

**VARIATION IN THE FRAMING OF HYDRAULIC FRACTURING**

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# **VARIATION IN THE FRAMING OF HYDRAULIC FRACTURING**

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This thesis examines how two opposing organizations frame hydraulic fracturing and prioritize particular framing activity. Framing has become a central concern for social movement scholars, but much remains to be theorized on variation of the same issue by different movement actors. This paper argues that the organizational goals and broader discourse influence the prioritization of core framing tasks and the selection of particular frame alignment processes pursued by each organization. Through qualitative, textual analysis of the content posted on two websites throughout the year 2013, this study found that each organization is engaged in framing activity that strategically fits their organizational goals, as well as the organization's ability to link their messages to the broader discourse. This study fills a gap in framing literature that takes for granted the persuasive goals of organizations, while providing insight on variation in the framing activity of two opposing organizations.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Framing has become a central concern for social movement scholars, but much remains to be theorized on variation in framing of the same event, issue, or process by different movement actors (Snow, Vliegenthart, and Corrigan-Brown 2007; Snow et al. 2014). Although scholars have begun to address the cultural and structural factors shaping frame construction, empirical evidence of the factors influencing variation in framing activity is scant (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow et al. 2014). Critical overviews of framing theory have suggested that framing analysts should pay greater attention to frame variation by “multiple movements [and] multiple actors within a movement industry... to better isolate factors that influence the creation, maintenance, and outcomes of framing activity” (Snow et al. 2014: 36).

Framing scholars typically identify external political and cultural forces that influence framing activity in a multi-organizational field, but even in studies that are concerned with movement-counter-movement dynamics, scholars often take for granted the organizational factors that influence particular framing strategies. Using framing activity of the ongoing debate about hydraulic fracturing – commonly referred to as fracking<sup>1</sup> – by an industry promotion group and a social movement organization, I conduct an impressionistic analysis to identify the substantive and discursive similarities and differences in the way two opposing organizations frame hydraulic fracturing. I show how shared and distinct organizational goals, respectively, of each

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<sup>1</sup> I use fracking, instead of hydraulic fracturing, when referring to the claims made by anti-fracking activists.

organization influences the selection of particular framing strategies. Through an examination of the content on each organization's website, I employ framing analysis to explain how the organizations' goals shape, constrain, and expand their framing activities and priorities.

Data for my research are drawn from the websites of the two organizations concerned with hydraulic fracturing. The organizations I study are Marcellus Shale Coalition (MSC), an industry promotion group, and Marcellus Protest (MP), a social movement organization. Drawing on qualitative, textual posts to their websites, I examine similarities and differences in how each organization prioritizes the core framing tasks and frame alignment processes based on their organizational goals and the broader discursive field.

I begin by setting out my theoretical framework and the empirical work on the framing of hydraulic fracturing. In the next two sections, I present my research questions and hypotheses and data and methods. I then present my findings on how each organization frames hydraulic fracturing and prioritizes particular framing activity based on their organizational goals and the broader discourse on hydraulic fracturing. In the conclusion I assess what framing scholars can learn about frame variation from analyzing these two organizations' framing practices as they pursue their persuasive goals.



## **2.0 FRAMING LITERATURE**

### **2.1 CORE FRAMING TASKS**

Social movement scholars have adapted Erving Goffman’s work on framing to develop a better understanding of the role of ideas and attitudes in movement formation and mobilization (1974). Goffman defines frames as a “schemata of interpretation,” by which individuals “locate, perceive, identify, and label” events and occurrences within their own lives and the larger world (1974: 21). Social movement scholars have further developed the concept to include collective action frames that are intended to mobilize adherents, to increase bystander support, and to demobilize opponents. Framing, the process by which social actors engage in and conduct meaning work, denotes an active process that implies agency and contention in the construction of a particular social reality (Benford and Snow 2000). Framing entails agency, as frames and reality are constructed by actors. Framing also implies contention – within a movement organization, between competing movement organizations, or both – as actors must consider the framing of other stakeholders, as well as the dominant views individuals already possess. Social movement actors and organizations construct a particular social reality by defining a social problem, imputing blame, and proposing a solution in a way that encourages action. Hunt et al. conceptualized these framing activities as the “core framing tasks”: diagnosis, prognosis, and motivation (1994).

*Diagnostic* framing identifies a social problem and defines particular characteristics that substantiate that status of a social problem. Diagnostic framing, also, assigns blame for a defined social problem or condition by designating a culpable opponent, or opponents. One common diagnostic frame, for instance, is the injustice frame that movements adopt when they want to define the actions of an authority as unjust (Gamson et al. 1982). The implementation of an injustice frame designates the members of the social movement as the victims of a defined injustice, while identifying the source(s) of the injustice. Imputing causality or blame to the actions of an authority differentiates the members of the social movement and culpable agents, which allows the social movement to construct an “us vs. them” framework and propose solutions to their diagnosed social problem.

*Prognostic* framing identifies a plan of action to ameliorate the problem identified and analyzed in terms of cause and agents in the diagnosis. Ameliorative plans often include specific targets and strategies of action. Prognostic framing, as with other framing tasks and processes, occurs in the presence of various social movement organizations, opponents, media outlets, and bystanders. Movements, organizations, and actors function in multi-organizational fields that affect framing (Klandermans 1992). The crowded multi-organizational field often requires prognostic framing that includes “refutations of the logic or efficacy of solutions advocated by opponents as well as rationale for its own remedies” (Benford & Snow 2000: 617). Challenging an opponent’s diagnostic and prognostic frame is referred to as “counterframing” – attempts to “rebut, undermine, or neutralize a person’s or group’s myth, versions of reality or interpretive framework” (Benford 1987: 75). Often the multi-organizational field of movements and detractors results in “framing contests,” in which the organization that provided the initial frame responds to counterframes through reframing activity (Ryan 1991). Framing contests between,

and among, movements and opponents further articulate the social problem and the proposed solution, while also promoting ameliorative collective action.

*Motivational* framing attempts to move people to action. Motivational frames prompt movement members, supporters, and bystanders to act collectively, while also sustaining membership and participation. Resources – in the form of adherents, money, and/or influence – are necessary for collective action. In a contentious environment filled with multiple organizations engaged in framing, counterframing, and reframing, movements are trying to retain and attract resources. Motivational framing is designed to draw resources to the organization; it is about fundraising and building political capital, and it is also important for bringing people *to the streets*. Collective efficacy – the perception that movement participants can make a difference and achieve their goals – is important for sparking new membership, retaining members, and ultimately, accomplishing their goals. Motivational framing, therefore, consists of efforts to create a sense of efficacy over the long term that encourages participation in the ameliorative plans emphasized by prognostic framing.

*Motivational* framing may also include an organization's attempt to demobilize opposition. For instance, a countermovement – “a movement that makes contrary claims simultaneously to those of the original movement” – may employ framing strategies that encourage demobilization (Meyer & Staggenborg 1996: 1631). The countermovement that argues against the existence of global climate change, for example, considers climate change a nonissue and seeks to demobilize climate change supporters through de-problematizing climate change (McCright and Dunlap 2000). In an effort to demobilize opposition, global warming skeptics challenge the diagnostic and prognostic framing of environmental movements. Therefore, the type of framing and the extent to which every organization pursues diagnostic,

prognostic, and motivational framing is dependent upon the goals of an organization and the political opportunities and opposition in its environment.

David A. Snow and his colleagues assess the role of ideological, contextual, attributional, and temporal factors in the frame variation of the 2005 French riots in newspapers from half a dozen countries (2007). Their findings suggest that the most important variable for explaining variation in diagnostic and prognostic frames is the set of actors they encounter, such as state, oppositional, and international actors. The various sets of actors attributed the cause of the riots to and proposed solutions based on either individual or structural factors. For instance, state actors concerned with maintaining order and redirecting the blame away from the state – in France and other countries – tended to “blame the riots on negatively evaluated groups rather than on structural factors” (Snow et al. 2007: 408). In other words, actors from different organizational settings proposed different diagnostic framings of the riots. The state, an entity concerned with maintaining the status quo, pursued particular diagnostic and prognostic frames – featuring a scapegoat group – that differed from international actors, who blamed the French government.

An implicit understanding by Snow and his colleagues and framing literature in general is that the goals of actors and organizations, such as promoting social change or maintaining the status quo, influence frame variation. Snow and his colleagues were primarily concerned with varying media representations of the French riots, which did not include the organizational affiliation of actors. The findings, however, indicate that in order to better understand frame variation, in relation to a specific event or issue, it is important to consider the organizational goals of collective actors. My analysis examines variation in how organizations set priorities

among diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing tasks based on their goal of promoting social change or maintaining the status quo.

## 2.2 FRAME ALIGNMENT PROCESSES

Movements and organizations employ different strategies to resonate with a particular audience. The core framing tasks are to define a social problem, introduce a culprit, propose a solution, and promote action, but all of these tasks may be interpreted differently by different leaders, members, opponents, and bystanders. Snow et al. conceptualize “frame alignment processes” as the strategic processes through which social movements seek to connect their diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames with a particular audience (1986). Frame alignment processes include frame amplifying, frame bridging, frame extending, and frame transforming. Movements and organizations tend to prioritize a particular frame alignment process, or set of frame alignment processes, in order to construct messages and frame issues in ways that will resonate with potential adherents.

Through *frame amplification*, social actors frame issues in a way that makes some issues more salient than others by means of selective emphasis. Movement organizations primarily use frame amplification to accentuate, embellish, and invigorate existing cultural values in an effort to appeal to their target audience(s). Snow et al. identify two different types of frame amplification: value amplification and belief amplification. Value amplification refers to the “identification, idealization, and elevation of one or more values presumed basic to prospective constituents but which have not inspired collective action for any number of reasons” (Snow et al. 1986: 469). In contrast, framing scholars conceive of belief amplification as drawing on

deeply held assumptions about the relationship “between two things or between something and a characteristic of it” (Bem 1970: 4, as cited in Snow et al. 1986: 469) that “cognitively support or impede action in pursuit of desired values” (Snow et al. 1986: 470).

As most movements and organizations attempt to attach their message to “existing cultural values, beliefs, narratives, folk wisdom, and the like, it is not surprising to find that most movements seek to amplify extant beliefs and values” (Benford & Snow 2000: 625). Frame amplification tends to be of particular importance for organizations reliant on resources from people that would not necessarily benefit from the organization’s proposed solution. For example, Ronnelle Paulsen and Karen Glumm’s analysis of the efforts to reform private psychiatric hospitals in Texas suggests that bridging beneficiaries with sympathetic supporters is dependent on amplifying commonalities, such as values or beliefs, between beneficiaries and supporters unaffected by the reforms (1995). Additionally, frame amplification is a common framing strategy for groups that contradict the dominant culture’s core values, such as stigmatized heretical social movements (Hipsher 2007) and white supremacist organizations (Berbriar 1998).

*Frame bridging* also attempts to link the organization’s frames to the individual by connecting two frames that are “ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected... regarding a particular issue or problem” (Snow et al. 1986: 467). Social movements and organizations build bridges from one frame to another by connecting to other stakeholders and forming coalitions. Frame bridging can also apply to social movement attempts to employ frames used by other movements dealing with ideologically congruent issues. Organizations utilize frame bridging by reaching out to unmobilized networks of “individuals who share common grievances and attributional orientation, but who lack the organizational base for expressing their

discontents and for acting in pursuit of their interests” (Snow et al. 1986: 467). Frame bridging can occur between an organization and individuals, “through the linkage of a movement organization with an unmobilized sentiment pool or public opinion cluster, or across social movements” (Benford & Snow 2000: 624).

According to Benford and Snow’s review, “Although, there has been little systematic focus on this framing alignment strategy [frame bridging], we suspect that this is among the most prevalent of framing strategies” (Benford & Snow 2000: 624). Frame bridging is particularly important for marginalized movements and their ability to form coalitions. Jürgen Gerhards and Dieter Rucht report that West German activists mobilizing against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund successfully used frame bridging to create a broad-based movement that incorporated actors from peace, ecology, women’s, neighborhood, and labor movement groups (1992). The activists employed an injustice frame to connect to other groups’ concerns of patriarchy, environmental destruction, imperialism, and unemployment. Transnational social movement organizations often incorporate human rights discourse to “bridg[e] global divides” between the global north and global south, as well as local organizations and global institutions (Smith 2002).

*Frame extension* is the incorporation of ideologically congruent issues that extend beyond the initial interest of the social movement. Organizations “extend the boundaries of [their] primary framework so as to encompass interests or points of view that are incidental to its primary objectives but of considerable salience to potential adherents” (Snow et al. 1986: 472). Expanding the goals of the social movement, however, can contribute to internal disputes and contradictory frames (Benford & Snow 2000).

Frame extension is an alignment strategy that extends the initial frame, which includes the consideration of temporal factors. For instance, Edmund Heery and Hazel Conley examine British trade unions' use of frame extension to include part-time workers and female employees between 1967 and 2002 (2007). Snow et al. document the use of frame extension by megachurches. The authors suggest that, in part, the massive appeal of megachurches is their ability to extend church-based solutions to personal issues, such as drug use, same-sex attraction, debt, and obesity (2010). Megachurches use frame extension to make religious teachings relevant to the difficult experiences of their congregation.

*Frame transformation* refers to establishing new understandings and meanings that alter the previous understanding of a social movement's primary issue. When frames "do not resonate with, and on occasion may even appear antithetical to, conventional lifestyles or rituals and extant interpretive frames," social movement organizations attempt to reframe the issue, condition, value, or belief. Gamson et al. suggest that an injustice frame or variation thereof may be necessary for frame transformation (1982; See also Snow et al. 1986). The other component of frame transformation includes a shift in attributional orientation from "fatalism or self-blaming to structural-blaming, from victim blaming to system-blaming" (Snow et al. 1986: 474). The scope of the transformation can be domain-specific or global. Transformations of domain-specific interpretive frames include "fairly self-contained but substantial changes in the way a particular domain of life is framed, such that a domain previously taken for granted is reframed as problematic and in need of repair" (Snow et al 1986: 474). Transformations of global interpretive frames represent a frame shift that establishes a new primary framework to the point that it reframes nearly every domain of life in the context of the new primary framework.



Not all movement organizations pursue all of the theorized frame alignment processes all the time or in every movement campaign. The diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames constructed by the organization determine the frame alignment processes pursued by the organization. Empirical studies already suggest that meaning making is a fluid activity and frames and framing strategies among, and within, organizations can vary considerably across social issues and over time (McCaffrey & Keys 2000; Esacove 2004; Gallo-Cruz 2012; McCammon 2012). David A. Snow and his colleagues use the term “frame variation” in their study of the media’s framing of French riots in 2005 to refer to different diagnostic and prognostic framing of the riots (2007). Additionally, Joann Carmin and Deborah B. Baiser report that different environmental organizations “view the sociopolitical, cultural, and natural environments through different cognitive filters,” which creates variation in the framing activity across organizations (2002:367). Although opposing organizations and organizations with “different cognitive filters” are likely to employ different framing strategies, the literature does not provide an explanation of the ways that different organizational goals affect cognitive filters or frame variation. My research takes a step toward filling this gap in the literature on social movements and framing by documenting variation in how organizations on opposite “sides” of a contentious issue – natural gas extraction through hydraulic fracturing – take on the frame tasks of diagnosis, prognosis, and mobilization and pursue strategies of amplifying, extending, bridging, and transforming frames.

### **2.3 RHETORIC SURROUNDING NATURAL GAS EXTRACTION**

Hydraulic fracturing is a natural gas extraction technology that has contributed to one of the largest domestic energy booms in U.S. history (Finewood & Stroup 2012). Hydraulic fracturing is a drilling technique that improves access to natural gas within shale deposits. Although the technique was developed in the 1940s, (Montgomery & Smith 2010) it was not until more recently that hydraulic fracturing has been combined with horizontal drilling, a technique developed in the 1930s (Helms 2008). In the 1990s, the combination of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing made shale gas and oil extraction a cost effective technique for natural gas and oil companies (Soeder 2010; Levi 2013). In part, the extraction process involves drilling a horizontal well into shale deposits and creating minor ruptures by injecting a combination of water, sand, and various chemicals that fracture the shale and allow for the release of natural gas. Drillers use highly pressurized water and chemicals to crack the shale formation and force the release of natural gas, and use sand to keep the pores of the rock open for increased production.

The intentionally technocratic, neutral, and benign description of natural gas extraction above has its adherents, of course, but it also has its critics. In fact, many local communities, city governments, states, and even countries have fought to ban or postpone hydraulic fracturing activity. Opponents of fracking claim that the extraction process is unsafe and environmentally destructive. Countries, such as France, have completely banned fracking, while states in the U.S., such as New Jersey, have temporarily banned fracking. Pittsburgh, a hot bed of anti-fracking activity and the city where both organizations I study are located, has also banned natural gas drilling in the city (Hoff 2014). Opponents of fracking have claimed that fracking increases the risk of earthquakes, water contamination, infrastructural damage, and adverse health effects,

among other forms of economic and environmental destruction. Despite economic and environmental concerns raised by citizens, the broader discourse surrounding hydraulic fracturing typically features the arguments supporting the natural oil and gas industry.

Supporters of natural gas production have described natural gas as an abundant and cheap energy source that serves as a bridge fuel on the path toward renewable energy sources. As John Graves (2012) proclaims, hydraulic fracturing has contributed to “America’s Alternative Energy Revolution” by making natural gas – and oil – extraction from shale deposits an economically efficient and environmentally safe extraction technique. The purported impacts of “America’s Alternative Energy Revolution” are lower energy bills (Graves 2012; Obama 2013), greater employment opportunities, and cheaper products, especially from petrochemical companies and energy intensive industries (e.g. fertilizer, aluminum, and finished metals) (Graves 2012; Levi 2013).

Additionally, supporters of hydraulic fracturing invoke concerns of global climate change to argue in favor of hydraulic fracturing and the natural oil and gas industry. Proponents have compared natural gas to other energy sources to highlight the potential environmental benefits of natural gas. Proponents call attention to, for instance, the claim that the combustion of natural gas emits about half as much carbon dioxide as coal combustion, for the same electricity output (Jaffe 2010; Finkel & Law 2011; Graves 2012; Levi 2013). Natural gas is regarded as a bridge fuel that provides an opportunity to transition from dirty coal to clean renewable energy sources, like solar and wind. Supporters similarly argue that liquefying or compressing natural gas has the potential to decrease or replace the use of petroleum for transportation, which would produce lower amounts of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, sulfur, and nitrous oxide (Rao 2012; Levi 2013).

Lastly, proponents of hydraulic fracturing have touted domestic natural gas as a means to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign countries for energy – gas and oil – and manufactured goods (Jaffe 2010; Graves 2012; Levi 2013; Guignard 2013). It is argued that the economic and environmental benefits of natural gas production contribute to geopolitical consequences that would ultimately provide the U.S. with greater energy independence and energy security. Supporters of natural gas even claim that instead of importing energy – gas and oil – and manufactured products from hostile countries, the U.S. could potentially become an exporter of energy and manufactured goods.

Previous research on the rhetoric used by proponents and opponents of hydraulic fracturing suggests that the Marcellus Shale region is of particular importance in the framing of hydraulic fracturing. James Guignard (2013) found that the regional industry trade organization, MSC, “abstracts” the Marcellus Shale region. MSC presents the region and the people impacted by hydraulic fracturing as an abstraction by not discussing hydraulic fracturing activity in terms of the people that live around natural gas extraction or the Marcellus Shale region more generally. According to Guignard, MSC primarily frames hydraulic fracturing as beneficial for the nation’s economy and environment. Guignard highlights the ways that MSC simplifies the process and assuages doubts, while portraying the region as a “frontier upon which the nation’s projected rosy economic future depends” (2013: 22). Guignard claims that MSC’s rhetoric focuses on the national level. MSC is less effective at framing a message that connects the local and national concerns, or at representing the region, its residents, and the effects of fracking on the environment, the economy, and everyday life in concrete terms.

One result of MSC’s lack of regional focus, highlighted by Guignard, is the formation of contradictory frames. MSC attempts to characterize the natural gas industry as uncontestable,

trustworthy experts, while claiming that the new industry that is still in a phase of infancy. When confronted by citizens of the Marcellus Shale region, in regards to taxation and regulation, the natural gas industry can no longer use rhetoric that appeals to a national audience; they are forced to consider the local audience. Proponents of hydraulic fracturing argue that taxes would severely hinder the economic and environmental benefits of the newly developed natural gas extraction technology. Meanwhile, the industry also argues against environmental regulations, because hydraulic fracturing is an age-old technology developed in the Marcellus region that the trustworthy natural gas industry has mastered. Despite the inherent contradiction, industry promotion groups, such as MSC, use these two frames of expert and infant interchangeably to ease local concerns about economic and environmental destruction and assuage local fears of exploitative practices.

The industry has used the claims of oppositional organizations to change its approach to the region. For instance, the industry attempts to appear as a transparent and trustworthy local entity rather than the rapacious, opaque, exploitative operation from outside the Marcellus Shale region (Texas, North Dakota, or Oklahoma). Brian Cope (2013) describes the efforts of Range Resources, a natural gas drilling company, as using the tradition of colonization of the Marcellus region by boom and bust energy extraction companies to support natural gas extraction. According to Cope, Range Resources uses imagery and narratives in commercials to frame hydraulic fracturing as an environmentally safe economic boon for unemployed, down-on-their-luck, honest residents. Cope claims that Range Resources is “co-opt[ing] the rhetoric of my home region, obfuscating a more natural holistic rhetoric, and subverting a proud tradition of working people” (2013: 29). The characterization of Range Resources’s strategy, as emphasized by Cope, suggests that Range Resources is engaged in counterframing and reframing the

critiques of the natural gas industry as untrustworthy outsiders strictly interested in the environmentally destructive economic gains of fracking. Meanwhile, Range Resources's campaign "gloss[es] over potential negative health, public policy, and infrastructural issues" (Cope 2013: 30).

Both Guignard (2013) and Cope (2013) describe the way that two industry organizations employ rhetoric to keep people from questioning the safety of hydraulic fracturing. Neither author thoroughly discusses anti-fracking opposition. To be fair, Guignard highlights that Citizens Concerned about Natural Gas Drilling (CCNGD), a community group that questions fracking activity, attempts to portray the region as home to real people "rather than framing it in abstract economic and environmental terms" (2013: 24). CCNGD seeks to make people "think of north-central Pennsylvania as something other than a resource" by alerting people to the fact that the Marcellus Shale region is their "home" (Guignard 2013: 24). The contrast between the concreteness of CCNGD's approach and MSC's rhetoric helps substantiate Guignard's argument that MSC treats the Marcellus Shale region as an abstract resource. Neither Guignard nor Cope, however, systematically considers the framing strategies employed by adherents and opponents of hydraulic fracturing. Aside from the differing positions on the issue of hydraulic fracturing, Guignard and Cope do not provide an analysis of the extra-political factors that influence frame variation.

In my analysis, I pay particular attention to how MSC and MP invoke the concepts of "home" and "trust" in order to produce frames that resonate with potential adherents. Guignard, and to a lesser extent Cope, suggest that these two themes are employed by proponents and opponents of hydraulic fracturing. I hypothesize that these will be important themes in the

diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing pursued by each organization, as well as the selection of a particular frame alignment process.

I also consider the organizational factors that influence the overall message put forth by each organization. One thing that neither Guignard nor Cope considers is the fact that MSC is a trade organization comprised of over 300 individual companies affiliated with and supportive of natural oil and gas, including Range Resources. The implication of omitting organizational factors by Guignard and Cope is that, by default, the authors attribute rhetorical similarities between MSC and Range Resources solely to the fact that they are on the same “side” of the issue. The authors also neglect to comment on how stakeholders link their messages to the national discourse surrounding hydraulic fracturing and natural gas. My analysis seeks to identify particular organizational factors, such as national or local audiences, to explain frame variation across the framing activity pursued by two opposing organizations concerned with hydraulic fracturing.

Lastly, the data used by Guignard and Cope were primarily from before 2012. In a contentious issue, such as hydraulic fracturing, the conversation is always changing as organizations frame, counterframe, and reframe their messages in reaction to the claims of other stakeholders. My analysis provides an updated look at the variation in the framing strategies prioritized by each organization, holding constant the issue, time, and geographic region.

In the next section, I turn toward my research questions and hypotheses based on the framing literature on core framing tasks and frame alignment processes and the rhetorical surrounding hydraulic fracturing. I next discuss the data collected and the method used to analyze the data and empirically answer my research questions. I then present my findings, organized around the three framing tasks (diagnosis, prognosis, and motivation) and four

strategic frame alignment processes (amplifying, bridging, extending, and transforming.) I conclude with a discussion of what framing scholars can learn from analyzing the framing activity of MSC and MP.



### **3.0 RESEARCH AND METHODS**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

Informed by the framing literature and the previous work on the rhetoric surrounding hydraulic fracturing, I provide an updated and more nuanced look at the particular framing strategies employed by an industry promotion group and social movement organization competing over the framing of hydraulic fracturing. I seek to answer the following questions:

1. How do competing organizations frame hydraulic fracturing?
2. Which of the core framing tasks and frame alignment processes does each organization prioritize?
3. How do organizational goals influence the similarities and differences in the framing activity of two opposing organizations?

The first two questions serve as a descriptive assessment of the framing activity surrounding the contentious issue of hydraulic fracturing. Meanwhile, the third question aims to bring an organizational focus to the framing literature, something that is currently lacking in the explanations of frame variation.

Based on the empirical research on the core framing tasks, frame alignment processes, and rhetoric employed by proponents and opponents of hydraulic fracturing, as well as preliminary research, I expect to find that Marcellus Shale Coalition and Marcellus Protest both

frame the process of natural gas production by employing rhetoric that constructs a particular version of reality. On the one hand, I hypothesize that the main goal of MSC is to demobilize opponents of hydraulic fracturing by framing the process as benign and beneficial, as well as necessary, for the future of the Marcellus region and the nation. As researchers have found in the study of the framing strategies of global climate change skeptics and the case studies of MSC and Range Resources, I anticipate finding that MSC will primarily employ prognostic framing to demobilize opposition by countering the diagnostic and prognostic frames of oppositional stakeholders. I expect that MSC will prioritize frame amplification to bolster the belief that the natural gas industry is a trustworthy steward of the environment from the Marcellus Shale region, through emphasizing the local and national environmental and economic benefits of hydraulic fracturing. Lastly, I hypothesize that MSC's framing strategy will most prominently feature framing aimed at defusing opposition and frame amplification because maintaining the status quo, appealing to regional and national audiences, and establishing a political foothold are the organizational goals driving MSC's framing activity.

On the other hand, I hypothesize that the main goal of MP is to gain support and mobilize action against fracking proponents by presenting fracking and the natural gas industry as environmentally and economically harmful. I anticipate that MP will primarily employ diagnostic and motivational framing to characterize natural gas industry as untrustworthy outsiders to the Marcellus Shale region, while seeking to mobilize anti-fracking support. I assume that MP will employ most, if not all, of the frame alignment processes to connect anti-fracking activity to other movements, other social problems, unmobilized individuals, and different understandings. Lastly, I hypothesize that MP's framing strategy will most prominently feature diagnostic and mobilization framing and most frame alignment processes because

promoting social change, appealing to the region, and mobilizing democratic support are the organizational goals driving MP's framing activity and require a broad spectrum approach.

### 3.2 DATA AND METHODS

To describe, compare, and explain the core framing tasks and frame alignment processes selectively pursued by two oppositional organizations, I analyzed the content of the websites of Marcellus Shale Coalition ([marcelluscoalition.org](http://marcelluscoalition.org)) and Marcellus Protest ([www.marcellusprotest.org](http://www.marcellusprotest.org)) for the year of 2013. MSC is an industry trade organization. The organization's self-description on their homepage emphasizes their status as a "partner," characterizes natural gas production as economically and environmentally friendly, claims expertise, and acknowledges their pro-industry bias.

The Marcellus Shale Coalition (MSC) works with the exploration and production, midstream, and supply chain partners in the Appalachian Basin and across the country to address issues regarding the production of clean, job creating, American natural gas from the Marcellus and Utica Shale plays. We provide in-depth information to policymakers, regulators, media, and other public stakeholders on the positive impacts responsible natural gas production is having on families, businesses, and communities across the region (Marcellus Shale Coalition 2013).

MSC's website contains 87 documents that were labeled "News," a combination of "Press Releases" and entries under the heading "In the News," all collected for this analysis. I also analyzed three editions of their magazine, *Marcellus Quarterly Magazine* from 2013.

MP is a social movement organization. The organization's self-description on their website highlights their role as an "information clearing house," characterizes fracking as environmentally and economically disastrous, and acknowledges their activist bias.

MarcellusProtest.org is an information clearing house about Marcellus Shale gas drilling and activism and related issues... Marcellus Protest is an alliance of western PA groups and individuals building a broad movement to stop the destruction of our environment and communities caused by Marcellus Shale gas drilling as well as to support other directly affected communities (Marcellus Protest 2013: "About").

I analyzed 100 documents that were filed on the website under "Resources," which consisted of entries under the headings "Story," "Blog," and "News Item." I also analyzed 12 editions of their monthly newsletter "Marcellus Monthly" from 2013.

Additional informative documents, such as the "About" page, were included in my analysis. The other content on the website excluded in my analysis, such as "Events," were accessed and provided background for my analysis.

Using an impressionistic approach, I collected and thematically coded the content from each organization's website for the year of 2013. I coded the documents based on core framing tasks, frame alignment processes, and organizational factors. I defined diagnostic framing as content that characterizes the process of hydraulic fracturing and the parties involved – either proponents or opponents of hydraulic fracturing. I defined prognostic framing as content that identifies a plan of action, or inaction, and refutations of oppositional claims. I defined motivational framing as content that seeks to promote mobilization or demobilization.

Frame alignment processes were coded as frame amplifying, bridging, extending, or transforming. Frame amplification was defined as messages that attempted to amplify particular beliefs or values of an organization's diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational frame. Frame bridging was defined as efforts to link an organization's diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational frame to an unmobilized sentiment pool or another organization. Frame extension was defined as messages that expand the primary scope of the diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational frame. Frame transformation was defined as an effort to change the common understanding of a

diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational frame. Some content was coded as deploying multiple frame alignment processes.

I developed a list of organizational goals based on the framing literature and empirical studies. The list includes commitment to maintaining the status quo or promoting social change, appealing to a local or national audience, and mobilizing people, money, or political influence. I analyzed the content for these based on the messages of the organization and each organization's characterization of the opposition. In the materials gleaned from the organizational websites, I coded content that represented one or more of these organizational goals.

## 4.0 FINDINGS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section I first describe the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing tasks pursued by each organization, and then describe the frame alignment process(es) employed by the organizations. I begin by introducing two parallel examples, one from each website, that demonstrate each organization's framing activity. I also provide supporting examples for each specific framing task and alignment process.

In February of 2013, Kathryn Klaber, then chief executive officer of MSC, was on a panel at Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business. Klaber was there to present the natural oil and gas industry's perspective on hydraulic fracturing. MSC's website later featured an article about the event that was written by a member of Carnegie Mellon University and posted on the school's website that reads in part:

Klaber also reported that market research shows that only eight to 10 percent of local residents oppose hydraulic fracturing, with the strongest opposition in Allegheny County, particularly the City of Pittsburgh. "Human nature is to try to convince every last person that this [hydraulic fracturing] is a good thing," she said. However, Klaber suggested that a better strategy is to reach out to the 92 percent [of the public] who favor gas drilling and to make sure they don't end up on the fence (Marcellus Shale Coalition March 20, 2013: "In the News").

Klaber's "Q&A-format presentation" represents one perspective put forward on the contentious issue of hydraulic fracturing. Klaber, speaking for the gas extraction industry, frames hydraulic

fracturing as economically and environmentally beneficial for the Marcellus Shale region. Klaber acknowledges the lack of popular consensus on the benefits of hydraulic fracturing. She provides “market research” to students at a well-regarded business school to bolster MSC’s contention that although there may not be consensus, the only opposition to hydraulic fracturing comes from an insignificant, geographically isolated minority.

Meanwhile, Klaber suggests that she is worried about the influence of this “eight to 10 percent” by defining her strategy as making sure the 92 percent who favor gas drilling do not “end up on the fence.” Here, the “fence” symbolizes the separation of competing ideas about hydraulic fracturing; to “end up on the fence” is to be undecided instead of in favor of gas drilling. Making sure people “do not end up on the fence” is an explicit reference to the efforts of MSC to construct persuasive messages that dissuade individuals from entertaining doubts, considering competing ideas, or acknowledging that competing ideas even exist.

The strong opposition from the City of Pittsburgh referred to by Klaber in the excerpt above is from organizations like MP. MP, based in Pittsburgh, is on the other side of the “fence” – comprised of the supposedly insignificant “eight to 10 percent of local residents [who] oppose hydraulic fracturing.” On MP’s website, the organization provides access to a document titled “Marcellus Protest Strategic Messaging Toolkit,” which argues:

In our movement, we have all the facts on our side. Every time a scientific study is conducted without biased industry funding, it shows that the fracking process is harmful to people and disastrous for the environment. However, the history of movements like ours makes it clear that **facts are not enough**. We need to communicate our values and speak in ways that are memorable and convincing. The reason the oil and gas industry has been successful in convincing citizens over the last decade is that they have crafted language that appeals to people’s emotions and makes false promises (Marcellus Protest January 30, 2013: “Resource” *original emphasis*).

Compared to MSC, MP represents an oppositional perspective on the contentious issue of hydraulic fracturing and frames the natural oil and gas industry – and fracking in particular – as

“harmful” and “disastrous.” MP makes claims about the deceitful natural oil and gas industry as using money and “crafted language” to conceal the “facts” about fracking. MP acknowledges the lack of popular consensus on the negative impacts of fracking, but unlike Klaber’s suggested strategy, MP is trying to stop the negative impacts of fracking in the Marcellus Shale region and raise awareness of the “fence” hidden by the industry.

In the excerpt from MP’s website, the suggested strategy to “convince” people of the harmful effects of fracking is to adopt a strategy similar to the natural oil and gas industry. MP claims that the industry has been successful – understood as an overwhelming majority of the public who favor gas drilling – through using money to misconstrue facts, “craft[ing] language” to appeal to people’s emotions, and making false promises to present fracking as positive. In addition to the truthful “facts,” MP recommends that anti-fracking activists strategically frame their messages in a way that evokes people’s emotions to the point that the messages become “memorable and convincing.” The implicit assumption made by MP is that simply presenting facts is not resonating with fracking proponents and bystanders. In order to be successful against the oil and gas industry, anti-fracking activists need to go beyond the facts by framing the negative impacts of fracking in ways that resonate with people and motivate opposition.

## **4.2 DIAGNOSTIC FRAMING**

MSC uses diagnostic framing to characterize hydraulic fracturing as economically and environmentally beneficial for the Marcellus Shale region. In addition to characterizing hydraulic fracturing as positive for the region, part of MSC’s diagnostic frame is characterizing the natural gas industry as trustworthy stewards of the environment with roots in the Marcellus Shale region,



while portraying anti-fracking opposition as uninformed city dwellers. MSC's diagnosis demarcates the competing ideas and organizations and constructs hydraulic fracturing and its stakeholders in ways that are complimentary to both the industry and the vast majority of the audience.

In the above excerpt from the report on her speech posted on MSC's website, Klaber uses the "on the fence" metaphor as part of MSC's diagnostic frame. She frames hydraulic fracturing as useful, benign activity opposed only by a small majority and frames MSC's main purpose as providing facts to counter the small, insignificant "eight to 10 percent." Despite the lack of consensus on the economic and environmental benefits of hydraulic fracturing, MSC constructs messages that reinforce the positive benefits of hydraulic fracturing. For example, MSC features a *Pittsburgh-Post Gazette* article that reads in part:

The latest opus is about tucking the shale gas revolution neatly inside every American's wallet. The increase in gas supplies as a result of unconventional shale development and all of its downstream implications reportedly is giving each household an extra \$1,200 a year. That's not a measure of how much consumers have cut costs in the past few years, but rather a 'counterfactual' estimate of how much more they would have had to pay if shale oil and gas were left in the ground (Marcellus Shale Coalition September 4, 2013: "In the News").

MSC uses claims that emphasize the economic benefits of natural gas to frame hydraulic fracturing as an uncontested benefit for the Marcellus Shale region.

From the excerpt above, Klaber's suggested strategy, that counters "human nature," is to disregard oppositional claims made by opponents. MSC does not directly engage the oppositional claims made by opponents of hydraulic fracturing, but they do provide counter claims that elicit a positive image of the natural gas industry as economically and environmentally beneficial to local communities. MSC finds the claims made by competing organizations, such as MP, objectionable and promotes natural gas, and hydraulic fracturing in

particular, as “responsible” and “positive” for “families, businesses, and communities.” The effort to portray hydraulic fracturing as an economic and environmental benefit for the region, and the country, is part of MSC’s diagnostic frame. MSC counters oppositional claims without mentioning the opposition to diagnose hydraulic fracturing as having a “positive” impact and assuage concerns raised by the “eight to 10 percent” Kluber contemptuously dismisses as out-of-touch opposition.

MP is also diagnosing fracking on their website. MP frames fracking as a social problem that is “harmful to people and disastrous for the environment.” According to MP’s “Strategic Messaging Toolkit”, the proponents of fracking, “the oil and gas industry,” are manipulating scientific data to hide the truth about the negative impacts of fracking. The oil and gas industry are the culprits; they mobilize emotions and money to maintain the status quo and discredit the messages put forth by anti-fracking activists. MP, in this example, establishes their organization as part of the “history of movements” attempting to stop the exploitation of citizens and the environment by energy extraction industries, which helps to construct an “us vs. them” framework and creates the two sides of the “fence.”

On the homepage of MP, they feature three links to introductory information about the hazards of fracking that diagnose fracking as a social problem. A key document is connected to the website with a hyperlink asking “What’s the Big Deal about Marcellus Gas Drilling?” (Marcellus Protest 2013). The document provides information about the many concerns with fracking. MP characterizes the natural gas industry as “not your daddy’s gas well, it’s heavy industry.” MP diagnoses the extraction process as producing “toxicchemicals [sic],” such as “benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene (BTEX)” and “radioactive elements including radium, barium, strontium, and uranium.” Additionally, MP claims that:

Wherever Marcellus development has occurred in Pennsylvania, reports of poisoned water, sick kids, and dead animals have followed. And in addition, every month or so there is another major blowout or explosion. These things don't happen at every well – but they happen often enough that we should be very concerned (Marcellus Protest 2013).

The content of these three documents to which MP provides hyperlinks on their homepage presents MP's diagnosis of fracking as a social problem perpetuated by the deceitful natural gas industry.

### **4.3 PROGNOSTIC FRAMING**

In the aforementioned report, the idiom of “fence sitting” is used as part of MSC's prognostic frame. Klaber refutes the idea that hydraulic fracturing is environmentally and economically harmful. She provides “market research,” understood to be objective science, to characterize the people on the other side of the “fence” as an uninformed, rabble rousing minority. The significance of presenting “market research” is that it rebuts the prognostic framing of the opposition without mentioning the opposition's arguments. Klaber uses this to counterframe public opinion about hydraulic fracturing as overwhelmingly favorable – so favorable that MSC does not need to concern itself with directly challenging the opposition. Klaber is employing nonproblematicity to challenge the prognostic frame of the delusional opposition and counterframe hydraulic fracturing as nonproblematic.

The primary way that MSC refutes arguments against hydraulic fracturing is to construct the natural gas industry as champions of the environment. On their website, MSC features responses to oppositional claims featured in the media. In a letter to an editor, Steve Forde, MSC's vice president of policy and communications, claims:

The fact of the matter is we are doing it right in Pennsylvania, where tightly regulated shale development continues to be a powerful job-creating engine for our region and nation, all while protecting and enhancing our environment. Indeed, the advance planning and environmental stewardship that Ms. Meyers [the columnist to whom MSC is responding] calls for are standard operating procedure across our industry. Through recommended practices, strict regulations and improving technology, our industry is producing this clean-burning fuel source more safely than ever. More and more water is being recycled; roads are not just repaired, but greatly improved; emergency preparedness training is ongoing; and site restoration practices are advancing all the time (Forde December 12, 2013: “In the News”).

MSC’s response to Ms. Meyers challenges her claims about the environmental destruction caused by hydraulic fracturing. Forde emphasizes “strict regulations” and “clean-burning fuel” to present hydraulic fracturing as a well regulated industry that produces energy with little or no pollution. Forde also highlights the additional measures being taken by the natural gas industry to positively impact the economy of the Marcellus region and maintain the industry’s role as a “powerful job-creating engine.”

In the excerpt of MP’s “Strategic Messaging Toolkit” quoted above, the organization provides a prognosis that challenges the “oil and gas industry” diagnosis. MSC characterizes fracking as a benign activity with positive benefits for the Marcellus Shale region, but MP contends that the deceitful “oil and gas industry” is intentionally misleading the public through the use of money and “crafted language” – and the “facts” show otherwise. MP admits that facts cannot speak for themselves when their “Strategic Messaging Toolkit” emphasizes the point that “facts are not enough” to expose the negative impact of fracking and insists on the need to “speak in ways that are memorable and convincing.” MP frames fracking as “harmful” and “disastrous” in an effort to challenge the legitimacy of the industry’s diagnostic frame of nonproblematicity, while proposing a strategy that would hopefully increase the “eight to 10 percent” of the public opposed to fracking and ultimately end fracking activities in the Marcellus

Shale region. Unlike Klaber, MP's prognostic framing explicitly characterizes both sides of the "fence" to indicate that the proponents of fracking are wrong and must be stopped.

In MP's "Strategic Messaging Toolkit," and various other documents on their website, MP provides a plan of action that ultimately bans fracking in the region. MP claims that they are engaged in the activity of "advocating for legislation to ban shale gas drilling throughout the region." MP's website also features an opinion paper written by Joseph P. McMurry that reads in part:

All I know is that to do *nothing* is to invite *nothing* to happen... Every thought and act, however seemingly 'small,' creates an effect. Whether one is praying for health and safety in the midst of the shalefields, writing to the President of the United States about the dangers of fracking or enacting a community-rights ban on drilling in one's community, **it all matters** (McMurry 2013: "Resource" *original emphasis*).

McMurry's opinion article and MP's efforts to "ban shale gas drilling" represent part of MP's prognostic framing of fracking. In both examples, MP calls for action that contests the natural gas industry and fracking activity, and ultimately end fracking in the region.

#### 4.4 MOTIVATIONAL FRAMING

The panel session that Klaber participated in is part of MSC's motivational framing task: MSC wants to make sure people who favor hydraulic fracturing "don't end up on the fence." Instead of pursuing unanimous consensus on the benefits of hydraulic fracturing, Klaber suggests that the "better strategy" is to dissuade people from acknowledging the existence of the "fence." The mobilization framing emphasized by Klaber and MSC is intended to defuse opposition and mitigate suspicions of the negative impact of hydraulic fracturing. Participating in a "Q&A-

format” panel presents Klaber the opportunity to refute the claims made by the opposition and assuage concerns of people “on the fence.”

Despite Klaber’s stated strategy, MSC does employ motivational framing aimed at environmentalists opposed to hydraulic fracturing. On their website, MSC features a report from the Centre [sic] for Policy Studies titled, “Why Every Serious Environmentalist Should Favour Fracking” (Muller and Muller 2013). In the report, authors Richard A. Muller and Elizabeth A. Muller argue that the concerns raised by environmentalists opposed to hydraulic fracturing “are either largely false or can be addressed by appropriate regulation” (2013: 1). The effort to convince environmentalists that they *should* favor hydraulic fracturing is an attempt to reduce opposition to hydraulic fracturing and potentially mobilize support for hydraulic fracturing. However, the strategy to convince environmentalists that hydraulic fracturing is a societal good is an exception. More often, MSC’s decision to focus on the environmental benefits of hydraulic fracturing is intended to further complicate the diagnostic and prognostic frames pursued by opponents of hydraulic fracturing, while reinforcing the positive depiction of the natural gas industry.

Rather than motivating more action, MSC is more likely to approach motivational framing as a way to garner political support. MSC attempts to convince politicians that hydraulic fracturing is beneficial to local governments and their citizens. MSC emphasizes that, in Pennsylvania, the natural gas industry pays an impact fee – a tax on the construction and operation of a natural gas well – that contributes to the well-being of the individuals in the community and subsequently support for elected officials. In their magazine, *The Marcellus Quarterly*, MSC continues the rhetorical use of “positive” in a section titled “POSITIVE

IMPACT” that discusses the government allocation of impact fees collected in 2011 (Pattack 2013: 6-17). In Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, for instance, MSC claims:

Public safety got the biggest chunk – \$535,200 – which will finance the purchase of a new police cruiser and other equipment as well as officers’ salaries. Also in public safety, the board allocated funds for new trucks, pumpers and breathing apparatus for its four volunteer fire companies (Pattack 2013: 8).

MSC frames impact fees as a generous donation from the natural gas industry to the local government that directly pays for public services, such as public safety. In this case, equating the natural gas industry with public safety is intended to alleviate the environmental fears raised by competing organizations, while also motivating support from elected officials in rural communities with a limited tax base. This links MSC’s message with broader discourse about the economic and environmental benefits of hydraulic fracturing and the natural gas industry.

MP’s “Strategic Messaging Toolkit” is part of MP’s motivational framing, designed both to expose the “fence” hidden by the industry and to promote collective action toward stopping fracking activities. MP pursues motivational framing that primarily focuses on mobilizing people. MP’s characterization of the “oil and gas industry” as being “successful in convincing citizens” suggests that MP needs to be better at “convincing” people about the negative impact of fracking. MP mentions industry funded scientific studies, one important example of the industry’s use of money to influence opinions. MP cannot mobilize the same kind of financial resources as the industry, and has little hope of using money for scientific, public, or political influence.

Consequently, MP’s strategy depends on “communicat[ing] their values” and mobilizing citizens (rather than paid political or scientific speech) against the “oil and gas industry.” MP also identifies their organization as a “movement” and employs the rhetoric “the history of

movements like ours.” Here, MP is presenting itself as an organization that is large enough to constitute a “movement” – a movement similar to other movements throughout history that fought against extractive industries. The motivational framing employed by MP further constructs an “us vs. them” framework that demarcates both sides of the “fence.” Their strategy also emphasizes their area of comparative advantage – that is, mobilizing people on the moral and political high ground – in order to compensate for their relative disadvantages in terms of financial resources with which to “buy” research, political influence, and airtime.

My analysis of the core framing tasks pursued by each organization reveals that the two organizations prioritize diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing to varying degrees. MSC primarily focuses on connecting their messages to the broader discourse: Natural gas is a bridge fuel that provides a temporary solution to global climate change that does not negatively impact the economic state of the U.S. MSC prioritizes diagnostic and prognostic framing to support their claims and negate oppositional claims. MSC is less interested in mobilizing individual support in favor of hydraulic fracturing, but they do employ motivational framing to garner support from elected officials. These findings support my hypothesis that MSC will prioritize diagnostic and prognostic framing tasks.

In contrast, MP predominantly focuses on diagnostic and motivational framing. The primary goal of MP is to frame hydraulic fracturing as a social problem that demands immediate attention. MP is committed to portraying the negative impacts of hydraulic fracturing, characterizing the natural gas industry as a culprit, and mobilizing support. Although MP does pursue prognostic framing to end fracking activity and challenge the natural gas industry, I found that this framing task was emphasized to a lesser degree. When MP employed prognostic framing to challenge the claims of the natural gas industry, it ultimately served the purpose of



vilifying the natural gas industry. These findings support my hypothesis that MP will prioritize diagnostic and motivational framing tasks.

In the following section on the frame alignment processes employed by each organization, I further develop the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames constructed by MSC and MP. In addition to providing different examples, I provide nuance to the empirical examples already mentioned.

#### **4.5 FRAME AMPLIFICATION**

In MP's "Strategic Messaging Toolkit," the organization has a section that highlights the organization's values and the ways that hydraulic fracturing threatens their values. Some of the values listed are "Pennsylvania's Outdoor Heritage," "Future Generations," "Our Constitutional Rights," "Health and Safety," "Community Self-Determination," "Environmental Justice," and "Sustainability." The organization lists "Greed and Consumerism," "Rights for Corporations," "Government Represents Corporations, not Citizens," "Special Treatment," and "Industrial Destruction of the Environment and the Economy" as threatening the values held by the opposition. MP is utilizing the collective memory of energy extraction throughout the country – especially in neighboring West Virginia – to signify that fracking is the same as previous exploitative practices by energy industry. These are values used to amplify the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames developed by MP.

MP uses frame belief amplification to associate the "oil and gas industry" with corrupt and deceitful practices of greedy corporations. MP characterizes the industry as using their money to influence scientific studies and politics, as well as to mislead the public, despite "all of

the facts on [MP's] side.” MP amplifies the association of the natural gas industry with greedy corporations elsewhere on their website. One example is MP's emphasis on the history of extractive industries in the Marcellus region. MP employs the collective memory of these industries to portray the natural gas industry as part of the timeless battle that local communities are still dealing with and recovering from. According to MP, “We have seen this before with coal mining and heavy industry. The long term effect is boom then bust, with a legacy of environmental destruction that compromises the region's quality of life and economic potential for future generations. And somehow, the folks who profit from it are never around to clean it up” (Marcellus Protest 2013: “What's the Big Deal About Marcellus Gas Drilling?”). The collective memory of coal mining emphasizes boom-and-bust economics, hazardous work conditions, and environmental degradation by industries that extract resources and leave ruined landscapes and ghost towns in their wake. With this characterization, MP is using frame amplification to further their diagnostic and prognostic frame: natural gas companies are untruthful outsiders seeking economic gains at the expense of the people, environment, and economy of the Marcellus Shale region. This provides MP with the opportunity to challenge the industry's claims of bringing economic and environmental benefits to the region, while portraying the natural gas industry as comparable to the exploitative dirty coal industry.

Similarly, MSC uses frame amplification to discredit the opposition. Klaber's presentation uses frame amplification to construct opponents of hydraulic fracturing as primarily city dwellers in Pittsburgh. Klaber's emphasis on Pittsburgh – a city that has banned hydraulic fracturing – as the center of opposition portrays the opposition as unaffected by the alleged harm and unknowledgeable about the benefits hydraulic fracturing brings to rural citizens. Klaber invokes the urban-rural binary to discredit the opposition and amplify beliefs about the city

imposing their unqualified views on the country-side. In a blog post that features excerpts from the media, MSC touts the environmental and economic benefits that hydraulic fracturing brings to the Marcellus region. One of the featured excerpts states:

The consulting firm HIS Global Insight reported last year that shale oil and gas combined generated \$87 billion in domestic capital investments in 2012 – on track to rise to \$172.5 billion a year by the end of the decade... Much of that investment is in struggling rural economies. Shale developers not only lease drilling sites from their owners; they also pay the owners of the plots whose gas is being tapped... The savings on energy ripple through the economy (Marcellus Shale Coalition August 7, 2013: “Blog”).

Another example portrays the concerns raised by the Philadelphia City Council as uninformed and unwarranted. In a headline titled, “Philadelphia City Council is vocal and concerned about the impact on water from the natural gas developed. What is going to be done about that?” MSC responds with “facts” and emphasizes that the natural gas industry:

aim[s] to encourage spirited public dialogue and fact-based education about responsible shale gas development. Pennsylvania’s extensive regulatory system, with which our operators comply through every step of the process, also ensures that our environment – water, air and land – and the public health and safety are protected (August 4, 2013: “FAQ Home”).

This use of belief amplification attempts to connect MSC’s pro-drilling perspective with non-city dwellers who, according to Klaber, already support hydraulic fracturing, while casting city dwellers as uninformed rabble rousers neglecting to pursue “fact-based education” about “Pennsylvania’s extensive regulatory system.”

The other way that MSC employs frame amplification is by associating outdoor activities with environmental stewardship. In a letter to the editor of *Scranton Times-Tribune*, Dave Spigelmyer, then chief executive officer of MSC, claims that “ensuring that our environment and wildlife are protected alongside responsible, tightly regulated shale development is a core commitment of our industry” (Spigelmyer November 25, 2013: “In the News”). Later in the

letter to the editor, Spiglemyer continues by asserting that “we live – and hunt and fish – here too, and understand that we can, and must, protect our environment and wildlife while safely producing clean burning American natural gas.” Here, Spiglemyer proclaims that “we,” the natural gas industry, and its stakeholders, “live,” “hunt,” and “fish” in the Marcellus Shale region and are therefore committed to protecting the “environment and wildlife.”

MSC is amplifying the association between engaging in outdoor activities, such as hunting and fishing, and a commitment to preserve the environment and wildlife in the region. Spiglemyer is amplifying the value of “Pennsylvania Outdoor Heritage,” a value also acknowledged by MP. The implication is that natural gas companies are trustworthy stewards of the environment and wildlife because they “live” and have a stake in the quality of life in the region. A further implication is that the welfare of proponents of natural gas extraction – their livelihood but also their leisure-time pleasures – depends on the well-being of the region. MSC’s use of frame amplification furthers their diagnostic and prognostic frames of nonproblematicity. Frame amplification is prioritized by both organizations. MP and MSC employ frame amplification to support their respective diagnostic and prognostic frames. MP amplifies the belief that the natural gas industry as greedy corporatists obfuscating the truth. MSC amplifies the belief that the insignificant minority that opposes hydraulic fracturing are uninformed, radical city dwellers, who do not understand rural struggles and the benefits of hydraulic fracturing. Additionally, MSC uses value amplification to portray the natural gas industry as trustworthy stewards of the environment with roots in the Marcellus Shale region. Amplification is the primary frame alignment strategy used by both organizations, as both organizations attempt to strengthen their claims about the positive or negative effects of hydraulic fracturing and their

characterization of the opposition. This becomes increasingly evident, especially for MP's framing strategy, in my discussion of frame bridging, extending, and transforming.

#### 4.6 FRAME BRIDGING

MP uses frame bridging to connect their anti-fracking claims to the unequal power relations between corporations and individuals. For instance, in their "Strategic Messaging Toolkit," MP makes reference to the unjust legal treatment granted to corporations that allows corporations "to accrue power and money, to purchase favorable legislation through campaign contributions, and to intimidate and defeat actual persons with legal action." Additionally, in their July 2013 newsletter, MP states:

Today, all around the world, we see the same pattern: In local groups and communities, people are rising up against extreme energy extraction, while the states and nations crackdown for the sake of economic stability. The nearer one is to the summit of institutional power, the more tied to the *status quo* and the harder to live authentically and to speak truthfully (Marcellus Protest July 2013: 2).

MP's attempt at bridging is an effort to link their diagnostic and prognostic frames that characterize the natural gas industry as greedy, power-and-money-hungry corporations seeking to dupe residents into passively agreeing to the economic and environmental degradation of their communities. MP's emphasis on power provides the opportunity to bridge the organization's interests with unmobilized sentiment pools and other movement organizations interested in the preferential treatment given to corporations by the U.S government.

The organization also mentions other energy practices throughout the United States as examples of environmental and economic destruction. MP claims that:

We are engaged in the timeless battle again, as our own human family responds to the *inhuman* threat from extreme energy technologies: exemplified by hydraulic fracturing of deep shales, but also encompassing nuclear reactors, mountain-top removal, the quarrying of tar sands, and deep-water and polar drilling... Under our free market ideology, no mode of capital-intensive extreme energy will surrender its market to another – each one appeals to its own constituencies (investors, workers, academics and politicians) for more money, longer hours, more exotic gadgets, more time, in order to meet the ‘threat’ from all the other modes. Unless we see them all as one, we will have them all at once: more and more and more (Marcellus Protest June 2013: 2).

Here, MP equates the natural gas industry with environmentally destructive industries with long and ambivalent regional histories. MP emphasizes that hydraulic fracturing is an “extreme energy technology” similar to other fossil fuel technologies. MP is attempting to bridge natural gas extraction with previous “battles” over energy extraction. The utility of connecting natural gas to other energy industries is that MP is able to exploit the negative associations that many local people have with other energy industries, while also critiquing the “free market ideology” used to support “extreme energy technologies.”

Once again MP is arousing the negative beliefs people have with industries and corporations. In this case and others, MP explicitly evokes concerns about capitalism – “free market ideology” – as a way to bridge fracking and a broader discussion that, in addition to energy extraction, incorporates consumerism and working conditions, among other issues.

MSC is a coalition comprised of companies affiliated with, and supportive of, the natural oil and gas industry. Additionally, as Klaber highlights, 92 percent of the public is in favor of gas drilling. Therefore, MSC rarely utilizes frame bridging to connect the organization’s message to unmobilized individuals or other organizations. One instance of frame bridging on MSC’s website is a brief reference to property owners’ rights as a way to end a fracking moratorium on the land of the Delaware River Basin. In part, Klaber states that “there is no reason to further deny property owners in northeastern Pennsylvania their fundamental right to safely develop

their land (Klaber July 25, 2013: “In the News”). Klaber bridges the property rights of residents in the Delaware River Basin to support the opening of the Delaware River Basin to natural gas extraction. MSC is attempting to bridge frames of property rights and the positive impact of hydraulic fracturing as a way to connect with undecided individuals unable to pursue “their fundamental right to safely develop their land.” Frame bridging, however, is not a frame alignment process prioritized by MSC.

#### **4.7 FRAME EXTENSION**

Frame extension is a frame alignment process used by MSC to reinforce the benefits that natural gas brings to the Marcellus region and the country. MSC frames natural gas development as a societal good that extends benefits beyond industry profits. MSC asserts:

Our positive effects on the communities in which we operate are not isolated to revenue dollars. We’re lowering energy costs, providing cleaner and less costly transportation fuel, building a strong and diverse supply chain, expanding workforce opportunities, and yes... taking the first steps toward a real manufacturing renaissance (Spigelmyer May 24, 2013: 58).

MSC frames the benefits of the natural gas industry not as windfall profits, but in terms of “positive effects on the community,” which are “not isolated to revenue dollars.” MSC calls attention to the economic benefits passed on to consumers through lower energy and transportation costs. MSC expands their description of “positive effects” in an effort to align individuals experiencing positive economic effects – regardless of the connection to natural gas production – with the natural gas industry in the Marcellus region. Additionally, MSC extends these benefits to the economic factors of “expanding workforce opportunities” and “taking the

first steps toward a real manufacturing renaissance.” The suggested “positive effects” are benefits that have real life implications for individuals suffering from economic hardship: cheaper costs for necessities and employment opportunities. These link MSC’s claims to the broader discourse about the economic benefits of natural gas.

MSC also employs frame extension to emphasize that natural gas is not just an energy source providing an economic boon, but instead natural gas significantly contributes to one’s daily life. Klaber claims that natural gas makes available a host of indispensable products from “eye glasses and credit cards to clocks to medicine bottles” (Klaber June 27, 2013: “Press Releases”). Klaber promotes the notion that these are only available “because of the work we’re doing right here in Pennsylvania to responsibly develop a resource that plays a role in the manufacturing of many goods and products.” Klaber is promoting the understanding that the natural gas industry is essential to the production of these goods. Klaber constructs the idea that the production of “these items we rely on every day” would be jeopardized without hydraulic fracturing, the natural gas industry, and hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus Shale region. By reducing the natural gas industry to the petrochemical byproducts of the natural gas extraction process, Klaber extends the purported benefits of hydraulic fracturing from vague, potentially unnoticeable, economic and environmental terms to tangible products that people use in their everyday life. The extension of MSC’s diagnostic and prognostic frames to include concrete effects on individuals’ daily lives is secondary to the initial “abstracting” framing activity highlighted by Guignard (2013). This excerpt was part of a larger effort, which featured a video titled “Natural Gas Does That,” (Marcellus Shale Coalition June 27, 2013) to show that natural oil and gas and its byproducts are used to make a host of essential products.



MP uses frame extension to frame the harmful effects of the natural gas industry and other “extreme energy technologies” as global issues with powerful stakeholders promoting their own interests above those of local residents. MP provides information about anti-fracking protests from other shale regions in the U.S. and from other countries around the world. MP’s decision to highlight news from around the world in nearly every issue of *Marcellus Monthly* extends the initial scope of the organization – the Marcellus region.

MP characterizes the hydraulic fracturing debate in Poland, for instance, as a local struggle against global energy companies: “Farmers maintain a blockade into its second week, to prevent Chevron from drilling a field where (the farmers say) there is no legal drilling permit. A priest visited protesters to hold mass, marking the first time that the church has joined in anti-fracking activity” (Marcellus Protest July 2013: 1). MP’s emphasis on farmers blockading Chevron over the legality of a drilling permit in Poland extends fracking from a regional issue to a global issue and casts global energy companies, Chevron in this case, as attempting to bully innocent local farmers. The ability to frame the natural gas industry, and in particular hydraulic fracturing, as a global issue, instead of a regional issue, provides MP with evidence for their diagnostic and motivation frames and further vilifies the natural gas industry as untrustworthy outsiders. The implication of MP’s use of frame extension is that it informs readers and potential adherents in the Marcellus region that the same thing is happening elsewhere and action is being taken, but further action is needed.

Comparatively, MP employs frame extension consistently throughout their website, while MSC selectively employs frame extension to support particular claims. MSC is predominantly focused on reproducing the abstracting national discourse, but on occasion extends there diagnostic and prognostic frame to include concrete local benefits. In contrast, MP prioritizes

frame extension to support their diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. MP informs readers to the news around the world in an effort to extend their scope from the Marcellus region to a global focus. Additionally, international examples are used to amplify their claims about the negative impact of fracking activity, as well as raise morale and promote action.

#### 4.8 FRAME TRANSFORMATION

Frame transformation is an alignment process employed by MP to develop a new understanding of energy issues. MP does not simply argue against fracking based on environmental destruction or adverse health effects. MP offers a holistic approach to hydraulic fracturing, and energy extraction more generally, that focuses on transforming the debate about technological and economic progress, of which includes the claim that hydraulic fracturing produces natural gas, a “cleaner” alternative to coal. MP challenges the understanding that natural gas can be a bridge fuel to an economy less dependent on energy sources that contribute to global climate change. MP seeks to transform the common sense argument articulated by proponents of fracking – and broader discourse – into a broader discussion of food security, breathable air, drinkable water, occupational safety, economic development, and political fairness. MP employs frame transformation to articulate the severity of the fossil fuel dilemma in the region, nation, and world.

In MP’s December 2013 monthly newsletter, the organization argues against fracking in public parks. In the document MP states:

Our local environment needs protection from fracking for its own sake: we need a place to live; we need breathable air here, drinkable water, and safe neighborhoods. But there’s also an existential question of whether human beings will yet be the ones to *decide* what

will – and won't – be destroyed, as the price of fossil energy. If our parks can't be saved, then what about our homes? What about the farms? What about the rain? *Where will this fever stop? Can it be stopped?* (1; *original emphasis*)

MP uses their diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames to construct messages against hydraulic fracturing, but in this example MP transforms these messages to change the understanding of “fossil energy” and human agency.

MP also writes:

A recent panel discussion about “environmental journalism,” made the case: We are first hand witnesses to the most important “news story” that anyone has ever covered: bigger than war or peace, bigger than a cure for cancer. It's no exaggeration to say that the future of the human species is being decided over these next few years. And it's not far-fetched to expect that Pennsylvania is where some of the most pivotal events will take place (Marcellus Protest December 2013: 1).

MP seeks to redefine energy solutions as limited to conservation and renewable resources, such as solar and wind. MP also claims that other “countries all over the world have come to this realization, yet our United States of America lags sadly behind” (January 30, 2013: “Resources”). MP is seeking to transform the understanding of hydraulic fracturing as a bridge fuel, but the goal of MP is more specifically to change the way that the U.S. understands energy. For MP, the approach of replacing one hazardous fossil fuel with another is not a way to pursue energy concerns of greenhouse gas emissions, ozone depletion, and global climate change. MP's characterization of energy policy as the “most important ‘news story,’” represents the severity of energy extraction and the need to alter our understanding of energy issues. MP's pursuit of frame transformation elevates the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames to a status that is no longer a question of hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus Shale region, but is instead a matter of “the future of the human species.”

MSC is not concerned with transforming the understanding of hydraulic fracturing. To some extent, I argue that MSC is concerned with obfuscating the understanding of hydraulic fracturing and energy extraction more generally to maintain the status quo – the common sense understanding of hydraulic fracturing in the broader discourse. As the public relations machine for the natural gas industry, MSC is uninterested with transforming their messages that have gained them 92 percent of the public who favor hydraulic fracturing. If their overwhelming support were to diminish, I suspect that MSC would consider using frame transformation to alter the public’s new understanding of hydraulic fracturing. For now, however, MSC is committed to linking their message to the broader discourse that MP is attempting to transform.

My analysis of each frame alignment process suggests that each organization prioritizes frame amplifying, bridging, extending, and transforming to varying degrees. MP predominantly pursues a multifaceted approach to frame alignment. MP primarily employs frame amplification to establish hydraulic fracturing as a social problem contributing to the economic and environmental destruction of the region. However, MP also consistently uses frame bridging, extending, and transforming to garner support for their claims. The ultimate goal of frame transformation means that MP must take a shotgun approach to framing to reach this persuasive goal. MP must amplify, bridge, and extend the issue of fracking in an effort to gain as many adherents as possible. These findings support my hypothesis that MP will employ all of the frame alignment strategies in an effort to connect their message to as many people as possible.

In contrast, MSC prioritizes frame amplification. MSC is primarily concerned with connecting their messages to the broader discourse and amplifying specific beliefs and values. MSC, however, does employ frame bridging and extending on occasion. The use of these two strategies is targeted with a specific purpose for that particular moment. MSC is uninterested in

transforming the commonsense understanding of hydraulic fracturing because it represents the interests of the natural gas industry. These findings support my hypothesis that MSC will predominantly employ frame amplification to bolster their claims and uphold the dominant discourse on hydraulic fracturing.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

I sought to understand variation in the framing of hydraulic fracturing on two opposing organizational websites by examining each organization's prioritization of core framing tasks and frame alignment processes. My analysis of the websites yielded three key findings. First, I found that some variation in the organizations' prioritization of the core framing tasks can be attributed to the broader discourse that predominantly portrays hydraulic fracturing as economically and environmentally beneficial for the nation. MP prioritizes diagnostic and motivational framing to establish hydraulic fracturing as a legitimate social problem that requires immediate action. MSC is able to prioritize diagnostic and prognostic framing tasks by drawing on the broader discourse that supports hydraulic fracturing. MSC's claims are already supported by an overwhelming majority, so they are able to focus on refuting oppositional claims and reinforcing the positive characterization of hydraulic fracturing.

Second, I found that the two organizations have different approaches to employing frame alignment processes. MSC focuses on frame amplification to characterize natural gas extraction as a societal good for the region and the nation. MSC uses value and belief amplification to bolster their claims, which reflect the broader discourse. I find that MSC's use of frame bridging and extension is selective. MSC does not consistently employ frame bridging and extension on their website. MSC does not employ frame transformation at all. MSC is committed to maintaining and reinforcing the current understanding of hydraulic fracturing and does not

attempt to transform this understanding. On the other hand, MP's use of frame alignment processes is best described as a multifaceted approach. MP employs all of the frame alignment processes on their website. MP predominantly employs frame amplification to support their diagnostic frame, which attempts to establish hydraulic fracturing as a social problem contributing to the economic and environmental destruction in the Marcellus Shale region. Frame bridging, extending, and transforming, however, are consistently employed on their website as well. Frame bridging and extending are used to connect with undecided individuals, ideologically congruent movements, and international efforts. MP's main goal is to transform the broader discourse surrounding fracking, but the organization currently lacks the support to accomplish this goal. Therefore, most of MP's framing activity incorporates messages that seek to redefine the common sense understanding of hydraulic fracturing, which requires a multifaceted approach to the framing of hydraulic fracturing. Whereas, MSC already has overwhelming support and a common sense understanding to link their messages, so they are able to pursue a relatively targeted purpose for each specific message.

Third, the organizational goals of MSC and MP influence their framing activity and account for some of the variation. My findings suggest that the broader discursive field greatly impacts the organizational goals of each organization. MSC is able to employ the broader discourse to maintain overwhelming support for hydraulic fracturing. MSC, an organization advocating for the natural gas industry, supposedly has 92 percent of the public's support and does not need to frame hydraulic fracturing in terms of individuals. The public already supports the natural gas industry and MSC simply needs to maintain majority support. This provides MSC with the opportunity to overlook individuals and focus on framing messages that "abstract" the extraction process, the alleged benefits, and the individuals and communities. Aside from their

attempts at frame extension, MSC predominantly constructs messages that reiterate the positive benefits of hydraulic fracturing featured in the broader discourse. MSC displaces the people of the Marcellus Shale region by using nondescript language that prioritizes regional or national audiences. MSC pursues a targeted strategy that seeks to uphold the dominant discourse, while on occasion directing their framing efforts toward mobilizing individuals who support hydraulic fracturing – especially individuals with power and money (e.g., politicians and academics).

MP has a different set of organizational goals based on the broader discursive field. MP is committed to promoting social change by transforming the energy conversation in the U.S. MP is unable to connect their messages to the broader discourse. Instead, MP predominantly focuses their framing efforts on establishing local support for their claims. Therefore, MP frames messages that legitimate their claims and mobilize people, as opposed money and political influence. The end goal is to transform the conversation and end fracking activity, but in the short term MP is limited to constructing messages that build their case against hydraulic fracturing.

My impressionistic approach to the website content limits my ability to report precisely on the degree to which each organization emphasizes each task and process, but my findings suggest that the framing strategy pursued by each organization is contingent on the broader discourse and the organization's persuasive goals. For instance, organizations committed to frame transformation must pursue a multifaceted approach to framing to accumulate enough resources – supporters, money, and political influence – to accomplish their goals. In contrast, an organization that already supports the hegemonic discourse can take a targeted approach that simply works to uphold the dominant perspective. Organizations, such as MP, that are unable to link their message to the hegemonic discourse must transform the discourse by incorporating



messages that simultaneously fulfill multiple framing tasks. As my findings reveal, a counter-hegemonic organization pursues a multifaceted approach to framing that incorporates frame amplifying, bridging, extending, and transforming. The organizational goals of MP include transforming the hegemonic discourse surrounding fossil fuel and global climate change, but, as an organization lacking majority support in the Marcellus Shale region, they strategically construct messages that appeal to both local communities and a larger audience. Compared to MSC, the inability to connect to the hegemonic discourse and the organizational goal of transforming the broader discourse, contributes to MP's less focused approach to framing activity. These are speculative conclusions that apply to variation in MSC's and MP's framing of hydraulic fracturing on their website. More research that deals specifically with frame variation on the same issue or event is needed, as well as continuing research on the framing of hydraulic fracturing as the issue gains increased national attention.

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