott and Tilbury, 2013, 13)

Presenting the fossil fuel industry as an enemy against which all those who care about their future, or their children's future, or human civilization's future must struggle has power. The report continues in great detail on the topic of stigma. For example: "firms heavily criticised in the media suffer from a bad image that scares

away suppliers, subcontractors, potential employees, and customers," or "Governments and politicians prefer to engage with 'clean' firms to prevent adverse spill-overs that could taint their reputation or jeopardise their re-election," or "Negative consequences of stigma also include cancellation of multibillion-dollar contracts or mergers/acquisitions" (Ansar, Caldecott and Tilbury, 2013, 14). This last example became all too true when the toy company Lego announced it would not renew contracts with Shell Oil after a successful and imaginative Greenpeace campaign in late 2014 (Vaughan, 2014). Finally, all of the prior divestment campaigns the report reviewed resulted in stronger regulation imposed on the targeted entity. The Oxford report's findings are vital to the logic behind why divestment should work and Fossil Free activist's depend upon them to justify their tactic (Soiffer, 2015a).

How Should Divestment's Success be Measured?

The Oxford report mostly focuses on the direct and indirect impact divestment has on the fossil fuel industry – particularly coal – but places less emphasis on the discursive implications of the campaign's climate narrative. In fairness, an investigation into divestment as a narrative strategy was not within the clearly delineated parameters of the report; however, its omission raises the important question: how should divestment's success as a narrative strategy be measured?

One way is to simply add up the number of divestment commitments and their total value. Based on the Oxford report's findings it could be assumed that the

more money divested translates into more stigmatization and greater dominance in public consciousness. This approach has a number of flaws. Firstly, the numbers can be manipulated very easily. For example, ahead of COP 21 350.org announced that up to $3.4 trillion worth of assets had been withheld from fossil fuel companies with around $50 billion having been directly divested (Fossil Free 2016). Critics were quick to expose the simple numbers trick (Divestment Facts, 2015). The $3.4trillion included divestment commitments like those of the UC, which only applied to coal and tar sands industries, or Stanford's commitment to divest from coal, and presented these under the broader category of fossil fuel industries – removing the UC's divestment reveals a rather different picture (ibid.). This could be called propaganda of the deed but, other than undermining the integrity of the campaign a little, is relatively harmless. More seriously, however, some activists have critiqued Fossil Free's seeming obsession with racking up divestment commitments while ignoring commitments to long-term organizing and training of young activists (Anonymous, 2015). One activist who wished to remain anonymous said that this approach "Doesn't leave space for us to say the university didn't divest but we created all these other movements and groups on campus and student conversations on climate justice issues"(ibid.). The very narrow definition of success can very easily lead to demoralization and burn out (ibid.).

Recognizing the commitment to long-term organizing and training of activists as a victory in and of itself may be another way to measure the campaign's success. This is certainly a more climate justice-oriented approach. The CJM needs young

activists who are trained to resist fossil fuel infrastructure and divestment is creating theses at an incredible rate. The importance of including this analysis is well recognized by the Divestment Student Network which has sought to cultivate activists able to organize over longer periods of time in hostile environments (Fossil Fuel Divestment Student Network, 2016). Furthermore, Rachelle Peterson has argued, what really matters when it comes to divestment's message is the struggle and the publicizing of the struggle (Peterson, 2015, 27). This is what "turns a generation of young people against fossil fuels." Therefore a long drawn-out fight with administrations, like the campaign at the UC, is not necessarily a bad thing. The more dramatic the fight, the more media attention the narrative gets, and perhaps the more supporters student activists can garner.

Another way to measure divestment's success could be to look for changes in market norms. This may be particularly helpful in the case of the demise of coal companies in the US and abroad. The Oxford report warned of this effect stating that:

> Even when divestment outflows are small or short term and do not directly effect future cash flows, if they trigger a change in market norms that closes off channels of previously available money, then a downward pressure on the stock price of a targeted firm is possible. (Ansar, Caldecott and Tilbury, 2013, 12)

While a strong regulatory environment and stiff competition from renewables and fracked gas have been the key reasons for coal's instability, Victoria Fernandez argues that its demise has been accelerated by a change in market norms initiated through divestment commitments (Fernandez, 2015). Indeed, coal is the most

popular industry to divest from because of its perceived instability. Perceptions of its instability are strengthened through divestment pledges leading to a change in market norms. Even coal companies like the industry giant, Peabody Energy, supports this argument. Just a few months before it declared bankruptcy, Peabody referred to divestment as a threat to the company's longevity:

> Concerns about the environmental impacts of coal combustion, including perceived impacts on global climate issues, are resulting in increased regulation of coal combustion in many jurisdictions, unfavorable lending policies by government-backed lending institutions and development banks toward the financing of new overseas coal-fueled power plants and *divestment efforts affecting the investment community, which could significantly affect demand for our products or our securities.* (Peabody Energy Corporation, 2015, my emphasis)

While it is important to show divestment having a material impact on fossil fuel companies, this measure does not represent a discursive shift outside of stock markets and the investment world.

Perhaps a more reliable measure of divestment's impact on public discourse is to examine the extent to which media outlets, politicians, and authority figures have adopted and reinforced its rhetoric and frames. It is worth briefly mentioning some of the media outlets and politicians that have engaged with and responded to Fossil Free. "*Keep It In The Ground"* is a key frame around which divestment is premised. Where the exact phrase *"*Keep it in the Ground" originated is not entirely clear but 350.org's rhetoric around the Keystone XL pipeline seems likely. While many climate justice campaigns have had similar sentiments and goals, the words "Keep It In The Ground" are now usually tied to divestment

campaigns. The insertion of this phrase into public discourse is perhaps the easiest frame to follow and trace back to its early appropriation by the divestment movement. The phrase saw a leap in momentum around March 2015. Pledging its own divestment commitment, the British Newspaper *The Guardian* launched its "Keep It In The Ground" campaign targeting two of the world's largest charitable foundations, calling upon them to divest from fossil fuels (Rusbridger, 2015). Though tied to 350.org's divestment campaigns, "Keep it in the ground" is a frame that has recently taken on a life of its own. Bill McKibben for example, has begun writing about the "Keep It In The Ground" movement to describe broad-based resistance to fossil fuel infrastructure and escalations against fossil fuel infrastructure planned for May of 2016 (McKibben, 2016a). In November 2015 Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders along with seven other senators brought the Keep It in the Ground Act to the US Senate (Goldenberg, 2015). Several Democratic congressmen followed suit and introduced a bill under the same name to Congress in February 2016 (Milman, 2016). IEN also used the frame to title their declaration rejecting the COP and embracing climate justice solutions in Paris (IEN, 2015). These are just a few examples of the frame's popularity, and admittedly they appear mostly amongst outlets that are preaching to the choir, but they do demonstrate yet another way to measure the success of divestment.

What Happened When the UC Divested?

On September 9th 2015 Jagdeep Bachher, the UC's Chief Investment Officer announced to the UC Regents' Committee on Investments that he had completed

the process of "dis-investing" the UC's endowment and pension fund holdings from coal companies and companies focused on operating in tar sands projects (Gordon, 2015). A textual analysis of 20 news media hits, blogs, and press releases covering the UC's divestment commitment, alongside evidence from several interviews with Fossil Free UC activists, provides an illustrative example of divestment actually working, as well as exposing some of its limitations. All of these articles come from online sources and are ones very likely to have been shared and spread via Twitter or Facebook. This analysis studies these articles' headlines, any accompanying visuals, and quotations that frame the story, to construct a comprehensive depiction of the narrative that was generated. If the narrative that gets reinforced in this process is Fossil Free UC's then it is clear that divestment is working.

Mr. Bachher explained his "dis-investment" reasoning in a statement to the UC Regent's Committee on Investments: "A slowing global demand, an increasingly unfavorable regulatory environment, and a high threat of substitution pose insurmountable challenges to coal mining companies" (ibid.). A spokeswoman for the UC later clarified the UC's position: "Dianne Klein told Reuters that UC is still free to invest in such companies "if the market circumstances warrant it"" and that "There are no plans to extend the sell-off into oil and natural gas" (Mosbergen, 2015). The decision amounted to a drawn-out process in which the UC took investments out of coal and tar sands industries with no policy preventing it from reinvesting in them and outright refusing to divest from oil and gas industries. Void of any moral rhetoric or Fossil Free's framing the

announcement was hardly the triumphant divestment commitment Fossil Free activists might have hoped for. Nevertheless, with ambitions to expose gained ground the Fossil Free UC core team made a strategic decision to frame the announcement as a victory (fossilfreeuc.org, 2015). What followed in the media was not only a struggle over the framing of the climate crisis, but also a struggle over the terms upon which the UC's decision should be understood.

How Fossil Free UC responded to the UC's announcement was a major theme in several discussions with divestment activists. Most campaigers made the case that it was up to student activists to take hold of the narrative when divestment happens and not to rely on the relevant institution to use Fossil Free's frames or acknowledge their narrative. For example when asked whether the UC's decision really did anything to legitimize and communicate the divestment narrative Jake Soiffer responded: "if they [the UC Regents] divest it's going to be because students pressed them to … we have access to the narrative of why they divested and we shape the media response like the public impression of why they divested" (Soiffer, 2015a). In response to a similar question Becca Rast replied: "it is our responsibility as campaigners to tell the story that we want to tell… and we did just that… social movements always have a responsibility and are not successful unless they are willing to claim ownership over victory " (Rast, 2015). These divestment activists therefore recognized that claiming victory and capturing the narrative was up to them and that expecting the UC to use Fossil Free's frames would have been "icing on the cake," to use Rast's words. The following textual

analysis examines just how successfully Fossil Free UC campaigners achieved this.

The 20 articles in question range from those published in *The Guardian* and *The LA Times* to *Yahoo News*, to UC campus newspapers, as well as assorted press releases and blogs. They represent the discursive struggle to humanize the climate crisis in a fascinating microcosm. It is first of all important to address the headlines, as these tend to capture reader's attention. In an interview Soiffer said that "most people who found out about the recent UC divestment probably didn't read the UC's statements, they just saw the headline. As long as there is visible student momentum that leads up to a decision to divest, especially with full divestment, we'll win the narrative" (Soiffer, 2015a). However, relying on headlines to convey divestment frames is perhaps a risky strategy. Of the 20 articles reviewed eleven did not even contain the words divest or divestment. Most opted instead for the words "dumps" or the more neutral "Sells-off." While perhaps a minor point, those who do not read beyond the headlines may not even have had divestment's frames triggered in their minds. If so, headlines such as "UC sells off $200 million in coal and oil sands investments," as found in *The LA Times*, may do little to legitimize or communicate Fossil Free's narrative. The word "divest" taps into the discursive opportunity structure divestment activists have sought to construct. "Sells off," on the other hand, may uphold the UC's position that disinvestment was only a financial decision with only financial implications. Moreover, this supposedly neutral framing could even undermine Fossil Free's position because the purpose of the word divestment is to trigger a

sense of moral outrage amongst its audiences. If divestment is not perceived as having occurred for ethical reasons, it does not help reinforce Fossil Free UC's narrative. There were, however, nine articles in which the words divestment or divest did appear in the headline, including some of the larger outlets such as *Huffington Post*, *the Guardian*, and *Yahoo News*. The point here is that even in the headlines the narrative being communicated is a contested one and that simply looking at the headlines to determine whether divestment's narrative was communicated yields ambiguous results.

Next to an article's headline, the accompanying image tends to help capture and also focus an audience's attention. In his excellent book, *Image Politics*, Kevin DeLuca argued that in discursive terms images dominate over words. Moreover, he says that images can actually contradict the framing of the story, pointing to dissonance in the conventional frame. Consequently, even when a hostile media is framing the story, activists' images can still activate the values and thoughts intended (DeLuca, 1999, 122). As such DeLuca suggests that when applying discourse analysis methodology it is important to read the accompanying images as well as the text (DeLuca, 1999, 19). DeLuca argues this in the context of televised mediums; however, there seems to be no reason why this shouldn't apply to the format of the articles discussed in this case study as well. Of the 20 articles reviewed, nine provided photos of Fossil Free UC activists demonstrating or holding up banners, two depicted polluting smokestacks, two depicted Jagdeep Bachher and/or the Regents' investment committee, one provided a cartoon illustrating a young person representing future generations locked behind bars of

smokestacks representing coal pollution, one provided two video clips of Mr. Bachher's statement to the COI and their response, and the rest did not provide images.

The photos of Fossil Free UC activists (many of whom are holding up banners communicating divestment's frames) at various demonstrations may help to undermine the UC's position that divestment was undertaken exclusively in the interests of financial prudence. At the very least these images insinuate that there is more to the story than the UC selling off investments. Similarly, the images of the smokestacks billowing grey smoke suggest at the pollution associated with the industries being divested from. Again it appears that there is more to the story. The cartoon also explicitly fulfils this role, drawing upon Fossil Free's argument that coal companies are locking future generations into climate catastrophe. In all, this adds up to 14 out of 20 articles in which the purpose of divestment was either directly or indirectly alluded to through images. One of the articles providing an image of Jagdeep Bachher gave room for divestment narrative to be communicated and the other gave some credit to divestment activists but adopted the UC's framing. What makes this imagery significant is that even in instances where the framing of the story favoured the UC's position or took a neutral position, imagery could still have played an important role in drawing audiences' attention towards the divestment campaign's frames. In this way, images used in reporting on the UC's divestment decision may have inadvertently helped communicate the ethical struggle for divestment and legitimize the narrative driving it.

While headlines and images are an essential component, the substance of the article, and particularly the quotations that frame it, matter too. It is in the substance of these articles that the framing struggle over the UC's position and the Fossil Free UC activists is best exposed. What becomes most clear is the way in which the UC's administration very deliberately sought to frame their decision as "disinvestment" and premised exclusively on economic expediency. As interviews with Fossil Free UC activists revealed, it was up to Fossil Free spokespeople to subvert this framing and counter it with their own narrative – humanizing climate change, framing it on political and moral terms, and holding those most responsible to account etc. Teasing out key themes, studying the exact quotations that each side gave, and deciding which frames the articles themselves reinforced yields a strong indication of which side won the narrative struggle.

Perhaps the most quoted sentence amongst these articles is CIO Jagdeep Bachher's statement on why he made the decision to disinvest: "Slowing global demand, an increasingly unfavorable regulatory environment, and a high threat of substitution pose insurmountable challenges to coal mining companies" (Carroll, 2015). Most articles also quoted him saying ""sustainability issues" had made investment in tar sands too risky (Gordon, 2015). This became the quotation many articles opened with and framed the rest of their story. In addition these articles often quoted the UC's spokeswoman Diane Klein saying that "the university has no plans to let go of its holdings and stocks in oil and natural gas." And that the "UC is still free to invest in such companies "if the market

circumstances" warrant it" (Mosbergen, 2015). Reuters placed the divestment decision in a context that many other articles adopted: "The profitability of companies focused on developing crude from Canadian oil sands has also fallen amid low global oil prices, Bachher said, making those companies increasingly risky investments" (Carroll, 2015). Meanwhile the UC most clearly articulated their position in a statement they gave to Yahoo News:

> We firmly believe that if we don't consider these aspects of a potential investment, such as its impact on climate change and other factors we are going to lose money, long term… Our chief responsibility is fiduciary… We do believe that our taking a stand on these issues is influential. But I would not portray us in a moral sense; this is smart investing. (Yahoo.com, 2015)

The UC's desperation to ensure that the decision was understood solely on financial terms and more explicitly to depoliticize that decision is tangible. Indeed the profitably of fossil fuel investments became a leading frame in many of these articles. Had this alone been the story, particularly when paired with headlines that did not mention the word divestment, it is unlikely that divestments frames would have been triggered. Neither the communication of Fossil Free's role in the UC's decision nor the legitimization of the divestment narrative could have been possible had the UC's framing simply been accepted.

Fortunately for the Fossil Free UC campaign, most articles did acknowledge – and many even emphasized – the role that Fossil Free UC had played in making divestment happen, as well as making reference to the global divestment campaign and its narrative. Admittedly, the very existence of the global divestment campaign made the UC's divestment decision difficult for media

outlets to ignore. This reveals a gap between the discursive impact of framing and the concrete decision taken to address divestment. Nevertheless, Fossil Free UC spokespeople were able to offer a compelling counter narrative – claiming the decision as a partial victory and a vindication of the power of student activism. Alden Phinney's quote, "I think it's a really good move by the university. But it doesn't mean we are going to stop pushing for full divestment soon," was picked up in several articles (Gordon, 2015). It embraces the win and pivots the conversation towards full divestment. Alden expands on this in a statement to Yahoo News, saying that "This is a big deal, and an important first step that takes $200 million away from companies like Peabody… but we need our schools to take a stance against Exxon and Shell too… they're every bit as responsible for the climate crisis" (Yahoo.com, 2015). Meanwhile, Jake Soiffer's longer statement appeared in *Mother Jones*, providing readers with some of divestment's key frames:

> They have divested from coal and from oil sands, but the major players profiting off of environmental destruction in California are oil and natural gas. They haven't done anything about those… We need to be using the institutions we have access to as a platform for climate justice, and calling out the way a system has been set up to keep power in the hands of a few… and highlight how those few are wrecking our planet. (Canon, 2015)

Jake is quoted in a similar context in several other articles saying, "This is a much needed first step, but oil and natural gas are the most powerful polluters in California, and we expect the UC to take robust action on the biggest climate villains in their backyard" (Greenmoneyjournal.com, 2015). CSSC summed up student activists' position in their press release stating, "While we applaud their

[the UC Regents'] decision, let us not forget that *student leadership* was the fundamental impetus and catalyst for this victory" (CSSC, 2015, italics in original). In sum, 17 out of 20 of the press releases and articles discussed helped to reinforce the divestment narrative and directly quoted Fossil Free UC spokespeople. Only three articles did not quote Fossil Free activists at all.

The difficulty for Fossil Free UC activists seems to have been to communicate all of the key components of their message in every article. Alden's first and shortest statement was the most quoted, and while it claims victory for students, it does not do much more than that. In addition, Jake's excellent articulation of the campaign's position only appeared in Mother Jones, while more truncated versions appeared elsewhere. A full articulation of claiming the win for students, and the divestment narrative, and where the campaign is heading was absent from most articles. For example, Victoria Fernandez' incredibly important quote in Fossil Free UC's press release which draws upon all the vital frames of the campaign seems to have been omitted from other reports completely:

> If the Regents are serious about climate solutions that means not just divesting from fossil fuel companies, but investing in a just transition away from fossil fuels and towards the non-extractive economy. There is no stopping this movement. We have glimpsed a future of dignity, justice and sustainability, and we are determined to make it real. (fossilfreeuc.org, 2015)

All the major post-divestment talking points can be discerned in this one statement but reporters did not use it. Divestment spokespeople may have been ready with the right quotes but these were rarely acknowledged in full. Meanwhile the difficulty for the UC was clearly articulating a position in which their decision

to divest was understood entirely outside the context of the global fossil fuel divestment movement and student pressure on their own campuses. The very presence of the Fossil Free UC campaign therefore made it very difficult for the UC to compellingly argue that its decision had nothing to do with the global divestment campaign.

Ultimately, the narrative struggle between the UC's spokespeople and Fossil Free UC's communicators became the story upon which these articles focused. Almost every article considered whether Fossil Free UC was right to claim the divestment decision as a victory for student activism. The story communicated in many of these articles was not the divestment narrative but the discussion over whether or not the UC's divestment decision was a victory for Fossil Free UC. In many cases this still offered space for divestment activists to present their narrative, but often it also reinforced the idea that the UC's decision was primarily based on financial pragmatism. Like the headlines that did not use the word divest, the focus on the struggle with UC Regents may have obscured the story divestment activists hoped to tell about resisting the fossil fuel industry.

The reasons Fossil Free UC sought to claim victory are obvious; mobilizing the base, demonstrating student power, and showing divestment's progress ahead of the Paris COP are just some of them. But perhaps divestment activists could have been more cautious in claiming victory and instead focused their responses on why partial divestment was not enough. The divestment event was an excellent opportunity for activists to tell their story but in trying to present the event as a

victory their story got sidelined. In hindsight it's easy to say Fossil Free UC communicators could have been equipped with stronger reasoning behind why they chose to declare victory or that they could have reinforced their narrative with demands for full divestment. On the other hand, perhaps capturing the UC's decision as a movement victory was an important step in legitimizing the narrative of the broader divestment movement – again forcing a choice point that audiences had to respond to. After all the UC's is the largest university endowment to have even partially divested so far and framing this decision as a result of the fossil fuel divestment movement's efforts certainly lends credibility to the broader narrative. Either way it is important to recognize that narrative operates in a contested sphere of narrative and counter narrative. As this analysis shows the assumption that one narrative will win outright should be avoided. Fossil Free UC joined the contest avoiding such assumptions and successfully challenged the UC on their own terms.

Before closing this section, it is worth briefly discussing an opinion piece Jagdeep Bachher wrote for *The Santa Barbara Independent*. His article provides a detailed account of his personal reasons for disinvesting the UC from coal and tar sands companies. Interestingly, Bachher's reasoning somewhat contradicts the economic pragmatism frames the UC so fastidiously sought to communicate. For example in this excerpt Baccher explains the significance of the COI's new ESG investment framework:

> Our approach to sustainability counters the timeworn trope that institutional investors can adopt a values-based investment strategy only if they can guarantee targeted returns. In our view, institutions

> that ignore societal values in their investment strategy imperil their bottom line – today and for years to come… As our students return to campus with the certainty of purpose that divestment is the only solution to society's woes, we are integrating sustainability into our investment framework as a philosophy of long-term investing in and for the future, and as a key metric for evaluating risk. By doing so, we will not only be able to generate competitive, risk-adjusted, long-term investment returns, but also help save the world. (Bachher, 2015b)

While challenging the notion that full divestment is necessary, and indulging in a rather peculiar fantasy about helping save the world, Bachher makes his argument on intensely ethical terms. In the article he writes of the role that implementing the Environmental and Social Governance investment framework had on his decision to divest from coal and tar sand and engage in ethical investing. His argument undermines the value-neutral, or more accurately put finance-oriented, approach the UC's spokeswoman, Dianne Klein, sought to communicate. In this way Bachher reinforces the divestment campaign's frames demanding that institutions invest ethically. He certainly criticizes what he regards as students' "single-mindedness" but he seems eager to present himself as an ethical investor who can help lower barriers to a sustainable economy. Bachher's illusions and contortions epitomize the hegemonic neoliberal climate solutions against which the CJM fights. However, he does share some of the same values as Fossil Free and while he may be unable to apply these values to investing in oil and gas companies, it is important to recognize that Bachher's decisions are driven by an ethical, if rather self-righteous, code. Furthermore, Bachher's reference to the ESG framework helps to prove the impact that divestment activists have had on the UC's decision and particularly on making up Bachher's mind. Pressure from Fossil Free UC led

directly to the Regents' committee on investments establishing an ESG investment framework, which, as Bachher made clear, led him to divest from coal and tar sands. Fossil Free UC is certainly vindicated in claiming a partial victory.

Finally, despite the UC administration's best efforts, their decision to divest sparked a moment in which Fossil Free UC could engage in an important struggle to communicate the divestment narrative to a far broader audience. While neither side prevailed completely, and many reports were far too willing to embrace the UC's frames, 16 of the 20 articles examined helped present the divestment narrative in some shape or form. It is in this incremental but essential way that the divestment movement is certainly working.

Is Divestment Shaping Discursive Conditions Amongst Audiences External to Climate Movement?

It is important to answer this question before drawing conclusions on the counterhegemonic efficacy of fossil fuel divestment campaigns. Rachelle Peterson, a harsh critic of the divestment campaign, has argued that the tactics of divestment, rather than uniting constituents against a common enemy, serve to alienate outsiders, divide those working towards action on climate change, and turn students and administrations against each another (Peterson, 2015). Meanwhile, members of Fossil Free UC have voiced their own concerns about whether the material resources at the campaign's disposal are enough to reach a significant proportion of population (Fernandez, 2015). Others still have argued

that if the campaign is to influence the narratives of audiences outside the climate movement it must be made more relevant to their local contexts (Rast, 2015). Addressing these critiques exposes the extent to which divestment campaigns have reached beyond the bubble of climate activism while also demonstrating how much further the campaign has to go.

In a caustic 300 page report on the Fossil Free campaign (which may itself be indicative of the Fossil Free's impact) Rachelle Peterson asserts that Fossil Free is "is an attack on freedom of inquiry and responsible social advocacy in American higher education" (Peterson, 2015, 10). She goes on to argue that Fossil Free campaigners' "self-avowed strategy is to intimidate the uncommitted into joining, or at least not opposing, divestment," that the campaign "smears opponents and bullies dissenters" and that Fossil Free campaigns consist of "A minority of indignant and dedicated special interests" who believe they can "prevail in the democratic court of public opinion by bullying opponents and polarizing what were once straightforward pragmatic questions" (Peterson, 2015, 19). If these allegations are true then Fossil Free campaigns are unlikely to draw in a diverse audience, will alienate large swathes of campuses, and their narrative will certainly fall on deaf or hostile ears.

Such allegations are far from true and indeed disproving them shows the extent to which Fossil Free campaigns and particularly Fossil Free UC have sought to work within the democratic channels available. For example, student governments representing the student bodies at UCSB, UCSC, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UC

Irvine, and UCSD, have all passed resolutions calling upon the UC to divest, and UCSB, UCSC and UCSD's Academic Senates also passed such a resolution (Fossilfreeuc.org, 2016). Fossil Free UC activists have spoken at almost every public comment at every Regent's meeting since the campaign begun to ask for meetings with UC Regents only to be denied or ignored (Phinney, 2015). Fossil Free UC very deliberately seeks to engage in the democratic channels available to students to legitimize their cause. Problems arise when those channels are shut down or designed to distance decision makers from the will of the student body, making more escalatory tactics necessary (Hannon, 2015). Furthermore, Peterson's critique is founded upon one campus, Swarthmore – where divestment began, and is then applied to *all* Fossil Free campaigns. Even if such claims were true of the Swarthmore campaign there is absolutely no reason why they should therefore apply to all campaigns across the US and indeed across the world. Sweeping generalizations like these hardly constitute evidence but they could be useful ammunition for institutions trying to undermine divestment campaigns. It is important, therefore, that campaigns do not fall into activities that reinforce this narrative. Finally, as it transpires, Peterson wrote this report for the National Association of Scholars (NAS). NAS is a notoriously conservative institution whose president, Peter Wood, has on multiple occasions been accused of denying the existence of climate change (Littlemore, 2011). While this relationship alone is not reason enough to discount Peterson's findings, it should be noted that she is writing with a very clear purpose accompanied by very transparent biases.

Peterson raises another more troubling argument, however. She claims that:

> 83 percent of all divested colleges and universities in the United States are located in states that The Gallup Poll ranks as either "solid" or "leaning" toward the Democratic Party. The remaining 17 percent are in "competitive" states. No state that is "solid" or "leaning" Republican has any divested colleges or universities (Peterson, 2015, 13).

This suggests that Fossil Free's framing, particularly constructing the fossil fuel industry as an enemy, may appeal to the values of liberals and progressives but does not appeal to conservative and Republican values. While hardly surprising, it does mean that Fossil Free campaigns in more conservative areas can do more to frame their arguments and narrative in ways that appeal to values that transcend party lines in the US. However, the campaign cannot abandon its antagonistic position towards the fossil fuel industry because the very purpose of the campaign would be eliminated. Therefore it seems that activists being strategic over which frames they emphasize to whom is essential. It also underlines the point that appropriate messaging depends upon the audiences for whom it is intended. Perhaps in so called "Red States" messaging on climate jobs would resonate better.

All this being said, Peterson's numbers are not entirely accurate. For example, Ohio is a predominantly conservative state but the University of Dayton based there divested fully from Fossil Fuels in 2014 (Udayton.edu, 2014). Furthermore, some Fossil Free framings, specifically those associated with fiduciary risk and responsibility, are convincing more traditionally conservative institutions. For example, insurance companies like Axa or foundations like the Rockefeller Brothers' Fund have fully divested. Moreover, the Governor of the Bank of

England, Mark Carney, stating that "the vast majority of reserves are unburnable" has also voiced concern at the risk investments in fossil fuel companies pose to investment portfolios (Shankleman, 2014). In addition, many churches in very conservative states using deeply moral framings have also divested from fossil fuels (Fossil Free, 2016). From anarcho-syndicalists to the governor of the Bank of England, a vast diversity of opinions and values has found Fossil Free's framings persuasive. This suggests that contrary to Peterson's findings, Fossil Free can appeal to large and diverse audiences depending on the frames employed. If anything, then, Peterson's extensive and minutely detailed report demonstrates that Fossil Free is in fact reaching broader audiences and this is worrying power holders.

While accusations of bullying and silencing clearly aren't among them, Fossil Free does face some very real challenges to amplifying its narrative. Victoria Fernandez, for example, explained that while there is little wrong with the messaging itself, getting that message heard beyond the echo chamber of climate change activism and campus organizing can be difficult (Fernandez, 2015). Fossil Free may lack some of the material resources needed to reach a significant proportion of population. Indeed, this is not a problem that only Fossil Free has had to contend with. The report, *Echoing Justice: Communication Strategies for Community Organizing in the 21st Century*, documents this problem arising again and again amongst social justice campaigns (Quiroz, 2013). As the report puts it "To win front end framing victories, local communities need media rules that keep media platforms accessible, affordable, and accountable" (Quiroz, 2013, 4). Thus

the report shows that not only must activists develop new framings and narrative strategies they must also contend with "insufficient funding, training, media resources, and infrastructure for communications" (Quiroz, 2013, 14-17). Fossil Free is not an exception but even so it is much better resourced and funded than many of the campaigns discussed in *Echoing Justice*. Fossil Free has the support of the giant climate NGO 350.org as well as and many state-wide campaign hubs like CSSC. However, in the context of local campus campaigns, gaining access to mainstream media platforms is still very difficult. As democratic channels of communication are shut down, forcing campaigns to escalate, it is likely that their access to mainstream media platforms will increase.

Finally, Becca Rast has made the case that if the Fossil Free UC campaign is to affect discursive conditions external to campuses and the climate movement it has to listen to the values and context of Californians who are already fighting or threatened by fossil fuel extraction in their backyards, and use frames that appeal to their concerns (Rast, 2015). As she put it, "California likes to portray itself as extremely progressive; yes we are, but we are also are a key export state for liquid natural gas, for coal, and for oil moving forward" (ibid.). California has witnessed a great deal of fossil fuel extraction as well as an unprecedented drought that climate change has likely exacerbated. Fossil Free UC has an opportunity to draw upon the experiences of those most affected by fracking, drought, oil spills, and respiratory diseases associated with proximity to oil refineries (ibid.). It can weave this into their frames and narrative, and, as Rast suggests, make the case that the UC Regents, as leaders of a public institution, have a responsibility to those upon

whom environmental racism and injustices are exacted everyday in California. Many UC campus campaigns have already been making these connections. For example, in May 2015 an oil spill near to UC Santa Barbara galvanized students into action. It was quickly discovered that the ruptured pipeline had been carrying Exxon Mobil's oil and the case was made that the oil spill had been "paid for by UC Regents." The proximity of the oil spill and the potential threat it posed to the student population helped to bring 75 students out to the Chancellors office and demand divestment (Jacobs, 2015). While opportunities to capture the narrative at moments such as these are rare, California's long history of environmental racism and injustice can be drawn upon to hold Regents and the fossil fuel industry accountable, as well as tapping into the values, experiences and frames of those most affected.

As the divestment narrative is split into sub-frames, each targeting specific audiences, the campaign itself matures and expands its influence over discursive conditions. Clearly, however, its work is not finished. It's rhetoric and frames are beginning to find a foothold in some political discourses but divestment's counter narrative has yet to establish itself in a significant proportion of public consciousness. Where it has been most successful is amongst institutions at which divestment actually occurs. Members and participants in those institutions have a lot more at stake than observers. At the UC for example, many students know of and support the campaign, but outside the UC in the rest of California however, divestment only reached broader audiences in the moment that the UC announced it would divest. Challenges that the campaign still has to overcome include

accessing far-reaching media platforms, avoiding accusations of bullying and silencing, and deploying frames that tap into local contextualized discursive opportunity structures. Importantly, however, its frames and narrative so far do not seem to be an impediment and are certainly bringing hundreds of people (young people in particular) into a movement that for a long time had seemed alienating, hostile or even boring.

Reinvestment in a Just Transition

Fossil Free UC, along with several other campaigns across the country, is beginning to make an important shift towards a reinvestment narrative (Hannon, 2015). Campaigners will not only demand that their institutions divest from fossil fuels but also that a percentage of those divested funds be reinvested in sustainable projects that frontline communities have pioneered. Some of the more radical divestment campaigners are recognizing that even when universities divest they tend to simply reinvest in the extractive economy. They are still invested in deforestation, mining, prisons, warfare, and countless other elements of the extractive economy that perpetuate environmental and social injustice. Drawing upon the rhetoric and actions of frontline communities, through reinvestment divestment activists will demand that some of the divested funds be diverted towards the non-extractive or "the living economy" (Fernandez, 2015). Universities and other institutions will be directly invested in the just transition away from fossil fuel dependent extractivism. The shift has both material and discursive implications for climate justice and represents an opportunity for

divestment activists to prove their climate justice credentials. As campaigns evolve and adopt the reinvestment approach their alignment with the principles of climate justice become much clearer (Soiffer, 2015a). In this way the reinvestment component of the campaign helps open up space for climate justice solutions.

Reinvestment is an important way that Fossil Free UC can engage with and listen to a much more diverse audience, in the way Becca Rast suggested, while holding the UC accountable. As one DSN strategist at the California Divestment Convergence in October 2015 explained, reinvestment in a just transition would channel resources to community-owned sustainable energy projects, energy cooperatives and community adaptation and resiliency projects. This money would go into what she called a "non-extractive finance fund" and would be governed by grassroots groups who set terms of investments and loans. Community-led solutions to declining water supplies, to food deserts, to energy monopolies, and alternatives to fracking, oil trains and spills could all be legitimized and made possible through reinvestment.

If divestment sounded difficult, reinvestment may sound impossible. However, Fossil Free activists are under no illusions of how difficult it will be to achieve reinvestment in community-led solutions. It requires CIOs and investment committees to completely reimagine the very concept of investment. A good investment would no longer necessarily be one that provides the best returns, nor one that does the least harm, but rather one that actively builds a livable and just future. This transition could also mean empowering students. Universities would

hand over control of a small percentage of their endowments to students who than place it at the disposal of frontline communities. The details of this process are still being imagined and experimented with at the time of writing. The difficult part is getting campaigners to believe such institutional reform is possible. Reinvestment will be a long-term project that will require its own form of cultural change. As such, reinvestment campaigns will depend upon long term organizing structures that are resilient to the fluctuations of student participation over many years.

Reinvestment in a just transition can also be read as a counterhegemonic project. The communications scholar Marshall McLuhan famously said "the medium is the message." The projects towards which redirected funds would flow are those that prefigure the just and sustainable world climate justice activists strive for. In this sense they are both the medium and the message. In other words, the possibility of energy democracy, of achieving climate justice, is the message and the project already doing so are the medium through which that message is communicated. When institutions like the UC invest in those solutions they legitimize that message and spread the story that, to quote Arundhati Roy, "another world is not only possible, she is on her way." This belief is at the heart of any counterhegemoic project and the divestment movement has the potential to be a part of it. The reinvestment component of divestment represents an attempt at prefigurative politics or the political culture of creation in John Foran's concept of PCOCs (Foran, 2014).

Finally, by redirecting financial resources towards just transition initiatives, reinvestment campaigns can act in solidarity with frontline communities not only rhetorically (which as this case study has shown is essential) but also materially. One excellent example is Richmond, California. As the next case study will elaborate, Richmond is a frontline community fighting against the influence of Chevron and its ambitions to expand their refinery in the city. The UC could divest from the cause of a great deal of suffering and corruption in the city, i.e. Chevron, and redirect investments towards local sustainability projects, and community regeneration. Fossil Free campaigns in California often claim to be acting in solidarity with climate justice activists in Richmond and indeed frontlines communities have also expressed their solidarity with divestment campaigns, but reinvestment could be an important way for that solidarity to be expressed in more than words, strengthening ties between the frontlines and youth activists (Rast, 2015).

Conclusion

Divestment works. Slowly but surely, fossil fuel divestment is helping to reframe the facts of climate change within an accessible and empowering counter narrative that engages larger, more diverse audiences. The shift in frames concentrated on tailpipe emissions to those emphasizing wellhead production can help to structure a discursive field more amenable to climate justice and open up further opportunities for counterhegemony and radical social change. As the example of Fossil Free UC demonstrates, when institutions divest they can help to legitimize

this shift but activists must be prepared for a hard fight to ensure divestment commitments do actually reinforce their narrative. While the divestment narrative is indeed shifting paradigms, Fossil Free has much further to go to affect larger and more diverse audiences. As the diversity amongst divestment supporters demonstrates, divestment's narrative and frames do not seem to be the problem, however. The difficulty for divestment campaigns seems to lie in accessing media platforms that will broadcast their narrative to larger and more diverse audiences. That being said, discursive shifts do not necessarily happen in moments but spread over time, and this is certainly the case with Fossil Free. The growing ubiquity of divestment's "keep it in the ground" rhetoric is testament to this.

The divestment campaign is maturing and adopting climate justice into its driving logic. In doing so Fossil Free campaigns are taking seriously the question of *who* their target audiences are and how to listen to those audiences. If the campaign is to successfully resonate with the lived experiences of larger, more diverse audiences it will have to make itself relevant to their specific contexts. Fossil Free UC can start by engaging in meaningful ways with frontline communities and those most affected by drought in California and is already beginning to do so. The adoption of reinvestment campaigns alongside divestment campaigns is an excellent example of this. Reinvestment is a material recognition of the solidarity that must exist between young people whose futures climate change threatens and frontline communities who today resist the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and in doing so help to protect that future. Reinvestment not only diverts resources away from the extractive economy but also helps to legitimize the

prefiguration of a more just and sustainable world. Through embracing climate justice and initiating reinvestment campaigns divestment becomes a truly counterhegemonic project.

In conclusion, fossil fuel divestment is a narrative tool that can be used to intervene in public consciousness. Fossil Free UC exhibits the kind of discursive interventions that counter hegemonic climate justice campaigns can deploy to shift the terms on which the climate crisis is understood and reshape dominant discursive conditions that create space for climate justice solutions. The narrative that divestment campaigns convey humanizes climate change, turning it into a moral, political and systemic crisis. It forces a choice point upon audiences who must decide whether they will side with the fossil fuel industry or with those resisting it. Its construction of the fossil fuel industry as "the enemy" subverts dominant climate change discourses by reframing who is responsible for climate change and thereby reframing how it must be combated. The campaign is already shifting discursive conditions within the climate movement, particularly amongst youth activists – these can and must be extended to a broader discursive field. Fossil Free UC is an inspiring expression of resistance, anger, empowerment and successful story based strategy. The campaign's contribution to climate politics and discourse must be seen as a sign of things to come.

III. Case Study 2: Climate Justice, Our Power and Discursive Interventions in Richmond, CA

Introduction

Recent political upheavals in the city of Richmond in California provide an excellent insight into the politics of climate justice and a campaign that has radically shifted public discourse in a relatively short space of time at the local level. This case study offers scholars and movement strategists an example of how the global Climate Justice Movement can successfully shift discursive conditions locally and then consolidate its wins through gaining power in local institutions like city councils. Covering a very different demographic engaged in a very different type of struggle, Richmond's grassroots climate and environmental justice organizations present an important contrast to the fossil fuel divestment movement discussed in my first case study. Nevertheless, when the case studies are discussed side by side the two complement one another just as much as they differ, and indeed together provide a far more complete picture of climate justice strategy in the US than does either one on their own.

In particular this case study is concerned with the Our Power campaign that has run a pilot project in Richmond and has brought together a coalition of social and environmental justice organizations cohering around the principles of climate justice. I apply the communication and discourse theories developed in my literature review to the recent victories that the Our Power coalition partners, along with the Richmond Progressive Alliance, have won against the Chevron

Corporation's influence that has dominated Richmond's political landscape and discourse for decades. I argue that Chevron has enjoyed a form of hegemony over the city and that climate justice narratives have helped counter that hegemony. Finally, I show how a discursive intervention based on narrative communication has been a central component to the victories for climate justice in the city.

Context

For over 100 years Standard Oil, and then Chevron, have operated an oil refinery in the city of Richmond. Until 2006 Chevron and its industry allies had more or less successfully bought out the city council and controlled most of the city's decision-making processes (Moyers, 2014). Council members and mayors would come and go but Chevron's influence always held fast. Gradually, however, grassroots social and environmental justice campaigns have been winning power from the industry interests that controlled the city and brought community voices into decision-making (Choy and Orozco, 2009). Their mounting pressure led, in no small way, to the formation of the Richmond Progressive Alliance and the subsequent election of Richmond's first Green Party mayor of Richmond, Gayle McLaughlin, in 2006. Since then grassroots community organizing and discursive conditioning has been crucial to consolidating these victories (not without considerable setbacks) through the rhetoric and practice of climate justice.

This case study tracks the decline of Chevron's influence in Richmond and seeks to determine the strategies that Our Power and its anchor organizations in the city

deployed that resulted in a significant shift in the city's balance of power. It also defends the claim that Chevron has acted as a culturally hegemonic force in the city, thus opening up the interesting possibility for non-state actors to exercise hegemony. The study concludes that the Our Power campaign and the Richmond Progressive Alliance's successful reshaping of discursive conditions is having a substantial impact on city politics and culture. There is potential for climate justice activists to learn much from the successes and setbacks of Richmond's progressive struggle. In addition, this case study shows up some of the concrete climate justice alternatives that Richmond's community have implemented in response to the city's interconnected crises and systems of oppression. This sets up a further line of inquiry discussed in my final chapter – can the prefiguring of climate justice alternatives be a tool for discursive interventions?

Part 1: A History of Richmond's Relationship with Chevron

Richmond is a site of intense hegemonic struggle. Powerful and intersectional groups of grassroots activists and community organizers have made an important stand, forcing hegemonic relations into the open. The city sits on the East Bay adjacent to San Francisco and is home to almost 104,000 residents most of whom comprise working class communities of color (Our Power, 2015). It is a racially diverse city with forty-percent of the population identifying as Latino, twenty-seven-percent as African-American, thirteen-percent as Asian and twenty-percent as Caucasian (Moyers, 2014). More than sixteen-percent of the population is below the poverty line (Rein, 2012, 8). Richmond's racial demographics have

shifted considerably over past fifty years and this has had important implications for the balance of power in the city (Soto, 2016). Up until the 1980s it was a majority Euro-American working class city. It attracted tens of thousands of migrants from across the US in search of work in naval shipyards during the 1940s and, promoting itself as a business-friendly environment, went on to attract chemical and shipping industries, as well as maintaining its close relations with the coastal oil refinery (ibid.).

In the 1980s the city experienced "white flight" and African Americans established themselves as the majority population and gradually started taking over management of the city's affairs. By 2002 every departmental head and most of the governing bureaucracy was controlled by African Americans. Chevron, meanwhile, successfully co-opted the leadership of the African American community and ensured the city remained friendly to the company's interests (ibid.). By 2015 the city's racial demographics had shifted again, with the majority now being represented by Latino residents. In addition, a progressive middle class white population is on the rise as Richmond's as they seek out cheaper housing in the Bay Area (ibid.). As community organizer Andrés Soto argues, "With changing demographics, the people who were historically loyal to Chevron because they received contributions from the company have been in decline." Chevron has not been quick enough to respond to these shifting

demographics. Demographics alone, however, do not explain the tremendous shift in public discourse surrounding Chevron and climate justice.[5]

Richmond presents a classic example of a city ravaged by neoliberal *extractivist* logic before being largely abandoned to austerity. In the 1980s the Richmond's downtown was largely divested from as corporate investment moved away to more profitable locations. Shops and businesses closed down with the development of an out of town shopping mall and with that the community's sense of itself began to collapse. High rates of crime, poverty and violence ensued. In addition, capital flight, police brutality, corruption, racial segregation and severe environmental degradation are all huge concerns for the community. However, to paint the residents of Richmond as mere victims devoid of their own agency would be mistake. For decades systemic racial and economic injustices have met with resistance and demands for dignity, a healthy environment and equity (Choy and Orozco, 2009). Understandably, over the past twenty-five years environmental justice activism has found a particularly strong foothold in the city (Soto, 2016). The Chevron refinery's pollution disproportionately impacts Richmond's communities of color and lower income communities and is located within those communities (Lopez et al., 2009). Between 1989 and 1995 the Chevron refinery had 304 industrial accidents, leading to "severe injuries and illnesses" amongst Richmond residents (Sherman, 2004). In 1993 grassroots

[5] It is important not to be essentialist or reductive when discussing the community of Richmond as a whole. For example Richmond's communities of color are not a united or homogenized entity. Indeed deep schisms exist, particularly within Richmond's African-American community between the wealthier, business-oriented residents and those living on the frontlines of poverty and environmental racism (Soiffer, 2015b).

environmental justice organizations like the West Coast Toxics Coalition mobilized the city's residents and won five million dollars from Chevron to help develop community projects (ibid.). Today, community organizing around climate justice has launched a sophisticated attack on Chevron and the ideology it espouses but has also drawn upon this legacy of resistance and disaffection.

Chevron

Nestled within the city and deeply ingrained in the community's consciousness is Chevron's oil refinery that has dominated the local politics ever since it was built. The refinery was opened in 1902 and the city of Richmond was incorporated in 1907, so, as Andrés Soto puts it, "the refinery and the city have grown up together" (Soto, 2016). The refinery was first owned by Standard Oil California, Chevron's parent company, and became Chevron's refinery in the 1980s. Richmond itself has become known as Chevron's company town. The refinery occupies 3000 acres, taking up some thirteen-percent of Richmond's land (Rein, 2012, 9). According to the Our Power campaign it is also the state of California's "largest stationary emitter of greenhouse gases" (Our Power, 2015). In addition the refinery and other industrial projects in the area have been linked to rates of asthma in the amongst children and long term residents that soar above the national average and which disproportionally affect low income communities of color (Lopez et al., 2009, 10). While these concerns were repeatedly brought to council's attention little in the way of regulation emerged. Organizations like West Coast Toxics Coalition, Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) and

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) argue that this is because Chevron has a notorious reputation for buying the support of local councilors to ensure low taxes and deregulation (apen4ej.org, 2016; Cbecal.org, 2016a). W.W. Scott, an employee of Chevron's parent company, Standard Oil, "was elected Mayor of Richmond on four occasions" (Soiffer, 2015b). Gayle McLaughlin, a former mayor representing the Richmond Progressive Alliance and now a councilmember on Richmond city council, confirms this stating: "we've been ruled as a city for a hundred years by the Chevron Corporation, because Chevron did control the council" (Moyers, 2014). Trying to gain back control of the council, Chevron funded the November 2014 city council candidates' campaigns with $3 million through an expenditure campaign committee called Moving Forward and is not afraid of heavy spending on supportive local politicians (Rowan, 2014).

Chevron looms large in the community's shared imagination. Chevron, like Standard Oil before them, has maintained its power over the city, in part, by holding influence over local mediators of discourse and culture (Soto, 2016). For example, Chevron executives sit on the boards of several influential organizations in the city including charities and an online news service. The Richmond refinery owners helped establish and continue to support a local new service called *The Richmond Standard* and they helped set up 4Richmond, a nonprofit organization that, according to their mission statement is "dedicated to promoting jobs, health, safety and educational opportunities for Richmond residents." Rather ominously their website reads, "Working together with all community members, we seek to actively transform the city we call home." 4Richmond would like to extend "it's

sincere gratitude to Chevron for continuing its longstanding, generous support of [their] work" (4Richmond, 2016). Meanwhile Andrés Soto argues that through 4Richmond Chevron has "created a permanent presence in Richmond for distributing cash and organizing events" (Soto, 2016). Chevron's officer for policy, Government and Public Affairs, Joe Lorenz, sits on 4Richmond's board of directors.

The Richmond Standard is very upfront about its connections to Chevron, stating on its about page: "This news website is brought to you by Chevron Richmond. We aim to provide Richmond residents with important information about what's going on in the community, and to provide a voice for Chevron Richmond on civic issues" (Richmond Standard, 2016). They also have a page on their website entitled "Chevron Speaks" which is intended "for the Chevron Richmond Refinery to share its news and views on issues important to the company and the Richmond, CA community" (ibid.). A cursory scroll through the featured news articles yields, for example, a piece entitled "Why the Election Mattered" – referring to the 2014 local election in which all the Chevron backed candidates were defeated – where Chevron is given space to defend its unprecedented political spending on Richmond's election (Richmond Standard, 2014). Soto dismisses the *Richmond Standard* as "a completely bogus news service " (Soto, 2016). Finally, and perhaps most demonstrative of all these examples is Richmond High's high school mascot: The Oilers. Soto explains that "the mascot on the side of the football field or in the gym for basket ball games is a guy dressed up as an oil can, a funnel on top and painted in the school colors of red and navy blue"

(Soto, 2016). The Oilers mascot is testament to how pervasive the refinery's influence has been throughout the culture and the community. Chevron executives have sought to control the city's discursive mediators and cultural institutions because they understand that control over these institutions is just as important as control over the city's political institutions. Thus for a very long time Chevron's will and the political ideologies that facilitate it in the city have been hegemonic.

Cultural hegemony, as an analytical category, can be applied to state actors and non-state actors alike. Chevron's dominance is a powerful indicator of this and I very deliberately use the concept of hegemony to describe power dynamics in Richmond. Indeed, drawing upon Antonio Gramsci, a founding theorist of cultural hegemony, gives me license to argue that Chevron is hegemonic in the context of Richmond's city politics. Gramsci writes that, "In any given society nobody is disorganized and without party, provided that one takes organization and party in a broad and not formal sense" (Gramsci, 1977, 264). Understood informally, neither Chevron nor resistance to it are disorganized and without party. They are part of different parties and each organizes to insert their party's discourses into the public consciousness and into what constitutes common sense. Richmond's power dynamics cannot be fully understood outside the framework of cultural hegemony. Gramsci describes how those in power cannot rule through coercion alone for very long but must shape what constitutes common sense, thus ensuring consent to, and the legitimacy of, that power. This means controlling the institutions of civil society that shape and mediate culture and discourse (ibid.). While his observations are in many regards limited to the context of Italian class

struggle in the 1930s, and while his theories have been adapted, evolved and improved a great deal since, I think the core of Gramci's writing is easily applicable to the dynamics of power in Richmond. Both Chevron and groups opposing its power recognize the importance of discursive conditions friendly to Chevron and have sought to reinforce those conditions or disrupt and change them, respectively.

The Richmond Progressive Alliance

Richmond's long history of resistance and environmental justice activism eventually produced a political culture ripe for a new political party – or rather a new political alliance. In 2003 community organizers, local politicians and activists including Andrés Soto and Gayle McLaughlin set up the Richmond Progressive Alliance (RPA) to unite a broad group of progressives. The group included members of the Green Party, Democrats and Independents, all disillusioned with the city's steady shift to the centre right but unwilling to risk splitting the vote that right wing and neoliberal candidates could easily exploit. (According to Soto, at the time seventy-seven-percent of the registered voters in the city identified as Democrat). While the local elections are supposedly non-partisan, traditionally the candidates elected to council almost always ran on a pro-business, and particularly pro-Chevron, neoliberal consensus. The RPA was designed to help give voice to growing discontent with this apparent political consensus. The purpose of the alliance was to help run progressive candidates against candidates representing Chevron and to disrupt Chevron's brand of

neoliberal politics that had proved so detrimental to the health, wellbeing and livelihoods of so many in the city. The RPA has both helped to expose the cultural and political dominance Chevron (and Standard Oil before them) enjoyed over Richmond and has begun playing a pivotal role in Richmond's local politics. It has also helped organize progressive voices and voters around a platform aligning closely with the principles of climate justice.

The RPA has undermined Chevron's influence over city and provided Richmond voters with a viable alternative to the Chevron-supporting neoliberal consensus. Sharing many of the same organizers and founders, the RPA is responsive to, and in many ways accountable to, important local grassroots organizations like Communities for a Better Environment, Asian Pacific Environmental Network and of course the Our Power campaign. The RPA first ran candidates in 2004, McLaughlin won a seat on the council and Soto lost narrowly. During the early 2000s Richmond had been experiencing the brunt of austerity politics, as the funding was cut and corruption rife. The city was $34 million in debt and only had an operating budget of $100 million to start with. Soto describes the situation succinctly: "Services were slashed. Over 250 city workers were laid off, every community centre was closed, all the branch libraries were closed the main library was only open 20 hours a week, street and park maintenance was halted – so it was a very difficult time" (Soto, 2016). Harsh austerity, however, provided an opening that the RPA could exploit and, in 2006, the Green Party's Gayle McLaughlin was elected Richmond's mayor. Pledging to refuse any corporate funding and running successful campaigns the RPA started winning more seats. A

blow had been dealt to Chevron's legitimacy and the politics it espoused. Nevertheless, as the RPA started winning Chevron and other corporate interests started spending (ibid.). As Soto explains Chevron "used to spend $100,000-150,000 on an election but over time that went up. By 2010 they were spending $1 milion dollars then $1.25 million in 2012" (ibid.). Chevron won back some seats but struggled to gain overall control of the council from McLaughlin's victory onwards. In 2014 the company spent $3 million on the local election and not a single one of the Chevron backed candidates won their election bid (ibid.). It is important to understand the growing popularity of the RPA and their platform amongst Richmond voters because it helps explain the success of a coherent climate justice resistance that has placed Richmond on the global map of climate justice activism. To help analyze why Chevron started loosing to the RPA we must examine the character of the resistance climate justice organizations have been implementing in the city. This resistance has been defined by a coherent and highly strategic discursive intervention.

Resistance to Chevron

The history of Chevron's recent political battles displays an important shift in discourse in Richmond as well as the kind of climate justice resistance Chevron must now contend with. With the election of Gayle McLaughlin in late 2006, grassroots community organizations like the West Coast Toxins Coalition, CBE and APEN that were working alongside the Richmond Progressive Alliance won an important victory. These groups began campaigning to halt the planned

expansion of the Chevron refinery that would have allowed it to process heavier crude oil from the tar sands transported from Alberta, Canada (Choy and Orozco, 2009, 43).

These expansion proposals were accompanied by petitions for permits to allow trains carrying crude oil from the tar sands into Richmond. The transportation of oil by trains is becoming more necessary as activists block pipelines across the US. The colloquially termed "crude-by-rail" or "bomb trains" are becoming very controversial. The transportation of crude oil by train is incredibly dangerous, particularly through residential neighborhoods. Carriages carrying oil can derail and when they do so they are prone to explosions (Lim, 2014). Many of Richmond's poorer communities and communities of color live within the blast zone of these trains. The most infamous example of a crude by rail explosion happened in downtown Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, in 2013, killing 43 people (ibid.). Understandably crude by rail has become an important campaign issue in Richmond, as Chevron has sought to ensure its product is easily transportable and accessible (Soto, 2016).

In 2008 the council had given Chevron permission to start expanding its Richmond refinery; however, this decision had been greatly contested (Early, 2014). In 2008, with the help of the Richmond Progressive Alliance and grassroots community organizing, progressive and left-leaning candidates won overall control of the city council for the first time in the Richmond's history and, responding to movement pressure, were able to halt expansion of the refinery. On August 6, 2012, amidst Chevron's determined counter offensive against grassroots campaigners and

Richmond's progressive council, an explosion occurred at the Chevron refinery nearly killing 20 workers and sending 15,000 Richmond residents to the hospital (Ourpowercampaign.org, 2015). Just months before the November city council elections Chevron seemed to be about to undergo a public relations disaster. Fortunately for the company, however, it also had public relations experts on its payroll (Chan, 2014). With a $1.7 million campaign budget (an impressive amount for a population the size of Richmond's) and the help of PR man, Sam Springer, Chevron was able to win back a seat on the council and defend the seat of its firm supporter, Nat Bates, swaying the balance of power back to a position more favorable to the company's interests. In 2012 progressives lost their majority and the possibility of the Chevron refinery expansion was again on the table. In 2014, before the November election, Chevron was given permission to expand its refinery despite huge opposition (Early, 2014; Soto, 2016). However, with the election of a progressive majority back onto the council in November 2014, Chevron's refinery expansion plans have again been thrown into question.

The recent history of Chevron's expansion bid has helped define climate justice resistance in Richmond and sets the scene for a crucial shift in discourse and politics. While Chevron may have successfully managed the PR fallout from the 2012 fire at the refinery in the short term, in the longer term it gave grassroots climate justice campaigns like Our Power an opportunity to begin attacking and undermining Chevron's political and cultural influence more consistently. It also gave activists the opportunity to start experimenting more explicitly with climate justice framings and rhetoric in Richmond. The 2014 election for example, makes

it very clear that the battle over Chevron's refinery plans had begun to frame Richmond's political discourse and that climate justice has been at the center of this discourse (Moyers, 2014). Furthermore, the recent victories of grassroots campaigners have led to ever more overt confrontations with Chevron's power and history of political control, thus outing the, often hidden, influence Chevron executives have had over the city. Over the past ten years, as Chevron's influence has become more overt, its power over city politics has diminished.

While I am less interested in the city's electoral politics per se, and much more interested in the discourses that the city's grassroots organizations have established, climate justice narratives and framings were on full display throughout Richmond's recent election cycles and so this history unveils some useful insights into shifting discursive conditions. Choy and Orozco write that "Refinery towns, like other oil-affected communities, are classic battlegrounds for corporate control and environmental justice" (Choy and Orozco, 2009, 45). Recently, however, refinery towns and fossil fuel extraction projects are increasingly becoming the battlegrounds of a new struggle – the struggle for solutions based on the principles of climate justice. In Richmond the shift towards climate justice has manifested itself with the introduction of the Our Power campaign. I have presented this history of Richmond's political context because it embeds my analysis of climate justice discourses in Richmond's particular context. I will now offer a description of the local grassroots organizations that have anchored the Our Power campaign and led Richmond's resistance to Chevron, before formally introducing the Our Power campaign itself.

Richmond's Grassroots Climate and Environmental Justice Organizations

Communities for a Better Environment – CBE is an Environmental Justice organization predominantly working alongside low-income communities of color and empowering those communities with the tools and knowledge necessary to confront environmental injustice. CBE "provides residents in blighted and heavily polluted urban communities in California with organizing skills, leadership training and legal, scientific and technical assistance, so that they can successfully confront threats to their health and well-being" (Cbecal.org, 2016a). The organization has been operating in Richmond for twenty years, working with residents to confront the industrial pollution and the impact it has had on the community's health. It also seeks to empower Richmond's residents with the tools necessary to make the transition from fossil fuels to building "a new healthier, thriving economy" (ibid.). CBE is now a key coalition partner in the Our Power campaign and is one of the organizations driving the Our Power campaign in Richmond.

The Asian Pacific Environmental Network – APEN is also an environmental justice organization operating in Richmond and much of the surrounding region. APEN was founded in 1993 and has won several major environmental justice victories including helping to halt the expansion of the Chevron Refinery in 2010, alongside CBE and the RPA. APEN focuses on the environmental injustices inflicted upon the Asian Pacific Islander communities in the San Francisco Bay Area. APEN is "bringing together a collective voice to develop an alternative agenda for

environmental, social and economic justice" (apen4ej.org, 2016). They are movement builders who work on rallying low-income Asian Pacific Islander immigrant communities around environmental justice. They are creating an organized and empowered base of membership and movement leaders to make demands upon the local council and the state of California. Both APEN and CBE are inherently intersectional organizations, recognizing that intersections of race class and gender are inextricably linked to higher levels of pollution, toxicity and risks to health and livelihoods. Along with CBE, APEN have also joined Richmond's Our Power coalition and are helping to spearhead the campaign. With the Our Power campaign both organizations are shifting to an explicitly climate justice-based orientation.

The Our Power Campaign – The Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) set up the Our Power campaign to bring climate justice and a just transition framework into the heart of intersectional grassroots organizing in the US at both the local and statewide level. CJA is "a collaborative of over 35 community-based and movement support organizations uniting frontline communities to forge a scalable, and socio-economically just transition away from unsustainable energy towards local living economies to address the root causes of climate change" (ourpowercampaign.org, 2016). The CJA is one of the most prominent coalitions of climate justice organizations in the US and also has a global presence represented at the annual UN climate talks. The CJA is a nation-wide coalition that organizes Indigenous, African-American, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, and working class communities around the principles of climate justice. It is deeply intersectional –

recognizing the importance of linking struggles of race, class, gender, food sovereignty and healthy environments. It launched the Our Power campaign to help bring the principles of climate justice into local organizing frameworks in the US. The campaigns stated goals are to "end the era of extreme energy" and to "implement a just transition to a local living economy" (ibid.). Espousing some of the key elements of climate justice, the Our Power campaign is

> creating transition pathways to end the era of extreme energy like fossil fuels, nuclear power, waste and biomass incineration, landfill gas, mega-hydro, and agrofuels, which pose extreme risks to human and ecosystem health, community resilience, economic equity and climate stability. This would reduce carbon emissions in line with what science says is necessary to avoid catastrophic climate change while preserving healthy local ecosystems and communities. (ibid.)

The campaign is also particularly aware of the fact that more than simply ending extreme energy, it must also help establish an alternative; thus the just transition it works towards is one in which "in which 10 million good, green, and family-supporting jobs are created for unemployed, and underemployed people, and workers formerly employed by extreme energy industries" (ibid.). Moreover, on a national scale they hope to help build a "climate jobs program" over the next five to ten years. Finally, their alternatives are rooted in local community and democratic control of resources. As they put it "Our re-localized economies will be ecologically grounded, produce community wellbeing, democratize decision-making, and promote local control of resources" (ibid.). Climate justice therefore permeates every element of this campaign's structure and it is an innovative and exciting new project that has enormous transformative potential.

The Our Power Campaign is based on four founding principles. These principles are *root cause remedies*, ensuring that solutions proposed to the climate crisis are ones that respond to its systemic nature based on endless growth and profit maximization; *rights*, any solution proposed must respect and enhance the rights of indigenous people, women, humans and nonhumans, the right to self-determination and so on; *reparations*, proposed solutions must recognize the responsibility of historically responsible for the joint crises humans now face while relations between those who have been most responsible and those least so must be repaired; and finally *representation*, solutions must ensure "that people will have directly democratic control over the decisions that affect their daily lives and that those who have been most victimized by the systems which got us here must lead the way to solutions" (ibid.).

The Climate Justice Alliance has launched six pilot Our Power Campaigns in communities that are "key grassroots groups who are poised to take on the extreme energy interests while creating grassroots solutions for a just transition." CJA's resources are therefore focused on these six campaigns where shifting culture, politics and discourse towards climate justice solutions can act as a catalyst and example for similar shifts across the county. Ultimately the purpose of the Our Power campaigns is to bring a climate justice lens to community organizing in these strategically chosen communities, strengthen the coalitions already operating on the ground in these communities and develop models of just transitions that are tailored to each communities' specific context (ibid.).

APEN and CBE “anchor” the Our Power campaign in Richmond. Summing up their work together in the city they write

> In the face of poverty and pollution, Richmond, California community members are on the frontlines of organizing to create a clean, democratic and equitable economy. This grassroots effort, driven by Richmond’s low-income communities of color, is leading Richmond out of the shadows of the Chevron Refinery into the sunlight of a resilient and thriving local clean energy future. (ibid.)

They are rejecting the fossil fuelled extractive economy and, rooted in the needs of the community, they are reinforcing and to a certain extent reshaping, grassroots efforts to make the transition to a sustainable and more just way of life. With the sustained innovation and activism of Richmond’s local community organizers, along with a largely supportive city council, the Richmond community is making sustainability work for some of America’s poorest and most marginalized citizens. CBE organizer and RPA cofounder, Andrés Soto explains that the Our Power campaign helped bring a clear climate justice focus to organizing in Richmond. Moreover, the campaign has helped place Richmond on the national map of communities at the centre of confronting extreme energy and working towards a just transition model. In this way, the campaign shows people in Richmond that they are not alone in this and that they are linked to communities around the country who are also engaging in the struggle. As Soto puts it, Our Power “creates collegiality and friendship that helps facilitate the movement” (Soto, 2016). Thus the Our Campaign is helping to strengthen and retool grassroots organizations already operating on the ground in Richmond. Soto says that this campaign is “not just showing the bad it also shows what people in Richmond are doing to create the good" (ibid.). It is in the Our Power

campaign and the broader systemic analysis it brings to community organizing that principles of climate justice in Richmond are really starting to emerge in a confident and consistent manner. This serves as an important reminder for climate justice communicators because it demonstrates how the global crisis must be internalized and rooted in local struggles– and indeed how local community organizing may in turn be mobilized to confront the global climate crisis.

Part 2: Discursive Hegemony and the Struggle for Richmond's Hearts and Minds

In its early days the Standard Oil refinery employed most of the people who lived under its shadow and, while most refinery workers no longer reside in Richmond, it remains the city's largest employer (Choy and Orozco, 2009; City of Richmond, 2015). For some time this alone was enough to maintain its legitimacy. However, as demographics shifted and employment fell, the predominantly white working class community moved out of Richmond and Chevron found it important to impose its legitimacy through political cultural interventions that are pervasive throughout the city (Soto, 2016). This is partly because those who were most affected by Chevron's pollution were no longer those receiving the benefits of its employment. As the history of the city shows, Chevron has donated millions of dollars to local charities, cultural events and civil society, not to mention the chamber of commerce and local councilors campaigns (Choy and Orozco, 2009). Furthermore, Choy and Orozco point out that Chevron has also tried "to drive a wedge between environmental justice and community groups and some very

important labor groups by claiming that many jobs were lost because of the halt on the expansion project" (2009, 44). In addition, Chevron (along with other business interests) have helped fund election campaigns for city council members and candidates like Nat Bates in return for legislation amenable to the company's interests. Bates defended this relationship pointing to the funding that Chevron has devoted to "youth sports, programs for seniors and nonprofit organizations that operate in the city" (Johnson, 2014). In this way, covertly and largely unchallenged, Chevron (and before them Standard Oil) successfully maintained political and cultural dominance over the city for 100 years.

Chevron's refinery has placed the community's health and well being at great risk. For nearly twenty-five years grassroots environmental justice organizations have been showing how this heightened risk is tied to the racial and economic inequalities that have also plagued the city. CBE, APEN and West Coast Toxics Coalition have demonstrated how the health risks disproportionately threaten low-income people and people of color and how these communities see few benefits from the refinery located next to their homes. Of course this has generated a great deal of anger and resentment towards Chevron and the politicians who did its bidding. This anger is hardly a recent development – racial and income inequality is not new to the city, nor is the refinery itself, nor even is grassroots activism to upend some of these injustices. The question I think needs asking therefore is why now? What has changed in the city that has led to recent victories of Our Power, CBE, APEN and the communities they empower, over Chevron and its hegemonic neoliberal logic? To answer this question I will focus in more detail upon the

rhetoric and discursive interventions used in the 2014 November election that Chevron spent $3 million trying to influence yet experienced a decisive defeat.

Richmond's November Election 2014

While there are drawbacks to focusing my analysis on a single local election result, I do see 2014 election in particular as highly indicative of a broader discursive shift that the Richmond Progressive Alliance and Our Power coalition partners have been able to generate. After the 2012 refinery explosion the city council and CBE sued Chevron for its negligence and the harm it had done to the Richmond. Naturally Chevron wanted councilors in office that, in Gayle McLaughlin's words, would "settle for pennies." McLaughlin explains that "[Chevron are] mad at us in the progressive movement because we stand up to them. We work with a mobilized community to make gains on our own behalf" (Moyers, 2014). Chevron had successfully defended itself in the elections directly after the 2012 fire but two years of community organizing around climate justice had rendered it even less trustworthy in the public's eye. Recognizing the threat and an opportunity to subvert it in the 2014 city council elections, Chevron and its campaign expenditure committee, Moving Forward, launched coordinated attack on the Richmond Progressive Alliance and the grassroots organizers it works with (Soto, 2016).

The city council election campaign in 2014 became a famous story in US national news. Chevron committed $3 million to the election campaign, buying up almost

every billboard in town, paying for television ads for the first time and spending heavily on canvassers and expensive flyers (Jones, 2014; Soto, 2016). Chevron's $3 million amounted to the company spending $72 per registered voter in Richmond (Baires, 2014). According to McLaughlin, never before has such a large amount of money been spent on a small local election (Moyers, 2014). This alone makes the Richmond case study noteworthy. However, if the amount spent on the campaign was historic so too was the result. All of the Chevron-supported candidates were defeated and balance of power against Chevron's influence increased to 6-1 on the council. The Green Party's Mayor McLaughlin stood down after her tenure was up and was replaced by RPA ally Tom Butt. Five members of The Richmond Progressive Alliance were returned to office, including McLaughlin running as a council member. So how was such an unlikely victory achieved and more importantly what deeper and broader shifts does it suggest have occurred in the community?

Discourse, Narrative and Framing Strategy

An essential component of Our Power's intervention has been to explicitly target Chevron's influence in the city, to highlight it in the public imagination, and to present coherent, viable, and exciting alternatives to Chevron's hegemony. They have led this intervention using story-based strategy. They are shifting discursive conditions by inserting new, compelling stories into the public imaginary and discussion. These stories have enormous power as they attach new meanings to the struggles Richmond's residents currently face. From climate change to the

corruption of local democracy, Our Power and its allies have helped align these concerns into new coherent stories that bring the principles of climate justice into the hearts and minds of their audiences. Some excellent examples of climate justice stories like these were presented at a convergence that the Our Power campaign hosted in the city in the summer of 2014. The convergence was held in the summer prior to the November election and 450 delegates from across the country were present (Soto, 2016). At this convergence a great deal of space was given to the kind of stories Our Power campaigners could use to communicate climate justice in their communities. These were recorded and called the Our Power Stories (storify.com, 2014).

Succinctly and poignantly, Mey Saechao, a member of APEN and a resident of the city tells a story all too familiar amongst Richmond's residents. A shortened transcript appears below:

> I have lived in Richmond for thirty years and since 2005 my illnesses have gotten worse. I live very close to the Chevron rail so if there was an explosion I would be the first to one to go… After the Chevron explosion in 2012 I tried but I didn't get the treatment I really needed…. Why can't they leave dirty oil where it is? Here it harms and kills us… I am happy to be part of this movement so my children and grandchildren can have green jobs and healthier lives." (ibid.)

Stephanie Hervey, also a resident of Richmond and a member of CBE, recounts how she started working on climate justice and a just transition.

> When I got to Richmond and there was an explosion at Chevron, that's when I realized that I had to do something about this, that I was not going to sit by and allow some big corporation to just pollute the air and walk away without remedy and without accountability and so that's when I started to get involved with

> Communities for a Better Environment... This Our Power campaign… gives us the opportunity to talk amongst each other about solutions… We need to feel confident that we have the answers within ourselves, that we don't need anyone to tell us how to do this, we are in the front lines but we have a vision and so we also have a solution. (ibid.)

Hervey gave an example of a community-owned garden in what is being called Richmond's "Green Way" or Green Zone that is designed to protect Richmond's low-income communities from food insecurity and pollution, foster community relationships and enhance food sovereignty.

The Our Power stories were then paraphrased and turned into photos that could be reproduced and shared across the social media via Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. In one photo Mey Saechao stands smiling next to her quote superimposed on the image: "We live everyday on the frontlines of the climate crisis – with illness and danger of explosions… I am happy to be part of this new journey so my children and grandchildren can live a better, healthier life" (ibid.). Stephanie Hervey stands beside her quote capturing the essence of her own story: "We have the expertise and people power to create a sustainable future. We won't wait, we are moving ahead and making a switch to a path where policy makers and corporations will soon follow" (ibid.). The Our Power stories were turned into memes that could be shared online. Reinsborough and Canning explain that "Memes can act as capsules for stories to spread virally through cultures" (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 36). In a similar way, stories such as these spread through culture and reframe the problems and the solutions. The format in

which these stories are presented through videos and images make them accessible, easy to communicate and transmit via the Internet.

These stories focus in on two of the city's major concerns: high unemployment and pollution. In this way the stories become almost universal. They are centered on the concerns of the community, told by community members, and engage with the values of the community. Moreover, they defy the "hegemonic jobs vs. environment" frame that neoliberal elites have sought to maintain with a new frame: "climate jobs." In these stories healthy communities and meaningful employment is not an oppositional binary but are inherently bound together in fighting climate change, corruption, pollution and poverty. They present the good with the bad, showing that the situation is not hopeless. Hervey's example of building a community garden in the Green Way seems so simple, yet it has restored community bonds, reduced dependency on fossil fuel consumption and provides healthy and cheap sources of food. Presenting the problem as Chevron and the politics it espouses, alongside positive alternatives like working towards accountability, democracy, health, employment and community makes combating the root causes of climate change seem not only urgent and necessary but also possible and exciting. It is also important to notice that in these stories climate change itself is rarely mentioned, but rather some of its systemic causes are called out and confronted in ways that empower communities on the frontlines. Stories like these empower the community with local relatable storytellers making change seem possible and exciting as well as lowering the bar to taking action. Recounting stories like these during in the lead up to the election campaign was

an important part of the discursive shift now underway in Richmond. These stories continue to be told long after the election and are by no means limited to crass electioneering contexts. They are heartfelt, honest and hopeful stories that people tell not because they want to win elections because they are genuinely believe in them. In addition, they are also excellent examples of new narratives that Richmond's citizens have warmed to and strengthened through their votes in the 2014 election.

In these stories Chevron is constructed as the source of Richmond's problems and while that framing may not be entirely true, it has helped to tie Chevron to racial inequality and neoliberal extractivist ideology that certainly are determining factors in the struggles many of the city's residents face. Tying Chevron to threatening images and ones of corruption and greed made candidates' relationships with the company hard to justify. Chevron and the extractivist politics it supports are becoming understood as one and the same, and candidates with the RPA and supported by the Our Power campaign have been eager to reinforce this conflation in the city's popular imagination.

The Our Power campaign and the RPA have been able to demonize Chevron's activities in the city through a carefully constructed narrative that links Chevron to the extractivist economy that has made people sick (ourpowercampaign.com, 2015). Meanwhile, Our Power has been experimenting with positive alternative models to Chevron's status quo politics that RPA candidates have been eager to adopt, making them a more popular option. In previous election campaigns the

link between Chevron and the candidates it supported had been less obvious and so the detrimental consequences of neoliberal extractivist ideology attached to Chevron weren't necessarily associated with Chevron-supported candidates. In 2014, however, Chevron's massive financial backing of status quo neoliberal candidates almost proved their corruption and helped to frame the election campaign in favor of counterhegemonic groups.

Our Power stories reinforced the notion that wealthy industries are seeking to buy political influence through their election spending. As the election became a referendum on Chevron's power over the city, every attack ad, and all the billboards and mailers that the Chevron-funded Moving Forward paid for, served the framing narrative that Chevron was leading a corporate coup to install business-friendly politicians (Prupis, 2014). In the meantime Chevron fell back upon the rather stale framing of environment vs. jobs. This framing was outdated not because jobs and livelihoods are not a concern in Richmond, but rather because the grassroots organizers successfully argued that few of the jobs that the Chevron refinery generates go to residents of the city and, moreover, that healthy communities and meaningful work are in fact two sides of the same coin (Rein, 2012, 8). With very clear alternative models on the table that enhanced community health and employment the jobs vs. environment frame was less persuasive. Chevron may remain the city's biggest employer but those numbers have decreased to just over one-point-eight-percent of the city's total population (City of Richmond, 2015). As such, there are far fewer people Chevron can rely upon to trust in its jobs vs. environment frame.

A narrative that forces the dominant hegemons's power into the open can be very effective in turning people against that hegemon (Selbin, 2010). Chevron has been forced into the open and in the context of election spending, proved itself to be untrustworthy. So exposing Chevron's history in the city certainly helped frame the election and the political environment directly preceding and succeeding it as Chevron vs. the People – a frame that Chevron-supported candidates seemed unable to counter. However, there is much more to this victory than simply drawing Chevron into the open. The successful delegitimizing of Chevron's candidates alone isn't enough to explain recent discursive shifts. We must also look at the kind of alternatives the RPA promised and that Our Power now holds them to. These are based fundamentally upon the principals of climate justice. They recognize the disproportionate impacts that fossil fuel extraction and climate change have on low-income communities and communities of color, and argue that leadership on solutions to the climate crisis, deeply engrained racism and structural inequality must come from the communities most affected. Alternative models, those based on climate justice and community that Our Power and its anchor organizations helped flourish prior to the election, provided promising examples that progressive candidates could point to and help scale up.

Narrative Power Analysis of Our Power Stories

As Reinsborough and Canning explain "narratives can often function as a glue to hold the legitimacy of power structures in place and maintain the status quo"

(Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 21). The narratives that have begun changing discourse in Richmond have also helped delegitimize Chevron's narratives and legitimize alternative models based on the principles of climate justice. CBE helpfully sums up the story that the climate justice organizations in Richmond want to tell: "In the face of Chevron's pollution, CBE and residents are creating a healthier Richmond by working towards a greener and more democratic local economy powered by renewable energy" (cbecal.org, 2016a). Many of the core elements of climate justice can be teased out from this shortened version of the new Richmond story. Along with the rejection of fossil fuel infrastructure climate justice stories point to solutions that are led by the grassroots, where democratic empowerment is vital. This includes aspirations towards economic as well as political democracy and specifically community control over sustainable energy production. We find many of the values of the community reflected in these demands, and this is what makes them so potent. Even more excitingly, Our Power activists have shown how their messaging on climate justice is inherently linked to the values of Richmond's residents and have successfully built a movement which addresses the climate crisis, the values of the community, and structural economic and racial inequality through a story that is itself ultimately about climate justice.

Reinsborough and Canning write that "a narrative power analysis recognizes that humans understand the world and our role in it through stories, and thus all power relations have a narrative dimension" (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 20). Narrative power analysis understands that when it comes to storytelling it is

meaning and not truth that matters. For example, Chevron can empirically show that it remains the Richmond's largest employer and thus the city remains economically dependent upon Chevron's good will, yet the Our Power stories convey meaning that renders Chevron's truth less important. We can use a narrative power analysis to expose the meaning conveyed through the stories that climate justice activists are telling in Richmond. When applying a narrative power analysis to stories Reinsborough and Canning suggest focusing on five key elements of story: conflict, characters, imagery, foreshadowing, and assumptions (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 38-39). Story analysts must ask several questions as well: What is the conflict upon which the story rests? Who are the characters supposed to represent, are they relatable? How does the imagery engage with people's values? What promises of the future does the narrative make about the resolution of the conflict? What are the underlying assumptions that must be accepted in order to believe the narrative is true? Applying these questions to the stories that Our Power campaigners are telling yields important insights into the meaning they convey and reasons for their popularity.

Conflict: What is the Conflict Upon Which the Story Rests?

As I have demonstrated the conflict that Richmond's climate justice activists have successfully framed is one of Chevron and the politics it espouses vs. the people of Richmond. More specifically, it is about Chevron manipulating public opinion, corrupting local democracy and polluting the local community. As Chevron's refinery is California's largest stationary emitter of greenhouse gases, climate justice activists have added Chevron's accountability for climate change into the

conflict as well. In this framing the people of Richmond must fight back against Chevron and protect their health, communities, democracy and climate. In doing so, the story goes, they can bring about a fairer, healthier, sustainable and democratic society – and these are all things worth fighting for. To get there, Chevron's influence and its politics must be removed. The conflict is a compelling one with clear good guys and bad guys, an embattled community fighting for a better way of life, an adversary threatening their lives and livelihoods, and, in Hervey and Saechao's very real lived experiences, the possibility of exploding trains and refineries and the struggle for something bigger than themselves.

Characters: Who Are the Characters Supposed to Represent, Are They Relatable?

Recognizing the human face of the conflict is essential. The characters are often the messengers communicating the moral or meaning of the story. As Reinsborough and Canning explain, "Messengers are just as important (if not more important) as the message itself because they embody the message." Thus the characters in this conflict must be relatable people that audiences can empathize with, feel connected to and even rally around. The Our Power stories and the story of climate justice in Richmond are told by local residents and activists who understand, connect with and look like members of their community. They are not the hairy white hippies that so often get associated with environmentalism but really just like the rest of the community living and working in Richmond. Mey Saechao and Stephanie Hervey, for example, were neither alienating nor threatening but rather part of the community with a genuine concern for their community at the heart of their story. This not only gives

characters like Hervey and Saechao credibility amongst their audiences but also makes their understanding of the problem more accessible. Moreover, the actions they've taken derived from their articulation of the problem appear possible and exciting for others to replicate.

The characters in this story are community members standing up to Chevron's corruption and reclaiming power for themselves to build the solutions they deem necessary. These are the "good guys" and they are very relatable. Chevron, on the other hand, represents the "bad guys." They are a faceless, monolithic corporation that has been dehumanized and indeed is framed as void of humanity. Chevron threatens the livelihoods and health of the people's families today and their children's security tomorrow. Furthermore, Chevron is made to represent an ideology that has caused so many of the problems that Richmond's resident's have experienced – from austerity to police brutality to respiratory illness. This makes it a target and an enemy against which the people of Richmond can rally and force out of the way so that they can reclaim decision making power over their own lives. Audiences are not supposed to empathize with Chevron but to rile against its presence in the city and the local politicians who support it.

Imagery: How Does the Story's Imagery Engage With the Audience's Values and Allow Them to Come to Their Own Conclusions?

If a story's imagery is to work successfully it must help show the story's moral or meaning rather than simply tell it. Moreover, imagery can help audiences come to understand the story's meaning of their own accord. Our Power storytellers have

used this with great effect. To communicate the nature of the problem they use images like "bomb trains," refinery explosions and the proximity of their homes to the refinery or the train tracks via which oil is transported to the refinery. For example, Mey Saechao and Stephanie Hervey both invoke the image of the 2012 Chevron refinery explosion in their stories and talk about how it impacted their health or how it got them involved in community organizing. Saechao also expresses her anger and fear when she says "I live very close to the Chevron rail so if there was an explosion I would be the first to one to go." The image of exploding trains and refineries speak for themselves, particularly as Richmond residents have experienced more than their fair share of refinery explosions and fires. The image it conjures is one that Richmond's residents know well and are rightly concerned about. Similarly, the image of "bomb trains" carrying crude oil evokes a sense of danger and profound insecurity as trains transport their incendiary product into the heart of the community. Concerns about the impact of their proximity to the refinery on their health are communicated in these stories. Proximity and frontlines to this dangerous infrastructure becomes an important image too. The image of families living directly next to the refinery leading to children with respiratory illnesses also summons a powerful sense of anger and unfairness. Ultimately they are intended to evoke emotional responses and a deep sense of injustice, which they do with chilling effectiveness.

Climate justice campaigners must also use positive imagery around which people can rally and in which they can see their values reflected. The Our Power stories and climate justice activists in Richmond use imagery that taps into community,

ownership, security, meaningful employment, and being part of something bigger. "Climate jobs" is an excellent example of this imagery. These are jobs that do not negatively impact the health of the community or its environment, that are meaningful and secure, and that move the community onto a path towards greater democratic ownership of their workplaces, while shifting power away from the likes of Chevron. The image is one that does not repeat the jobs vs. environment frame but combines employment needs and environmental sustainability into part of the solution to current economic, political and environmental crises. The idea of "community" itself is also a powerful image that inspires many. Community implies solidarity and a collective form of power that can be wielded to determine for themselves the circumstances under which Richmond's residents live. Community also evokes ideas of friendship, peace and security. A sense of community was largely gutted from the city during years of austerity and corporate divestment from the city center. Restoring and reinforcing this sense of community is a powerful image that is worth striving for. Finally, the children and grandchildren of the city's residents are an image that activists invoke to bring their message into the most intimate concerns of Richmond's families. Mey Saechao concludes her story: "I am happy to be part of this movement so my children and grandchildren can have green jobs and healthier lives." The invocation of children and providing them with a better life than their forebears helps tie the struggle for climate justice to parents' desires to do right by their children.

Foreshadowing: What promises of the future does the narrative make about the resolution of the conflict?

Inherent to these stories are promises of the future. Climate justice organizers are already experimenting with models that could replace the ideology, politics and economics that dominated the city under Chevron's influence. These models help to foreshadow the future that climate justice activists want to help build alongside the city's residents. Part of this envisioning of the future entails reclaiming power and democracy for the community as a whole. As Stephanie Hervey says, "We need to feel confident that we have the answers within ourselves, that we don't need anyone to tell us how to do this, we are in the front lines but we have a vision and so we also have a solution." An example of a community-led response is CBE's Green Way or Green Zone that Hervey has helped work on. According to CBE "a Green Zone designation provides a local framework to protect the environmental and economic health of a community heavily affected by local pollution" (cbecal.org, 2016b). Green Zones can transform a community "from a highly polluted, economically depressed neighborhood into a vibrant area with green business practices, a healthier environment and a stronger economic future" (ibid.). In this example the jobs *and* environment frame is used to foreshadow a future in which the community is empowered and leads the transformation away from extractive economies towards new sustainable and equitable models. In Hervey's Our Power story she says she is part of a community garden in Richmond's Green Way and finds this empowering not just because she has cheap access to local healthy food or because it enhances food sovereignty and reduces dependency on out of town supermarkets, or even because it brings community

back into the city, but because it is a project that is led by and for the residents of Richmond.

On the last day of the 2014 Our Power Convening in Richmond, organizers hosted a Day of Action to "amplify the grassroots-led solutions of Richmond and other communities on the frontlines of energy injustice and social injustice" (ourpowercampaign.org, 2014). They showed off the new models that community members had been pioneering, making a new way of doing things seem not only possible and accessible but also exciting and empowering. As the event description explains:

> Communities are taking action to directly meet their needs by creating jobs that foster healthy communities, by building up the local economy through clean community power, local food systems, worker cooperatives and strengthened housing rights, while addressing pollution, health, and safety issues at the Chevron refinery and in the community. (ibid.)

The day was designed to be a material expression of the stories that Our Power has been cultivating in the city. At the beginning of the Day of Action attendees took part in "The March for a Just Transition," starting at the Kinder Morgan rail yard, where oil-transporting trains enter the city, and towards the Green Way, where new sustainable and equitable models are being experimented with. The march was steeped in symbolism as community members marched away from what they perceived as the problem and towards solutions. The march helped to foreshadow a better and brighter future for the people of Richmond, or as the event organizers' put it: "Together we can not only stop the expansion of dangerous, polluting refineries and pipelines, but begin a just transition away from fossil fuels and towards clean energy, good jobs, and healthy thriving

communities" (ibid.). Hervey's story and the Day of Action are just two examples of the kind of foreshadowing that storytellers have used to rally Richmond around a vision of the future. In this way activists are prefiguring the alternatives they want to see and using this as a discursive device to make these alternatives appear accessible, credible and scalable.

Assumptions: What are the underlying assumptions that must be accepted in order to believe the narrative is true? What do they tell us about the storyteller's worldview and values?

Understanding the assumptions upon which a story is based provides insight into the shared worldview and values that hold a group's narratives together (Reinsborough and Canning, 2010, 40). In the Our Power stories some of the underlying assumptions that must be accepted in order to believe that the narrative is true are that access to meaningful employment, more democracy, healthier communities and greater sustainability are all worthwhile and should be strived for. If residents don't value democracy, health, sustainability and jobs the Our Power stories may fall on deaf ears. It seems, however, that the community does care about these things and this is important because it makes communicating climate justice somewhat easier. It is unsurprising that people value these things but they have been turned into central issues by the city's environmental justice organizations that have spent twenty-five years educating, organizing and working with people in Richmond to fight economic inequality, systemic racism and environmental degradation. Thus there was already a discursive opportunity structure set up that climate justice activists could rest their stories' assumptions upon.

The assumptions upon which the conflict is premised reveal the potential for communicating climate justice across a set of shared values that goes beyond ideology or political preference. While they may not be values shared universally they do spread across time, space and politics. This is exciting because where these value-based assumptions are accepted climate justice can very easily be framed to fit into those values. Indeed, the community's values reflect the principles of climate justice remarkably closely. Communicators just have to use framing that makes these shared values clear, and more importantly appear achievable. While respecting context and local specificity of placed-based struggles, this shows that there is also a high possibility that many of these climate justice stories can be transferable to other communities with similar struggles and values.[6]

Stories that climate justice activists have told in Richmond have a compelling, plausible conflict, have relatable empathetic characters, are told by credible local storytellers, use imagery that shows the problem without the need for long explanations and that residents can easily engage with based on their own lived experiences. They also foreshadow a future and resolution to the conflict that involves and empowers the entire community and promises exciting, feasible alternative models to Chevron's status quo politics. Finally, the assumptions that these stories are based on reflect not only the values of climate justice activists but of the community as a whole. All of this demonstrates that successful narratives

[6] At first this argument seemed like a tautology: climate justice narratives are successful because they reflect the values of climate justice. But actually we are finding that as communities construct their own climate justice narratives it is inevitable that the community's values will be reflected in their stories. Climate justice communicators have to frame their narratives to ensure that those values are centered in the story.

must be deeply rooted in the community for whom they are intended and storytellers must have a profound connection to, or at the very least excellent understanding of, the community in which they are telling their stories. Recognizing and speaking to a certain set of values is therefore essential.

Climate Justice and Community Values

The Our Power stories connect with the values of their intended audiences and it is clear why – they are stories constructed by members of the community for members of that same community. Inevitably the concerns and values of the community are reflected in the stories they tell. Some of the obvious values that are shared across a large portion of the city are health, meaningful and sustainable livelihoods, and local democracy – these are all core elements of climate justice and a just transition, which means that when climate justice activists focus on these aspects of climate change in communities like Richmond they can more easily make climate justice fit into the frames and values of their audiences. How activists have engaged with these shared values is worth examining in greater detail.

Health - The health threat to which Chevron's refinery subjects the local community is, for the most part, something that the intended audience directly experiences. The health of the community and the risk that Chevron's supporters place it in has been a key feature of climate justice activists' framing. Health and the right to a healthy environment in which your children do not grow up with severe respiratory disorders is a value that these storytellers have engaged with

honestly and effectively. The Chevron refinery, and therefore Chevron itself, represents a direct threat to the health of the community. This claim was validated during the 2012 fire at the refinery, sending 15,000 people to hospital. This event has become something of a shared folk memory. Community organizers have worked to emphasize the direct link between Chevron's refinery and high rates of asthma and respiratory difficulties in the city. In this way they have delegitimized many of Chevron's candidates who want to help the company expand its refinery.

Sustainable and meaningful employment – The struggle over who will provide the most and best jobs is another important feature of Richmond political discourse. Our Power campaigners have begun to win this fight. Chevron holds fewer and fewer employment opportunities for local residents while Our Power and the RPA are pushing for huge investments in community-owned sustainable energy and efficiency projects though projects like the Green Way. They also call for greater community involvement in the construction of new green jobs that allow residents to claim ownership over their work and livelihoods. They have shown how this approach has already created many jobs in the city and, with greater investment, can create many more. Additionally, it helps counter the jobs vs. the environment polemic, so climate jobs has been an important reframing of the local debate on Chevron's role in the community that has combined values of health, jobs and equity.

Democracy and self-determination – A prominent feature of the 2014 election was Chevron's political spending. As the extent to which it had sought to buy the

election became clear, corruption and Chevron's corrupting influence over local democracy became a very important hurdle that Chevron's candidates failed to jump. Consequently, their credibility, connection to the community and trustworthiness were all called into question (Soto, 2016). Meanwhile, grassroots activists from the community were able to connect with their community's values, while Chevron's paid canvassers knew very little about the issues that most concerned Richmond's residents (ibid.). As Soto caustically remarks " the people prepared to run as Chevron candidates were terrible so it was a lot easier to defeat them than say a candidate who was articulate and intelligent and has something to offer" (ibid.). Chevron's candidates and the ideology they espoused no longer tapped into the values of the majority of Richmond's population so voters were unlikely to believe that these candidates could honestly and accurately represent their concerns on the council. Moreover, RPA's candidates promised community empowerment and self-determination while Chevron's candidates promised more of the same failing status quo. As such, the grassroots organizers backed by Our Power and RPA won council seats by going door to door, going to all the community events, telling better stories and relying on the twenty-five years of community organizing that won the trust of Richmond's residents (Parker, 2014). The backlash against Chevron's displacement and control of local democracy is indicative of a more widespread frustration with politicians taking money from corporate interests who then fail to represent the electorate. The stories that Our Power campaigners have told are about bringing democracy back under the control of local people. These stories reinforce their right to self-determination and to be at the heart of constructing solutions Richmond's intersecting

oppressions. As an alternative to 100 years of stagnant politics, corruption and underrepresentation, greater democratic control over decisions guiding their lives is welcomed.

Climate Change – Richmond's residents are directly threatened by climate change. They are vulnerably to sea level rise and drought and campaigners have used these to bring the consequences of climate change home to Richmond (Soto, 2016). However, as the threat is perceived to exist in the (admittedly very near) future rather than here and now, the climate crisis alone wasn't enough to shift the balance of power in Richmond. Thus the Chevron refinery expansion plans provided a narrative device that helped align climate change concerns with calls for democracy, health and meaningful work into a coherent story. Meanwhile Chevron has been condemned for trying to "retrofit 33 existing refineries, construct five new ones, and build thousands of miles of new pipeline," rather than shift to renewable energy (Choy and Orozco, 2009, 43). This opened up the opportunity for RPA candidates to champion community-owned renewable energy projects and investment in climate jobs that resonated far better with the values the Richmond community. Thus Chevron's responsibility for greenhouse has emissions linked the Richmond local struggle for health and democracy to more far reaching discourses on climate justice.

Conclusion – The Local in Global and the Global in Local

It is no exaggeration to say that the Richmond Progressive Alliance's victory in the 2014 election was an expression of, and a result of, radically shifting the discursive conditions that the Our Power campaign and its anchor organizations helped to instigate. The Richmond case study shows how the Our Power campaign was able to bring climate justice discourses into the environmental justice organizations already operating on the ground in Richmond. This brought a more coherent vision of alternatives to Chevron's neoliberal discourse and politics that was based on the principles of climate justice. It also brought much needed resources and national recognition to the tireless efforts of environmental justice organizers over the past twenty-five years. The Our Power campaign brought to its coalition partners an explicitly climate justice-oriented framing and this has given local activists an opportunity to begin resting power away from Chevron and its hegemonic control of the city's discursive and political structures.

Furthermore, this case study demonstrates an presents example of where a global crisis manifests itself a local struggle and indeed the importance of local struggles in shaping the global response; the global appears in the local and local in the global (Darian-Smith, 2016). This is important for climate communicators to understand because it is essential that they are able to make climate change relevant to the specificity of different local communities. By targeting the refinery and Chevron's attack on local democracy climate justice activists with Our Power and the RPA drew attention to climate change and exposed the global dimensions

of local environmental injustice, but then used climate justice solutions to lock the response to the global crises into local values, by drawing upon local discursive opportunity structures and values. In this way Richmond has become one of "the battlegrounds of this global struggle" (Choy and Orozco, 2009, 43).

The stories that climate justice activists are telling have played an essential role in this effort. The stories they tell are about organizing communities to resist fossil fuel extraction and to fight for their land, water and sovereignty; they are about going after the real bad guys, and about finding your own stake in this fight. Ultimately they are about community, empowerment and hope. They allowed the community to believe that another world is not only possible but, in Arundhati Roy's words, "is on her way." Crucially, these stories relied upon local storytellers who were relatable and credible and deeply embedded in the community. They also engaged with values and concerns that were shared across the community and helped to reframe a stale jobs vs. environment narrative with one that emphasized the pursuit of meaningful work and healthy living spaces being inextricably linked. By connecting a story about Chevron and possible alternatives to its hegemony to the values of Richmond's residents, climate justice activists operating in Richmond have won a victory that has global ramifications. Climate justice activists can learn a great deal from Our Power's strategic narrative intervention that helped shift discourses and common sense in a city that, for so long, had been subject to Chevron's hegemony. Richmond's story is one that provides a glimmer of hope in the face of an Earth in crisis.

IV. Communicating Across Difference – Conclusions, Findings and Implications of Climate Justice Interventions in Climate Change Discourse

My thesis has asked the question "How can the Climate Justice Movement successfully challenge hegemonic climate discourse while engaging with, and appealing to, a larger and more diverse array of audiences?" This research paper is ultimately about persuasion, communication and ethics but it recognizes that a fundamental question in the study of all of these is where does power lie? It has taken seriously the concept of cultural hegemony, interpreted as shaping and mediating common sense in any given society, and followed the example of theorists like Laclau and Mouffe, Gramsci, and DeLuca in pointing towards discourse as a crucial terrain of power and ideological struggle. Intervening in discourse is one essential strategy to counter cultural hegemony, to shift common sense and to challenge prevailing structures of power. I have argued that with the era of climate change denial drawing to a close, a new struggle is beginning to emerge, one over the meaning of climate change and the appropriate responses to it. I have showed that the hegemonic, neoliberal approach is perceived to be inadequate and, as the Climate Justice Movement argues, fundamentally unethical. Climate justice activists around the world have responded by resisting fossil fuel infrastructure and communities on the frontlines of climate change and fossil fuel extraction and pioneering new energy and economic models. My case studies have covered two struggles where intervening in dominant neoliberal discourse has been a central component to challenging the fossil fuel industry and to reimagining an energy economy based on principles of equity, democracy and

horizontalism. I have claimed that Fossil Free UC and the Our Power campaign are two excellent models of the kind of discursive intervention developed in my literature review, which communicate through narrative and framing to engage with an audience's values.

In this closing chapter I will discuss the extent to which my case studies demonstrate the efficacy of discursive interventions based on Reinsborough and Canning's story-based strategy and, moreover, whether they successfully challenge hegemonic climate discourse while engaging with, and appealing to, a larger and more diverse array of audiences. I will also examine some of the drawbacks and limitations of strategic discursive interventions in neoliberal climate discourse. Finally, I will open up a conversation pointed to by the findings of this research paper, discussing where I believe climate justice research must be targeted in the future: namely, forging solidarity across difference to build the largest, most powerful, social movement the world has ever seen. Here I ask whether discursive interventions, such as the ones described in this paper, can help build political cultures of opposition and creativity by communicating across very different sets of lived experiences and values and ultimately fashion forms of solidarity amongst them all. I conclude with a brief summary of what scholars and activists can learn from the strategies that this research has uncovered.

How Effectively Do the Discursive Interventions Described in My Case Studies Challenge Hegemonic Climate Discourse While Engaging With, and Appealing to, a Larger and More Diverse Array of Audiences?

Deva Woodly succinctly and effectively explains the importance of discursive interventions. She says "the way movements communicate matters because changing public discourse changes power relations, and altered power relations change politics" (Woodly, 2015, 1). She goes on to claim that "a movement that effectively alters the terms of discourse can overcome considerable opposition and structural disadvantages to achieve sustained, meaningful change" (ibid.). This nicely sums up the argument I have sought to elaborate upon and defend throughout this thesis. Fossil Free UC and Our Power are campaigns that intervene in dominant neoliberal climate discourse to change what is politically acceptable as a response to climate change. Fossil Free does this by telling a story about the fossil fuel industry, singling it out and targeting it as "the enemy" in climate politics. Moreover, as Fossil Free has embraced a position more closely aligned with climate justice, this enemy has been constructed as a symptom of a broader systemic crisis. Despite the overwhelming influence and power that fossil fuel industry wields (and indeed has wielded to stamp out this story for decades), Fossil Free is successfully attaching a new meaning to climate change and is therefore helping reinforce new discourses about what the solutions to it should be. Our Power, meanwhile, intervenes directly in the struggle over climate solutions. Operating in a city blighted by Chevron's pollution, Our Power, along with many other progressive organizations in Richmond, have rallied citizens around stories about reclaiming democracy, restoring community and demanding self-determination to lead the city out of dependency on Chevron and towards equitable, sustainable and democratic models of energy production and livelihoods. These stories led to a direct confrontation with the neoliberal politics

Chevron props up and against which the Richmond Progressive Alliance with its counterhegemonic politics won in the 2014 local elections.

Both campaigns have used a form of story-based strategy to persuasively shift discursive conditions that reach a broad and diverse range of audiences. Our Power in Richmond has been making profound change at the local level, while Fossil Free UC, as part of the global fossil fuel divestment campaign has begun to shift meaning attached to climate change as publicly visible and credible institutions divest across the world. People understand and attach meaning to the world around them through stories, which in turn form discourses. Stories are therefore an important way of changing discourses and thereby countering hegemony. Through applying a narrative power analysis to each campaign it becomes clear that both Fossil Free and Our Power have used some form of story-based strategy in their campaigns.

Fossil Free is starting to undermine assumptions about climate change within dominant culture with a reframing narrative that shifts blame and guilt away from the individual and onto the fossil fuel industry and the politics/politicians that/who protect it. This reframing shows that climate change is not an apolitical phenomenon for which everyone is equally to blame but rather a result of a particular set of power dynamics. This mandates a very different set of solutions and lends legitimacy to the Climate Justice Movement. As more institutions divest Fossil Free's frames and narrative are being accepted into public discourse and are changing the story around responses to climate change. This was evinced in many

of the articles that covered Fossil Free UC's partial divestment victory as well as "Keep It In The Ground" rhetoric that is becoming very widespread and genuinely threatening the fossil fuel industry. Each oil spill, news piece on a fossil fuel company's corruption, each company bankruptcy or refinery explosion reinforces Fossil Free activists' messages. Not without significant backlash, these messages gradually become accepted into public discourse and displaces dominant narratives about equally shared responsibility, changing consumption habits, and melting ice caps.

The Richmond Our Power campaign operates differently in that its stories are embedded in the lived experiences of its storytellers and are reinforced as alternative models of energy economies are realized in the city. Thus there is a materiality to the Our Power campaign that is less obvious in fossil fuel divestment. Story-based strategy is just one (albeit essential) component of the campaign. Directly intervening in policy and experimenting with models based on climate justice feature alongside, and help to strengthen, the campaign's discursive intervention. The stories Our Power campaigners tell are rooted in the community's lived experience of the consequences of neoliberal politics that reinforced Chevron's power grab, led to the pollution around their homes and sicknesses of their families. The stories reflect the values of the community for whom they were intended, and indeed, who constructed them. The storytellers were members of the community who spoke in the shared idioms and values of their community. Our Power's stories were about leading the way out of our contemporary politics and energy economy towards solutions that are sustainable,

democratic and equitable. They not only reflected the values of the community but also the principles of climate justice. This shows that climate justice campaigners do not have to radically alter their message but simply have to make it fit into the frames and values of their intended audiences (which, of course, is easier said than done). Furthermore, these stories were ones that RPA candidates spread, reproduced and built upon in several election campaigns. The narrative that Our Power's stories challenged was one that propped up a stale binary of jobs vs. the environment. Proposing and actually building alternatives that proved that the community's health and meaningful work could both be achieved undermined Chevron's narrative. The efficacy of Our Power's discursive intervention is demonstrated in the enormous success with which the RPA was able to topple Chevron's decades-long hegemonic grip over city politics. All of this has helped to construct a political culture of opposition and creativity that has drawn a highly diverse community into the principles of climate justice.

Woodly writes that "social movements have their most lasting and permanent effect not though particular policy victories but instead by changing politics, redefining what is at stake and what can and ought to be about a politicized problem" (Woodly, 2015, 5). This is precisely what the Fossil Free and Our Power campaigns are currently doing. Fossil Free is rearticulating the meaning of climate change while the Our Power campaign is reshaping public perceptions of possible solutions to the crisis. Both of these are redefining what is at stake and what should be done about it. More than changing policy, they are changing politics. As such, they are two excellent examples of how climate justice activists

can intervene in hegemonic discourse with strategically constructed counter narratives to win legitimacy amongst larger and more diverse audiences. This strategy, however, is not without some limitations and drawbacks.

What Are Some Drawbacks and Limitations of Discursive Intervention Strategies?

In both of these case studies some drawbacks and limitations to story based strategy and movement strategies intervening in discourse became apparent. Some of the most important ones are discussed in the following section. First, discursive interventions alone are never enough, building political cultures of opposition and resistance must have an equally important material dimension as well. Secondly, I must respond to the critique that neither case study is intervening in climate change discourse but rather in neoliberal discourse without the climate change component. Thirdly, I will briefly explore whether intervening in neoliberal climate discourse might actually do more harm than good to the climate movement as whole. And finally, I will discuss a problem that activist communicators in both the Our Power campaign and Fossil Free have run into which is material access to media and resources in a hostile media environment.

In his *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci writes of Wars of Position and Wars of Maneuver as two different components of counterhegemonic strategy. The War of Maneuver is an overt struggle for governmental or state power, often involving those of force, elections or both. The War of Position, meanwhile, is a struggle for legitimacy, for the hearts and minds, the battle over what passes for common

sense in any given society. My thesis is primarily concerned with struggles over shaping discursive conditions and, as such, describes a War of Position. However, the War of Position and the War of Maneuver were never meant to be separate entities but rather part of a continuum of struggle (Gramsci, 1977). It is true that the War of Maneuver has been under-emphasized in this thesis. This is because elsewhere in climate justice literature it is overemphasized, particularly with regards to winning specific policy concessions at the annual UN climate talks (Bond and Dorsey, 2011; Tokar, 2014; Doherty, 2006). I have written this thesis, in part, to refocus attention upon the winning of public acceptance and legitimacy for climate justice principles before taking them to neoliberal forums like the Conference of the Parties, which is fundamentally hostile to climate justice. It would also be unfair to suggest that this paper has completely ignored policy interventions. One purpose of Fossil Free, for example, is to establish political cover for politicians to distance themselves from the influence of fossil fuel industry lobbyists and legislate for more meaningful climate policy (McKibben, 2012). Additionally, the Our Power campaign built up a discourse that RPA's candidates were able to take advantage of and thereby win control of the city council. These councilors are now instituting policy that reinforces and facilitates the creation of alternative economic and energy models based on climate justice (Moyers, 2014). Thus the Wars of Positions, the struggles over discursive conditions, described in this thesis have direct policy implications and consequences for Wars of Maneuver.

Secondly, I must respond to the possible critique that my case studies are only intervening in neoliberal discourse but not hegemonic climate discourse. Throughout both case studies I have sought to show otherwise, but I want to address this critique more explicitly in the following paragraphs. Fossil Free seeks to shift contemporary climate discourse by targeting the fossil fuel industry. Therefore much of its intervention may seem as though it is confronting the neoliberal politics that prop up the industry rather than the neoliberal approach to climate change. In fact it is doing both. Fossil Free very obviously and directly challenges the politics that fossil fuel companies benefit from and support, but in its confrontation with the fossil fuel industry, Fossil Free lays out the framework for a broader critique of an ideology that positions individual consumption habits as both the cause and solution to climate change. This position is deeply engrained in the neoliberal approach to climate change (Al Gore's solutions at the end of *An Inconvenient Truth* provide no better example) but it is one that fossil fuel divestment confronts by specifically targeting fossil fuel industries and the system it benefits from, rather than individual consumption habits.

Similarly, in targeting Chevron it may appear that the Our Power campaign and Richmond's environmental justice activists are not intervening in neoliberal climate discourse but rather a single company's narratives that have maintained its legitimacy in a single city. Moreover, the "jobs vs. environment" frame that climate justice campaigns have helped undermine is one that ecomodernists and eco-neoliberals also fundamentally reject – after all green growth is their ultimate goal. This points to a messiness within neoliberal discourses that pits traditional

neoliberals against ecomodernists, as the former maintain and reproduce the fossil fuel industry's power and the latter would prefer a form of green capitalism. This tension reveals the false promises of eco-neoliberalism tied to corporate elites, which despite their purported commitment to free markets will not allow the fossil fuel industry to fail. All that said, it is also important to look at Our Power's solutions to see where the direct confrontation with neoliberal climate politics lies. The "climate jobs" that Our Power campaigners are fighting for are very different to those that would exist under an ecomodernist framework. They empower the community, give them control over energy production and would require a lot of regulation to ensure they remained equitable and sustainable. It is more than conceivable that the prospect, and indeed realization, of solar energy cooperatives has inspired the Richmond community far more than, for example Tesla's gigafactory for electric cars in Reno, Nevada where General Motors' workers went on strike in March 2016 (Gordon-Bloomfield, 2016). In ways like this Our Power's radically democratic approach to energy production and climate politics has helped to counter eco-neoliberal climate discourse in Richmond.

Thirdly, I must address the claim that a critical intervention in neoliberal climate discourse at this stage might be counterproductive. After all, neoliberal elites have finally agreed that it is time to do something about climate change and trying to push solutions in a direction that contradicts neoliberal hegemony might force elites back into climate denial. Implied in this claim is the belief that climate change is too big a threat to politicize, that once climate change is dealt with we can start talking about social justice. In some ways it is a compelling argument but

what it really means is that to ensure climate change is actually dealt with we must allow eco-neoliberals to solve the crisis on their terms and be grateful that they did. This aligns with the position many climate change communicators take when they call on climate change activists to frame the crisis to appeal to conservative values (Corner, 2012; Christensen, 2015; Marshall, 2014).

As I showed in my literature review climate change is already a politicized category and to deny this is to ignore oppressive relations of power that mean that climate change and proposed neoliberal solutions negatively and disproportionately impact low income people and people of color worldwide. If the solutions to climate change entrench and reproduce the systems and oppressions that led to it in the first place they are not only unethical but also likely to fail. The Carbon Tracker report shows that eighty-percent of fossil fuels must remain below ground and unburned to maintain a reasonable chance of climate stability (Carbon Tracker, 2012). Meanwhile, Kevin Anderson shows that remaining below two degrees will require emissions cuts of ten-percent year on year from now until 2050 and argues that the rate of technological innovation simply can't keep pace with mandated emissions cuts *and* the economic growth model (Anderson, 2012). Annie Leonard, Larry Lohmann, Patrick Bond and Michael Dorsey have all demonstrated the failures and injustices of carbon markets and offsets as well (Leonard, 2009; Lohmann, 2010; Bond and Dorsey, 2011). The COP 21 agreement, a milestone in international climate policy, is nonbinding and at current commitments ensures warming of at least three degrees.

Neoliberal economics and politics can't solve the crisis so to pretend that they can is the truly counterproductive avenue.

Finally, I want to address an important limitation of discursive interventions: access to media and resources in a hostile media environment. Counterhegemonic agents will almost always face heavily unbalanced access to media compared to their adversaries (Quiroz, 2013). As such, it is hard for stories to be communicated to larger and more diverse audiences. Both case studies displayed this limitation. For example, after the partial UC divestment announcement, Fossil Free UC activists found it difficult to control their message once media outlets in the public sphere picked it up. Disciplined messaging, well-trained spokespeople and narrative and strategic framing only got them so far. The University of California and the fossil fuel industry, however, have far greater access to mediators of discourse. The UC's Chief Investment Officer had his message repeated at the top of almost every article and his message even shaped many of the articles' headlines. *The Guardian* and *Democracy Now!* have been consistently supportive of Fossil Free and have used its frames and narratives but these are media outlets that do little to reach beyond the choir to engage with a larger and more diverse set of audiences.

With the help of the Richmond Progressive Alliance and twenty-five years of environmental justice activism prior to it, the Our Power campaign had slightly more access to local resources and media. Nevertheless, Chevron consistently outspends RPA candidates and in 2014 it bought up almost every billboard in the

city of Richmond and spent heavily on television ads (Soto, 2016). The RPA raised about $120,000 for all their candidates, while Chevron raised and spent at least $3 million to get its message heard (ibid.). As I've shown this ultimately wasn't enough for Chevron to maintain its credibility but it does demonstrate the disproportionate access to media and resources that hegemonic forces have. Clearly activists are still at a disadvantage when it comes to discursive interventions.

In *Echoing Justice*, Quiroz argues that "To win front end framing victories, local communities need media rules that keep media platforms accessible, affordable, and accountable, and communications strategies that engage the methodologies of organizing and create the cultural environment for political change" (Quiroz, 2013, 4). However, these are unlikely to come about anytime soon. What has emerged, however, is access to social media and blogging that can act as a leveler of the playing field. It is by no means equal because those with institutional access to power and resources can still buy more space on the Internet but not nearly to the extent that they have in traditional media. Activists with Fossil Free and Our Power have very successfully used social media to their advantage.

Can Interventions in Discourse Help Build Counterhegemonic Political Cultures of Opposition and Creativity by Communicating Across Difference and Forging Transcendent Solidarities?

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* Laclau and Mouffe write: "Our central problem is to identify the discursive conditions for the emergence of a collective action, directed towards struggling against inequalities and challenging relations of subordination" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, 137). My thesis and its case studies have responded to this problem in the context of climate justice communications that intervene in and change discursive conditions. However, this thesis stopped short of illustrating how exactly shifting discursive conditions may lead to the emergence of collective action. Further research on whether and how climate justice activists can shift discursive conditions to build the kind of solidarities that transcend political, cultural, ideological or simply strategic differences, and that are necessary for collective action, is urgently needed. I open this conversation because I think it is where my research directly leads. I don't have answers to this problem but based on the research in this thesis, I will briefly suggest a possible avenue of thought that may prove productive. Bringing together Foran's poltiical cultures of opposition and ceativity and Giles' Gunn's "Cosmopolitan Challenge" yields fruitful results.

As I discussed in my literature review, John Foran has developed an analytical category he calls Political Cultures of Opposition and Creativity (PCOCs) and argues that these are an essential component of radical social change. Constructing the largest and most diverse PCOCs the world has ever seen is

therefore a crucial part of social movement building in the 21st Century (Foran, Ellis, and Gray, forthcoming) Laclau and Mouffe provide insight as they discuss how counterhegemonic "political spaces" (what Foran calls PCOCs) can attract a large and diverse range of movements, campaigns, theories of change, and people. They argue for "The rejection of privileged points of rupture and the confluence of struggles into a unified political space, and the acceptance on the contrary, of the plurality and indeterminacy of the social" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, 136). If the Climate Justice Movement is to grow and nurture PCOCs they may have to reject the temptation to position climate change as the single most important "point of rupture" and instead accept a plurality of struggles, strategies, ideologies and values to build solidarity across counterhegemonic movements. The Our Power campaign did this particularly well when emphasizing the community's health, self-determination, and access meaningful work over climate change per se.

Paul Routledge has produced exciting and innovative work on what he calls *Translocal Climate Justice Solidarities*. As he writes:

> A key issue concerning the forging of meaningful solidarities is how the network's [of different counterhegemonic movements] 'imaginary' is visualized and developed at the grassroots: how to construct senses of shared (or 'tolerant') identities concerning climate justice amongst very different place-based communities. This will require the co-recognition and internalization of others' struggles in a global community. (Routledge, 2011, 392)

As part of a global counterhegemonic network of movements the CJM must articulate common ground across counterhegemonic struggles, across different

lived experiences and values, and across very different geographic localities. Meanwhile, it must also avoid privileging its points of rupture, i.e. capitalism and climate change, over those of other counterhegemonic struggles. This could help build PCOCs with the power necessary to confront, and model alternatives to, neoliberal hegemony.

Of course, this is all so much easier said than done. Gunn understands this well when he writes, "People not only seem to prefer their own values to the values of others but appear to be able to maintain their own values too often at the expense of disparaging and frequently demonizing the values of others" (Gunn, 2003, 316). Climate justice for climate justice activists is the most important point of rupture imaginable, and truly embracing and understanding the struggle of another counterhegemonic group or even the values of a community that has a very different set of concerns to those of the movement is a very difficult task. However, Gunn has helped theorize a way forward that involves communicating across difference. He argues that new cross cultural understandings can be formed, and bridges built, through learning to put ourselves in what is possible to understand about another's place or position:

> The first step, which can be called interpretation, entails… figuring out, as best one can with the limitation one has, what that other mind is essentially up to, or about, or desires. The second step, which can be called translation, involves a conversion of the principles, purposes, and practices of that other mind back into the idioms of one's own… The third step, called appropriation, is the most difficult because it requires an assessment of how such translations challenge one's previous understanding and internal adjustment must be made as a consequence. (Gunn, 2014, 434)

Placing yourself in someone else's shoes may seem like an obvious first step but it is rarely practiced. Learning and understanding, as far as is possible, what motivates others, and speaking in those terms, is vital to the formation of large and diverse counterhegemonic political cultures. All this, I think, depends on discursive conditioning and framing that can bring different groups into PCOCs while maintaining their own identity and struggles. This practice should extend not only to other counterhegemonic groups but also to the specific audiences that movement communicators are trying to reach.

The CJM needs to create the discursive conditions for solidarity amongst counterhegemonic movements that can confront neoliberal forces with collective action. In recognizing that climate change impacts people of color, women, and lower income people first and hardest, it is already doing this. The Our Power campaign provides a good example. Our Power communicators speak in idioms that their intended audiences understand and relate to. Moreover, they appeal to the values of their audiences while connecting those values to climate justice. In this way they have successfully built a diverse PCOC in Richmond. Fossil fuel divestment, meanwhile, has developed a language and a narrative that appeals to everyone from anarchists to the governor of the Bank of England. Furthermore, Corrie Ellis' doctoral research on resistance to fracking in Idaho suggests that the principles of climate justice can be framed to appeal to values that transcend conservative and left wing ideologies (Ellis, 2016). Confronting pollution that threatens the health of your family is not necessarily a left wing or conservative value, nor is demanding greater self-determination and control over decisions that

guide your life, nor is securing meaningful sustainable employment, nor even is protecting your livelihood from drought or flooding, but they are all powerful motivating forces that can join people together despite their differences. Finally, while climate justice does confront capitalism and in this way will alienate conservatives, it does not have to be framed as an anti-capitalist movement in order to speak to a shared set of values and goals. Forging solidarity that transcends these categories is both possible and crucial but more research is necessary to understand precisely how.

Conclusion: What Can Scholars, Activists and Scholar-Activists Learn From the Movement Strategies Discussed in This Paper?

As my two case studies demonstrate, many communication strategists in the Climate Justice Movement are already experts in the strategies I have discussed. Indeed they are the ones who have written about and explained these strategies to me. I began my research thinking I might have something to offer the movement in return for the opportunity to study and participate in it. While this research may help some activists see a coherent picture of the work they have achieved so far, my research has largely been playing catch up to their achievements. I think the findings I have to offer so far are more useful to scholars of counterhegemonic social movements in academia.

I have argued that climate change communication scholars and scholar-activists must be more sensitive to relations of power and should be wary of conservative

framings on climate change. I have shown that discourse and hegemony are important terrains of struggle for the CJM and that these have been undertheorized in climate justice scholarship. I have found that story-based strategy is a very successful method of discursive intervention that can help reframe climate change, attach new meaning to it, and fit climate justice into the values of a large and diverse range of audiences. The Fossil Free UC and Our Power campaigns are both excellent examples of how climate justice campaigns can intervene in and change discourse on climate change through story-based strategy. Finally, I have learned that successful climate justice communications depends upon an acute understanding of their intended audience, that storytellers and communicators must "speak in" the values of their audiences, and that the messenger matters as much as the message and should be a credible figure amongst the audience for whom climate justice messaging is intended.

It is my great hope that further research will be devoted to the counterhegemonic discursive strategies discussed in this thesis and that these will be deployed to help build solidarity and to grow the largest, most powerful, most diverse, most emancipatory, most democratic, most hopeful, most joyfilled movement the world has ever seen. Confronting the crises of our times demands nothing less.

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