PLAINS SPOKEN: A FRAMING ANALYSIS OF BOLD NEBRASKA'S

CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the School of Journalism and Communication
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

March 2017

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

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Title: Plains Spoken: A Framing Analysis of Bold Nebraska's Campaign Against the Keystone XL Pipeline

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Philosophy

School of Journalism and Communication

March 2017

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XL Pipeline

This dissertation focuses on the use of strategic communication in the context of
contemporary environmental activism. It examines the case of Bold Nebraska, a grassroots
advocacy group opposing the construction of TransCanada's Keystone XL oil pipeline in the
state of Nebraska. Such an analysis of activist communication informs several areas of research,
including public relations theory and practice, social movement theory, and environmental
communication. To understand the construction of strategic communication within such
activism, this study employs a movement framing analysis, a media framing analysis, and a
rhetorical analysis. A quantitative framing analysis of Bold Nebraska's website communication
against the pipeline during the five-year period of 2011 to 2015 assesses how activists craft and
project strategic messages. A framing analysis of Bold Nebraska's national media coverage
during the same timeframe highlights the relationship between activist framing and mainstream
news coverage. Finally, a rhetorical analysis of Bold Nebraska's 2014 Harvest the Hope concert
is provided to understand the role of rhetorical appeals in building an environmental activism
metanarrative or master frame.

Taken together, these three approaches provide both a more holistic means to considering environmental activism campaigns in the context of strategic communication, and fill in the gaps for understanding the interplay of social movement organizations, public relations, and persuasion. This study brings a framework of strategic advocacy framing to the realm of environmental politics, and builds upon this framework by considering the dynamic of populism in activism. It also explores the role of strategic communication in evolving a movement organization's metanarrative as it toggles between short- and long-term goals. Finally, it identifies a civic environmental persuasion built upon the attributes of narrative, hyperlocalization, engagement, and bipartisanship in order to build broad support and influence public policy.

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Moscato, Derek (2016). "Media Portrayals of Hashtag Activism: A Framing Analysis of Canada's" #IdleNoMore Movement." *Media and Communication.*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe an incredible debt to the many individuals who have provided extraordinary support and guidance during this journey. Firstly, I want to humbly thank my dissertation committee members for their tremendous help and mentorship. Kim Sheehan, my chair and adviser, has been a personal source of inspiration. Thank you Kim for your countless hours reviewing my work, for your enthusiasm and creativity, and for sharing your scholarly acumen and expertise at every step. The importance of Kim's contribution cannot be overstated here. Dean Mundy, my dissertation co-chair, has helped me navigate important theoretical terrain, especially where the realms of strategic communication and public relations meet democratic dialogue. I am grateful to Dean for both his grounded advice and input, and our Habermas-inspired conversations about public engagement. I also owe a huge thanks to Chris Chavez—who has continually provided me with new theoretical and methodological perspectives. Chris has opened up for me new avenues of scholarship, and a refined lens through which to view media and strategic communication. Marsha Weisiger has also played a critical role in the success of this project. Marsha's generosity of time, knowledge, and historical insights has provided crucial contextualization for my study while igniting my passion for environmental history. To Marsha, and to the entire committee, I thank you again profusely.

I also owe a big thanks to Endalk Chala for not only his assistance in coding during this project, but also for his enthusiasm and fresh perspectives, especially during our many Starbucks meetings. Along these same lines, I am grateful to the larger community of faculty, students, and staff at the University of Oregon and the School of Journalism and Communication. My professors have been amazing in terms of their ability to impart knowledge, encourage deep

This dissertation is dedicated to Miho, Cordell, and Nelson.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nearly three hours west of Omaha, in the heart of Nebraska's Antelope County, lies the farmland of Art and Helen Tanderup. The rural property's bountiful corn fields, sitting atop the Great Plains water source of the Ogallala Aquifer, are the very picture of idyllic Nebraska prairie. Yet this land has also been the scene of conflict, past and present. The Ponca Trail of Tears, memorializing the state's Native Americans who were forced to walk to a reservation in Oklahoma in 1877, passes through here. Such history gives the land a sacred dimension. More recently, oil and gas executives earmarked these same grounds for a different kind of route for one of North America's largest petroleum pipelines. In response, activists from an organization called Bold Nebraska descended upon these fields in April of 2014 to challenge the encroaching infrastructure of petroleum-bearing steel tubes. With an unlikely coalition of environmentalists, Indigenous groups, ranchers, and farmers—a "Cowboy and Indian Alliance"—they unveiled a symbol fitting for the location: A massive crop art display, the size of 80 football fields, and best viewed from the air. The image, dug by the Tanderups' tractor into the farm's sandy soils, depicted facial silhouettes of both the cowboy and the Indian warrior, united atop giant letters spelling out the rallying cry of "Heartland." Beside it was a call to action to stop the Keystone XL Pipeline: "#NoKXL."

Multi-billion-dollar oil and gas projects—including pipeline infrastructure projects such as Keystone XL—continue to be proposed and built around the world, contributing to a global oil and gas market worth roughly $4 trillion annually (IBIS World, 2015). In North America alone, this private and public investment has transformed the North American oil economy, leaving the United States and Canada as two of the world's top five oil producing nations. In a

strictly economic sense, the stakes are high for industry and government. But the stakes are significant also for environmental activists and their allies, who have resisted projects such as Keystone XL on account of their ecological and societal impacts. As a result of these different priorities and the infusion of activism against its construction, Keystone XL has emerged as one of the most contended environmental debates in recent U.S. history (Wolfgang, 2015).

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand how environmental movements can effectively deploy strategic communication within contemporary environmental disputes to build support for their mission and cause. This study examines whether contemporary manifestations of activism inform the communication theory of framing, and the extent to which such activism extends or complicates framing. It specifically analyzes Bold Nebraska's environmental campaign against TransCanada's Keystone XL Pipeline.

A Pipeline Runs Through It

Traversing a broad expanse of North America's Great Plains, the Keystone Pipeline System transports Canadian and U.S. crude oil across a 2,639-mile network. When seen on a map, it appears to be snaking its way across physical and political geographies. One might be tempted to compare its path to that of a continental railway, or a geological entity such as a river and its tributaries. Originating in Hardisty, Alberta, the original Keystone pipeline travels east across the Canadian prairie—through Saskatchewan and a section of Manitoba—before it changes course and heads due south across the U.S. border: First to North Dakota, and then South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma, finally arriving at refineries in Texas along the Gulf of Mexico. An easterly branch of the network also transports oil through Missouri to the Wood River Refinery in Roxana, Illinois, and the Patoka Oil Terminal Hub. Since it began operations in 2010, a decade after the pipeline project was originally proposed, the network has

moved more than one billion barrels of crude oil to U.S. refineries. Designed using high-strength carbon steel and featuring thousands of data points along its route sending information to a central data center, the pipeline moves oil at the speed of the average person's walking pace (Keystone-XL.com, 2015, Section 4).

Figure 1: TransCanada's map showing Keystone XL's proposed routing as a broken line between Hardisty, Alberta and Steele City, Nebraska. The proposed pipeline travels through Alberta and Saskatchewan before going to Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska. The other lines on the map depict already-completed pipelines in TransCanada's network.

"One of the most modern and technologically advanced pipeline systems in the world" is how TransCanada, the company behind Keystone, describes its energy infrastructure (Keystone-

XL.com, 2015, para. 2). Based in Calgary, Alberta, TransCanada is an energy company with a focus on oil pipelines and power generation stations. It is a publicly traded corporation, with shares listed in New York and Toronto under the ticker symbol TRP. In addition to its Keystone assets, it owns 35,500 miles of natural gas pipeline, numerous power plants, and stakes in nuclear, wind power, and natural gas power generation projects (TransCanada.com, 2009). It also maintains the TransCanada pipeline network, a system of natural gas pipelines connecting Western Canada to the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The company's market capitalization is $24 billion, making it one of Canada's 15 largest public companies.

Central to the Keystone XL project is the development of Alberta's oil sands, which represents one of Canada's, if not the world's, most ambitious undertakings in the petroleum sector. These oil sands, also known by critics as tar sands, represent 97 percent of proven oil reserves in the country, leaving Canada with the third largest amount of oil reserves in the world, trailing only Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. The role of a continental pipeline in transporting this petroleum to markets in the United States and internationally has therefore been paramount. Construction of the Keystone network has comprised four phases, with the first three already completed. The first connects the Keystone Hardisty Oil Terminal in east-central Alberta to Illinois; the second extends the first phase south to Cushing, Oklahoma, a major oil trading hub. The third continues the southern trajectory to the Gulf refineries in south-eastern Texas. It is the fourth, however, the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, that has held up TransCanada's bid to bolster its continental oil network. This proposed segment of the pipeline, estimated to cost $8 billion to build, would again originate in Alberta, run through the Bakken formation oil patch of Montana and North Dakota, and transport crude oil to Steele City, Nebraska. Here, it would rejoin the extended Keystone network on route to refineries. It is also here, in Nebraska, where

the Keystone XL project has become bogged down in an unlikely and years-long fight with environmental activists opposed to this 1,179-mile extension of the original Keystone project.

The Opposition

A number of groups and individuals along the new pipeline's path, as well as across the region and the country, have long opposed the construction of the pipeline. This opposition is part of the reason why the extension has not received a presidential permit for construction after a seven-year wait, even though the earlier three phases of the Keystone network were approved after a two-year wait. Opposition to the project revolves around five issues (NRDC.org, 2015). The first is the safety of oil and gas pipelines. Leakages or spills from them are potentially destructive to local wildlife, geology, and human populations. A second, related issue is the long-term health and environmental impacts of human and wildlife populations living along the pipeline, particularly individuals near the source of the Canadian oil sands in Alberta. Opposition groups also cite the questionable economics of oil pipelines, particularly their positioning by corporate and political backers as national job generators. They argue that the project primarily serves offshore oil demands and the interests of the oil sector. A related theme is opposition based on the reliance of the United States and other industrial economies on oil as a source of energy instead of clean energy alternatives. Finally, the construction of Keystone XL has become a symbolic battleground in the global debate over climate change. In an op-ed for the *New York Times*, James Hansen, an expert on climate change science, warned of an apocalyptic future stemming from the extraction of "dirty oil" (tar sands oil produces more greenhouse gas emissions than regular oil)—including an expanding dust bowl in the central United States, drought and water shortages in California, spiking food prices across the country, and rising sea

levels globally. "If Canada proceeds, and we do nothing, it will be game over for the climate," he wrote (Hansen, 2012, para. 2).

Several high-profile national organizations have publicly opposed TransCanada's pipeline bid, including organizations with national and sometimes even international profiles, such as the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Indigenous Environmental Network, the Sierra Club, and Greenpeace. At the forefront of opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline, however, is a state-based organization with a message aimed at local and national audiences: Bold Nebraska.

Table 1: Organizational opposition to Keystone XL Pipeline

Organization	Focus of Opposition
350.org	Climate change
American Rivers	River conservation
Bold Nebraska	Environmental protection/justice
EarthJustice	Legal/environmental
Environment America	State-based environmentalism
Friends of the Earth	Global environmentalism
Greenpeace	Global/national environmentalism
Hip Hop Caucus	Social justice/equality
Indigenous Environmental Network	Environmental protection/justice
League of Conservation Voters	Environmental politics
League of Women Voters	Democratic participation
National Resource Defense Council	Environmental protection
National Wildlife Fund	Wildlife conservation
Oglala Sioux Tribe	Environmental justice
Sierra Club	Conservation/environmental policy
Tar Sands Blockade	Energy/oil sands policy
The Other 98%	Economic injustice

The growing prominence of the environment as a focal point for public debate at levels local, national, and global—and the ecological, economic, and societal outcomes of such debates—underscore the importance of activists who leverage their resources and support to campaign against projects like Keystone XL. As a state-based organization that draws from

grassroots support—including environmentalists, farmers, ranchers, and Indigenous communities—and leverages opportunities afforded by communication and media, the case of Bold Nebraska offers new insights into the changing faces of environmental discourse and activism.

The Rise of Bold Nebraska

In 2010, Bold Nebraska was founded with a mission of mobilizing "new energy to restore political balance" (BoldNebraska.org, 2015, para. 1). As a Nebraska affiliate of the national online advocacy organization ProgressNow, Bold Nebraska cited state politics both lacking balance and being heavily influenced by far-right policies in close alignment with big business. This scenario was seen as adversely impacting environmental, economic, and social policy in the state. Bold Nebraska's initial focus was on health care reform until the pipeline proposal came along.

> Our state is currently dominated by one political voice—conservative, and it's not the conservative voice many of us grew up with in our families. The conservative voice in our state is now dominated by far-right ideas and policies that are more about protecting big business, not fighting for our families. (BoldNebraska.org, 2015, para. 1)

Projects like the Keystone proposal have highlighted the economic and social challenges facing local populations in the U.S. heartland, such as farmers, ranchers, and Indigenous peoples. To this end, Bold Nebraska has engaged in a longstanding fight against the Keystone XL pipeline and, by extension, the traditional energy sector. Bold Nebraska named its opponents in the Keystone saga as "the Provincial Government of Alberta, the Government of Canada, the most powerful industry on earth, and in the United States, the Republican Party and half the Democratic Party" (BoldNebraska.org, 2016, para. 9).

The overriding goal of Bold Nebraska, then, has been to "put the brakes on this pipeline" (BoldNebraska.org, 2010, para. 21) and to transform the political landscape of Nebraska. The group's activism has been marked by a steady stream of coverage in publications such as the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine, demonstrations and rallies from Lincoln, Nebraska, to Washington, D.C., and a high-profile rock concert featuring musical acts of national repute. As *Rolling Stone* magazine described it, activists from Bold Nebraska have helped "turn the pipeline into a symbolic crossroads, a chance to make a national decision about what form our long-term relationship to energy will take" (Jarvis, 2013, para. 8).
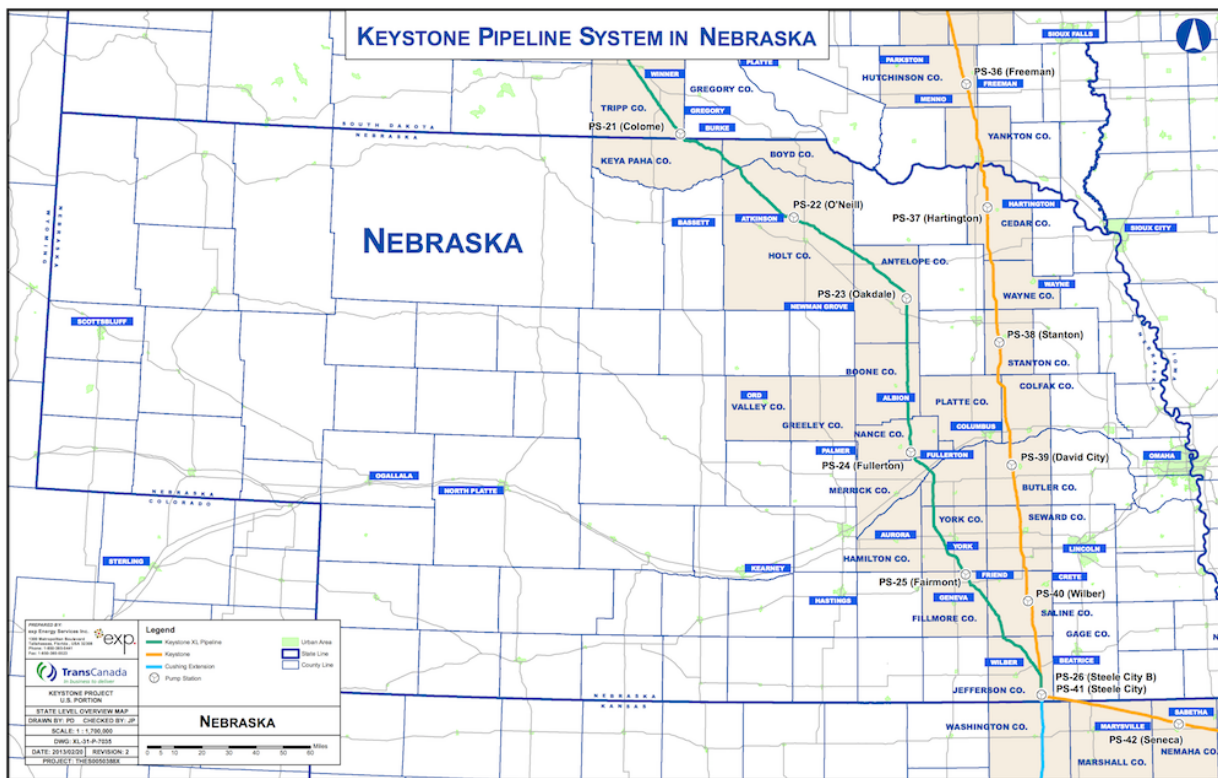
Figure 2: A TransCanada map showing Nebraska routing of the Keystone pipelines. The north-south line in eastern Nebraska is the existing Keystone pipeline. To the west is the proposed Keystone XL route.

The founder of Bold Nebraska is Jane Fleming Kleeb, an activist from the rural community of Hastings, Nebraska. Kleeb was formerly a national executive director of the Young Democrats of America as well as a reporter for the cable music television channel MTV.

Having been chosen by MTV from among hundreds of competitors from across the United States in 2008 to be a street reporter, she was responsible for submitting weekly reports to the channel's website and "covering everything from school board races to the Presidential race in Nebraska" (Nebraska Democrats, 2008, para. 10).

Kleeb was not always linked to the Democratic Party or progressive politics, however. Growing up in South Florida, her parents were staunchly Republican. She often watched her mother lead rallies for the Broward County Right to Life movement. Until taking a job with the Young Democrats of America, Kleeb claims to have been a Republican herself. Her connection to the state of Nebraska is a result of her marriage to energy entrepreneur Scott Kleeb, at the time also an aspiring politician. The two met at the 2005 Democratic Convention in Phoenix. Running as a Democratic candidate, he would eventually run—and lose—in a 2007 bid for Nebraska's third congressional seat, as well as a 2008 bid for the Senate.

Kleeb's communication background appears to have had a significant influence upon her work with Bold Nebraska. Until 2016, when she became the president of the newly-created Bold Alliance (which oversees Bold Nebraska and a network of like-minded state-based organizations) she was listed as Bold Nebraska's "Editor and Founder." In 2014, she helped organize a benefit rock concert, similar to MTV's 'Rock the Vote' concerts in support of youth voting. Bold Nebraska's "Harvest the Hope" concert was staged in a cornfield near the pipeline route in the town of Neligh and featured folk rock musicians and noted activists Willie Nelson and Neil Young, drawing 8,500 spectators. In a statement connecting the performances to the pipeline issue, she explained that "ranchers, farmers and tribes that have been standing up to TransCanada are rock stars in my eyes" (PR Watch, 2014, para. 4).

This confluence of popular culture and activism extends into Bold Nebraska's online communication. The organization's website features petitions, guidelines for writing to government leaders, and calls for fundraising. However, it also draws from consumer retailing and music festival culture with the "Bold Store"—where supporters can buy the "No Permit, No Pipeline" t-shirt, a "Pipeline Fighter" trucker hat or armband, and a Cowboy and Indian Alliance bracelet. Celebrity activists Willie Nelson and Neil Young are also featured in Harvest the Hope concert apparel that is available for purchase.

These symbolic artifacts serve as a reminder that this activism is located within Nebraska, a relatively sparsely populated Great Plains state (ranked 43rd out of 50 U.S. states for population density) with a heritage of agricultural industries, including livestock and dairy production, and farming of crops such as corn, wheat, soybeans, and sugar beets. The state is also a longstanding stronghold for Republican politics (The Hill, 2014). Having voted for a Republican candidate in the last 13 presidential elections, Nebraska is better identified with conservative politics than a liberal political climate where contemporary environmentalism is more likely to be embraced.

Bold Nebraska's deployment of strategic communication is extensive. The organization's website includes a resources page specifically for press that also includes pipeline pictures, videos, and Nebraska contacts and resources. Kleeb herself continues to be listed as a primary press contact. Some news releases and campaign materials even embed entire legislative bills. The group's account on the microblogging platform Twitter, established in 2010, claims roughly 7,000 followers and has broadcasted over 9,000 tweets.

Between 2011 and 2015, Kleeb's leadership team included New Media Director Mark Hefflinger, a former journalist who also worked as an online organizer for progressive causes, including the 2008 campaign to stop California's Proposition 8, which eliminated the right of

same-sex couples to marry in California. Her team has also included Ben Gotschall, a cattle rancher and Nebraska Farmers Union representative, who continues to serve as the movement's Energy Director. Both Hefflinger and Gotschall regularly contributed to Bold Nebraska's public- and media-facing website communication, along with Kleeb herself (Hefflinger is now the Digital & Communications Director of the Bold Alliance). Bold Nebraska also had two members serving on its board of directors during this timeframe: Rick Poore, a small business owner from Lincoln, Nebraska, and Amanda McKinney, a doctor from rural Nebraska who advocated for President Obama's healthcare reforms (both are now board members with the Bold Alliance). In spite of its relatively small organizational size and its limited impact outside of its home state, Bold Nebraska draws from extensive, national-level communication and political expertise.

Grassroots Activism and the Media

The opposition to TransCanada's Keystone XL proposal, and the ensuing debates in mainstream and social media, emphasize the outsized role of media within environmental activism. For example, pipeline opponents from Bold Nebraska have provided commentary or op-ed articles for national media outlets such as the *New York Times*. Their stories, sometimes emerging from news releases and media advisories, have been disseminated through social, local, and national media channels. At the same time, TransCanada has attempted to garner the trust and goodwill of the public in North America with large-scale public relations efforts. For a period, this included representation from the Washington, D.C., and Calgary offices of U.S.- based Edelman, the largest public relations firm in the world (Edelman.com, 2015, para. 1). While 2014 polling showed that 61% of Americans supported the construction of the pipeline, those numbers dropped for specific groups. Among Democratic voters, only 49% were supportive. For Democratic women, support dropped even further, at 43%. Conversely, support

for Keystone XL was much higher with Republican males and females (90% and 78%

respectively).

The quest for positive public opinion has been a driver of communication for both

TransCanada and Bold Nebraska. It has also highlighted the increasingly prominent role of North

American energy politics in the United States, marking a potential divide between the economic

interests of Canadians and the social and environmental interests of Americans. The United

States imports more crude oil from Canada than any other country, and by a wide margin (U.S.

Energy Information Administration, 2015). However, Canada's embrace of its petroleum

industry has garnered the wrath of some pundits. A "climate villain" is how one liberal American

magazine described the United States' northerly neighbor in light of its oil agenda and growing

carbon footprint (Leber, 2015). This has left environmental activists in the U.S. engaging not

only with policymakers, companies, citizens, and media in the United States, but also with

political actors in a foreign jurisdiction. Even when the threats of climate change and oil spills hit

close to home, the network of involved parties in these debates is increasingly dispersed and

globalized. For Americans living in the path of pipelines carrying Alberta oil, Canadian

politicians, lobbyists, and media outlets are now part of the debate about America's energy

future. This new macroeconomic and political reality has also fostered necessary linkages

between environmentalists and tribal communities on both sides of the U.S/Canada border. In

addition to Keystone XL, potential additions to Canada's energy pipeline interests include the

recently approved Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project, which carries

Alberta oil through British Columbia to the West Coast (where it will be shipped to Asia); and

Enbridge's Line 3 pipeline expansion project, carrying crude oil from Alberta and Saskatchewan

to Superior, Wisconsin. Another TransCanada project, the Energy East Pipeline, proposes shipping Alberta crude to refineries in Eastern Canada.

The complex interplay of resources extraction industries with grassroots environmentalism and advocacy is fostering new discussions in communication scholarship about the growing role of activists in the public sphere. For many years, social movements have been examined by scholars from the disciplines of sociology and political science, where activities such as organizing and direct action have been emphasized. Within the communication literature, much analysis of activism has considered its role from the perspective of the companies they are opposing. Missing in much analysis, however, is how activists themselves attempt to persuade media and publics through communication. This outreach is the focus of this study.

Overview of Study

This study builds upon previous studies of activism scholarship by focusing on a contemporary state-level organization that simultaneously challenged political and business leaders in its home state of Nebraska, at the national level in the United States, and in the foreign jurisdiction of Canada. Such a focus sheds light not only on the practices of social movements but also the changing environments in which such actions are deployed. To this end, Keystone XL represents a watershed moment not only in energy politics and public policy, but also in the communication of environmental activism. Given that Bold Nebraska joined international environmental groups like Sierra Club, Greenpeace, and other national advocates in providing media leadership on this issue, it is clear there are new lessons to be learned from the Keystone saga.

Central to this case is the question of when and how a pragmatic and decidedly strategic communication strategy can enable a social movement to make significant gains, where other movements without such an acumen might fail (Bob, 2001). Accordingly, this case study examines how contemporary environmental activism deploys strategic communication and attempts to sway public opinion amid global debates over energy politics and climate change. Such an analysis of activist communication informs several areas of research, including public relations theory and practice, social movement theory, and environmental communication.

To understand these dynamics, this study employs a movement framing analysis, a media framing analysis, and a rhetorical analysis. First, I draw from framing theory to understand how social movements communicate to their publics and the media. A framing analysis of Bold Nebraska's activism against TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline within the organization's online texts—between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2015—is provided. Such an analysis helps to determine how environmental activists project strategic communication into public debates. Analyzing Bold Nebraska's public-facing materials, such as media releases and feature articles, assesses whether such communication ultimately aligns with the principles of strategic framing, and if so, what strategic framing elements are most dominant.

Secondly, this study employs a quantitative framing analysis of Bold Nebraska's national media coverage from the same five-year period, highlighting the role of frames in shaping the organization's message to mainstream audiences. Media framing helps explain the shaping of environments that are favorable or hostile to public policies. Identifying the saliency of different aspects of Bold Nebraska's activism against the Keystone XL project within the movement's own communication texts, and within mainstream media, provides insight into how the

movement influenced broader public debates about pipeline construction, energy policy, environmental protection, and the rights of marginalized rural and Indigenous populations.

Finally, a rhetorical analysis of Bold Nebraska's Harvest the Hope music festival, held during the summer of 2014, is provided to understand the role of rhetorical appeals in building an environmental activism metanarrative. Such an analysis shows how the social movement organization communicates to its members and mass audiences through the symbolic and cultural levers of a non-traditional communication artifact such as the rock concert. As a site of study, Bold Nebraska's music festival draws from mainstream, alternative, and Indigenous cultural artifacts, symbols, and histories in contesting existing metanarratives.

Taken together, these three distinct approaches to studying an advocacy communication campaign provide new insights into how activists and marginalized publics are able to level the playing field against much better-funded corporations and government bodies. It provides both a more holistic means to considering advocacy campaigns in the context of strategic communication, and fills in the gaps for understanding the interplay of social movements, public relations, and persuasion. It brings a framework of strategic advocacy framing to the realm of environmental politics, and builds upon this framework by considering the dynamic of populism in activism. It identifies the role of frames and framing elements in constructing activist messages; and identifies a civic environmental persuasion built upon the attributes of narrative, engagement, hyperlocalization, and bipartisanship in order to build broad support and influence public policy.

Outline

The next chapter provides an overview of existing theoretical approaches to the confluence of framing and activism, as well as findings from these studies. This includes

perspectives from, and intersections with, the public relations, persuasion, and social movements literatures. Chapter 3 offers an explanation of the methodological approaches employed for data collection. Chapter 4 provides results from this data collection along with a rhetorical analysis, while Chapter 5 offers analysis of these results. The final chapter provides a discussion of the theoretical implications of these findings for the public relations and social movement literatures, as well as implications and suggestions for future study.

CHAPTER II

THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Environmental activism is defined broadly as action and discourses on behalf of environmentally-focused organizations and collectives (Seguin, Pelletier, & Hunsley, 1998). Fundamental to such activism is the materiality of the spaces being contested: wildlife, natural geologies, and human-inhabited environments along with their living and working conditions. Environmental activists are more actively committed to changing environmental conditions or policy, and this is reflected in their attempts to influence people's attitudes and behaviors toward the environment through acts of persuasion, protest, advocacy, fundraising, and related forms of political communication (Seguin, Pelletier, & Hunsley, 1998).

This study investigates environmental activism specifically in the context of strategic communication—which describes how organizations purposefully use communication to engage audiences and create favorable conditions for reaching goals—through the lenses of framing, public relations, and rhetoric. By doing so, it assesses the complex dynamics between activists, media channels, and the audiences for whom media serve. Activists thus play multiple roles in their communication efforts as message creators and framers. They serve as sources for media— providing expertise, opinion, and commentary. They also serve as newsmakers—providing both new story ideas and newsworthy events for journalists. Along the way, they must contend with other political actors in the media—including institutional elites—in getting their message through or providing alternative perspectives. Finally, they are cognizant of the audiences for whom media serve and craft their communication accordingly. As an organization advocating for the environmental protection of natural landscapes, farm lands, Indigenous territories, and

specific geological features such as the Ogallala Aquifer, which is one of the largest shallow water tables in the world (U.S. Geological Survey, 2008), Bold Nebraska therefore provides an appropriate site of study to explore these questions regarding environmental activism.

This chapter provides an overview of scholarship pertaining to contemporary environmental activism through the lenses of activist movement and media framing. It identifies framing theory for understanding how activist messages communicate to both the public and the media. Second, this review outlines how public relations scholarship has researched similar questions. Finally, this review examines the role of rhetoric as a vehicle of persuasion within framing. This chapter identifies the gaps in the literature arising from studies of general and environmental activisms, highlighting where contemporary activism both aligns with, but also diverges from, previous scholarly explanations.

Movement Framing

The framing of events and issues in the media has been shown to be a critical dimension to successful activism. Framing does not emanate exclusively from the media, however. Activists are able to frame issues, events, and even entire movements for journalists as well as organization members, political elites, and the general public. Accordingly, this section focuses on activists' use of framing, in terms of both motivations and outcomes as well as the composition and construction of such activist frames.

Studies of activist and social movement organizations, including environmental groups, have incorporated a range of theories and disciplinary perspectives reflecting the widespread interest in the topic. Social movements have been analyzed from domains such as sociology and political science, while grassroots environmental protests and campaigns have received special attention in fields such as environmental history. Social movement literature often focuses on the

political, historical, economic, and psychological circumstances and contexts behind the mobilizing forces trying to create change. At the same time, approaches from within media and communication studies have also been used to study these movements. Public relations scholarship has increasingly explored the relationship-building and communication strategies on the part of activists, while studies from rhetoric and persuasion have explored the conception and construction of movement messages themselves. Accordingly, the following review first looks at movement and advocacy organization framing strategies. It then explores how public relations literature has explored activism. Finally, it outlines the rhetorical devices used to influence public discourse.

Social movements and movement framing. Studies of social movements have incorporated numerous theories to account for the rise and fall of groups committed to social and environmental change, including resource mobilization (Jenkins & Parrow, 1977; Walsh, 1981), political process (McAdam, 1982), and transnationalism/globalization (Brysk, 1996; Seidman, 2000; Widener, 2007). Since the 1980s, a growing interest in individual participation and engagement in social movement organizations, as well as meaning-making by movement actors, has been made manifest through the study of framing (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p.15). Significant milestones have connected framing theory to social movements literature. These include the application of frame analysis to media portrayals of social movements (Gitlin, 1978; Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978), and Gamson et al.'s (1982) introduction of the "injustice frame" as a key catalyst for protest macro-mobilization (Gusfield, 1994).

Social movement organizations both articulate and disseminate frames of understanding that are meant to resonate with their constituents and the general public. Snow and Benford (1988) position movements as carriers of beliefs and ideologies through a range of activities

including recruitment and messaging, in turn constructing meaning for supporters and opponents. They focus on the idea of collective action frames, while acknowledging that social movement organizations are typically embedded in a field in which multiple actors are vying for framing dominance or salience (Wiktorowics, 2004). Multiple groups vie for membership, funding, political support, and favorable public opinion. Consequently, movement organizations strategically develop specific frames—conveyed verbally, visually, interpersonally—around which their constituents are able to mobilize. In the debate regarding abortion, for example, different groups specifically use terms "pro-life" versus "pro-choice" to frame different perspectives of the same issue (Gusfield, 1994, p. 69).

Social movement collective action frames provide groups with a means to understanding and articulating an issue and placing it in a larger context. For example, Snow and Benford (2000) described collective action frames as representing a shared understanding of a condition or situation in need of change, an attribution of blame, an articulation of a different course of action, or a call to action for interested parties. This builds upon Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford's (1986) earlier focus on frame alignment processes, such as the alignment of different frames within a movement, and the amplification of frames to larger audiences through public events and media outreach. These "micromobilization" processes are used to align the social movement organization's goals and ideology with the values and beliefs of targeted individuals. Far from guaranteeing success, however, these processes are prone to failure, and can even be counter-productive. Key to these different outcomes is "the content or substance of preferred framings and their degree of resonance" with existing and potential supporters:

> Does the framing build on and elaborate existing dilemmas and grievances in ways that are believable and compelling? The higher the degree of frame resonance, the greater the probability that the framing effort will be relatively

successful. Many framings may be plausible, but we suspect that relatively few
strike a responsive chord. (Snow et al., 1986, p. 477)

Because framing processes can be conceived as rhetorical strategies to align personal and

collective identities (Gusfield, 1994) and build broader support with publics, an understanding of

framing composition and content becomes key for movement organizers and communicators.

These framing studies of social movement organizations highlight the need for further

understanding of how they strategically conceive and craft frames for resonance with different

constituents, including supporters, the general public, and members of the media. Public

discourse is central to this framing process, hinging upon persuasive communication during

mobilization campaigns along with consciousness raising through collective action

(Klandermans, 1992). That said, there are gaps in this area of research. Matthes's (2009) analysis

of 131 framing studies in 15 international journals, for example, found a relative shortcoming of

studies dealing with framing effects and strategic frames of communicators. He called for

consideration of communicator frames and audience frames to co-exist with frames that emerge

from media content.

Strategic advocacy framing. A taxonomy for an organization's strategic framing of

public issues offers a key approach for activists, advocates, and not-for-profit organizations to

position public discourse on specific issues in order to achieve desired policy outcomes.

Developed by Gilliam and Bales (2001), it calls special attention to the key role played by the

news media in constructing public perceptions of issues and how organizations might identify

and communicate alternative frames. Such "reframes" (Lakoff, 2014) have potential for

encouraging publics to reconsider previously held conceptions. Because news reporting can be

steeped in old conventions or stereotypes, newly-developed frames by organizations can help

counter a dominant narrative (Gilliam & Bales, 2002). Organizations should strive for message

development that is closely aligned with campaign goals—which requires the translation of a group or organization's policy positions into language that considers a target audience's knowledge and beliefs about the issue (Bales et al., 2004).

Elements of strategic framing. Frames form around a variety of persuasive devices geared toward influencing how the public understands an issue (Gilliam, 2006). In conjunction with one other, these elements organize situational interpretations in new and different ways or provide mental shortcuts. Bales and Gilliam's (2010) strategic framing taxonomy is particularly instructive, identifying five influential elements: numbers, messengers, visuals, tone, metaphors and simplifying models, and context. I add a sixth here—populism—that builds upon the previous elements described. Fully developed frames often draw from more than one element (such as visual cues in conjunction with messengers)—"a proper orchestration"—in order to generate new thinking about an issue (Bales & Gilliam, 2010). The selective use of these cues triggers "shared and durable cultural models that people use to make sense of their world" (Gilliam & Bales, 2002). These elements are defined below, and are further discussed in the context of other framing studies of activism that have featured these elements.

Numbers. While the use of numbers by themselves (in terms of statistics and other data) fail to produce the kind of frames that can emerge as dominant, they can and do orchestrate with other framing elements to provide a persuasive interplay between facts and narrative (Gilliam & Bales, 2001). The framing of statistics for charitable organizations, for example, can influence the way issues are interpreted or perceived to be made salient. A social issue framed with large numbers in ratios, such as child poverty, is more likely to garner attention and consideration (Chang & Lee, 2015). In this sense, what becomes important it not just which numbers are presented, but how they are presented.

Messengers. As the people who bring issues to the public, messengers play a pivotal role in the strategic framing process. They provide comments to the media, write op-eds, appear in photographs, publish messages on social media, and are often seen as the physical symbol of the issue—thus rendering their role as important as the message itself (Bales & Gilliam, 2002). In climate change activism, for example, variations in messengers allows the issue to be seen through scientific, social justice, economic, or even ethical lenses. A climate change message delivered from a church leader casts the issue as a religious, moral crusade—giving it greater traction with members of the Catholic Church, particularly in more devout nations such as Mexico (Moses, 2009). Because environmental sources are sought out by the media in issues like global warming and sustainability, Reber and Berger (2005) call for the training of spokespersons to enhance the framing of public opinion and take advantage of media opportunities at the local, regional, and national levels.

The role of messengers with social movement organizations only continues to grow thanks to the changing communication environment. As Tufekci (2013) notes, thanks to emerging media forms such as online social networks, activist spokespersons can have follower networks that rival the readerships of large newspapers, in turn enhancing their ability to be represented in the mainstream media as well.

Visuals. Photographs and images serve as visual short-hands in advocacy, producing the same mental models and frames that words do (Gilliam & Bales, 2002). Images can also undermine frames constructed with words, and have the power to narrow audience focus on a particular detail or emotion. Environmental reformers in the United States have long felt an attraction to photographic images because they bring aesthetics and emotions into politics, they record the reality of nature, and they bring Americans closer to the natural world (Dunaway,

2008). Drawing from seminal visual media moments in the environmental activism arena deployed by organizations like Greenpeace, DeLuca (2005) advocates for "image events"—the use and recognition of visual communication as a potent and particular means for social activists to communicate on a level playing field against companies and governments. Drawing from DeLuca's image events, Johnson (2007) examines Martin Luther King's 1963 campaign and the Children's Crusade in Birmingham, Alabama. He explains the campaign's success—"an exercise in cross-racial vision"—as a triumph for visual communication and specifically Charles Moore's emotional photographs of fire hoses and police dogs turned against black youth (Johnson, 2007).

In the realm of economic and environmental justice, a lighter form of visual rhetoric involves the subversion of popular and consumer cultural artifacts (Harold, 2004). Three contemporary cases highlight the success of this approach, which pairs conflict with humor: The Barbie Liberation Organization, the Biotic Baking Brigade, and the American Legacy Foundation's Truth campaign. All three examples integrate a subversion of existing corporate or cultural entities with comedic posture and the creation of colorful imagery for the media. The Biotic Baking Brigade, which throws pies in the faces of captains of industry to express opposition to neo-liberal economics, environmental degradation, and corporate monopolies, hijacks already orchestrated media and publicity events. In this sense, these activists provide "entertainment and consumption" in order to visually deliver a very real environmental or social message (Harold, 2004).

Tone. The tonality of activism can range from polarizing and confrontational to reasonable and neutral. Some confrontational forms of communication emanating from marginalized publics have been shown to ultimately resonate with the media and the general public in the short term (Harold, 2004; Weaver, 2010; Deluca, 2005). An examination of the

successes and failures of working class and poor people's movements argued that activists are

most effective when they are at their most radical and disorganized, and less vulnerable to co-

optation by political elites:

> We may begin to consider alternative forms of organizations through which
> working class people can act together in defiance of their rulers in ways that are
> more congruent with the structures of working-class life and with the process of
> working-class struggle, and less susceptible to penetration by dominant elites.
> (Piven & Cloward, 1978, p. xvi)

Klumpp's (1973) study of student activism at Columbia University demonstrated how one

polarizing image depicting heavy-handed police response to student protesters helped sway

public opinion in favor of radical student protesters. The image—showing the kind of violence

that university leaders decried— delegitimized the administration and undermined its moral

authority. Klumpp's analysis points to a sense of conflict fuelled by student activists that

ultimately set the stage for converting opposition to the administration's position into support for

their own: "The traditional theory of identification through compromise has fit well with the

goals of representative democracy. Yet today situations in which purity of ideology and

polarized opposition are the goals have gained new importance" (Klumpp, 1973, p. 155).

Well-publicized skirmishes between groups like Sea Shepherd Conservation Society and

whaling ships on the Pacific Ocean may turn off some audiences, but they also energize others.

Epstein and Connor (2007) argue that where activist organizations like Sea Shepherd position

themselves on a spectrum that ranges from outright conflict to cooperating with policymakers

becomes important in terms of the psychologies of their would-be members, volunteers, and

donors. Thus, the diverging activisms of Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace hint at a complex

ecosystem of movement organizations. If Greenpeace's role in recent years was to influence

global publics or lobby lawmakers on the topic, Sea Shepherd's radical actions are what have allowed the issue to garner the public's attention in the first place—criticism of their tactics notwithstanding (Epstein & Connor, 2007). An emphasis on radical action and disorganization can be useful for short-term impact, but is less successful in building a broader base of supporters and allies.

Russill's (2009) study took the interest in Sea Shepherd's activism one step further, examining the first season of Animal Planet's reality program *Whale Wars*, which focuses on Sea Shepherd's campaign to stop Japanese whalers in the Antarctic Ocean. An entire season's worth of footage both raw and televised reveals that, beyond image events depicting boat rammings, vandalized whaling equipment, and stink bombs launched at Japanese vessels, there is another side to this activism story seen only in the raw footage and previously left untold:

> For all the tough talk and black flags, it is obvious that Sea Shepherd is not really at war, or simply about whaling. When they launch an action, the activists refuse to imperil the lives of whalers, even as they risk their own. When Sea Shepherd loses some crewmembers at sea, they radio the Japanese ship for help, and the whalers offer assistance. Nor does Sea Shepherd oppose all whaling. In the brief moments when Sea Shepherd volunteers share their beliefs on the public screen, they suggest vague connections between whales, ocean life, and the future of humans… these examples and explanations evoke moments of a broadened sense of shared finitude, which is the experience motivating a wide variety of eco-centric thought. (Russill, 2009, para. 12)

Russill's findings suggest that even polarizing forms are rooted in a strategic orientation, with Sea Shepherd's members toggling between oppositional and reasonable based on whether television cameras are rolling. Perhaps counter-intuitively, they revealed a more polarizing face for mass audiences—a more effective approach to garnering attention—but displayed a more reasonable tact during private moments with their adversaries.

Metaphors and Simplifying Models. Metaphors enjoy an outsized presence in

environmental activism and communication, with terms like "population bomb" and "carbon footprint" regularly injected into debates (Cox, 2012). Analogies and simplifying models about the environment are useful because they help audiences make extensive inferences through streamlined patterns of reasoning (Bales & Gilliam, 2002). They have also been shown to be popular with the media. A study of carbon reduction activism and subsequent news coverage argues for an interplay of issues frames, which help articulate a language of climate change activism, and media frames, which deployed conceptual metaphors for the environment like religion (climate activism as a moral imperative), dieting (equating the carbon footprint to human health), and finance (climate activism as financial management) to make such activism understood by a wider audience (Nerlich & Koteyko, 2009). Climate activism was also framed as a battle or war, or as a journey in which the final destination is the reduction of carbon emissions.

> A first step toward such a change is always to make people think differently about a topic, to change old cognitive habits, and entrench new cognitive habits to see things in a new light, in fact to create new ontologies. However, new thinking has to be rooted in something already well-known and familiar to make the jump from old to new possible. (Nerlich and Koteyko, 2009, p. 219)

Such metaphorical language not only democratizes debates about climate change by simplifying the language and making it more widely available to audiences, it also brings about behaviour change.

Context. By focusing on issues that are common to groups and go beyond individual-level problems, context helps broaden frames to family, community, regional, or even national levels (Gilliam & Bales, 2001). Long-term or national trends are considered, positioning the issue as part of a wider public discourse. In the bid to maximize support across the political spectrum, Chong (2012) argues for activist appeals that integrate dominant cultural norms such

as individual liberty, limited government, patriotism, and respect for private property. To this end, the framing strategies of bipartisanship, patriotism, and narrative are recommended to adjoin more traditional movement frames of legality and radical social justice. The bipartisanship frame in particular recognizes the importance of the political center in the United States, and argues that key economic values and principles are shared by conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, workers and executives (Chong, 2012). Along with patriotism and narrative framing strategies, it reflects an attunement to the values and beliefs of mainstream audiences:

> The cultural resonance of a frame is therefore even more important than its veracity, as is demonstrated by the ongoing effectiveness of political messages that are refuted by fact-checking organizations. In the cultural context of the United States, then, economic and social rights must be promoted in a manner that appeals to the dominant cultural norms… even as activists seek to co-opt or modify these cultural norms. (Chong, 2013, p. 125)

Social problems, as Guttman (2000) notes, are "time-, place-, and context-bound… the particular view of the ideal state is what determines what is considered problematic" (p. 74). With their integration of dominant cultural norms such as patriotism and private property rights, Chong's framing strategies also raise the specter of a political style driven by contextual factors—populism. Because of the specific, individual treatment scholars have given to populism, and its particular relevance to social movement literature, this review argues that it could be considered a sixth element to build upon the strategic movement framing taxonomy.

Populism. The state of Nebraska plays a pivotal role in the history of populism in the United States. In the late 1800s, the Populist Party enjoyed a strong appeal in the state because of its agrarian ideology and its stances against banks, railroads, and other powerful institutions working against farmers' economic interests. In receptive rural states like Nebraska and Kansas,

the party offered a remedying of political and economic problems outside of the existing political system (Ostler, 1992). Similarly, as a contemporary political communication element, populism is described as a form of political movement that lies outside of traditional party politics (Kramer, 2014). The presentation and rhetoric of populism is of equal or greater importance than the political content itself: "The style is ostentatiously intelligible and plain-spoken while complexity is represented as interest-led obfuscation. As populism is at odds with political routine and bureaucracy, it tries to raise moral sentiments and a need to restore morality and the nation" (Kramer, 2014, p. 45). Similarly, Stanley (2008) argues that there is little evidence of common ideological purpose amongst populists. Rather, the icons and appeals of populism are local rather than universal. Studies of populism bear out recurring themes: anti-elitism, dissatisfaction with institutions, and the primacy of the interests of "the people." Building on this, Roodujin and Pauwels' (2011) call for measurements of populism in classic content analysis through the presence of two key attributes, people-centrism and anti-elitism.

At the same time, critics of populism accuse it of more sinister attributes: demagogic leadership and practices, creating an atmosphere of distrust toward political elites, and playing on individuals' emotions (Stanley, 2008). The challenge for researchers, then, is to identify the political or social movement corresponding to the broader concepts of populism and understand "context-specific ideation resources" that drive this political phenomenon, given that it can start from anywhere and adjoin itself to fuller but wide-ranging political ideologies (Stanley, 2008, p. 108).

In environmental activism, frames that focus on political variables such as polarization, co-optation, or collective action means that populism has often been overlooked as an agent of change. A notable exception comes from Szasz (1994), whose study of activisms against toxic

waste in communities across the United States shows how they permeated American popular consciousness and influenced national lawmakers. The media populism of Canadian journalist/activist Naomi Klein provides another useful example. In a 2013 article for the left-leaning *The Nation*, she lumped some environmentalists together with other elites such as corporations in promoting market-driven environmental schemes like carbon offsets:

> Some of the most powerful and wealthiest environmental organizations have long behaved as if they had a stake in the oil and gas industry. They led the climate movement down various dead ends: carbon trading, carbon offsets, natural gas as a "bridge fuel"—what these policies all held in common is that they created the illusion of progress while allowing the fossil fuel companies to keep mining, drilling and fracking with abandon. We always knew that the groups pushing hardest for these false solutions took donations from, and formed corporate partnerships with, the big emitters. (Klein, 2013, para. 4)

Her suspicion of elites—including those moderates *within* the environmental movement— is echoed by other activists and scholars. According to Foster (2015), the penalty for journalists like Klein going "off script" from conventional liberal thought about the environment is "excommunication from the mainstream, to be enforced by the corporate media" (para. 27). From the perspectives of Klein and Foster, elites within the environmental movement are not only wrong in their approach to addressing climate change, they should be viewed with the same suspicion reserved for corporate polluters.

While Klein's brand of populism attacks the status quo from the progressive left, other movements fuelled by populism have perhaps counter-intuitively emerged from the right. Wellock (1998) describes an anti-nuclear movement in California's Central Valley that was led by a used car dealer and infused with the spirit of Oklahoma transplants, Nixonian politics, and the country music of Merle Haggard. These Central Valley residents rhetorically attacked political elites from the California coast with the slogan of "Stick It In L.A."— the "it" referring

to a federal nuclear waste disposal facility originally destined for their community. Wellock

(1998) links the Central Valley's anti-nuclear movement to a new era of state suspicion against

the federal government, and the dawn of a populist era in California politics spawning the

prolific usage of petitions and recalls. As Wellock's example demonstrates, such populism

appears to be most effective in regional or localized contexts. Populist discourse-fuelled conflicts

between Nevada ranchers and federal agencies were at the fore of Merrill's (2002) work on the

Sagebrush Rebellions, which have given way to more recent standoffs between armed ranchers

and federal government agencies in the states of Nevada and Oregon.

Steeped equally in regional culture is Walton and Bailey's (2006) examination of wildlife

protection advocates in the state of Alabama, revealing the adoption of populist wilderness

frames by groups such as the Alabama Wildlife Association and Wild Alabama. Representing a

major departure from the rational, scientific discourse used by many wilderness organizations,

these activists framed wilderness not in terms of endangered species or pristine natural

landscapes, but rather using regional populist sentiment, incorporating wilderness as a part of

broader cultural heritage for Alabama residents (Walton & Bailey, 2006). Reaching out to this

demographic required a different tact on the part of the activists:

> By recognizing that the Deep South is one of the most culturally, socially, and
> politically conservative regions of the country, these activists have realized that
> any preservation efforts that put them in the mold of ''environmental radicals''
> will threaten their success. To many Alabamians, concern over endangered
> species is an eco-liberal and elitist preoccupation, and one unlikely to win
> widespread support. The mainstream environmental movement can promote an
> endangered species agenda and attract support from middle- and upper-middle-
> class citizens. The wilderness advocates that are our focus here target an entirely
> different public—the rural and working class people of Alabama who have never
> viewed themselves as part of any environmental movement but who have a strong
> attachment to the land and a deep distrust of both big government and big
> industry. (Walton & Bailey, 2006, p. 128)

With this strategy, environmentalism and wildlife are framed to be part of a broader cultural

realm that includes "barbeque, beer, and firearms" (Helvarg, 1998, p. 15) and Southern traditions

like college football and prayer meetings. This is region-specific populism—"populist culture

framing"—that leverages cultural traditions and symbols, as well as dissatisfaction with ruling

elites (Walton & Bailey, 2006). Like other circumstantial properties, it demonstrates the

importance of focusing on issues that are common to groups at the community, regional, and

national levels and go beyond individual-level problems.

Table 2: Strategic advocacy framing taxonomy (Gilliam & Bales, 2001)

Strategic framing element	Description
Numbers	The provision of data or statistics to highlight a problem or opportunity
Messengers	Individuals who bring personal experiences, perspectives, and actions to an issue
Visuals	The usage of photos, illustrations, maps, cartoons, charts, and other graphical representations
Tone	The degree to which advocacy is strident or oppositional in tone
Metaphors	Simplifying models or figures of speech representative of more complex issues
Context	Recognition of the problem or opportunity within the boundaries of time, space, and community
Populism	Appeals premised on the notion of "we the people" or animosity towards societal elites

Strategic framing elements summary. Bales & Gilliam's (2002) strategic framing

taxonomy—with its six elements of numbers, messengers, visuals, tone, context, and

metaphors— responds to the confluence of activism with strategy and framing to understand

how specific compositional elements inform frames. These elements can integrate dominant and culturally resonant norms such as patriotism, property rights, and individual liberty. The prospect of universal disenfranchisement also invokes the additional dynamic of populism, with movement actors drawing from dissatisfaction with political and economic elites as well as emotional, cultural, regional, and other contextual factors to challenge the prevailing status quo. As a form of strategic communication, this framing taxonomy parallels many of the questions public relations and rhetoric scholars are asking in terms of how strategic communication can be used to advance the priorities of activist organizations.

Public relations. An ongoing dialectic exists within the social movements literature between frames that serve collective action and member beliefs, and those that serves the strategic or long-term interests of the organization, including a movement's ability to affect policy change, attract new supporters, and gain preferred standing with media and audiences. Here, public relations literature offers additional insight. A recognition of this tension between ideology and strategy, from the social movements literature, comes from Bob's (2002) study of the Ogoni movement in Nigeria. The insurgency of the indigenous Ogoni people of Central Niger Delta was critical of not only the Nigerian state over human rights issues such as poverty and medicine, but also the impacts of the petroleum industry. The latter, environmental stance helped the movement garner an important alliance with Greenpeace and a subsequent global media spotlight both domestically and internationally. Its human rights focus did not attract the same attention internationally, leading the Ogoni activists to increasingly frame themselves as an environmental movement.

Bob argues that while global communication has afforded all oppressed groups new avenues for disseminating their cause or issue, only those organizations with pre-existing

linkages with political actors and expertise in international public relations will reap greater opportunities and resources. To garner favor from media, politicians or international NGOs (non-governmental organizations) sometimes requires the shifting or even contortion of an issue. The Ogoni case study echoes the assertion by Jasper (1997) that local movements, in a bid to secure new allies, are often tempted to tailor their goals and tactics to appeal to both local and non-local audiences, even while running the risk of having their concerns diluted or subverted by outsiders. In other words, this ability of movement members to strategically navigate a complex network of global political, economic, and media institutions becomes prerequisite for the successful "insurgent marketing campaign":

> Something as simple as a leader's fluency in English or another world language enables NGO staff or journalists to appreciate insurgent claims. An understanding of public relations techniques, permitting a movement to project a coherent and pleasing image, can subtly influence hardened NGO professionals. (Bob, 2002, p. 45)

As Bob explains, this public relations "pitch" ultimately paid dividends for the Ogoni people in terms of securing much-needed resources and attention for their cause. It also underscored not only the importance of media coverage for global activists but also the tensions inherent in projecting certain frames to secure publicity or financial support from global NGOs. While securing media coverage helps a movement, activists simultaneously run the risk of emulating, to some degree at least, the approaches used by the institutions they seek to oppose:

> Using sophisticated approaches, they seek to influence the media, NGOs, and broader publics. In this, of course, insurgents do nothing more than their opponents—governments, multinational corporations, and international financial institutions with huge resources and privileged access to the international press. But where the powerful buy the world's best public relations machines, challengers must bootstrap themselves to the fore. (Bob, 2002, p. 7)

In short, Bob argues that activists have the ability to exist on a level playing field with their better-funded opponents if they emulate their communication practices. Such an approach is vulnerable to critique—on the grounds that the Ogoni movement adjusted its activism to adjust to the global media environment. It also suggests that many social movements, like their adversaries, are results-driven entities dependent on media coverage and broad public support. Bob argues that while this view "is more skeptical of movements and NGOs than is most existing scholarship, this is a tribute to their highly strategic choices" (Bob, 2002, p. xi). This begs the question: Does Bob's assertion situate activism as a form of public relations?

While also drawing from different theoretical perspectives, public relations studies, including those featuring activists, have emphasized the primacy of the organization and its relationship with audiences or stakeholders. For example, L.A. Grunig (1989) argued for the heightened role of public relations in potentially resolving confrontations with green activists for companies and navigating contentious communication terrain. Referring to it as a more constraining force for companies than the government itself, she defined activism as "the organization of diffused publics into a powerful body attempting to control the organization from the outside" (L.A. Grunig, 1987, p. 55). To achieve an optimal operating environment, she called for good relations through symmetric communication, a tenet of excellence theory, the most widely applied theory in public relations scholarship (Ye & Ki, 2012). Grunig and Hunt (1984) called for the use of communication to negotiate, conflict resolve, and foster mutual understanding with publics. It asserted that organizations should maintain good relations with strategic publics—including customers, shareholders, community members, and activists—in order to achieve the goals of both the organization and its publics, and to reduce negative publicity (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). For companies, to reach agreement through mutual

communication would be preferable to engaging in conflict. As a normative model for public relations practitioners, it proposes a two-way symmetrical approach to communication where "individuals, organizations, and publics should use communication to adjust their ideas and behaviour to those of others rather than try to control how others think and behave" (Grunig, 2006, p. 156). L.A. Grunig's (1986) research echoed this called for two-way symmetry in situations where companies were confronting adversaries such as environmental activists. This was in part because activists were seen as often garnering stronger support from publics than their corporate adversaries being called out in the media and via public demonstrations (L.A. Grunig, 1986). Case studies dealing with environmental activism from other nations such as Canada and Belize have further provided an international dimension to this approach (Anderson, 1992; Guiniven, 2002).

Building on this foundation, other mainstream theories have emphasized the notion of symmetric dialogue between institutions and activists. In conceptualizing public relations as the facilitation of interpersonal dialectic, Pearson (1989) proposed dialogue as an ethical communication approach. A focus on the structure of organization-public interactions, he argued, removes the problem of ethical relativism in public relations practice by focusing on communication rules. This in turn brings public relations practice to a goal of symmetric, dialogic, and ethical communication relationships. Reaching mutually desirable outcomes are not the sole objective of such dialogue. The opportunities for such dialogue between organizations and publics have become more apparent with the rise of Internet communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Drawing from Pearson's original conceptualization, Kent and Taylor (2002) proposed a dialogic theory between parties not only for the transmission of ideas and ideology through two-way interaction but also for the sake of the communication itself.

A key underpinning of public relations' dialogic theory is ethics discourse, a form of dialogic ethics conceived by Jurgen Habermas as the "procedure through which persons can live up to the imperative of the moral principle" (Heller, 1985, p. 5). Habermas argued in favor of a public moral discourse that is free of power imbalances and one in which the superior argument for society as a whole ultimately prevails. It explicitly includes as participants of argumentation all those affected by a norm (Hoenisch, 2005). This freedom of access positions public discourse differently from arrangements such as government hearings, university seminars, parliamentary debates, or corporate meetings:

> Anyone who seriously engages in argumentation must presuppose that the context of discussion guarantees in principle freedom of access, equal rights to participate, truthfulness on the part of participants, absence of coercion in adopting positions, and so on… This must be distinguished from the institutional arrangements that obligate specific groups of people to engage in argumentation. (Habermas, 1993, p. 31)

Habermas asserts that the degree of a society's liberality hinges upon institutional expressions that are non-coercive and non-authoritarian, giving way to an autonomous morality that takes on a life of its own (Habermas, 1993, p. 171). A key tenet of discourse ethics is the ideal speech situation, which necessitates equal opportunity for all to participate, for participants to be true to themselves, and for participants to have the equal ability to influence others. This suggests an ideal condition that real discourse must measure up to or roughly satisfy.

The central importance of optimized communication procedures—built on Habermas's foundation and developed for public relations by Kent and Taylor—is further explicated by public relations' relationship management theory. Drawing from interpersonal communication and management theory, it recognizes organization-public relationships as distinct from the perceptions held by parties in the relationships—underscoring the unique properties of the

relationship (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997). A fundamental goal of public relations practice then is the cultivation of strategic relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

This emphasis on relationship-cultivation pays dividends at the organizational level as well as the societal level. Sommerfeldt (2013) called for the application of public relations on the part of organizations as a means to uniting diverse audiences: "Establishing relationships built on common interest and helping to coordinate activities in civil society is a clear path for public relations in democracy. Public relations also has a more practical role in facilitating organizational participation in public dialogue" (Sommerfeldt, 2013, p. 286).

PR and Social Change. Public relations as an applied communication discipline and a means to coalition-building can therefore play a key role in supporting democratic institutions and more civil societies (Sommerfeldt, 2013). This is because it provides a means to voicing collective opinion and shared meaning while building relationships among groups. A study of LGBT rights in the United States provides a case in point. Advocacy messaging spiralled from state-based, grassroots activists, and supporters to national-level audiences and decision-makers, providing the underpinnings necessary for critical mass support and a demonstration of how public relations can serve as an instrument for democratic change (Mundy, 2013).

Crucial in this process was the conveyance of authentic, personal, and locally specific stories that emphasized LGBT issues as community issues, establishing a foundation for ground-level support, and allowing the movement to progress at subsequent state and federal levels. Initial public discourse resulted in local positive action from town councils or school boards— before advancing to state-based advocacy for LGBT protections at higher levels. A key facet of this public discourse was the role of the local audience for such advocacy—"neighbors, friends, families, coworkers"—who began to hear LGBT stories in locally relevant terms and helped

build a critical mass of ground-level support (Mundy, 2013, p. 388). This spiral of advocacy also

embraces the crafting of positive, non-confrontational messages that emphasize the linkage

between LGBT individuals and the communities they live in. Mundy (2013) provides evidence

that the interplay of strategic activism with increasingly empowered grassroots supporters can

power a bottom-up approach to movement activism. The identification of audiences as

"neighbors, friends, families, coworkers" hints at an activism that is more inclusive than

oppositional.

At the same time, activists must deal with a reality in which the outcome of a single

public policy issue can be even more important than the long-term viability of their movement

organization—a marked difference from the corporate or government bodies more commonly

studied in public relations. The construction of meaning within the disseminated communication

about a social issue or situation, and how this communication helps cultivate the organization-

audience relationship, becomes a pivotal process. Building on the premise that human behavior

is predicated on how people interact and use symbols to create meaning (Blumer, 1971),

Hallahan (1999) calls for framing theory as a useful vehicle for examining what occurs in public

relations. He presents seven models of framing that have potential application for the discipline:

situations, attributes, choices, actions, issues, responsibility, and news. Underpinning these

framing approaches is the argument that framing is conceptually connected to the psychological

processes that people use to digest information, make choices, and make sense of the world

around them. This recognizes both the construction of messages intended to influence publics

and the importance of the publics themselves in deciphering content.

For public relations practitioners, then, framing becomes a vehicle for negotiating

meaning of issues and situations with publics. An analysis of the Sierra Club's newsletters and

national/regional newspapers bears out this organization-audience dialectic. Activist organizations construct and use issues frames, among their repertoire of public relations strategies, to influence the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of internal and external audiences (Reber & Berger, 2005). The use of a diversity of issue frames (such as urban sustainability or Arctic wilderness protection) can attract and mobilize supporters or expand awareness of a topic, but can also dilute the potential power of any single frame to impact media coverage or galvanize public opinion. These are collective action frames that can help recruit and mobilize members, reach out to other groups, and influence public debate (Reber & Berger, 2005). The Sierra Club's media successes reflect the potential usefulness of framing theory at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, and societal levels in which activist groups and NGOs operate.

Hallahan (2001) extended this premise in arguing for an understanding of audiences though an issue-specific context. Four key types of publics are described based on their knowledge and involvement of an issue: active (high knowledge, high involvement), aroused (high involvement, low knowledge), aware (high knowledge, low involvement), and inactive (low knowledge, low involvement). In turn, responses on the parts of organizations are designated for each public grouping: negotiation (for active publics), intervention (for aroused publics), education (for aware publics), and prevention (for inactive publics) (Hallahan, 2001). This suggests more generally that audience cognition is subject to change on an issue-by-issue basis and requires carefully calibrated messaging and response on the part of activists.

Rhetoric and persuasion. Underscoring the strategies behind movement framing, and activists' use of public relations, is the importance of rhetorical device. Hallahan (1999), for example, though addressing from a public relations perspective, highlighted the rhetorical

approaches that infuse messages with their actual meaning. Indeed, rhetorically fused devices such as visuals, metaphors, and messengers help drive meaning making within strategic framing. Visual artifacts and symbols used in framing, for example, represent a major part of the rhetorical environment and have significant impacts on contemporary culture (Foss, 2004).

Investigating rhetorical appeals thus provides an effective way to explore the processes of strategic framing. Though much framing analysis comes from a social scientific perspective, Kuypers (2010) argues for rhetorical studies to be aligned more closely with framing because rhetoric too involves the creation of persuasive discourse to alter modes of thought and mediate a message of change (Bitzer, 1968). The conscious crafting of messages for public consumption thus becomes a strategic act. As Kuypers (2010) notes, "rhetoric is persuasive. It seeks to influence our personal and collective behaviors by having us voluntarily agree with the communicator that a certain value, action, or policy is better than another" (p. 288).

From performance to ideology. Beyond framing, rhetorical appeals stand on their own as a means for activists to identify and position themselves within broader societal discourse, and to set direction and meaning for the collective. The origins of rhetoric are to be found with Aristotle, who positioned it as the natural counterpart of dialectics. Whereas dialectics represents the interplay of historic contradictions to reach a mutual knowledge, rhetoric is engaged in the art of persuasion. A focus on discourse in political and societal debates drives Aristotle's modes of persuasion, which are ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos is defined by the credibility and charisma of the speaker in persuasion; pathos is the mood or tonality of the appeal for the audience; and logos defines the advancement of appeals to reason or intellect (Demirdöğen, 2010).

While contemporary scholars continue to draw upon Aristotle's work in an effort to assess persuasion within communication and language, they also view rhetorical appeals through

the historic, political, moral, and psychological dimensions emphasized by Kenneth Burke. Burke's explanation of rhetoric enables critics to view human action as a form of performance (Gusfield, 1989, p. 44). Holding up motivations of groups and individuals as the central object of inquiry, he focuses on the "resources, limitations, and paradoxes of terminology" (Burke, 1989). Drawing from this perspective, contemporary rhetorical analysis provides "a sociocognitive perspective on discourse, which assumes that opposing actors in a context of social change adopt genres of speech and writing that subconsciously reflect and deliberately manipulate the values and ideology of a particular discourse community" (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). This rhetorical perspective—what Burke (1969) refers to as a "symbolic means of inducing cooperation" (p. 43)—positions environmental controversies as the site for emotional appeals, tropes, narrations, and argumentation, whether they are featured on websites or in speeches, banners, campaigns, or events (Cox, 2012).

Building on Burke's notions of dramatism and the "philosophy of myth" to explain the phenomena of the public and mass consciousness, McGee (1980) describes the language terms that build political consciousness in collectives as "ideographs." As linkages of rhetoric and ideology, such symbolic constructs provide explanations of the power of a dominant ideology or state, help propagate common beliefs, and create a sense of "the people": "Each member of the community is socialized, conditioned, to the vocabulary of ideographs as a prerequisite for 'belonging' to the society" (McGee, 1980, p. 15). Used in political discourse to develop support for political positions, such a rhetorical approach establishes the ideology of a community, guiding future behaviour and beliefs.

> The important fact about ideographs is that they exist in real discourse, functioning clearly and evidently as agents of political consciousness. They are not invented by observers; they come to be as a part of the real lives of the people whose motives they articulate. (McGee, 1980, p. 7)

The fusing of rhetoric and ideology in movements is similarly identified by Charland (2009), who considers the constitutive or group-building ramifications of rhetorical narratives within ideological discourse, forming the basis for appeals to collective action.

Metanarrative to master frame. To this end, rhetorically developed representations such as cultural or heritage narratives help members of a collective make sense of their organization, set boundaries for public discourse, and create an audience for subsequent appeals (Bridger, 2005). These narratives in combination with each other provide a larger metanarrative—a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema—for groups, fostering sense-making of the world for the collective and its audience (McKee, 2003; Stephens & McCallum, 1998). From the perspective of framing as a means to understand movements, the rhetorically-infused metanarrative can also be understood as a master frame (Koenig, 2004). For social movements, master frames both "punctuate and encode reality but also function as modes of attribution and articulation" (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 146). Therefore, the master frame emerges as a means to both interpret a situation as well as a vehicle for confronting it.

This review has shown that research devoted to framing in activism comes from a wide range of perspectives, including social movements, public relations, and rhetoric/persuasion literatures. Indeed, understanding the communicative processes that affect social change require an understanding a range of communication-focused literature. Studies of social movements have considered how frames are extended to larger audiences through public discourse, raising the specter of persuasive communication within activism. In this regard, strategic framing emerges as a means to assessing, or developing, this construction of persuasive communication, including how specific elements such as metaphors, visuals, and context inform frames. Social movement scholars also have leveraged the public relations lens, and its role in building relationships,

coalition-building, and strengthening democratic institutions. In fact, Hallahan (1999) calls for

the public relations field to turn to framing for a greater understanding of the construction of

messaging that informs this relationship-building. Finally, scholarship has also called for a better

understanding of how the appeals of rhetoric can be studied within or alongside framing theory.

Rhetorical narratives embedded in this discourse help groups to define themselves within a

metanarrative or master frame, and establish an audience for subsequent appeals.

RQ1. What issue frames were employed by Bold Nebraska?

RQ2. Which strategic framing elements were used and to what extent? How did they

interact with one another as well as issues related to the pipeline debate?

RQ3. Which metaphors and simplifying models are most prevalent?

RQ4. Does populism emerge as a specific style deployed by the activists, and if so, what are

its attributes?

RQ5: Did Bold Nebraska's communication serve as a catalyst for civic action or

engagement?

RQ6: What were the rhetorical appeals of the metanarrative used to construct movement

meaning and establish an audience for Bold Nebraska?

Media Framing

Framing helps audiences interpret the world around them in new or different ways.

When New York Times journalist Gail Collins dedicated her op-ed column on November 8,

2014 to the politics surrounding TransCanada's Keystone proposal, she initially highlighted the

issue of jobs creation from the pipeline's construction. Yet a subsequent quotation from Bold

Nebraska's Jane Kleeb later in the article—"When you start to mess with Nebraska water, you definitely have a fight on your hand"—pivoted the focus of Collins' column from one of jobs to the importance of Nebraska's water supply. This is an example of media framing—one that shows both the power of the media to shape public debate, and how social movement organizations can influence their coverage.

Framing involves the highlighting or selection of information to provide a distinct or different perspective of reality. Describing the power of a communicating text, Entman (1993) highlights four functions of a media frame: to define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. This largely mirrors Snow and Benford's (2000) description of collective action frames as representing a shared understanding of a condition or situation in need of change, an attribution of blame, or a call to action for interested parties. The media's role in framing is one of selection and salience, directing attention to how a communicated text exerts its power by directing the audience's attention toward a particular focus or issue (Entman, 1993). Drawn from a range of theoretical positions, including cognitive, constructivist, and critical, media framing analysis examines images, stereotypes, metaphors, actors, and messages (Matthes, 2009). It has been used to study a range of communication within media discourse, including political communication, social issues, and economic topics. It is studied within the communication genre by scholars of political and scientific communication, journalism, and public relations, while also attracting attention beyond the domain from scholars of history, political science, and sociology.

Given this range of disciplinary perspectives, how researchers understand and measure frames is the subject of some debate. For example, a conceptual divide has been located between issue-specific frames (such as the economy or environment) and generic frames (such as conflict

or personalization) (Matthes, 2009). Other media framing literature has identified some regularly occurring frames in the news across multiple issues and based on previous studies. These include the conflict frame, the human interest frame, the economic consequences frame, the morality frame, and the responsibility frame (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In non-democratic environments, two main patterns of framing—overt propaganda and hidden manipulation (Baysha & Hallahan, 2004)—exploit cultural values and past political events. They can also be used in the struggle over meaning as audiences adopt either pro-government or pro-opposition perspectives.

This privileging of audience opinion is central to another dualism in framing: episodic versus thematic frames. Iyengar (1991) explained the presence of specific groups and individuals in media coverage of polarized media topics as episodic in nature. These frames revolve around isolated events and breaking news without broader societal context. However, frames can evolve to become more thematic, attributing responsibility of a problem or issue to societal or political forces as opposed to specific groups or individuals. Over time, episodic frames can give way to thematic ones—suggesting that coverage in the media is dynamic and subject to evolution and continual influence because of larger contextual factors (Dimitrova et al., 2005).

Media framing of environmental activism. "If a tree falls in the forest, does anybody hear?" The question was posed by musician and environmentalist Bruce Cockburn in his 1989 song *If a Tree Falls,* which concerns the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest. Based on an older variation of the eco-philosophical adage featured in Mann and Twiss's book *Physics* (1910), it also represents a poignant environmental question: Does an environmental debate exist without an audience? Terry Simmons, a founding member of Greenpeace, argued as a graduate student at Simon Fraser University that one such example—a controversy over construction of

the Ross Lake Dam on the border of British Columbia and Washington State—would not have existed without active interest from members of the media: "A public controversy is in large part a media campaign" (Simmons, 1974). Frames emanating from activists, then, will often need to be deliberated in the media in order to be successful. For environmental activists, a key challenge emerges in bringing an environmental issue to the public's attention. Helping to shape the right kind of media frames plays a role in this process. A further challenge comes with retaining control and influence over the media narrative when other political actors deploy frames of their own. To this end, and suggesting a historic overlooking of the role of strategic communication in media framing studies, Matthes (2009) implores theorists to consider whether frames in media content align with either communicator frames or audience frames.

Given the prominent role media play in environmental and social debates, media framing therefore emerges as a key lens through which to study activist movements. In creating frames for media, Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) argued that movement organizations have three overarching goals: Standing, which refers to the press taking such movements seriously; Preferred framing, which occurs when the news media provides coverage of the specific movement and its views; and Sympathy, which is the tone with which the movement is covered. That said, scholars also have emphasized that social movement organizations must use various means to navigate media frames that either distort or ignore them. Kowalchuk's (2009) analysis of Salvadoran newspaper coverage of a movement's struggle against health care privatization, for example, revealed how the third-party endorsement of government policymakers lent credibility and legitimacy to public health care advocates, paving the way for better media coverage. Activists leveraged credibility through government engagement to be taken more seriously as a provider of information to the media. This goes against other accounts of media

coverage of activism, which are often informed by the assumption of journalistic norms and decision-making, or structural forces such as the political economy of media (Kowalchuk, 2009). Much like media relations practitioners, activists serve as prolific sources for journalists.

Activists as sources. Contested issues playing out in the media, such as environmental debates, highlight the influence of mass media in the context of whether movements are successful. In turn, social movement organizations have become a source for the news media, as they convince journalists that their frame is the most useful in organizing a story (Reese, 2001, p. 20). Boykoff and Laschever's (2011) framing study of the Tea Party movement, for example, addresses the lamenting of some movement organizations of what they perceive as just or unjust portrayals on television news. Their study found that Fox News used frames to legitimize the Tea Party, in stark contrast to MSNBC. The latter in fact described the group as a construction of Fox (Boykoff & Laschever, 2011)—suggesting the perceived ability of media outlets to not only frame a movement's issue but also to legitimize (or delegitimize) an entire movement. This tension over representations of a movement is manifest in framing battles: Everyday American versus non-mainstream, grassroots versus establishment, fiscal-federal frustrations versus hodgepodge of grievances, and election impact versus flash in the pan. Media frames, then, depend on the affinity of the network toward the movement and are shaped by a changing mainstream media environment favoring partisanship and polarization.

This environment creates obstacles for some activists, but an opportunity for those with a greater degree of media sophistication. A study of the interaction between frames advanced by community groups and the frames employed by journalists found that marginalized voices are able to enter news discourses when they are afforded economic and cultural resources (Ryan, Carragee, & Meinhofer, 2001). However, their viewpoints are often limited because of trends

like sensationalism, diminished story length, and attention paid to soft news. Despite these setbacks, framing is still upheld as a useful tool in expanding civic dialogue and improving communication between the news media and communities whose stories are underreported (Ryan, Carragee & Meinhofer, 2001). However, this requires that community advocates be better prepared for their interactions with media and that they improve their ability to articulate frames.

According to Hansen (2011), the production of environmental communication in the media specifically hinges on activist sources, who make environmental or scientific claims while trying to influence what is communicated to the public. In turn, the media supplement their coverage of environmental issues with these contributing perspectives. Environmental activists who interface with the media provide commentary on existing stories and direct media to further expertise within their organizations. Like their communicator counterparts from government and the private sector, they also prepare story ideas that are both compelling for, and easily digestible in, the mainstream news cycle.

Activists as newsworthy. The establishment of newsworthiness has direct bearing on whether an organization or issue succeeds or fails in making the news (Lester, 1980). Evidence suggests that the presence of activist viewpoints in media stories is hardly an organic process where journalists somehow stumble across what environmental groups are doing or saying. Rather, this transmission of information and arguments from movement to media involves research, strategizing, and the deployment of tactics on behalf of the activists. It also requires a nose not only for "what makes news" but also for who is reading or watching the news and who else might be trying to influence the news. This is evidenced in Greenberg and Knight's 2004 study of the U.S. news media's coverage of global production practices by athletic footwear manufacturer Nike. The greater presence of activists versus company representatives in their

analyzed coverage is attributed to a larger repertoire of tactics and strategies such as demonstrations, fashion shows, and student protests that fit a criterion of newsworthiness.

These findings go against the notion of government and company sources as being the only actors to help determine news and policy agendas in the media (Greenberg & Knight, 2004). In a global environmental context, advocates and communication organizations not only help shift the framing of specific news topics. Rather, they are argued to have altered broader media discourses. Barnett's (2003) examination of media coverage of pollution in South Africa points to an increase in environmental stories arising from NGOs' and community activists' ability to provide journalists with newsworthy information such as chemicals dumping, industrial leaks, and health impacts (Barnett, 2003).

This ability to provide journalists with important scientific and social data and information is not a sole driver for prolific or sympathetic media coverage. A study of advocacy for individuals with disabilities showed that the mere presence of activists helped to amend existing media frames about disabled individuals. Haller's (1998) analysis of protest in support of the American Disabilities Association showed traditional media representations of the disabled to be more malleable—and favorable— in the face of disability activism. Newer media representations didn't entirely do away with old stereotypes, but they did include more progressive representations (Haller, 1998).

Concurrent with the view that information by itself doesn't translate into newsworthiness, Cox (2012) suggests an outsized role for emotional appeals, tropes, narrations, and argumentation in environmental controversies in the media. This is underscored by Landsman's (1987) analysis of ten years of coverage of a Mohawk/white conflict in upstate New York in the 1970s. National media stories about the Mohawk activists used outdated stereotypes of Native

Americans while simultaneously providing coverage that was sympathetic to their cause. In turn, Mohawk organizers embraced this irony and chose to represent themselves to the media using discourse—such as romanticized depictions of Native Americans—that resonated with non-Indigenous readers, even if these selective representations did not match current Native American lifestyles or priorities (Landsman, 1987). This is an example of the public media event existing as an interpretive construction fostered by audience and journalist conceptions. Newsworthiness, then, can be socially constructed—contingent upon features, meanings, and consequences of a story or topic (Lester, 1980). An embrace of these features is not a precursor for guaranteed success, however. Activists by their nature contest policies and actions deployed by other institutions—meaning that they are not the sole political actors within a given media frame, and as a result face constant competition.

Activists versus elites in the media. As the previous discussion suggests, the depicting of activism in the media is not a black and white affair. Overwhelming evidence suggests that the balance of power in media coverage shifts back and forth between activists and elite sources such as government and companies—even within a single event. Kutz-Flamenbaum, Staggenborg, and Duncan's (2012) analysis of protest at the G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh discovered this phenomenon. While news commentators and city officials generated media frames such as "violence" and "anarchy," protesters were successful in deploying their own frames through the media such as "First Amendment/right to protest" and "nonviolence." Volatile political events like global nation-state summits provide protesters with the opportunity to be positioned as central figures when journalists are motivated to cover protest stories (Kutz-Flamenbaum et al., 2012).

This leaves activists with a potential conundrum. In positioning themselves as

oppositional in order to garner attention, do activists reinforce existing, negative media framing of their work such as "violence" and "anarchy"? Juris (2005) examined a similar event: the G8 Summit in Italy, and specifically the Battle of Genoa clash between police and protesters, which evoked "images of tear gas, burning cars, and black clad protesters hurling stones and Molotov cocktails at advancing lines of heavily militarized riot police" (p. 413). While these violent protests as reported by the media helped generate significant visibility for anti-globalization activists, and also energized certain movement actors, they also helped justify repressive strategies promoted by the authorities including efforts to criminalize dissent. Evolving frames contingent upon the presence of elites, then, can help or hurt activists. Other studies paint a challenging picture for marginalized groups when they are presented as "rhetorical enemies" (Bowe & Makki, 2015), engaged in disturbance or radical action (Kruse, 2001), or even seen as fleeting or apathetic (Entman & Rojecki, 1993).

Coverage of climate science in the media shows how this diminishment can even occur when activists have access to more conclusive or fuller scientific evidence to justify their views. Boykoff (2007) and Liebler and Bendix (1996) have shown activists being outdueled by opponents who are willing to simplify or obfuscate environmental debates. Boykoff's (2007) content analysis of U.S. and U.K. media coverage of anthropogenic climate change—based on over 9,000 articles published in elite newspapers—highlighted the role of climate change contrarians, those dissenters who argue that such a warming trend is a falsehood. That climate change deniers can undermine scientists in the news suggests a divergence between scientific agreement on anthropocenic or human-created climate change and the role of the media in affirming or undermining such consensus (Boykoff, 2007). The study of a debate over logging old-growth forests similarly reveals the media's potential for mitigating scientific facts (Liebler

& Bendix, 1996). Campaigners intent on saving the forest and protecting the native spotted owl tried to frame the debate as a choice between preserving an ancient geological resource for the public or propping up an industry in decline. They were outflanked by the pro-logging side because the latter defined the debate more narrowly as a simple conflict between an obscure bird and people losing their jobs. This demonstrates the importance of beliefs and narrative in environmental media coverage relative to scientific information. The framing of an environmental controversy in concise or more simplistic terms allowed sources and journalists to move past scientific data, asking audiences to make decisions based on values-laden storylines and their own personal and social experiences. Activists are thus vulnerable to opponents who weave more compelling narratives.

To get to positive media framing, then, activists must navigate a complex ecosystem of supporters, opponents, journalists, and mass audiences. The sympathetic media framing of a deaf rights movement described in Kensicki's (2001) study demonstrates how attending to these different groups can prove successful. Positive frames were attributed to several factors: a lack of expedience on the part of elite sources, the availability of protesters as sources and their peaceful nature, support from corporations and liaisons with journalists, and sympathetic assumptions from the public about disability.

Activists and media audiences. Breaking through to the audiences served by media outlets with the right kind of news coverage, known as message pull through, becomes paramount for activists—who risk public disinterest, or worse, alienation with the wrong kind of media treatment. Studies of feminist activism reveal the power of the media to frame movements in negative terms and disrupt activist efforts in the media. Bronstein's (2005) analysis of third wave feminism identifies frames such as demonization, personalization, trivialization, and

victimization, which prevented a fuller account of modern feminism for readers. An argument articulated in Terkildsen and Schnell's (1997) study of U.S. coverage of the United Nations' Conference on Women and NGO Forum suggests the value of media frames that emphasize a common denominator between marginalized groups and the broader public. Noting that adversarial media frames exerted a negative impact on gender-related issues and support for women's rights, they call for messaging that integrates universal values. A focus on long-term or national trends can position an issue as part of a wider public discourse. This consideration of media audiences within a larger societal context underscores Iyengar's (1991) explanation of thematic versus episodic framing.

More comprehensive appeals have enjoyed success in the environmental policy arena. The universality of food and its inclusion in contentious debates about biotechnology provides a case in point. Ten Eyck and Williment (2003) examined how the U.S. elite press develops discourses around genetics and genetic technology, producing seven frames: Progress, economic prospect, nature/nurture, public accountability, ethical concerns, runaway technology, and Pandora's box. Independent variables—including the presence of controversy, metaphors, government officials, scientists, and topic were also coded. Concurrent with Thompson's (1997) assertion that genetics debates are more fierce when the topic of food or crops is present, the study found more critical discourses of biotechnology when food or crops were the central issue, as opposed to the integration of genetics in medical innovations. In other words, topicality can influence the kind of science frame invoked in news coverage. That food trumps medical innovation in critical environmental reporting shows that news media are embedded in larger cultural contexts, with environmentalists having made a more deliberate and successful push to reveal the negative impacts of genetically-modified foods (Ten Eyck & Williment, 2003). This

suggests that framing can elevate the prominence of some environmental problems while overlooking or even disguising others.

These resonant, totalizing messages can also activate larger audiences through real-time and digital social networks. A study of the 2010-2011 Tunisian uprising, for example, shows that such an approach helped connect online human rights activists with working-class populations and labor movements (Lim, 2013). An image of a fruit vendor lighting himself on fire after his stand was confiscated by the government served as an archetypal image that had iconic value for many groups. This suggests the effectiveness of master narratives that culturally and politically resonate with large populations as one approach to successful framing by a movement. Combined with the activation of a large, dense network of bloggers and other social media users, it helped to transform local actions and contentions into a successful movement at the national level (Lim, 2013).

In sum, media framing emerges as a key site for influencing public policy and affecting policy change for activists. Their interest goes beyond observing the results of media discourse, however. Activists have become important sources and newsmakers for the media in the development of news stories. To this end, and like their media relations counterparts from government and the private sector, they interact with journalists and prepare stories that are digestible in the mainstream media. Additionally, their actions—when fitting a criteria of newsworthiness, such as demonstrations and events—can shift existing media discourses about an issue. This goes against some assertions of media framing being controlled exclusively by elites from government and business. A number of studies, however, show media framing to be a complex process that delivers mixed results for activists. Media coverage may include more progressive representations of a movement while simultaneously communicating outdated

stereotypes. Other times, a media frame deployed by activists fails to compete with other frames based on cognitive or cultural factors. Activists must contend with opposing forces within media discourse, including those from government and corporate elites. They must also be cognizant of the audiences for whom media serve.

Within environmental communication in particular, the tension between scientific data and metaphorical or storytelling approaches becomes especially significant. Defining conflicts in simple terms or storylines that match up with existing personal or cultural beliefs allows sources and journalists to define issues beyond scientific evidence. It also allows activists to develop larger narratives resonant with broader publics and networks. In a contemporary news context notable for sensationalism and diminished journalism resources, activists need to be prepared for their interactions with media and improve their ability to articulate their frames, especially to overcome media environments where movement voices are obscured or marginalized. In spite of challenging media environments, these studies suggest a variability of media framing outcomes that present opportunities for activists to gain traction for their causes in terms of salience, cognition, and support.

RQ7. How did the media frame Bold Nebraska's activism against Keystone XL?

RQ8. What frames were most dominant?

RQ9. Were elements of strategic framing observed in the media stories, and if so, which ones were most pervasive? Did they align with the strategic framing elements observed in Bold Nebraska's website communication?

RQ10. Were conceptual metaphors and simplifying models about environmental communication used within national media discourse?

RQ11. What science/environmental frames were used within national media discourse?

Chapter summary

Increasingly, scholars have called for pairing media framing studies with studies that explore how frames are used by activist organizations themselves. To this end, the elements of strategic framing are identified as part of a larger taxonomy for understanding how movements can successfully position their issues in policy debates, at both the movement and media levels. Meanwhile, case studies such as the Ogoni movement in Nigeria suggest an outsized role for strategic communication and public relations in activism (Bob, 2002). Within the public relations literature, which has highlighted process and relationships between organizations and publics, Hallahan (1999) calls for framing as a vehicle through which scholars can better understand movement outcomes with audiences and the media. Furthermore, rhetoric and persuasion is identified as both aligning with the strategic elements of framing, and as a means to positioning activist organizations in their entirety. By fusing ideology within rhetorical appeals or performance, they help members of the collective make sense of the world while creating an audience for further rhetorical appeals through metanarratives, also known as master frames.

Media framing emerges as a key lens through which scholarship examines political communication and protest, including cases involving environmental activism. Indeed, activists have informed these studies through numerous case studies in which multiple political actors—citizens, journalists, companies, governments, and the activists themselves—potentially influence how an issue is ultimately received by the general public. Activists help shape these media discourses by serving as media sources and as newsmakers. However, they must contend with resistance from counter-narratives emanating from political or corporate elites. At the same

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time, activists strive to connect with audiences on the receiving end of such discourse. Accordingly, research in media framing provides a complementary perspective to strategic framing, public relations, and rhetorical research. Together, the two perspectives provide an effective framework for exploring social movement organizations, specifically how they create strategic campaigns for social change and influence public discourse.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

In order to assess environmental activism in the case of Bold Nebraska's dispute with

TransCanada, this study used quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches. Both

quantitative and qualitative methods are useful in particular contexts—with both approaches

ultimately deploying empirical observations to address specific research questions:

> Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research are all superior under different
> circumstances and it is the researcher's task to examine the specific contingencies
> and make the decision about which research approach, or which combination of
> approaches, should be used in a specific study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Gunter (1999) describes the quantitative approach as an extension of the outlook affirming the

basis of research in objective measurement as opposed to a subjective judgment or perspective.

At the same time, qualitative research affords an impressionistic form of data collection that

largely avoids wide-sweeping generalizations of human nature. Noting the limitations of a

strictly quantitative approach in terms of the provision of texture and detail in the analysis of

environment-media-policy interactions, Boykoff (2007) calls for qualitative approaches to co-

exist with quantitative content analysis.

This study's first method involved a quantitative framing analysis to understand Bold

Nebraska's own framing of the pipeline issue through its strategic website communication,

including media releases and feature stories. A second analysis also deployed quantitative

framing analysis to assess national media coverage of Bold Nebraska within the larger Keystone

XL debate in the United States and Canada. Finally, Fisher's (1987) narrative rhetorical analysis

was used to examine a Bold Nebraska signature public event: The Harvest the Hope benefit

concert in Nebraska.

By focusing on one organization, Bold Nebraska, and its campaign against the construction of TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline, this study drew from the case study methodology. The term 'case study' identifies a specific form of inquiry that is different from two other predominant forms of social research, the experiment and the survey (Gomm & Hammersley, 2000). The method has been found to be a direct means to building upon experience and improving understanding (Stake, 1978). In the past, case study inquiry has been criticized for its linkages with various forms of occupational practice—such as medical practice and business management—which imbue the method with a less-than-scientific reputation. However, a growing emphasis on the need for research to have practical application or be integrated into practical activities has fostered greater interest and uptake of the case study approach in recent years (Gomm & Hammersley, 2000). The ongoing popularity of case studies is attributed in part to their style and usefulness in searching for explanatory laws. In this sense, case studies have an epistemological advantage over other methods of inquiry, in that they are predicated upon experiential understanding (Stake, 1978). Parallels may be drawn with the work of historians, in that cases are studied in depth, and as opposed to experiments, such studies investigate real world causal processes rather than those conceived in artificially created settings (Gomm & Hammersley, 2000).

Data collection in case study research is extensive, and can draw on varying sources of information such as documents, interviews, observations, and audiovisual materials (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Notably, the researcher needs to make a case for their sampling strategy and information-gathering approach. Additionally, the researcher should also be able to set boundaries around the case to give it clean beginning and end points (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The case study analysis must show an attention to all of the evidence uncovered, and must

address all of the research questions in an exhaustive fashion. Otherwise, the analysis of a case study can be vulnerable to alternative interpretations (Yin, 2013).

Phase 1: Quantitative Framing Analysis (Movement Texts)

This study used quantitative framing analyses to assess communicator and media texts. As a form of content analysis, such a method provides the researcher with distinct advantages. Firstly, the text is publicly available, and exists as a document embedded in reality (Bauer, 2000). Content analysis holds up the text as a medium of appeal, positioning it as one that is trying to reach out to or convert an existing audience. Content analysis can help the researcher identify inaccuracies when prevailing "wisdom" attributes certain characteristics or attributes to a text or artifact (Bauer, 2000).

Much framing research focuses on ways that politicians, issues advocates, and stakeholders use media to communicate their preferred meaning of an issue or event (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). The framing paradigm as method ensures the collection of data that represents media messages being picked up by most audience members (Entman, 1993). Analyzing texts in the media can highlight information that is more or less salient by placement or repetition or by association (Entman, 1993).

This study followed the best practices recommended by Lacy et al. (2015) for quantitative content analysis. A written protocol was developed that could be shared with other researchers and instructs coders on how to assign values to content units. A probability sample was selected to reflect the nature of this study and its theoretic underpinnings. Lacy et al. (2015) refer to the probability sample as the "gold standard of social scientific methods" because the sample statistic can be measured using margins of error and confidence intervals. To establish reliability and replicability, two coders are assigned to code content independently.

This first phase of research examined how Bold Nebraska strategically framed its environmental activism. In order to identify the frames emanating from this activism, materials were collected from the news section of Bold Nebraska's website (BoldNebraska.org/news). This section included Bold Nebraska's press releases, media advisories, editorials, statements, updates, information about petitions and other forms of political action, organization-generated stories, and recaps of mainstream media stories devoted to Bold Nebraska or Keystone XL pipeline developments.

To measure the extent to which Bold Nebraska incorporated strategic framing elements in its website communication, texts were coded on the basis of whether they recognized or engaged with their audiences by incorporating the six elements put forth by Gilliam and Bales (2001): Numbers, messengers, visuals, context, metaphors and simplifying models, and tone. Each article in Bold Nebraska's news section, which represents one web page, was also inspected to identify what issues were present. Key issues promoted by an activist organization provide means to study master frames in activist websites as well as media coverage (Reber and Berger, 2005). From an organizational perspective, these frames are collective action frames—frames intended to help recruit and mobilize members and other concerned citizens and groups—that can become potentially integrated into media/news coverage as issues frames (Reber & Berger, 2005). In the case of Bold Nebraska's website communication, these issues deemed most prioritized after a review of tags from Bold Nebraska's website articles from 2011 to 2015 were: farming/ranching, Indigenous rights, climate change, land rights, alternative energy, environmental threats, and globalization. Metaphorical conceptualizations from Nerlich and Koteyko (2009) were also coded: Environmentalism as religion; dieting/nutrition; finance;

battle/war; and a journey (a sixth "other" category accounted for metaphors that did not fit the description of the first five categories).

In addition to coding for framing elements, issues, and metaphorical concepts, this analysis also measured populism, based on Roodujin and Pauwels' (2011) recommendation for measuring populism in content analysis, namely through two key categories: 1) the presence of *people-centrism*, indicated by language such as "citizens," "our country," and "we the people" and 2) the presence of *anti-elitism,* indicated by general criticisms of political/economic elites. Articles were also coded for additional physical, independent variables related to the website articles, including whether they took the form of a traditional press release, and whether or not they included an "action item" or call to action for members. Appendix 1 includes a full list of coding measures.

To establish a sample, articles were collected from the Bold Nebraska website. Over 1,000 articles were published between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2015. The years indicated covered the primary timeframe of Bold Nebraska's activism against TransCanada and the Keystone XL pipeline. In designing a content analysis, researchers can use representative subsets of the population rather than examining an entirety of artifacts (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998). In order to examine a statistically significant sample, the articles' titles were first entered into an Excel spreadsheet, and then randomized to generate a random sample. In total, 236 randomly-sampled articles were selected for analysis, spread out across a five-year period during which the activists campaigned against the Keystone XL pipeline. In these articles, written communication was the predominant mode of transmission, informing audiences through verbal text. Most content analysis articles involve text because text is the primary vehicle for preserving

mass-produced content (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998). However, it's important to note that the presence of visuals in the stories was also recorded.

As a condition for content analysis to be valid, intercoder reliability was tested and reported in order to gauge the reliability of the coding protocol and produce the most reliable and valid data. Lovejoy et al. (2014) maintain that coefficients should exceed .8 or otherwise be justified by the researcher.

Phase Two: Quantitative Framing Analysis (Media Texts)

The second phase of this study examined how national media in the United States and Canada used news stories to frame stories involving Bold Nebraska and its activism directed at the Keystone XL pipeline. Pan and Kosicki (1993) present news discourse as a sociocognitive process involving all three players: sources, journalists, and audience members. Entman (2007) also makes the linkage between frames and sources, arguing that content analyses should be informed by explicit theory linking patterns of framing in the media to priming and agenda-setting effects on audiences. Framing analysis examines news discourse by conceptualizing news texts into empirically operationalizable dimensions—syntactical, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures—to ultimately show evidence of the media's framing of issues in news texts (Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

The purpose of this phase was to determine what media frames were dominant, and how the frames were orchestrated in relation to each other. Because the debate over the Keystone XL pipeline entailed a North American audience and a strongly political dimension, four publications were analyzed through quantitative framing analysis. A quantitative framing analysis of the four newspapers—the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* in the United

States, and the *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* in Canada—was used. Leading national newspapers are optimal for framing studies because news stories are by far more likely to have a cascading effect on other media outlets, elite views, and ultimately mass opinion (Entman, 2008). The newspapers were selected because of their national presence within their respective countries. The *New York Times* is generally considered the most influential newspaper in the United States. The *Washington Post* is notable for its coverage of national political issues and events. The *Globe and Mail* newspaper is Canada's highest-circulated national newspaper and has been dubbed the country's "newspaper of record." The *National Post*—originally built around the *Financial Post* newspaper and currently the flagship newspaper of Canada's Post Media Network—draws from its business journalism tradition to offer a more conservative perspective of national and international affairs.

Using the Lexis-Nexus database, the author obtained and examined stories published between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2015 about the Keystone XL pipeline that include the term "Bold Nebraska." In the case of all four publications, I removed articles where the term "Bold Nebraska" was mentioned only in passing. Letters to the editor about Bold Nebraska were also removed, as well as duplicates that were published in more than one edition of a certain publication. However, editorials, op-ed contributions, and blogged articles remained for analysis.

In total, 68 articles were collected—from the *New York Times* (17 stories), the *Washington Post* (18 stories), the *Globe and Mail* (14 stories), and the *National Post* (19 stories). As opposed to a subset or sampling of media articles that is seen in some content analyses, this set of articles represented full coverage from these national media publications. Riffe, Lacy and Fico (1998) note that when the focus is on a particular critical event such as a major environmental disaster, probability sampling can miss important parts of the coverage.

Additionally, research will be more successful in examining the entire population of stories devoted to certain topics when such topics receive comparatively scarce coverage compared to more prolific topics.

The unit of measure for the study was the article. Stories related to coverage of Bold Nebraska's activism against the Keystone XL pipeline were coded for whether they deployed media frames marked by conceptual metaphors, making them more digestible for larger audiences. Drawing from Nerlich and Koteyko's research on climate activism in the media, these were: Environmentalism as religion (stopping the pipeline as a moral imperative), dieting (equating the health of the threatened environment to human health), finance (environmental activism is good financial management), battle or war (environmental activism as a battle) and a journey (with the final destination being the elimination of the pipeline). Stories were also coded according to seven media frames based on Ten Eyck and Williment's (2003) examination of media treatments of an environmental issue: progress, economic prospects, public accountability, ethical concerns, Pandora's box, runaway resources extraction, and globalization. Finally, each article was also coded for the presence of elements from the strategic framing taxonomy (Gilliam & Bales, 2001). Along with a sixth element of populism, these five elements were: Context, numbers, messengers, metaphors and simplifying models, and tone. (The element of visuals is not included in this part of the study, due to limitations of the media archive in determining whether visuals were present or not).

In addition to frames, articles were coded for additional variables related to the content. These included physical attributes such as the length of the story (assessed by number of words) and whether the story was on the front page of the newspaper or not. Appendix 2 includes a list of coding measures.

Phase 3: Rhetorical Analysis

Among the qualitative approaches to studying strategic communication within activism, rhetorical criticism emerges as a means to assessing and understanding the symbolic artifacts of environmental discourse. Hart (1990) argues that modern rhetorical criticism is useful as a method because it assesses trends over time, allows for study via the case study, and allows researchers to exist outside of themselves. He warns, however, that in addition to being imaginative, rhetorical scholars need to be both skeptical and discerning.

Given the characteristics of environmental activism described earlier, including visual and metaphorical forms of rhetorical appeals, one form of analysis is well poised to grapple with the interplay of activism and storytelling: the narrative paradigm. Emerging from the pervasiveness of storytelling as a mode of discourse throughout human history, the narrative paradigm has been applied to a variety of communicative events in order to understand them (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1991). Developed by Walter Fisher, it is predicated upon the same Aristotelian assertion that rhetoric serves as the natural counterpart to dialectics. Fisher's focus on the tensions between technical and rhetorical communication is important in the environmental context, because his development of the narrative paradigm represents a rebuttal of "privileged" scientific discourse of philosophers like John Locke and Francis Bacon. Narrative paradigm emphasizes the power of story development in persuasion. Several factors come together to make for successful narrative rhetoric. These include performance, historicity, and cohesiveness. An ability to succeed in these realms can even offset other significant shortcomings such as a lack of technical knowledge or even fidelity (Fisher, 1987).

For this third phase of research, a major public cultural and media event—the Harvest the Hope rock festival hosted by Bold Nebraska— was examined. Archived media documentation provided by the organizers allowed for rhetorical analysis of this live event discourse and production. Hosted by Bold Nebraska and the Cowboy and Indian Alliance, and featuring popular musicians such as Neil Young and Willie Nelson, the Harvest the Hope concert was held September 27, 2014 on a farm in Neligh, Nebraska. The farm owners were among the several Nebraska landowners who refused to sell their land to TransCanada for the Keystone XL pipeline. Proceeds from the event supported Bold Nebraska. The event's media artifacts for narrative analysis were 1) a 4:24 minute video published on Bold Nebraska's YouTube channel (titled "Neil Young 'Who's Gonna Stand Up' at the Harvest the Hope #NoKCL Benefit), and 2) selected images on Bold Nebraska's Harvest the Hope Flickr photo sharing set, which contained 168 images of the event (accessible from http://boldnebraska.org/concert/).

This analysis assessed the rhetorical metanarrative established by Bold Nebraska. It first identified the chief characteristics and objectives of the producers of the rhetorical appeals. Secondly, it identified the features of the messages disseminated during the concert: settings, characters, temporal and causal relations, themes, and actions. Finally, audiences were examined (primary, secondary, tertiary) to understand their characteristics and relations to the movement.

Central to this analysis was the objective of identifying the appeals being deployed by Bold Nebraska. To this end, a typology was introduced to catalogue and interrogate all of the appeals identified, both logical and emotional; the spokespersons; the different narratives deployed broadly across the event; and the para-text within the performative aspect of the event itself, including speeches, songs, visual imagery, and symbols.

Comprehensive Framework for Bold Nebraska Campaign Analysis	Phase 1: Website Advocacy	Phase 2: National Media Coverage	Phase 3: Harvest the Hope Concert
Strategic Framing Elements Taxonomy (Gilliam & Bales, 2001)	X	X	X
Environmental Issue Frames (Reber & Berger, 2005)	X		
Two Categories of Populism (Roodujin & Pauwels, 2011)	X		
Metaphorical Conceptualizations of the Environment (Nerlich &Koteyko, 2009)	X	X	
Science/Environmental Media Discourse Frames (Ten Eyck & Williment, 2003)		X	
Narrative Analysis/Fidelity (Fisher, 1987)			X

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The first three chapters of this dissertation provided an overview of the case of Bold Nebraska; a review of literature focused on movement and media framing, public relations, and rhetoric in the contexts of environmental and social change; and the methodology for analyzing Bold Nebraska communication artifacts, including website communication, media coverage, and the Harvest the Hope concert. This chapter reports on results from the analysis of Bold Nebraska's website communication as well as media coverage in national newspapers. It then provides a rhetorical analysis of the Harvest the Hope concert, which includes a typology of Bold Nebraska's constructed appeals.

From the Bold Nebraska website, a total of 1032 articles were identified in the organization's news section between January 2011 and December 2015. The news section includes all blog posts, media releases, information updates, opinion articles, and other public-facing strategic communication and editorial materials. From this list, a total of 236 articles were randomly sampled using Microsoft Excel's randomizer function. This function automatically assigned a random number to each of the 1032 story headlines listed in an Excel spreadsheet. Stories were subsequently reorganized based on the descending values of the numbers, and the first 236 were selected for analysis. In order to ensure inter-coder reliability of the content analysis, a second coder independently coded 12.5% of the website articles (30 articles). Based on the Holsti formula, inter-coder reliability scores averaged 0.81.

Attributes of Bold Nebraska articles

The values for the physical characteristics of the articles were first coded. For article size, they were assigned the number 3 for being six paragraphs or more in length, 2 for being between

three and five paragraphs, and 1 for being two paragraphs or less. In assessing whether the article was a formal media release or not, articles were coded as 0 (not a media release) or 1. Thirdly, articles were coded as 1 (yes) or 0 (no) for whether or not they contained an action item, such as imploring readers to sign a petition to sign, make a donation or purchase, attend an event, or phone or write to politicians. Finally, the article's origin or authorship was coded: 1 (Bold Nebraska staff member), 2 (Bold Nebraska member/ guest contributor), 3 (partner or third party organization), and 4 (media outlet contribution or reprint).

An overwhelming majority of articles (78%) were six paragraphs or more in length, indicating both a substantiveness in terms of quantity but also ideas. Only 10% of the articles were between 3 to 5 paragraphs, and less than 10% were one or two paragraphs. Of the 236 articles measured, 14 percent were formal media releases originally created for distribution to media. The remaining 86 percent included stories, news, calls to action, and event information.

Issue frames (RQ1)

The values of each issue framing scale were coded as 1 (frame present) or 0 (frame not present). These issue frames were farming/ranching, Indigenous/tribal issues, climate change, land rights/eminent domain, alternative/clean energy, environmental threats, and globalization. These issue frames emerged from a review of all tags (an indexing system for websites and blogs) from Bold Nebraska's website articles from 2011 to 2015. Chart 1 details the usage of each issue frame as a percentage of all articles. Three issue frames were found in a majority of news articles: environmental threats (67%), globalization (65%), and land rights/eminent domain (50%). Farming and agricultural issue frames were present in 44.5% of articles, followed by climate change (31%), alternative/clean energy (22%), and Indigenous/tribal issues (8.9%). Chart 1 shows that a majority of articles contained multiple issue frames (for example,

farming/agriculture was often situated alongside land rights and globalization; Indigenous and tribal concerns often existed in conjunction with land rights and also environmental threats; and discussions of alternative/clean/solar energy co-existed with the issue of climate change).

Chart 1: Issue Frames (as percentage of all articles)

Issue Frame	Percentage
Globalization	66
Environmental Threats	68
Alternative/Clean Energy	22
Land Rights/Eminent Domain	51
Climate Change	32
Indigenous/Tribal	9
Farming/Agricuture	45
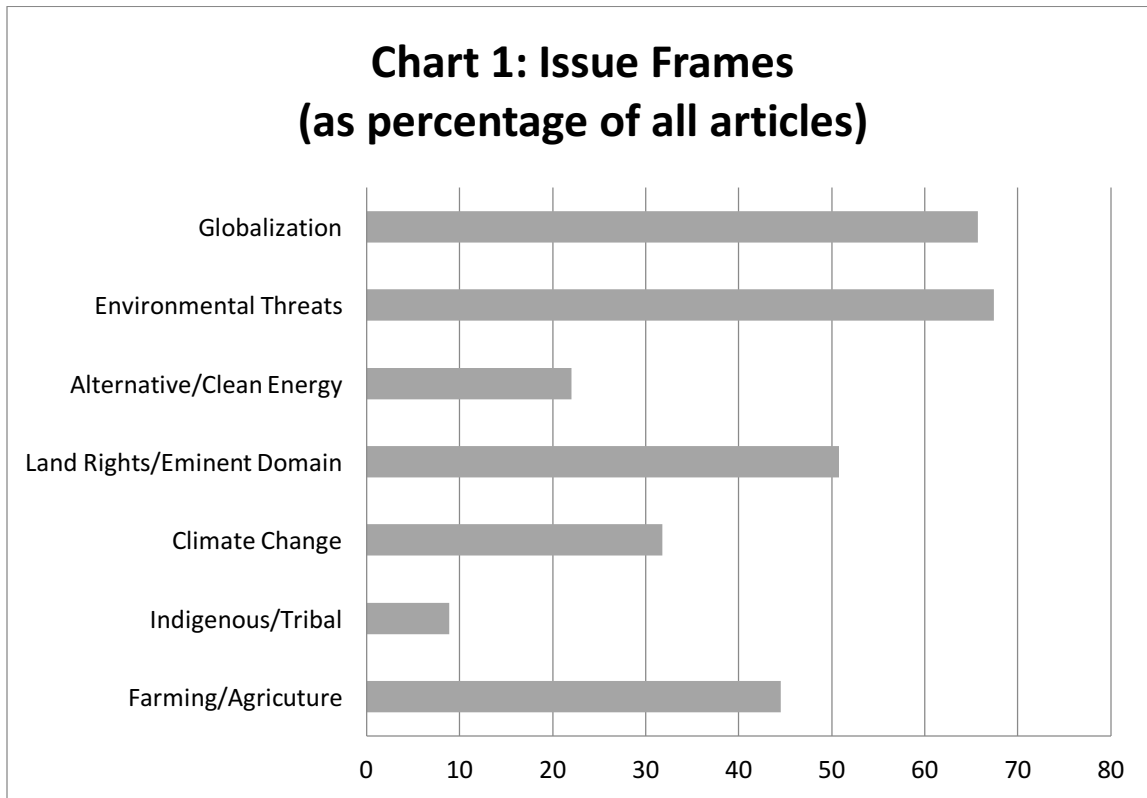
More than 20% of all articles contained three or more issue frames, while a further 40% contained four or more frames. Chart 2 breaks down the articles examined by how many issue frames they contained per article.

Chart 2: Number of issue frames per story (as percentage of all articles)

Category	Value
0	13.7
1	10.3
2	12
3	22.7
4	24.8
5	10.3
6	4
7	1.7
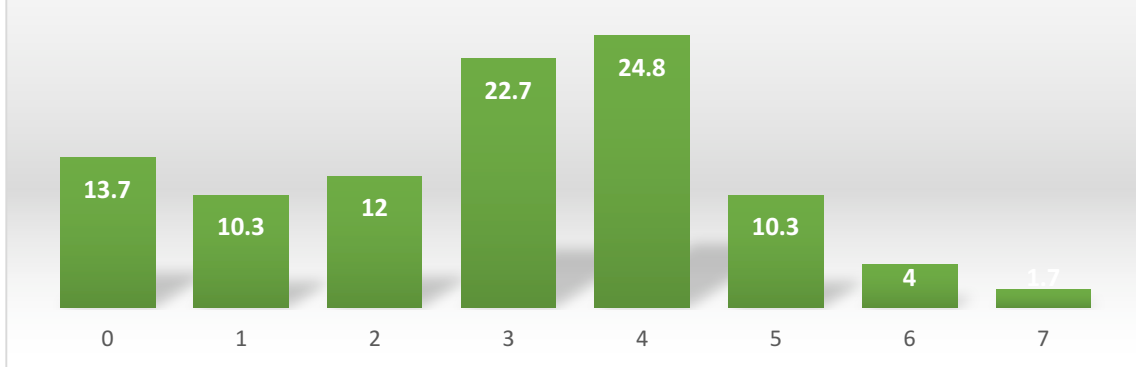
Action items by issue frame

Each of the seven issue frames in Bold Nebraska's communication were analyzed to determine association with inclusion of an action item in the article—including calls for readers to sign a petition, donate money, participate in an event, or write a letter to a politician or government agency. Pearson chi-square tests showed a significant association between the use of an action item and only one issue frame, that of farming/ranching ($x2=9.29$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$; see Table 1). Significance was not found in the associations between action items and the other six issue frames.

Table 3: Action items within the issue frame of farming/ranching.

Crosstab					
			Action Item*Farming/Ranching		
			None	Farming/Ranching	Total
Action Item	No Action	Count	81	44	125
		Expected Count	69.4	55.6	125.0

Action Item	Count	50	61	111
	Expected Count	61.6	49.4	111.0
Total	Count	131	105	236
	Expected Count	131.0	105.0	236.0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.290[a]	1	.002		
Continuity Correction[b]	8.508	1	.004		
Likelihood Ratio	9.339	1	.002		
Fisher's Exact Test				.003	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.251	1	.002		
N of Valid Cases	236				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 49.39.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Strategic framing elements (RQ2)

To determine which of the strategic framing elements were used and to what extent, the seven—numbers, messengers, visuals, metaphors, tone, context, and populism—were coded as 1 (present) or 0 (not present). Chart 3 shows that each element was used in over half of all Bold Nebraska articles analyzed. Context (89%), populism (87%), and messengers (86%) were the three most popular elements, followed by oppositional tone (71.6%), metaphors (69.5%), numbers (59.7%), and visuals (55.5%).

Chart 3: Strategic Framing Elements in Bold Nebraska's Website Communication (percentage)

Numbers	Messengers	Visuals	Metaphors	Tone	Context	Populism
59.7	86	55.5	69.5	71.6	89.8	87.7

Chi-square tests were also conducted to assess the relationship between the strategic framing elements employed by Bold Nebraska. The element of context enjoyed significant relationships with four other elements: populism, tone, metaphors, and numbers. Along with context, populism displayed signification relationships with tone and metaphor usage. The element of visuals did not enjoy significant associations with any other element. The element of messengers enjoyed significant associations with tone and metaphors.

Populism (RQ4)

In order to assess the association between the strategic framing element of populism and issue frames, chi-square tests were performed, comparing expected and actual usages of populist communication across the six issues. Stories featuring globalization were most likely to integrate populism ($x2=17.6$, $df=1$, $p<0.01$). Localized environmental threats, featuring impacts to water and land, also carried populist framing elements ($x2=10.16$, $df=1$, $p<.05$). Significant

associations using Pearson's chi-square test were also found with the issue frames of land

rights/eminent domain (x2=9.43, df=1, p<0.05) and farming/ranching (x2=9.94, df=1, p<0.05).

Table 4a: Farming * Populism

Crosstab					
			Populism		
			No Populism	Populism	Total
Farming	None	Count	24	107	131
		Expected Count	16.1	114.9	131.0
	Farming/Ranching	Count	5	100	105
		Expected Count	12.9	92.1	105.0
Total		Count	29	207	236
		Expected Count	29.0	207.0	236.0

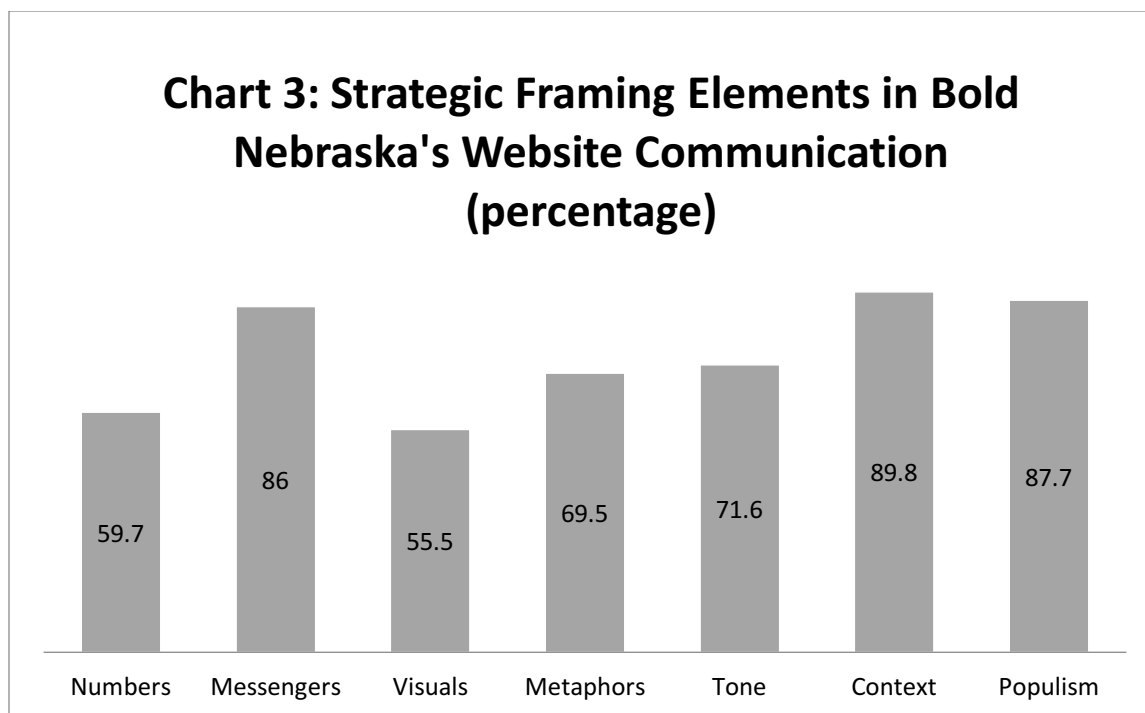| Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.941[a]	1	.002		
Continuity Correction[b]	8.723	1	.003		
Likelihood Ratio	10.907	1	.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				.001	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.899	1	.002		
N of Valid Cases	236				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.90.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 4b: Land Rights * Populism

Crosstab

			Populism		
			No Populism	Populism	Total
Land Rights	None	Count	22	94	116
		Expected Count	14.3	101.7	116.0
	Land rights	Count	7	113	120
		Expected Count	14.7	105.3	120.0
Total		Count	29	207	236
		Expected Count	29.0	207.0	236.0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.437[a]	1	.002		
Continuity Correction[b]	8.258	1	.004		
Likelihood Ratio	9.827	1	.002		
Fisher's Exact Test				.003	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.398	1	.002		
N of Valid Cases	236				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.25.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 4c: Threats * Populism

Crosstab

			Populism		
			No Populism	Populism	Total
Threats	None	Count	17	60	77
		Expected Count	9.5	67.5	77.0

Enviro Threats	Count	12	147	159	
	Expected Count	19.5	139.5	159.0	
Total	Count	29	207	236	
	Expected Count	29.0	207.0	236.0	

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.163[a]	1	.001		
Continuity Correction[b]	8.859	1	.003		
Likelihood Ratio	9.498	1	.002		
Fisher's Exact Test				.003	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.120	1	.001		
N of Valid Cases	236				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.46.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 4d: Globalization * Populism

Crosstab

			Populism		
			No Populism	Populism	Total
Globalization	No Globalization	Count	20	61	81
		Expected Count	10.0	71.0	81.0
	Globalization	Count	9	146	155
		Expected Count	19.0	136.0	155.0
Total		Count	29	207	236
		Expected Count	29.0	207.0	236.0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.603[a]	1	.000		
Continuity Correction[b]	15.895	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	16.636	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	17.529	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	236				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.95.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

People-centrism versus sentiment against elites

In order to further assess the type of populism deployed, Bold Nebraska articles were assessed for the two types of populism measurements in content analysis as recommended by Roodujin and Pauwels' (2011): 1) the presence of *people-centrism*, indicated by language such as "citizens," "our country," and "we the people" and 2) the presence of *anti-elitism,* indicated by criticisms of political/economic elites. Stories analyzed were drawn from those already containing populism as a strategic framing element (87% of all stories). Table 3 shows that 72% of all stories featured people-centrism, while 68.2% contained criticism of political and business elites. Chart 4 shows that 52% of the articles featured both attributes.

Table 5: Populism (people-centrism and anti-elites sentiment)

Populism: People Centrism

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	66	28.0	28.0	28.0

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1.00	170	72.0	72.0	100.0
	Total	236	100.0	100.0	

Populism: AntiElites

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	75	31.8	31.8	31.8
	1.00	161	68.2	68.2	100.0
	Total	236	100.0	100.0	

Chart 4: Populism as people-centrism and/or opposition to elites (percentage of all articles)

Populism not present 12%

People-centrism or anti-elitism identified 36%

Both people-centrism and anti-elitism present 52%
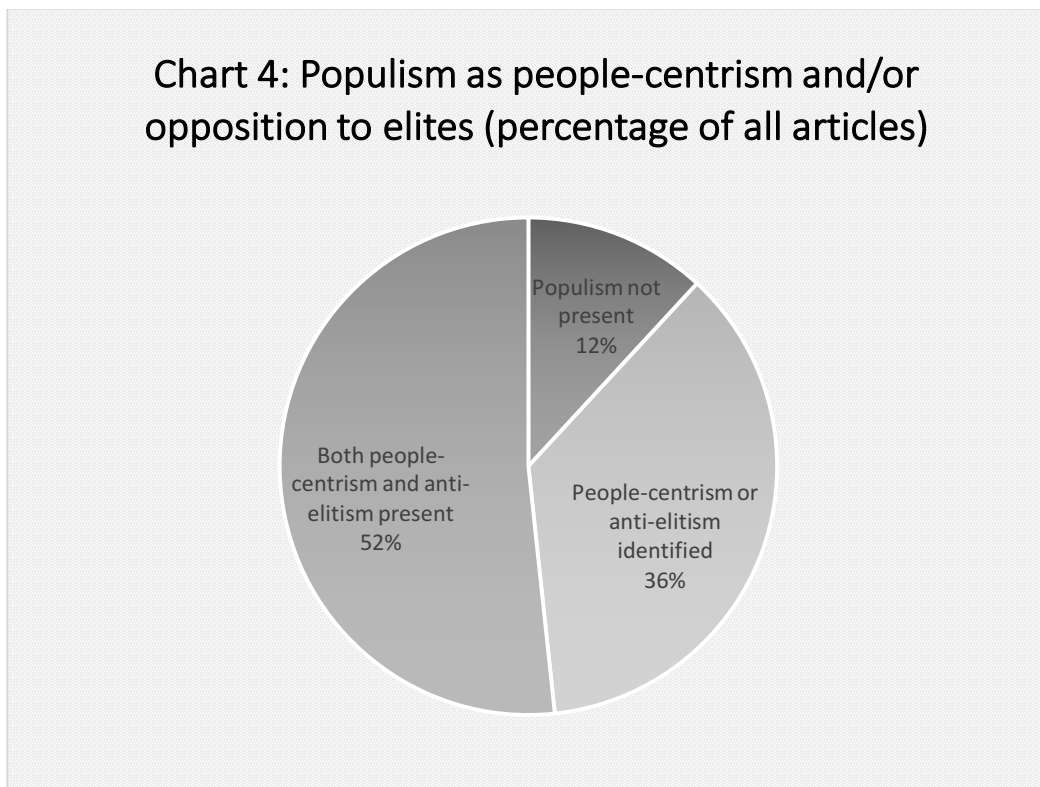
Conceptual Metaphor Frames (RQ3)

Articles that contained the strategic element of metaphor usage were further analyzed for their containing of conceptual metaphors for environmental and climate activism as suggested by Nerlich and Koteyko (2009): financial/money (1), religion (2), health/diet (3), battle (4), journey

(5), and other (6). This latter category included metaphors that did not fit into the existing framework, including representations of environmental struggle and crisis as a sporting or popular culture event, or as an agricultural or wildlife scene. Chart 5 shows that of the articles coded for metaphors, 40% contained metaphors that did not fit the existing framework. The most pervasive individual conceptual metaphor was battle/war, represented in 34% of the stories containing metaphors. This was followed by journey (11%) and finance (9%). The conceptual metaphors of diet/health and religion were represented in only 5% and 1% respectively. Chart 5 shows the breakdown of all Bold Nebraska articles containing metaphors.

Chart 5: Metaphorical Frames in Bold Nebraska's Website Communication

Finance 9%
Religion 1%
Diet/Health 5%
Other 40%
Battle/War 34%
Journey 11%
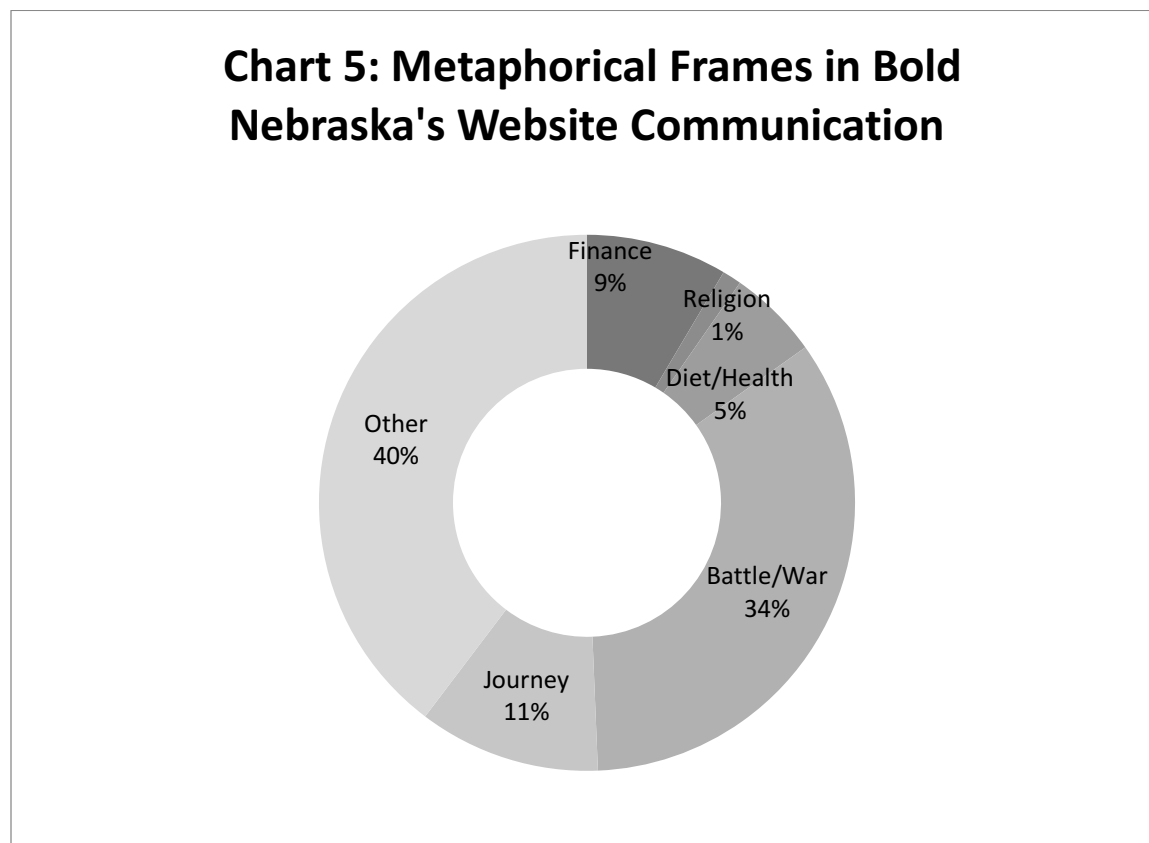
Metaphors within the "other" category were recorded and further analyzed. Three new categories of metaphors emerged: agrarian/ecological themes; sport and popular culture; and oil industry/pipeline themes. Examples of the first category, which comprised 25% of the "other"

metaphors, included "bold boots kicking in the doors," "chickens hiring the fox to look after their interests," and "fixing the fence." The second category of sport and popular culture, which also garnered 25% of the "other" category, included references to the fictional Grinch character from Dr. Seuss, horror movies, and the college football "Hail Mary" pass. A further 15% of the "other" metaphors fell into the third category of oil/pipeline themes, and these included references to "pipe dreams," the "oil sands academy," and "towering mountains of petcoke."

Part Two: Media Framing

A total of 68 articles were coded from the four newspapers: *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Globe and Mail*, and *National Post*. Two well-trained coders analyzed the articles independently. Inter-coder reliability scores averaged 0.8. Of the stories, only a small percentage (10%) were located on the front page of a newspaper section. A majority of articles were coded as category 2 for medium length (between 500 and 1000 words) while a further 21% of all stories were over 1000 words. Those coded as category 1 (for less than 500 words) accounted for 19% of the stories. A majority of articles were general news stories (63%), while a smaller number were either feature/magazine stories or commentaries/editorials (29% and 6%, respectively).

Framing Elements in Media Stories (RQ7 and RQ8)

Media frames were analyzed for the existence of one or all of six elements of strategic framing—numbers, messengers, metaphors, tone, context, and populism. Measurement of the element of visuals was not included due to limitations of the database service which provided the newspaper articles. Of the six measured elements, all were featured for at least 50% of the articles. Chart 6 shows the frequency of the six elements of strategic framing. Context was the most commonly used framing element in the media coverage, featured in over 89% of articles.

The numbers frame, which includes statistics about the pipeline, environmental impacts,

and climate change, appeared at least once in 85% of the newspaper stories, while messengers

were also identified in 85% of the stories. Metaphors were identified in 53% of the articles, along

with the framing element of tone. Finally, the element of populism was seen in 70% of

the articles.

Chart 6: Strategic Elements of Framing in Media Articles (percentage)
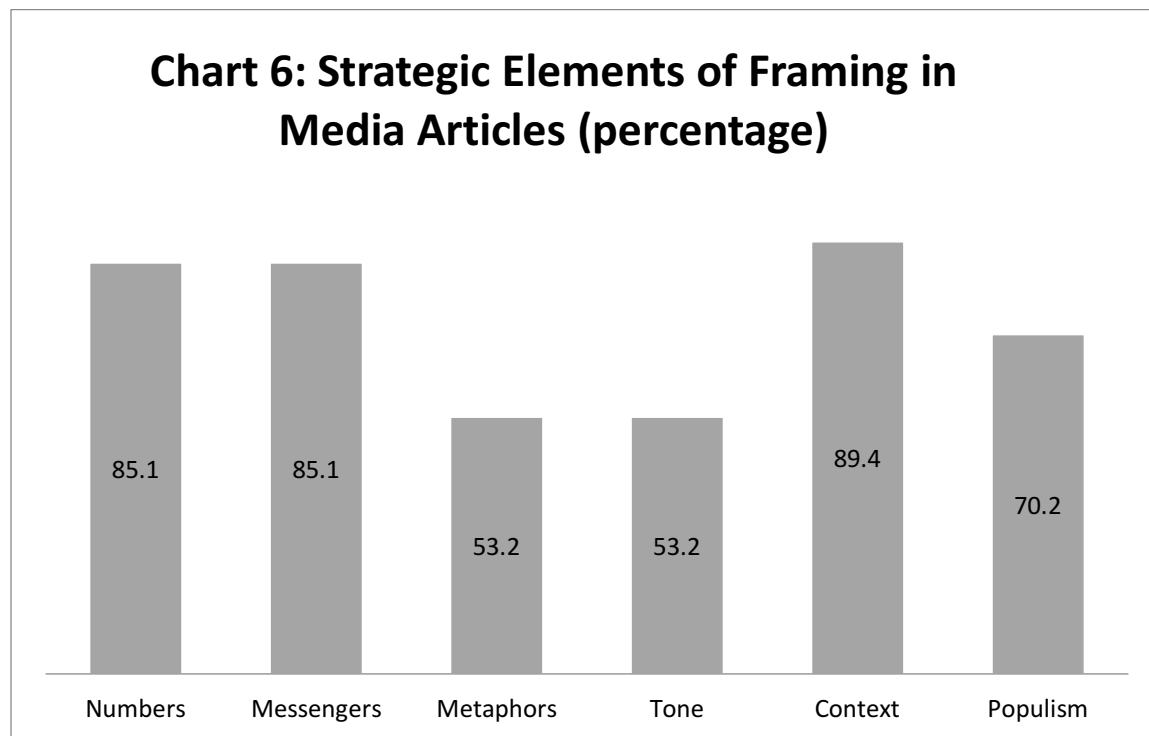
Metaphorical Frames (RQ10)

Chart 7 shows the occurrence of conceptual metaphorical frames of environmental

activism used in coverage of Keystone XL involving Bold Nebraska. Among these frames, the

metaphor of "battle/war" was most prevalent, appearing in 51% of stories measured. The

environmental metaphor of the "journey" followed, present in 31% of news articles, along with

the conceptual metaphor of finance (also 31%). Two other metaphors, "diet/health" and

"religion," were used with less frequency, as they appeared in only 6 and 4 percent of all stories respectively.

Chart 7: Metaphor Frames in News Articles about Bold Nebraska

	Finance	Religion	Dieting/Health	Battle/War	Journey
■ Series1	31.9	4.3	6.4	51.1	31.9
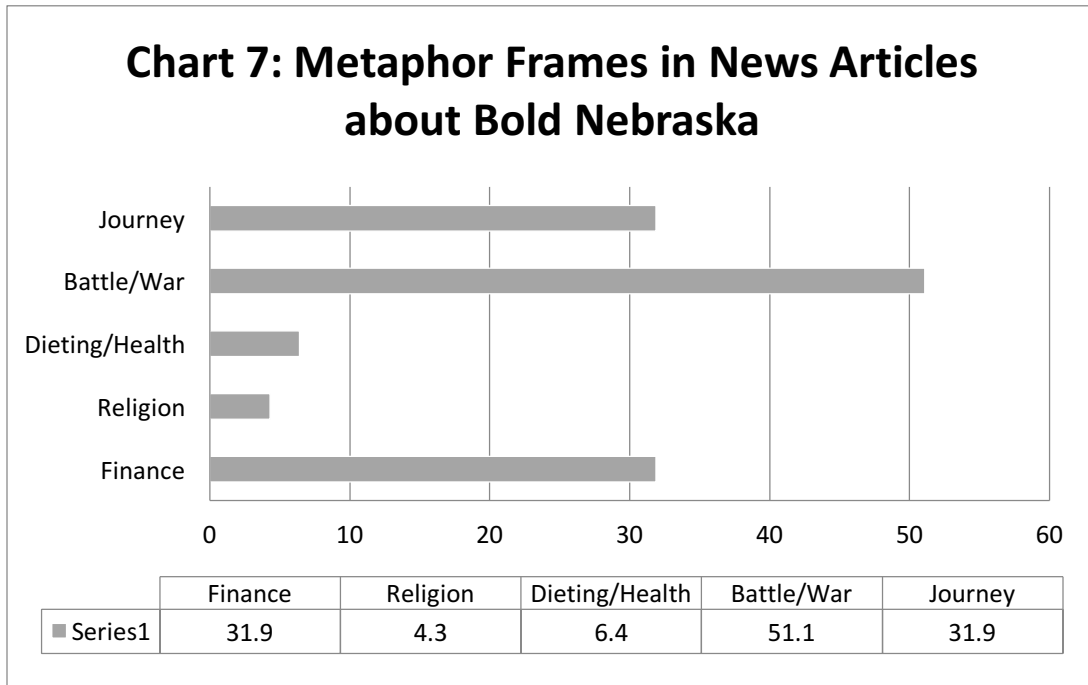
Environmental Frames (RQ11)

News articles were also examined for the presence of Ten Eyck and Williment's (2003) frames of scientific/environmental discourse: Progress, economy, public accountability, ethical concerns, runaway technology/resources extraction, and Pandora's box. The frame of globalization was also measured. The top four environmental frames in media coverage featuring Bold Nebraska were "ethical concerns" (67%), "globalization" (61%), "economy" (46%), and "public accountability" (46%). The frames of "progress" and "runaway resources extraction" were used in 38% and 36% of the articles respectively. The frame of "Pandora's Box" saw much sparser usage at 15%. Chart 8 shows the occurrence of the seven scientific/environmental frames in overall media coverage of Bold Nebraska's activism.

Chart 8: Science/Environment Frames in News Articles About Bold Nebraska (by percentage)

Frame	Percentage
Progress	38.3
Economy	46.8
Public Accountability	46.8
Ethical Concerns	66
Pandora's Box	14.9
Runaway Extraction	36.2
Globalization	61.7
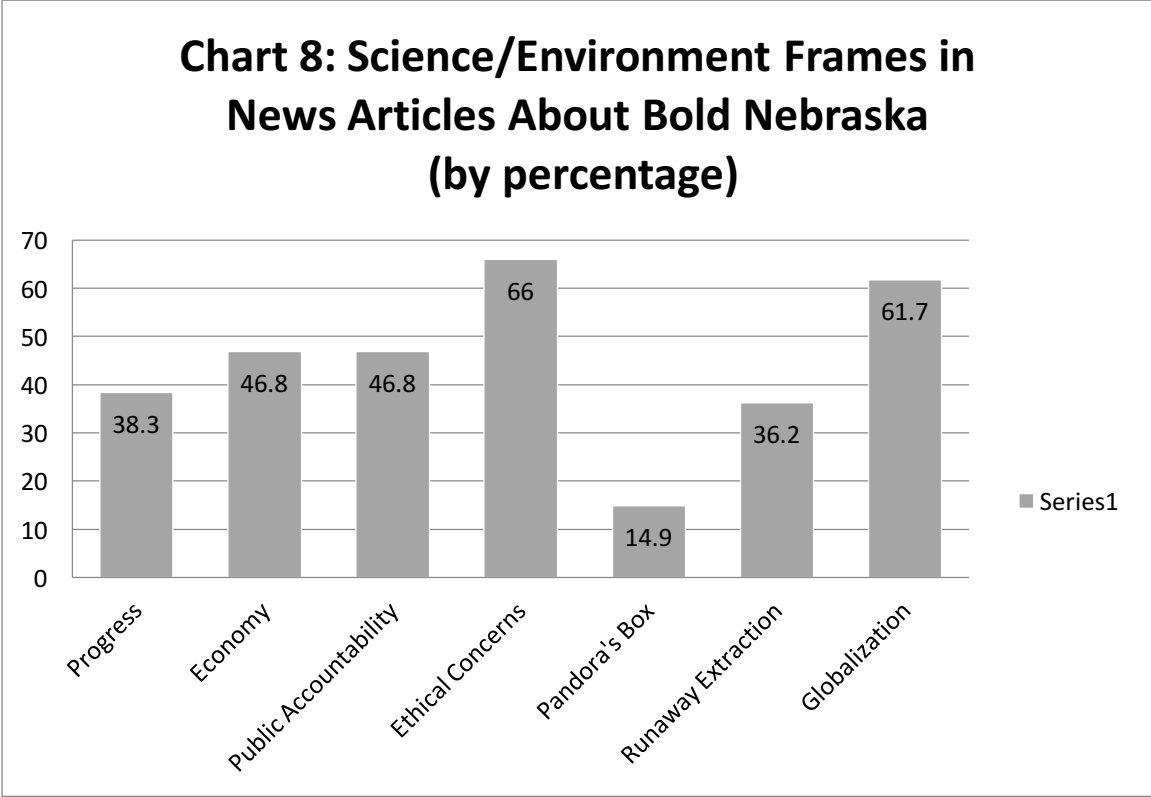
Elements of Strategic Framing: Movement Framing vs. Media Framing (RQ9)

Chart 9 shows the degree to which Gilliam and Bale's (2001) strategic framing elements were used in both the contexts of Bold Nebraska's controlled media (website articles) and uncontrolled media (mainstream newspaper coverage of Bold Nebraska). Context, which was the most pervasive element in Bold Nebraska's communication (89%), was also the most popular element in news coverage by the major newspapers (89%). Similarly, the element of messengers, another leading element deployed within the group's communication (86%) was also a top element within newspaper coverage (85%). While the element of populism was featured in a majority of Bold Nebraska and newspaper articles, it enjoyed greater popularity within the

movement's communication (87% of articles) compared to newspaper coverage (70%). Conversely, the element of numbers was more pervasive in newspaper coverage (85%) than in Bold Nebraska's website communication (59%). Chart 9 also shows a drop-off in the usage of oppositional tone and metaphor in newspaper coverage of Bold Nebraska compared to the group's own discourse.

Chart 9: Strategic Framing Elements: Bold Nebraska and News Articles (by percentages)

■ Bold Nebraska Articles　　■ News Articles

Element	Bold Nebraska Articles	News Articles
Populism	87.7	70.2
Context	89.8	89.4
Tone	71.6	53.2
Metaphors	69.5	53.2
Messengers	86	85.1
Numbers	59.7	85.1
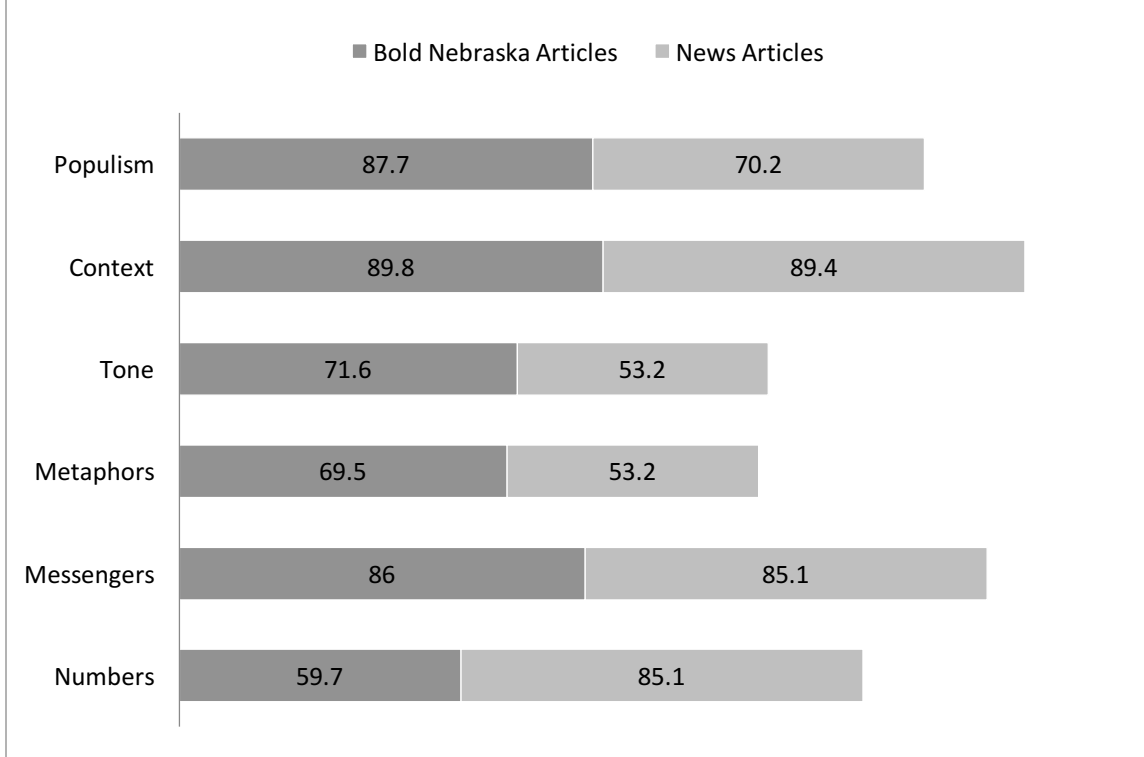
In sum, this content analysis of strategic website communication and national media coverage found significant usage of strategic framing elements in both environments. The elements of context and messengers were strongest in both website and newspaper communication, while populism was also heavily used in website communication. Conceptual metaphor frames were found in a majority of website articles, although they often did not line up with Nerlich and Koteyko's (2009) proposed frames for environmental and climate activism. The most popular environmental metaphor in both website communication and media coverage was that of battle/war. The analysis of website communication also examined the usage of issue frames. Bold Nebraska was most likely to deploy frames featuring farming/ranching, environmental threats to land and water, and land rights/eminent domain. Chi-square tests were

performed to assess the association between the strategic framing element of populism and issue frames. The issue frames of land rights/eminent domain, localized threats to land and water, and globalization all had a significant statistical association with the element of populism. Globalization, as a frame within Ten Eyck and Williment's (2003) science/environment frames, was also present in a majority of media articles, along with environmental concerns.

Rhetorical Analysis

To analyze the rhetorical appeal of Bold Nebraska's activism, I conducted a narrative analysis of one of the organization's largest public events, Harvest the Hope. This analysis is predicated on Walter Fisher's view that storytelling is not only central to human communication, but that a narrational perspective also helps the scholar in interpreting such communication (Fisher, 1987). The Bold Nebraska-organized Harvest the Hope music festival marks the confluence of the organization's environmental politics and its regionally- and contextually-infused culture. The benefit concert, headlined by performing music artists Neil Young and Willie Nelson, took place on farmland owned by Art and Helen Tanderup near Neligh, Nebraska. The site, situated in the path of the sacred Ponca Trail of Tears, is also located on the route of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline. Proceeds from the concert were directed toward Bold Nebraska as well as its partners, the Cowboy and Indian Alliance and the Indigenous Environmental Network.

I have chosen to analyze Harvest the Hope because of its significance as a large scale, mediated, and highly symbolic event for the movement. It gathered Bold Nebraska's leadership, its grassroots membership from Nebraska and neighboring states, members from local tribal communities, and other environmental organizations to participate in a cultural event that conflated popular and traditional cultures to create a landmark activism moment. Activist and

non-governmental organizations often find themselves working with multiple publics, though these networks are often cultivated virtually. Harvest the Hope brought these various stakeholders together in the same physical environment, providing valuable insight into the narrative devices used by Bold Nebraska, including characters, audiences, and appeals. To this end, Fisher's narrative analysis provides a useful lens through which to analyze Harvest the Hope because it captures the messaging, the communication strategies, and the audiences present.

The media artifacts for narrative analysis are 1) the music video for Neil Young "Who's Gonna Stand Up," featuring footage from the Harvest the Hope #NoKXL Benefit, and 2) images from Bold Nebraska's Harvest the Hope Flickr (photo sharing) set, which contains 168 images of the event (accessible from http://boldnebraska.org/concert/). "Who's Gonna Stand Up?" was written by Young in 2014 and promoted by Bold Nebraska as an "anti-pipeline anthem" (YouTube: BoldNebraska, para. 1). The resulting Harvest the Hope video was released on Bold Nebraska's website, as well as its YouTube channel, in October of 2014, in an effort to raise voter awareness in the lead-up to November 4 national elections in the U.S. On the YouTube channel, where the video received over 15,000 views, prospective voters from Nebraska who "give a damn about protecting our land and water" are also encouraged to visit the New Energy Voter Guide, a project of Bold Nebraska's that seeks to influence elected positions in the state by recommending candidates based on their stance on KeystoneXL and related energy topics.

The beginning of the video itself, however, is more straightforward about its political leanings: "We ask President Obama to STAND UP to protect our land and water. #NoKXL." This message, composed on white letters against a black backdrop, then fades away to the close-up image of the sun setting on a Nebraska cornfield. The cheering of a crowd can be heard, and a

sign with the words "Pipeline Fighter Village" is shown hanging from a lamppost. As an electric guitar is strummed, the scene moves toward a row of traditional Native American teepees. Three of the cone-shaped tents, identified by their animal hide composition and wooden poles jutting from smoke flaps at the top, represent the strong presence of Nebraska's Indigenous peoples at Harvest the Hope. The support of tribal leaders also provides the raison d'etre for the Cowboy and Indian Alliance, a Bold Nebraska initiative that sees ranchers, farmers, and other non-native rural dwellers partnering with Aboriginal communities to stop the pipeline.

The diversity of visuals and messages is noteworthy at Harvest the Hope, because it shows that Bold Nebraska has different audiences that it needs to engage in order to win support from the public and policymakers. These audiences include rural Nebraskans engaged in farming and ranching, tribal community members, environmental advocates, and a broader swathe of Nebraskans who are not normally engaged in environmental activism. Through this collage of images, symbols, and words represented in both the Harvest the Hope music video and the Flickr photo set, a typology of narrative appeals emerges. The criteria for determining these thematic areas included: frequency of appearance within the event's paratexts of music video and photos; saliency of the themes in terms of their representation within the media artifacts; and an interpretation of how these themes align with audience interest and reception. The narrative appeals that emerge reflect the way the Bold Nebraska campaign, manifested through Harvest the Hope, weaved broader stories and myths into the fight against the Keystone XL pipeline.

Narrative One: We the People.

As a conflation of environmental issues, Bold Nebraska's opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline also requires a melding of audiences. It speaks to agricultural landowners, Indigenous communities, environmentalists, the citizens of Nebraska, and the American public. This

outreach helps establish a coalition of pipeline proponents while bridging political, cultural, and historical gaps between groups. To this end, the imagery of Harvest the Hope underscores an attempt to promote a democratic pluralism, one featuring marginalized Nebraska groups (farmers, Native Americans, rural dwellers) united against a multinational corporation and layers of government. The character of the movement is established as simultaneously open to different groups, but decidedly confrontational against the established, pro-pipeline antagonists from the business and public sector camps. Symbolically this is revealed through a combination of event-day sloganeering, visual imagery, and Young's rock anthem lyrics. The concert video from Young lingers on the image of a homemade sign propped up against a wooden barn that reads: "Whisky is for drinking. Water is for fighting. #NOKXL." The scene transitions to a video pan of motorcyclists arriving at the concert. The message is clear: These Keystone XL opponents are salt-of-the-earth Nebraskans, not fair-weather protesters—and they are united in their disdain and fear of what the pipeline represents.

Lyrically, this grassroots appeal is made readily apparent in Young's chorus: "Who's gonna… save the earth? Who's gonna say that she's had enough. Who's gonna take on the big machine?" Here, he articulates a populism that incorporates both empowered citizens and a special contempt for elites responsible for environmental woes. The song also promises to widen the scope of environmental awareness beyond pipelines: "Take out the dams, stand up to oil. Protect the plants, and renew the soil." Such a conflict-laden narrative also gives way to a conceptualization of pipeline opponents as religious crusaders: "Damn the dams, save the rivers. Starve the takers and feed the givers. Let's the build the green and save the world. We're the people's known as earth."

Young's musical religiosity within the video is synchronized with the visual of a small child holding a marker and filling in the lettering for a Harvest the Hope sign. The child's efforts transition to a collage of signs along a fence marking the messages of the movement: promoting clean energy, protecting landowners, and saving the Ogallala Aquifer water supply. The latter geological entity takes on a particular urgency. One of the largest shallow water tables in the world, the aquifer underlies 174,000 square miles of the Great Plains and is essential to drinking water and agricultural irrigation in the region (U.S. Geological Survey, 2008). Here, the significance of the Tanderup farmland as concert venue is elevated further. It is situated along the pathway Ponca trail and the proposed pipeline route; but it also exists directly above the Ogallala water table. Like the attendees of Harvest the Hope, the land itself stands in for different histories and lives impacted by the pipeline. Another scene from the music video shows a Nebraska building with the American flag painted on one side, and the words "Freedom isn't free" sprawling across the top of another. This is followed with Bold Nebraska's directive to the White House, encapsulated in another sign, one that is propped up with wire fencing in a hay field: "President Obama: Protect Our Sacred Land."

Narrative Two: The Heartland.

Starting with its name, the Harvest the Hope festival is built upon the activist communication emanating from rural symbols and imagery. The word "harvest" is imbued with meaning directly relevant to Bold Nebraska's activism. It is defined as both "the process or period of gathering in crops" and as "the collection (or obtaining) of a resource for future usage" (Oxford, 2016). Notably, it is also the namesake of Neil Young's best-selling 1972 album (*Harvest)* and his 1992 album (*Harvest Moon)*.

The language of Bold Nebraska thus evokes environmentalism and the values of the traditional agricultural society—evidenced in the photographs from the event. Underneath the event's own Jumbotron, on a large red banner, the silhouettes of the cowboy and Indian are seen, representing the Cowboy and Indian alliance. Underneath this powerful image reads the words "Protect the Heartland." The word "heartland" evokes the heart, the central organ of life. The word is defined as "the central or most important part of a country, area, or field of activity" (Oxford, 2017). Merriam-Webster (2016) explains the word as "a central area of land," "the central area of the U.S. which is known for traditional values," or "an area that is the center of an industry or activity." This confluence of traditional values and economic activity is signified by the symbols of rural America featured in both the video and photographs. A corn farmer, Art Vanderup, is shown several times in the music video backdropped by his John Deere trailer. John Deere is an American corporation that manufactures farm equipment, but its logo, which originated in 1876 and shows the iconic bounding deer—has become a stand-in symbol for rural life and Americana. In the same way that Coca-Cola signs and t-shirts have transcended a strictly utilitarian marketing function for the soft drink's brand, John Deere t-shirts, signs, and bumper stickers abound at county fairs and antique shops. The Deere brand exerts a "magnetic influence" over its audience through rural aesthetics, but also, like Apple or Coca-Coca Cola, a language of feeling versus information (Neumeier, 2005, p. 18).

The company's logo and products feature prominently throughout the video, including a scene where a young woman dressed in a checkered plaid shirt and bright red dress (emblazoned with the letters "NOKXL") does a curtsy is front a bright green John Deere row crop tractor. Promoted here is the conflation of traditional American values with protest and anti-authoritarianism. In another black-and-white image within the video, a middle-aged couple

stands in front of what appears to be a small-town market, and they are backdropped by a weathered, vintage sign reading "Peter Pan Fresh Bread: Makes Tastier Meals." The scene evokes an idealized Main Street scene from a small prairie town, before the advent of big-box retailing and industrial farming.

Art Tanderup embodies this spirit. One of the Nebraska farmers who refused to sign land easements with TransCanada, his is the property where "Harvest the Hope" is being held, and his connection to the land is shown in multiple images. He is backdropped by symbols of the campaign: including his John Deere tractor along with his acreage of corn stalks and hay bales.

As rhetorical appeals, these images embed a sense of strong morality and small-town rural values, evoking a civic life enriched by rural work, small business, family life, and friendly neighbors. Such values are in stark contrast to depictions of modern life in 2016—the flight of citizens from rural areas to cities, the growing disengagement of working people from civic life, and the intrusion of global and corporate entities into everyday life. Here, Bold Nebraska suggests to its audience that solving environmental problems is a natural extension of traditional prairie values.

Harvest the Hope's mediation is also intent on juxtaposing age-old values of the prairie with contemporary realities of both globalism and global warming. Bumper sticker-like slogans with agrarian and ecological themes appear on different signs highlighted in the music video: "Vote New Energy"; "Stop the TransCanada Pipeline"; "Save Our Land and Your Water."

These populist environmental sentiments are softened with a nod to Nebraska's families. In a later scene, a young boy wearing a cowboy hat stands in front of the concert crowd and gives the camera his nod of approval. Neil Young's voice joins the guitar fray: "Protect the wild, tomorrow's child." The inclusion of children as both messengers of, and protagonists within,

these ecological narratives creates a universality to Bold Nebraska's message, and a reminder that preserving Nebraska's natural assets for future generations serves a collective good. It also deepens Bold Nebraska's environmental persuasion, extending it from the societal level to the family unit.

Narrative Three: The Ecological Indian.

Indigenous communities represent an integral dimension to Harvest the Hope. Along with Bold Nebraska, the Cowboy & Indian Alliance and the Indigenous Environmental Network were the key partners for the event. The narrative setting of the Tanderup farm and the Ponca Tribe Trail of Tears is pivotal to the narrative setting. As the venue of the festival, the farm lies directly on the proposed route of the Keystone XL pipeline, but it is also situated along the historic trail. In 1877, members of the Ponca tribe of Northeast Nebraska were forced by the federal government to march 500 miles, across the states of Nebraska and Kansas, to an Oklahoma reservation. Harsh travel conditions during this journey led to the death of nine tribal members. One of those travelers, a young woman named White Buffalo Girl, is memorialized at a cemetery in the community of Neligh.

That legacy provides a key subtext to the festival. Nebraska's relatively young history includes a legacy of Native American communities historically disenfranchised and damaged by the actions of government and private business interests. Their presence at Harvest the Hope is especially important because it highlights the notion of a pan-Nebraskan pluralism as advertised in the Cowboy and Indian Alliance moniker. It also legitimizes the decision to situate the symbols of American Indigenous cultures alongside the symbols of non-Native America. Within the photographs, leaders from the Oglala, Ponca, Rosebud, and Omaha Nations are present. They honor musicians Young and Nelson for their dedication to Nebraskans and Native families. Both

of the performers are shown wrapped in ceremonial blankets given to them by the tribal leaders—a key expression of artistry, diplomacy, and Indigenous culture.

Within the video footage and photos examined, it is the ceremonial that is put forth as Indigenous identity. A tribal elder, covered in a white gown with a blue, red, and yellow pattern headdress, is seen dancing in front of a large white teepee. In another scene, a young man from South Dakota rides a horse in full headdress and carries a traditional wood-carved hunting spear fletched with feathers. These visually-elaborate images depict the richness of Native American culture and history in Nebraska. Simultaneously, they play into a broader depiction of what could be described as the "ecologically noble Indian" (Nadasdy, 2005).

While such scenes convey a sense of respect, even awe (but possibly fetishization) of Indigenous cultures, they also position Native Americans almost exclusively in harmony with nature, at the expense of more nuanced or contemporary representations. Redford (1991) connects these depictions to the myth of *the noble savage*, a term describing the idealized European vision of Indigenous peoples: "The idealized figure of centuries past has been reborn," though accumulated historical evidence "refutes this concept of ecological nobility" (Redford, 1991, p. 46).

Yet these depictions persist—in part because they cater to audiences already conditioned to accept these representations. Such scenes by their nature attract attention—sometimes driven by what anthropologist Renato Rosaldo calls "imperialist nostalgia" (Willow, 2010), a reminiscing for a colonized culture as it was when first encountered by European settlers. A fascination of Native American culture based upon exaggerated mythology and misrepresentation, perpetuated by governments, academics, and popular media (Bataille, 2001, p. 4) can also drive this communication. Even when motivated by good intentions, such

representations risk masking the everyday lives of Indigenous peoples, and the current challenges they face in navigating modern societal, economic, and environmental realities. They harken back to the painter and writer George Catlin—who both celebrated and exploited Native Americans during the 19th century with artwork and staged performances. The well-travelled Catlin was the first white American to depict Plains Indians in their native territories, and he synchronized his artistry with a championing of Indigenous peoples (Watson, 2002). Yet Hausdoerffer (2009) argues that Catlin's paintings and other mediations, while well-intentioned, merely accelerated the demise of many American tribal nations, by both emphasizing the inevitability of their demise at the hands of colonial settlement, and by positioning Indigenous cultures as the "other."

Given Bold Nebraska's attitudes about the ecological impacts of a petroleum pipeline passing through Nebraska land—native or non-native—we can infer that the organization would disapprove of depictions that reduce Indigenous peoples to simple caricatures or "the other." At the same time, the near-exclusive focus on ceremonial symbols and clothing in the video and photos, including their rich historical context, comes at the expense of more realistic portrayals of Native Americans in non-ceremonial contexts. There are exceptions here: In one video image, a younger Indigenous male, shown handling a horse, wears a decidedly more contemporary form of attire: a baseball cap depicting the logo of Nike's Air Jordan running shoes. Other members of the tribal communities are depicted within the video and photographs as participating as musicians or as audience members—lending a credibility to the choice of Young and Nelson, themselves non-Natives, as the headline performers.

Narrative Four: The Celebrity Activist.

The celebrity performers at Harvest the Hope not only serve as logical conduits between Bold Nebraska's message and a mass audience—they also lend their own symbols as rock stars to the organization's mission. Unlike the tribal members whose presence as an audience is also positioned as a performance, the involvement of musical celebrities is overt rather than implied. They are at the Neligh Farm ostensibly to help sell tickets, and provide a focal point of entertainment. At the same time, they provide a set of ready-made symbols for the cause, honed over decades of recording, touring, and interfacing with the media and fans. This is underscored by their centrality to the event's paratexts of video and photographs. The twosome of Neil Young and Willie Nelson are a major reason why the audience for Bold Nebraska's activism on this day is in the thousands rather than dozens. (That only a sporting event could attract such a mass audience is reflected in the Nebraska Cornhuskers football attire worn by some members in the concert audience.)

Collectively, Young (from Canada) and Nelson (an American) embody as celebrities the bi-national nature of the fight against Keystone XL. Nelson is often referred to as a "national treasure" in the United States, and in 2015 was awarded the Library of Congress's Gershwin Prize for Popular Song. Young is considered a national icon in his home country and received the Order of Canada, the nation's highest civilian honor, in 2009. Both are international-caliber musical performers who have built their reputations on catalogues of hits from decades gone by, but also have won over a younger demographic because of both their influence on contemporary musicians and also their public activism in the realms of politics and the environment.

On stage at Harvest the Hope, Young is photographed wearing a black t-shirt adorned with the hashtag #IdleNoMore and the image of a clenched fist holding a lone feather. This is the rallying cry for the Idle No More protest movement. Founded in 2012 by Canadian Indigenous

leaders, Idle No More represents ongoing resistance by tribal communities to historically contested economic and environmental policies in Canada and internationally. The endorsement of the movement is important here because Young, as a Canadian, is communicating his criticism of the same Canadian policymakers who have given rise to the country's oilsands industry and by extension a demand for petroleum pipelines. Secondly, it provides him, as a non-Indigenous person, with political legitimacy and a degree of cultural congruency as he performs with and for the Native American audience members at Harvest the Hope.

In terms of conveying a grassroots aesthetic and sound, Young is arguably only outdone by his colleague Nelson. Joining Young on stage, Nelson plays a weathered six string guitar that is slung around his neck with a red, white, and blue guitar strap. His attire choices also speak to the commercial sophistication of the concert organizers. He is wearing the official "Harvest the Hope" concert t-shirt, which is available at the Bold Nebraska online store for $35. The front of the t-shirt shows two guitars superimposed by the words "These Machines Stop Pipelines." The back of the t-shirt, along with the names of the feature and opening acts, carries many visual symbols of the event: The silhouette of the cowboy and Indian and images of cows, forest, and tractors. Nelson is also wearing the "Pipeline Fighter" mesh cap, also known as a trucker hat (also available from Bold Nebraska's online store). Nelson helps construct a storyline that fosters the interplay of patriotism and protest, as well as grassroots spirit with commercial appeal.

Assessing the Narrative Fidelity of Harvest the Hope.

Multiple elements converge at Harvest the Hope in conveying a message for the environment and in cultivating a dynamic audience through multiple appeals. These appeals are propped up by culture—heartland values, Indigenous history, celebrity entertainment—but they are also supported by mediating the natural world. The notion of land as sacred is a recurring

theme that also bridges the values of Indigenous nations with their non-Indigenous Nebraska neighbors. The event's title of "Harvest the Hope" implies a future for Nebraskans that is connected to the earth's metabolic processes. The bounty of Nebraska's farm crops—corn, wheat, hay—stand in for both individual and community sustenance. In one black-and-white image, a wooden barn is flanked by a sign reading "Reject and Protect: Protect Sacred Land and Water."

The emphasis here is the role of land and water in growing food, raising livestock, and sustaining a way of life. This is exemplified by Harvest the Hope images where the camera's focus hones in on the ground itself—corns stalks, haystacks, dirt fields—which in turn literally frame the attendees at Harvest the Hope. Seen from afar in one particularly telling photograph, the 8,500 attendees, the makeshift concert stage, the portable toilets, the tee-pees, and the parked vehicles are seemingly enveloped in corn and wheat fields that stretch for miles before meeting the horizon.

An ambitious pluralism helps bolster the fidelity of Harvest the Hope's storytelling. The festival unites rural Nebraskans, Native Americans, and environmental activists in solidarity against a multinational corporation and against different levels of government. Bold Nebraska is able to make the case that their form of activism, imbued with symbols of patriotism and the American West, as well as Native American identity, will positively impact stakeholders with very different backgrounds and agendas. For environmentalists, Keystone XL represents simultaneous threats of global climate change and local threats to land, water, and wildlife. For rural Nebraskans, Keystone XL represents the intrusion of national-level and foreign elites into a way of life that is centuries old. These "sophisticates" are seen as being to blame for the stagnation of small towns, the lack of viability of the family farm as a means of subsistence, and

the vulnerability of land ownership in marginalized regions, including rural "flyover" states like Nebraska. For Native Americans, TransCanada's actions represent merely the latest in a long line of altercations with government and business over land right violations and environmental degradations. Yet Bold Nebraska's appeals weave these perspectives together.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, the involvement of celebrity activists only serves to further cement this fidelity. In Neil Young, Bold Nebraska has recruited a singer/songwriter whose activism has aligned with both the plights of farmers and Native Americans for several decades. Similarly, Willie Nelson's well-publicized endorsement of marijuana, his taxpayer struggles with the Internal Revenue Service, and his advocacy for struggling American farmers, only affirm his existence at the margins of mainstream culture—thus situating him outside of the "establishment" of elites. Worth noting also is that narrative fidelity is assured by Young and Nelson's involvement with a much larger cultural event, that of Farm Aid. Started as a benefit concert by the twosome three decades ago along with John Mellencamp, the event was inspired by fellow musician Bob Dylan's assertion that some funds from the 1985 Live Aid concert go to American farmers.

Taken holistically, the rhetorical appeals of Bold Nebraska embedded within Harvest the Hope's paratextual materials are used to create a story about the state and the country that is more aspirational than real—a suitable reflection of the aspirational politics of this environmental activism.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS

In the analysis of this dissertation, I discuss the implications of this research as they relate to environmental activism and strategic communication, placing Bold Nebraska and its anti-pipeline activism in a broader environmental and communication context. Given the political, economic, and environmentally symbolic significance of Keystone XL and its ultimate rejection by the White House in 2015, Bold Nebraska emerges as a key milestone in the ongoing trajectory of environmental activism.

The organization's ability to cultivate a message that ultimately resonated with both its followers but also a larger constituency, as seen through mass appeal events like Harvest the Hope, emphasizes the critical role of strategic communication within environmental politics. While some studies from the domains of sociology and political science have pointed to the critical role of media and communication in assisting movements (Bob, 2001; McAdam, 1982; Wickham, 2002), others have overlooked the construction of the messages and appeals themselves, thus assuming a uniformity in their composition. Other studies from these realms have simply ignored, or have taken for granted, the role of strategic communication in rallying publics and fostering public policy change. In some cases, this is because some self-conscious protest movements intentionally downplay the "strategic" part of their communication for fear of being seen as co-opted or "selling out"—favoring instead more radical or disorganized approaches (Conner & Epstein, 2007).

Bold Nebraska showed no such nervousness concerning its affiliation with what are tried-and-true public relations practices, including public outreach and media relations. The organization's online news site offered the same key press relations materials offered by

traditional organizations: press releases, media advisories, statements, photo opportunities, and interviewee contact information. In short, its communication output was not only prolific, but it also emulated a public relations approach developed historically for corporate and government entities.

This media savvy can be contributed in part to founder Jane Kleeb's background as a political organizer as well as MTV journalist. That Kleeb, as the founder/director, was also the de facto communicator-in-chief says much about the organization's reliance on a continual outflow of communication and media messaging. Other key Bold Nebraska communicators leveraged professional backgrounds and interests. These included Mark Hefflinger, the former journalist from California who served as Bold Nebraska's communication director; and Ben Gotschall, the writer and agriculture expert who worked on behalf of farmers and ranchers with the Nebraska Farmers Union. The involvement of these experienced communicators and policy experts underscored the organization's commitment to effective strategic communication.

Not all environmental activist organizations embrace such a level of professionalism, one that emulates best practices in industry and government. Paul Watson, founder of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society as well as Greenpeace, disparages his former colleagues at the latter organization as "the Avon ladies of the environmental movement" and "a bunch of wimps" for moving toward pragmatic and user-friendly approaches to environmentalism, including collaborating with corporate sponsors at the 2000 Sydney Summer Olympic Games (Conner & Epstein, 2007, p. 2). In turn, such pragmatism risks alienating core members and diluting the organization's identity over time. McAdam (2005) argues that "the mob in the street is always more effective than bureaucratized, institutionalized organization." Yet Bold Nebraska's professional communication was careful to foster grassroots action and protest—the movement

"purity"—alongside its sophisticated public relations strategies and tactics. In short, Bold Nebraska found its ideal location on the purity-pragmatism spectrum, one that answered Conner and Epstein's (2007) call to "understand the price of being practical, as well as the cost of being pure" (p. 2).

Proof of Bold Nebraska's unwavering strategic communication agenda was evidenced in different ways. Over the timeframe of a half-decade, the organization was featured prominently in local and national publications. Kleeb herself earned the title of "Nebraska's Most Controversial Woman" on the cover of *Omaha Magazine* (the publication of which inspired a subsequent magazine launch party for Bold Nebraska members) and a personal feature article in *New York Times Magazine* entitled "Jane Kleeb vs. the Keystone Pipeline." But the success of this communication agenda was also made manifest through the publication of thousands of website articles and a multitude of public policy meetings, fundraisers, rallies, parties, and concerts. So too was Bold Nebraska's ability to infuse the call to action—its so-called "action items"—into its stream of communication.

Figure 3: Cover of Omaha Magazine's July/August 2015 issue: "Nebraska's Most Controversial Woman."

Communication as activist engagement and action

A key facet of Bold Nebraska's strategic communication was usage of the call to action tactic—embedded in nearly half of the organization's website strategic communication output measured in this study. In marketing and public relations, calls to action are intended to provoke an immediate response or engagement by imploring audiences to "call now," "find out more," or "visit a store today" (Payton, 2015). Labelled by Bold Nebraska as "action items," they were a

recurring part of Bold Nebraska's messaging. They implored their audience to go beyond merely elaborating upon Bold Nebraska's ideas. They asked members and readers to engage in live-time: to fundraise, attend lawmaker meetings and court sessions, participate in demonstrations, sign petitions, spend time with their family members at community events, and write to politicians and lawmakers. In other words, they were generators of civic engagement. Such communication is concurrent with Snow and Benford's (1998) assessment of movement framing as a catalyst for ameliorative action, as well as the role of frame alignment in creating linkages between otherwise disparate groups or individuals (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986).

Bold Nebraska's calls to action reinforced the powerful combination of public relations and member activation within activist movements. Just as McAdam (1982) explained in his description of the black insurgency cause, a movement's audience and membership serves as a means to broadly diffusing ideas and action across a network of connected individuals. In Bold Nebraska's case, this network was the rural citizenry of Nebraska. It is worth noting also that these action items were numerous in some stories. For example, an October 25, 2011 missive written by Jane Kleeb implored supporters to write to President Obama, call their state senator, write a letter to the editor, post pictures of the "Stand with Randy" land rights campaign to the social media channel of Flickr, and sign a Nebraska anti-pipeline petition along with a similar petition at the White House. These are examples of the "micromobilization processes" (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986) used to align a movement organizational goals and

ideology with the values and beliefs of targeted individuals.

Figure 4: Rancher and landowner Randy Thompson, who sued the governor and legislature of Nebraska (*Thompson v. Heineman*) over the constitutionality of the proposed pipeline route, became one of the faces of Bold Nebraska's activism thanks to the "I Stand With Randy" campaign.

With the exception of its participation in a major climate rally in Washington, D.C., Bold Nebraska's events were almost exclusively located in the state of Nebraska. Unsurprisingly, such calls for audience engagement enjoyed a statistically significant association with the issue frame of farming and ranching. The confluence of the farming/ranching issue frame with "action items" provided a hyperlocalization, rooting Bold Nebraska in a specific time and place. Here, farmers and ranchers emerged as the state-based grassroots advocates described in Mundy's (2013) spiral of advocacy, helping Bold Nebraska's mantra resonate with a local constituency before advancing to state and national lawmakers. Their key involvement also conjured up memories of Nebraska's century old tradition of agrarian collective populism.

Calls to action also provide a feedback mechanism for the host organization. Membership action is in part predicated on enthusiasm and support for the over-arching cause (and sub-causes). In farming and ranching, Bold Nebraska found a particularly rich area for building on-the-ground support and for leveraging this support into direct political action. While this engagement through action also existed in other issue frames, the other issues (such as climate change) did not garner a significant association with this engagement like farming and ranching did. Here, Bold Nebraska played to its strengths and its region's character. As part of the state's cultural and economic fabric, the topic of farming and ranching resonated with Nebraskans, paving the way for tangible political results.

Climate change, which continues to be a leading environmental topic in the United States as well as a catalyst for the general public's participation in environmental action and discourse, did not emerge as a focal point for civic engagement. This can be attributed in part to the viability of climate change as a leading issue for Bold Nebraska, with other state, national, and international organizations also focusing (with greater expertise) on the topic. Many other environmental groups have taken up the climate change cause and have engaged with politicians and publics on the topic. For Bold Nebraska to duplicate the efforts of its environmental allies across the state and country might risk diminishing interest and a diluted activism.

Issue framing as a vehicle for hyper-localization

Regionally-relevant and relatable. The ability of Bold Nebraska to mobilize support through regionally relevant, contextually-dependent appeals speaks to a key strategic approach on the part of Bold Nebraska: hyper-localization. Among the leading issue frames, at least three (environmental threats, land rights/eminent domain, and farming/ranching) were steeped in discourse that spoke to how the pipeline's construction would impact specific rural geographies

and properties, including public lands and privately held farms. The Ogallala Aquifer, the

shallow water table sitting under most of Nebraska and much of the Great Plains; and north-

central Nebraska's Sand Hills, dunes designated as a national landmark in 1984, both warranted

mention in numerous stories and media releases. The Ogallala Aquifer plays an outsized role in

Nebraska's quality of life and rural economy, supplying over 80% of the state's drinking water

(U.S. Geological Survey, 2008). In north-central Nebraska, sitting above the Aquifer, lies the

state's Sandhills. Its geographic mix of sand dunes and grass prairie have garnered the status of

National Natural Landmark (National Park Service, 2016).

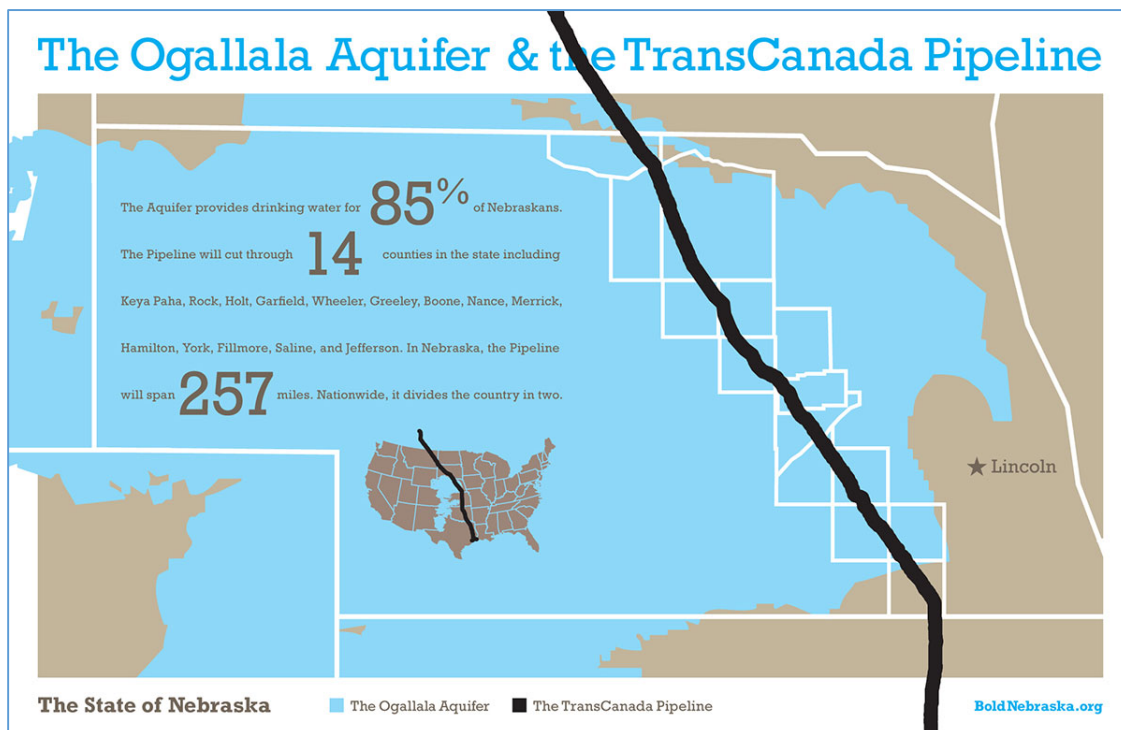**Figure 5: A Bold Nebraska website infographic details how the Keystone XL Pipeline will travel through the Ogallala Aquifer.**

These ecological assets do not exist in a natural resources vacuum, but rather they are

linked to the state's broader ecosystem, including wildlife, wetlands, lakes, rivers, forests,

cropland agriculture, and cattle ranching. Throughout its campaign against Keystone XL, Bold

Nebraska continued to highlight environmental threats to land and water brought on by the possibilities of pipeline leakages, spills, or even explosions. "Protecting land and water" became a key message in Bold Nebraska's website communication, and a repeated talking point in media interviews.

The issue of land rights and the government's usage of eminent domain rules to expropriate private farmland for the pipeline was also a crucial issue frame to Bold Nebraska's communication. The frame of land rights provided Bold Nebraska with the opportunity to maximize support across Nebraska's political spectrum, and integrate what Chong (2012) describes as appeals to dominant cultural norms, notably individual liberty, limited government, patriotism, and respect for private property. This emphasis on land rights created an additional layer of meaning within Bold Nebraska's activism. The repeated mantra of "protecting land and water" became a rallying cry for environmentalism, but also for individual property rights. This double-entendre messaging provided Bold Nebraska with a powerful tool for recruitment and mobilization, by offering a new lens through which to understand the environment. Keystone XL was no longer just a threat to the collective via threats to waterways, wildlife, and public lands; it was also a danger to the privately-held agricultural land holdings of the individual farmer and rancher. Such a symbiosis fostered Bold Nebraska's goal of inclusivity in its activism and having a politically welcoming tent. When Bold Nebraska's self-styled "Pipeline Fighters" were marching, writing, or retweeting with the hope of staving off the TransCanada project, they were doing so on their own political terms, whether it was progressivism from the political left, or the championing of individual liberties and land ownership from the political right. This approach was critical given the state's historic leanings toward the Republican Party and conservative

politics. Such bipartisanship was therefore contingent upon the deployment of different issue frames.

From the local to global. This study's analysis also shows that the issue frame of globalization was integral to Bold Nebraska's campaign against the pipeline. This frame played out in three different ways. Firstly, the pipeline was continually positioned as a Canadian project—even though many of its supporters (and shareholders) were American. Secondly, the pipeline was framed by Bold Nebraska not as delivering oil to U.S. Gulf of Mexico refineries, but rather (and by extension) to offshore markets, including China. The U.S. was therefore bearing all of the risk for oil neither produced nor consumed in the country. Finally, the oil and gas sector was contextualized as a global force, an international polluter, and a catalyst for global climate change. It was the first approach, the Canadianization of Keystone XL, that was used most often and most effectively, however. In many of its website articles, Bold Nebraska simply called the pipeline the TransCanada pipeline—allowing the group to invoke the foreign country's name on numerous occasions. More importantly, setting up Canadian oil interests (and occasionally the country's politicians) as a foil helped render some of the economic arguments in favor of the pipeline as irrelevant. That's because profits were argued to be going to Canadian oil interests—not into the communities hosting the pipeline itself. The notion of foreign economic interests as a cause for environmental degradation or government impositions on Nebraska lands was useful in bringing a diverse set of stakeholders together. The targeting of these economic interests was decidedly easier once they were positioned as foreign, and helped shield Bold Nebraska from accusations that its actions might be unpatriotic. Those Nebraska lawmakers who continued to be in favor of the pipeline were not viewed as fighting for economic growth in the state, but rather for serving foreign corporate interests. What emerged in this discourse was a

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Canadian corporate bully targeting the livelihoods of ordinary Nebraskans. A local newspaper

headline reflected this sentiment when President Obama denied permission for the pipeline's

construction in 2015, declaring that "Nebraska Davids beat a Canadian Goliath" (Omaha.com,

2015). In this sense, Bold Nebraska bridged what management theorist Mintzberg (2016) refers

to as "the disconnect between multinational enterprises that barrel ahead in the backrooms and

the people in local communities who feel shut out" (para. 5).

The climate change conundrum. While the climate change crisis was featured with

some regularity in Bold Nebraska's website communication, it did not emerge as the most

prolific issue frame, nor was it even among the top three. This is surprising given the salience of

climate change in many national environmental debates today and over the past decade. The

issue frames of environmental threats, globalization, land rights, and farming/ranching all

garnered substantially more attention from the organization. While Bold Nebraska recognized

the relationship between the pipeline's construction and the exacerbation of the climate crisis,

and allied itself with organizations such as 350.org which are devoted to solving the global

climate challenge, this did not drive the dialogue conceived by Bold Nebraska. Other frames

emerged as more popular because they represented a more immediate concern to Nebraskans.

The issues of farming and ranching, as well as land rights, framed the pipeline as an antagonist to

Nebraskans' way of life in a way that the climate change topic could not. The issue of

environmental threats, similarly, showed how the pipeline's construction and possible spills were

not just a danger to land and water—but rather specific land and water entities, most notably the

Ogallala Aquifer and Nebraska Sand Hills. This points to an ongoing conundrum for climate

change as an issue: It does not fit the profile of a hyper-local issue frame as effectively as frames

such as land rights or threats to land and water. Despite the scientific community

overwhelmingly uniting on climate science, and weather events globally increasingly being linked to the outcomes of a warming planet, the impacts of global emissions are more easily abstracted than a local oil spill, even if the results are equally devastating. Bold Nebraska certainly tried to incorporate the climate change issue as a driver of activism dialogue (it was present in roughly one-third of all stories) but it did not come as naturally or prolifically for Bold Nebraska. A number of stories published by Bold Nebraska involving climate change had their origins with third parties, such as other activist groups like 350.org and the Sierra Club, academic researchers, or national/international media outlets.

There were some indicators of a climate change issue frame driven by Bold Nebraska and its state-based agenda. An example comes from the summer of 2014, when Kleeb appeared on MSNBC's "The Ed Show" to discuss severe weather events across the U.S. connected to global warming, including flooding in Kearney, Nebraska. This was the exception, however. A more common scenario was Bold Nebraska's "outsourcing" of the climate change topic to state and national experts. For example, a major report on how the KXL pipeline would worsen climate change and fail the climate test set by President Obama was republished on Bold Nebraska's website but was originally produced by the National Resource Defense Council (NRDC). This example also demonstrates how national-level appeals to the issue of climate change, while rich in statistical data and scientific expertise, did not always make the local connection. The NRDC missive dated July 23, 2013, despite its depth and alarming warning, did not once mention the locale where the pipeline's construction was being contested: the state of Nebraska.

The Bold Nebraska experience highlights an ongoing challenge for climate change as an environmental issue: it is a relatively abstract phenomenon best explained by scientists and politicians. As an issue frame, it did not align as effectively with the rhetorical, emotional, and

cultural appeals of the strategic framing taxonomy, in part because it is viewed as a more diffused and internationalized issue. While some national media stories championed climate change concerns as a leading catalyst for anti-pipeline activism, the analysis from Bold Nebraska's own activism reveals a different story. Climate change still held an important place in the group's campaign, but it did not energize its base to the same degree that agriculture, land rights, or threats to the Ogallala Aquifer did. Nor did it provide a platform for populism in the way that these other issues did.

Tribal rights: Opportunities realized and missed. Of the issue frames examined in this study, the frame of Indigenous/tribal rights and concerns garnered less coverage than the other issue frames. This comes as something of a surprise because Bold Nebraska's activism has regularly integrated Indigenous messages and symbolism in its campaigns, events, and rallies. One the most impactful elements of both the Harvest the Hope festival and Bold Nebraska's "reject and protect" rally in Washington D.C. was the powerful symbolism of the American cowboy reaching out and shaking hands with the Native American, a representation of the Cowboy and Indian Alliance. In part, this lack of substantive representation within topical frames in Bold Nebraska's communication can be attributed to the distribution of population— Native Americans make up only 1.4% of the state's total population (U.S. Census, 2015). It stands to reason that there were fewer individual messengers, activists, and newsmakers from the tribal nations to feed Bold Nebraska's prolific communication output, which amounted to over 1,000 articles published over a five-year period.

However, tribal members *were* disproportionately impacted by the Keystone XL proposal. The pipeline was slated to run through the heart of the Oceti Sacowin Treaty area. Tribes along the pipeline's route included the Oceti Sacowin, the Lakota, Dakota and the Nakota

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nations (PRI.org, para. 13). Rosebud Sioux Nation president Cyril Scott referred to the

authorization of Keystone XL as "an act of war against our people."

Figure 6: A scene from Bold Nebraska's 2013 "Reject and Protect" rally held in Washington, D.C.

Yet as the framing analysis shows, Indigenous/tribal-specific issues, while still present,

were overwhelmed by issue framing related to more general environmental threats, the role of

globalization, land rights, and challenges facing farmers and ranchers. This points to Bold

Nebraska's ability to foster a symbolic alliance for broader appeals and high-profile protest

events, but also its shortcomings in bringing Indigenous topics (and by extension Indigenous

peoples) into its daily, on-the-ground activism. This finding corresponds with Wilson's (2017)

observation in his study of a video production championing Keystone XL protesters:

Environmental organizations like Tar Sands Action and 350.org mediate a diversity of

participants, including Indigenous peoples, but such diversity tends to be more aspired to than realized. Climate activism in particular remains "stubbornly white" (Wilson, 2017, p. 136).

There is one other dimension to Bold Nebraska's integration of Indigenous issues that should be mentioned. The group didn't start actively discussing a Cowboy and Indian Alliance publicly until 2013, at which point Indigenous messengers and narratives become woven more regularly into the pipeline campaign. Bold Nebraska's communication was subsequently energized from the integration of another aggrieved group into its campaign (evidenced by national media stories, support from Indigenous organizations and media, and arguably a more compelling narrative for the national media). This speaks to Bob's (2001) assertion that those movement organizations willing to adjust their activism in order to access superior resources (political, economic, media) will ultimately be more successful than their counterparts unwilling to evolve. As Bold Nebraska embraced tribal-specific pipeline concerns, it also enjoyed its most highly visible moments as an organization, including the Harvest the Hope festival and its "reject and protect" rally in Washington D.C. Media coverage of these events—featuring the contrarian imagery of ranchers and Native Americans protesting in unison, and the cultural heritage and artifacts of both groups—showed that tribal engagement wasn't just another layer to existing activism, it was essential to Bold Nebraska's credibility as a regional leader in resisting Keystone XL.

Strategic framing elements taxonomy

This study's analysis of Bold Nebraska's public-facing materials, including media releases, event advisories, and website stories, sought to both assess whether Bales and Gilliam's (2002) strategic framing elements—numbers, messengers, visuals, tone, context, and metaphors—were woven into the movement's strategic communication, and of these what

elements were most pervasive. Populism was also examined as a seventh framing element alongside Bales and Gilliam's (2002) original variables. The original framing taxonomy encourages public issues advocates, such as activist and not-for-profit organizations, to strive for message development that is aligned closely with campaign goals, and to translate policy positions into language that considers the target audience's existing knowledge and beliefs. Fully developed frames, comprised of these "shared and durable cultural models that people use to make sense of their world" are argued to develop new thinking about an issue (Gilliam & Bales, 2002). They are also argued to help integrate universally resonant norms such as patriotism, property rights, and individual liberty.

This study found multiple strategic framing elements to co-exist in an overwhelming majority of website articles. The most common element found was context, featured in nearly 90% of all articles. Context helps broaden advocacy to family, community, regional, and national levels by positioning an issue within a time and place (Gilliam & Bales, 2001). In the case of Bold Nebraska's activist communication, this included numerous references to specific geographic entities such as the Ogallala Aquifer, communities in the state of Nebraska, and even specific family farms. Such contextualization not only provided a means to localize content, it mitigated abstractive or conceptual styles of communication. For example, the completion of the #NoKXL crop art installation wasn't merely distributed as a photograph without contextual information. Rather, organizers sought readers to volunteer and "help pull weeds in the rows of hand-planted sacred Ponca corn and organic soybeans (that comprise the art installation) on farmer Art Tanderup's land near Neligh, Nebraska" (Hefflinger, 2014, para. 1).

The predominance of contextual elements in Bold Nebraska's framing shouldn't come as a great surprise. By virtue of its name, *Bold Nebraska,* the movement had declared that civic

policy within the state is an organizational priority. The adjective *Bold*, which is defined as "showing an ability to take risks" and be "confident and courageous" (Oxford, 2016), highlights a willingness by the organization to shake up the state's political status quo. The state's name, *Nebraska*, is also contextually-rich, rooted in Indigenous conceptions of local ecology. It comes from the Omaha-Ponca word NiNbdhaska(=khe), meaning "flatwater," used to describe the state's Platte River (Koontz, 2003). Thus, the organization's contextual appeals are even embedded in the *Bold Nebraska* name. Such a contextualization is especially poignant when it invokes sacred Native ground (the Ponca Trail of Tears), sensitive ecological geography (the Nebraska Sand Hills), or utopian-ecological gathering spots (the NOKXL Clean Energy Barn).

Messengers as activism narrators. Messengers, according to Bales and Gilliam (2002) can be as important to the issue as the message itself. They not only provide compelling quotes as part of speeches or media interviews, they also appear in photographs, reach out to audiences on social media, and even write op-eds for influential newspapers. In some cases, they can become the embodiment or physical symbol of a cause. Bold Nebraska proved itself to be particularly adept at both bringing messengers into its communications; only the element of context was used more. These messengers included the obvious spokespersons (such as Jane Kleeb) but also ordinary citizens and even celebrities (one post invoked celebrity activists Daryl Hannah, Mark Ruffalo, Neil Young, *and* Willie Nelson alongside climate change thought leader Bill McKibben). Other messengers took the form of officials (members of the Natural Resources Committee, for example) or specific politicians (such as Nebraska State Senator Ernie Chambers, who fought to repeal TransCanada's eminent domain land acquisition powers). The inclusion of messengers is a reflection of civic exchange within strategic communication. Messengers provide narration, opinions, expertise, and leadership. They show that advocacy does not exist

within a communication vacuum, but rather incorporates the voices of activists and citizens. In constructing rhetorical appeals, messengers make important contributions to the three elements of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. They establish the credibility of the organization, they help conjure up emotions connected to the issue, and they provide arguments and expertise based on logic. In conjunction with the previously discussed contextual elements, messengers were especially important in building ethos and pathos on behalf of Bold Nebraska—helping audiences to make sense of the organization's connection to the pipeline and fusing this authenticity with human emotion.

Another advantage imparted by messengers is their ability to frame or reframe stories featuring different narratives. The Keystone XL proposal was treated by the mainstream media as a political story, an economic story, and an environmental story. As a result, stories about Keystone XL were produced by a wide range of reporters, who situated the pipeline within larger debates over energy policy, climate change, jobs creation, and national politics. Consequently, such stories also featured voices from government (such as the State Department tasked with overseeing the permitting process), TransCanada executives, other oil and gas companies, and think tanks (such as the Center for International Policy). A January 23, 2013 story in the *Washington Post*, describing the backing of the pipeline by Nebraska's governor, highlighted the ability of Jane Kleeb as a messenger to re-route a story's narrative back to Bold Nebraska's favored frames. "The fight continues, even though Governor Heineman sided with a foreign corporation and turned his back on our water and property rights," said Kleeb to the newspaper. Other Bold Nebraska messengers, such as rancher Randy Thompson, provided even blunter assessments of the pipeline project while cementing the saliency of a favored frame—land rights. "They just keep you in a pressure cooker all of the time," he said of pipeline builder

TransCanada's demand to run the pipeline across his family's property in a 2011 *National Post* story. "To me, it's obscene. I thought, screw you, bring your attorneys." The story's reporter echoed those sentiments within the story, referring to TransCanada's correspondence with Thompson as "a blunt missive… (with) all of the charm of a high school bully threatening to punch a third-grader's lights out." Here, the journalist's voice synchronized with Thompson's.

In some cases, the messengers became the story. A September 10, 2013 *Globe and Mail* article reported on Neil Young's description of Fort McMurray, a key site for oil sands production in Alberta as a "wasteland" and more: "The fact is, Fort McMurray looks like Hiroshima," he said, describing his recent visit there. "The Indians up there and the native peoples are dying… The fuel's all over—the fumes everywhere—you can smell it when you get to town." In the same story, Canada's Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver responded that while he was a fan of Young's music, he disagreed with the singer's assertions. Kleeb showed no hesitation in responding to both Young *and* Oliver in the same story while re-routing the story to a preferred frame: "Neil Young is speaking for all of us to stop the Keystone XL," she said. "Joe Oliver can say anything but the reality is people are dying and the alliance between cowboys and Indians is stronger than any K Street lobbyists Canada hires." This time, drawing from sympathetic and oppositional voices, Kleeb was able to reshape a related story about Fort McMurray and the Canadian oil sands into yet another direct narrative against Keystone XL's intrusion into Nebraska.

Metaphors: Translating pipeline politics. The usage of metaphors and simplifying models, also included in a majority of Bold Nebraska's website communication, allowed the organization to take what was a nuanced process involving a multinational company's energy proposal and make it readily digestible for public consumption. While conceptual metaphors are

often used to describe more abstract concepts in concrete terms, Bold Nebraska proved especially adept at connecting the nuances of ecological and resource extraction debates to rural experience and terminology. Officials with various conflicts of interest were labelled as "foxes watching the hen house." Pro-pipeline officials deserved "coal for Christmas" and were implored to "work a day in our boots." Members were encouraged to watch TransCanada "like a hawk," while the pipeline itself was "shovel ready for the grave." Other metaphorical expressions used equally blunt force or humor. State officials were described as "keystone cops" and "puppets of rich foreigners." Others were accused of procrastinating on key decisions ("kicking the can") or receiving perks from TransCanada, including trips to Alberta to play golf with oil lobbyists ("when is tee time?"). One oil and gas industry project was described as a "horror movie"; another as a "pig on the loose." Some of these metaphors leveraged previously conceptualized themes such as the environmental "battle" or "journey." However, Bold Nebraska was also successful in developing metaphors rich in contextual and populist sentiment. Metaphors containing agrarian/ecological themes were a natural fit for the organization's activism, as were metaphors containing sporting or popular cultural references, such as Hollywood movies or the Nebraska Cornhuskers football team. The petroleum industry also provided Bold Nebraska with ready-made metaphors depicting environmental hazards or corporate ambivalence toward Nebraskans.

Seen through the Aristotelian model of persuasion, the usage of metaphors played an outsized role in establishing pathos or emotion appeals. These metaphors interfaced effectively with other framing elements in developing a style of communication for Bold Nebraska that was equal parts provocative, colorful, and grassroots. For example, a Christmas campaign promoted to media involved the fictional character created by Dr. Seuss, The Grinch, visiting Nebraska

governor Dave Heineman and asking him to "not be a mean one" by denying any pipeline route that crossed the Ogallala Aquifer. The Christmas theme provided a strong hook for the media ("great visuals to kick-off holiday," Jane Kleeb pitched earnestly in a media advisory) and also provided a lighter, simpler approach to engaging the public on the routing of the pipeline. Similarly, a "Pumpkins Against the Pipeline" event allowed Nebraskans to engage with the pipeline issue through the occasion of Halloween. The group's members carved 91 pumpkins to represent the projected 91 oil spills projected by a University of Nebraska professor that would occur over the lifetime of the Keystone XL pipeline. Here again, a metaphorical model for pipeline resistance provided member engagement (this was effectively a pumpkin carving party), a compelling photo opportunity for both Bold Nebraska's internal communication as well as the media, and a ready-made message for the public and journalists about what was otherwise a long-winded academic report. Through the Aristotelian persuasion lens, it also helped develop logos, by disseminating an argument about pipeline accidents based on scientific evidence. Both the Christmas and Halloween events also featured prominently in Bold Nebraska's social media

efforts, including their Facebook and Flickr pages.

Figure 7: Scene from Bold Nebraska's pumpkin carving party on October 30, 2015. Members gathered at Harmony Nursery in Bradshaw, Nebraska to carve "#NOKXL" messages for U.S. President Barack Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Visuals: A currency of American environmental history. Bold Nebraska's continual focus on the hyper-local was perhaps best articulated through visual imagery. Within its thousands of website messages, Bold Nebraska embedded hundreds of images, conveying a pivotal sense of time and place in Nebraska. The group also posted many more images to photo sharing sites and social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and Flickr. The images conveyed a unique sense of ecology in the state: bountiful cornfields, agricultural equipment, and the well-publicized clean energy barn. At the same time, they drew from the visual symbolism of the prairie to inspire a much larger constituency—not a new tactic in American history.

According to historian Finis Dunaway (2005), a century ago the Sierra Club (one of Bold

Nebraska's chief allies in the pipeline fight) used a combination of powerful images and words

to resist the Hetch Hetchy dam development in the northwestern corner of Yosemite National

Park. In this fight, the Sierra Club benefitted from forerunners in activist public relations, the

environmentalist John Muir and the photographer Herbert Gleason:

> Gleason's photographs became a centerpiece of the campaign, not only in his
> popular lectures but also in a pamphlet distributed nationally… The photographs
> authenticated Hetch Hetchy's aesthetic value and testified to the sacredness of the
> site. (Dunaway, 2005, p. 22)

Bold Nebraska's #NOKXL crop art installation emulates these objectives of conveying a natural

spirituality. Though crop art as a communication tactic is often dismissed as a publicity gimmick,

in this case it leveraged an ideal medium to tell a story about the convergence of Native

American and Nebraskan farmer interests against a common environmental threat to land that is

simultaneously sacred and agriculturally productive. Seen from an aerial vantage point, the

inscription of the outline of the cowboy and Indian standing side by side into a corn field, above

the words "Heartland" and "#NoKXL", signified the sacredness of Nebraska's heritage and

environment. It had come to represent not just one farm, but many.

Figure 8: Aerial image of the #NoKXL crop art installation in Neligh, Nebraska, near the Ponca Trail of Tears.

While visuals were featured in roughly half of all Bold Nebraska's website communication, many of these visuals were qualitatively more important than the numbers would suggest. The crop art installation, for example, was used multiple times in Bold Nebraska's own communication, but was also featured in mainstream news stories, including national media coverage. Another visual used was that of the black snake. For Lakota tribal members, it represents a second coming as a result of a destruction to the earth's natural resources. It was used in several scenarios, including the previously discussed cover of Omaha Magazine. Finally, Bold Nebraska's regular usage and publication of political cartoons also helped fulfill a confrontational strategy with government and "big oil" officials—using ridicule, humor, and an understanding of local values to mobilize publics and marginalize those in power (Alinski, 1972). That environmental narratives were embedded in Bold Nebraska's photographs

and other images echoes Dunaway's (2008) assertion that American environmental reformers have turned to images because they infuse aesthetics and emotion into political debates. Such images are effective because they can "elicit an emotional response in spectators, awakening them to the beauty of nature and arousing their concern for its protection" (Dunaway, 2008, p. xviii). Bold Nebraska was building on a longstanding tradition within environmentalism of leveraging photographs and visuals to construct powerful rhetorical appeals.

      Populism: Reborn on the prairie. Among the framing elements analyzed through the five years of Bold Nebraska's website activism, populism emerged along with context as a leading strategic communication element. Phrases like "we the people," "victory for the people," and "the people's voice" were used regularly. So too were criticisms of TransCanada officials and politicians at the state and national levels—in tones ranging from mockery to dismissal to anger. This study's analysis of Bold Nebraska's frames also found that a significant association existed between the usage of populism and the issue framing of farming/ranching. Populism was also linked to two other issue frames directly impacting the prosperity of American farmers— ownership of agricultural property free of government/corporate interference (land rights) and the availability of a clean water source (environmental threats).

      Historically, populism as a political process—especially in the context of farming— is a known quantity in Nebraska. During the 1880s, wheat farmers from Nebraska and Kansas, facing a bleak economic environment driven by transportation costs and a deflationary market for their agricultural output, joined forces with other wheat farmers from Plains states and cotton farmers from the south. The People's Party, also known as the Populist Party, became a force in American politics during the 1880s, taking aim especially at Wall Street, railroad barons, banks, the gold standard, cities, and other manifestations of "East Coast elites." The party's formative

convention in 1892, held in Omaha, called for sweeping changes to the electoral and taxation

systems, the nationalization of railroad and telecommunication networks, stabilization of the

national currency, and assistance for farmers. While the party enjoyed mixed success in the

coming decades, many of these policy positions continue to be debated in contemporary politics.

It is arguably the Plains-style populism that continues to endure in Bold Nebraska's

populist rhetoric—the criticisms of elites in combination with the rising of the people:

> For self-proclaimed outsiders, the image of the enemy took on particular
> importance. A persuasive rendering of political evil could transform radical
> dissenters into legitimate contenders for power, reversing the natural advantages
> possessed by those who already held it… champions of the people described the
> elite as being everything that devout producers, thankfully, were not:
> condescending profligate, artificial, effete, manipulative, given to intellectual
> instead of practical thinking, and dependent on the labor of others. (Kazin, 1995,
> p. 15)

This conflation of hyper-localization with distrust of political and economic elites leads to the

regional populist sentiment (Walton & Bailey, 2006) discussed earlier in this study. Just as

wildlife protection advocates from Alabama framed the wilderness of the Deep South in an

emotionally resonant matter in order to broaden support for environmental preservation and

protection, so too did Bold Nebraska.

> Successful adoption of populist and cultural frames poses a challenge to those
> who seek to characterize wilderness advocates as elitist liberal tree-huggers.
> These gun-toting, beer-drinking, football-loving activists claim kindred spirit
> status with their neighbors and can effectively label individual, corporate, and
> government actors who threaten wilderness as outsiders not to be trusted. (Walton
> & Bailey, 2006)

This study did not measure the implementation/usage of specific cultural artifacts and signifiers

within communication such as references to football, hunting, and prayer meetings. However, a

search of all Bold Nebraska website articles over a five-year period reveals that beer was a

central appeal to bolster support and dialogue. For example, the group invited Barack Obama to

a "Tarsands Free Beer and Beef Summit" featuring "the best water from the (Nebraska) Sandhills that makes great beer and lots of ranchers with tarsands-free beef" (BoldNebraska.org, 2012, para. 12). Another related activity during the summer of 2011, "a beer cooler talk," provided Bold Nebraska supporters with talking points for their July 4 parties in order to build support for several protest actions, including the "I Stand with Randy" events across the state in support of aggrieved landowners. Finally, to mark the occasion of the first meeting between U.S. President Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Bold Nebraska hosted a "Politics and Pints: Bold State Dinner" event, which included a "pub quiz" comprised of topics such as climate change, oil sands, and the North American Free Trade Agreement. Public actions and events such as "Politics and Pints" and the "beer cooler talk" conjure up classic mass communication theories emphasizing the role of individuals and groups in mediating issues and messages to eachother. These include Katz and Lazarsfeld's two-step flow (1966), which explains the role of interpersonal communication in message transmission; and Rogers's (1976) research on the diffusion of ideas and the role of opinion leadership. Both theories situate social structures inside the communication process, and harken back to the 19th century French philosopher Gabriel Tarde, who argued for a public opinion process that travelled from the pages of newspapers to conversations in coffeehouses and salons, before finally merging into one or two primary public positions (Rogers, 2006).

Football, in the form of the University of Nebraska's Cornhuskers football team, was also layered into the years-long campaign against the pipeline. Though some of the references to the popular team were part of conversational blogs, and not central to pipeline politics, at least one moment ensnared the flagship college team into the Keystone debate. During the 2011 football season, TransCanada paid for pro-pipeline video advertisements aired inside the team's iconic

Memorial Stadium in Lincoln. The university ended the sponsorship arrangement because of

pushback from aggrieved fans, which included spectators actively booing the ads during the

games (JournalStar.com, 2011). Bold Nebraska was quick to pounce on this public relations

mishap for TransCanada. Kleeb provided comment to local media, explaining how she "worked

with an advertising agency to estimate how much TransCanada had spent on (football)

advertising and discovered the company had spent about $200,000 over a recent two-week

period" (JournalStar.com, 2011, para. 24). Later, in a story headlined "Huskers Sack

TransCanada," Bold Nebraska declared on its website that "when college football's best fans

start booing your ads (not even the other team), well, the actions speak for themselves" (Bold

Nebraska, 2011, para. 6).

To the outsider, this confluence of populist American imagery—the Cornhuskers football

team, the July 4 beer cooler talks, the ranchers serving up "tarsands-free beef"—clashes with

some key dimensions of Bold Nebraska's activism: its ability to navigate mainstream and social

media channels, its alliances with green organizations like 350.org and the Sierra Club, its

effective lobbying of state legislators and national leaders. Given this political savvy and

sophistication of networking, it would be easy to dismiss Kleeb and her leadership team as

"elites" themselves. Yet previous studies of populism have shown such a tension to be essential

to a movement's success:

> This symbiosis was intrinsic to the political process. Without strong movements
> to rally around and mobilize grievances at the grassroots, elite reformers stood
> naked before their stand-pat adversaries. Yet, without the aid of insiders able to
> speak to a national constituency and work the levers of government, movements
> withered away or became impotent, bitter shells… Movements usually have to
> shear off their radical edges and demonstrate that, if necessary, they can march to
> the rhetorical beat of an influential set of allies. (Kazin, 1995, p. 25)

Populist appeals were a natural fit for Bold Nebraska's activism because they synchronized with topical frames that have incorporated populism for over a century. American populism is rooted in the experience of the Nebraskan independent farmer. Bold Nebraska's narrative of disenfranchised farmers and ranchers fighting big business and government officials resonates because it builds upon a story that has already been told—through history textbooks, popular culture accounts in films and novels, and even oral histories passed down from family members.
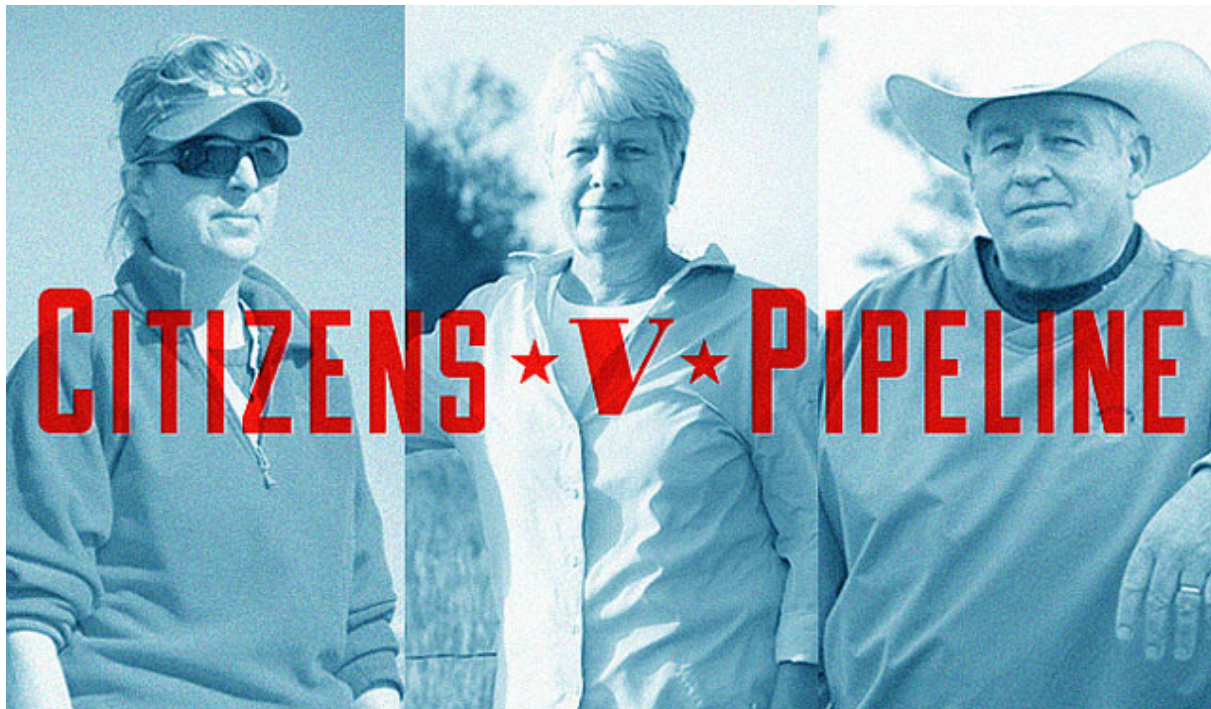
Figure 9: Image of Bold Nebraska landowner supporters sent with the organization's statement about the pipeline's routing.

This study has also shown that contemporary populist activism does not exist in a regional or national vacuum. Populism in recent decades has reached beyond the United States to find a new enemy recognizable to the original Populist Party of a century ago: "Banks and corporations who routinely moved capital, goods, and services around the globe and could shrug off the once potent restraints of national governments and labor movements" (Kazin, 1995, p. 281). As shown through the significant statistical association between usage of the populism

element and the issue frame of globalization, Bold Nebraska's activism was predicated on villainizing not only U.S. elites, but particularly those from outside the country's borders. Canada, in the form of the TransCanada corporation, emerged as a convenient and easy target here. It held the distinction of being both foreign and a for-profit corporation—an aggressive purveyor of "dirty oil" and a serious threat to the prairie farm. However, the sentiment that drives this newer form of populism has also generated some of its most impassioned criticism. As a powerful process, populism has been associated with more dangerous appeals to isolationism, nationalism, and even ethnicity and race.

Bold Nebraska's coalition-building politics and its progressive-leaning stances on non-environmental issues like the provision of healthcare for undocumented immigrants helped define a populism that was both hopeful and tolerant. But did Bold Nebraska engage in nationalism during its years-long fight with TransCanada? Definitions of nationalism have included themes of anti-colonial sentiment, class ideology within capitalism, and mythological, irrational, and extreme ideas of nationhood (Gellner & Breuilly, 2008). For this discussion I focus on the latter interpretation of extreme patriotism.

Bold Nebraska's communication held up TransCanada as a foreign corporation, a merchandiser and conduit for foreign oil, and a Canadian interloper devoid of any sense of social responsibility to Nebraskans. Yet the criticism was specifically targeted at the company's leadership and occasionally Canadian's political leadership class. Otherwise, Bold Nebraska communicated the threat of "tarsands oil" to Canadian citizens and its First Nations groups, engaged with Canadian media through the provision of media commentary, and even took an active interest in Canadian policy decisions as they related to the oil and gas sector, including proposed pipeline developments *within* Canada such as TransCanada's Energy East pipeline.

Jane Kleeb went so far as to express her fondness for the Canadian band the Barenaked Ladies as proof that she liked Canadians. By walking this line—between rhetorically-infused criticisms of foreign (primarily Canadian) elites and active interest in the well-being of Canadian citizens and Canada's environment—Bold Nebraska successfully leveraged the power of populist, anti-globalization communication without devolving into any of its darkest attributes.

Figure 10: A pipeline opponent stands beside Bold Nebraska's "Stop TransCanada" billboard.

Further insight here comes from Anderson's (2006) examination of nationalism and patriotism as features of culture imbued with history and communal life. Forms of organization based on personal relationships are bolstered by communication-driven "imagined communities"—fostering commitment to patriotism and national life while cementing an in-group dynamic. This imagined fraternal or community life plays a central role in establishing, or at least influencing, identities for groups and individuals (Anderson, 2006). Patriotism emerges here as a form of cultural expression—more closely aligned with the attributes of religion or community life than a specific political ideology. Brubaker (2010) builds on this positioning of

patriotism as a catalyst for community in contemporary American life—connecting it to more engaged citizenship, better integration for newcomers and immigrants, and advocacy for equitable social policies. Seen through these perspectives, Bold Nebraska's focus on the best interests of local community members helped align its patriotic appeals with inward-looking civic engagement, while reasonably distancing the organization from dangerous exploitation of in-group/out-group dynamics.

From activist frames to media storytelling

In addition to seeking a greater understanding of communication emanating from contemporary environmental activism, this study also sought to identify the elements from this strategic communication that carry forward into mainstream media coverage. This study's analysis of newspaper articles from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* in the U.S., and the *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* in Canada, found that the strategic framing elements embedded in movement communication can also be found in subsequent national media coverage. Bold Nebraska's continued emphasis on contextual factors, notably its Nebraska location and geography, became embedded into the broader media narrative. Context was the most used element in both movement framing *and* media framing, as journalists situated the pipeline fight squarely in Nebraska's farming and ranching communities. This was especially important because dozens of reporters from a myriad of beats were assigned to reporting about Keystone XL and Bold Nebraska. At the *New York Times* alone, articles were authored by Michael Shear, a White House correspondent, Coral Davenport, an energy and environmental policy reporter, Mitch Smith, a reporter with the Times' Chicago bureau, Dan Frosch, a Denver correspondent, Saul Elbein, a Texas-based freelance journalist, and Ian Austen, the Times' Canada correspondent. The provision of contextual information in Bold Nebraska's messaging

was important in relaying to a wide swathe of reporters from a range of media outlets the circumstances, setting, and history of Bold Nebraska's fight against Keystone XL—especially when almost all of the national reporters were based outside of the state.

Messengers too were integral to both Bold Nebraska's narrative of the pipeline battle as well as the media's. These storytellers—in the form of farmers, ranchers, landowners, and other activists—drove the message of the pipeline. Nebraskans such as Art and Helen Vanderup, the corn and soybean farmers from Custer Township, and cattle rancher Randy Thompson from Merrick County, were put forth as the protagonists in Bold Nebraska's years-long eco-drama. In explaining the "Stand with Randy" campaign, one of several engineered to energize Nebraskans in their fight against TransCanada, the *New York Times* described Thompson as "a lifelong Republican who had never done anything more political than vote" (Elbein, 2014). The Tanderups, whose farm hosted the Harvest the Hope festival, garnered similar attention, including attention from *Rolling Stone* magazine, which detailed how Art Tanderup had first met Neil Young at a Keystone XL protest in Washington, DC—leading to Young's concert for Bold Nebraska on Tanderup's property (Kreps, 2014). In a statement posted to Bold Nebraska's website and given to media, Kleeb even situated the group's salt-of-earth messengers as celebrities in their own right: "Farmers, ranchers and tribes that have been standing up to TransCanada are rock stars in my eyes," she wrote (PRWatch.org, 2014, para.5).

Not all elements were as well represented in both movement and media framing, however. Bold Nebraska's oppositional tone, which was featured in nearly three quarters of the organization's website communication, garnered less inclusion in the media coverage—in great part because journalists control the tone and also determine which quotes to incorporate in news stories. Similarly, Bold Nebraska's usage of metaphors saw a similar drop-off in media articles,

again demonstrating how journalists construct their stories based on different professional practices that may or may not incorporate specific communication styles. This also helps explain why numbers and data were featured in media stories to a greater degree than Bold Nebraska's own articles. Still, a telling result is that Bold Nebraska's rhetorically-infused strategic framing elements were found in a majority of both Bold Nebraska and national media articles. This can be explained in part to Bold Nebraska's ability to provide not only a prepared narrative to the media (complete with compelling protagonists and colorful commentary), but also specific components helpful in re-constructing it as part of the reporting process. The organization's press releases, statements, advisories, and interviews given to the media closely mirrored what was communicated in primary missives to Bold Nebraska's primary audience. For example, the organization's mantra of protecting Nebraska's "land and water" from a foreign corporation in website communication was repeated near-verbatim by metropolitan and national daily publications, including the *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Omaha World-Herald*. So while media coverage didn't mirror the exact usage of Bold Nebraska's framing elements, it did convey the same master frame emanating from Bold Nebraska's website and the Harvest the Hope concert.

Harvest the Hope: Cementing the Cowboy and Indian Alliance Metanarrative

As this study has highlighted, the national media were not the sole entities responsible for broadly defining anti-pipeline activism. Bold Nebraska actively defined its environmentalism as a movement through largescale events like the Harvest the Hope music festival. As a cultural venue for protest and public activism, Harvest the Hope represented the aggregation of Bold Nebraska's rhetorical appeals—in turn fostering a master frame, or metanarrative, of united rural Americans, both Native American and non-Native, resisting the environmental threat wrought by

a foreign corporation. Judged by different measures, including attendance, star power, and media interest, the event in and of itself was a considerable success. The concert was sold-out, attracted two of the highest-profile musicians in the world, and garnered extensive media coverage in publications as diverse as the *Lincoln Journal Star*, *Indian Country Today*, and *Rolling Stone*. At a regional level, the event parallels the trajectory of equally iconic and much larger music festivals. Harvest the Hope stands in for an idealized prairie pipeline activism in the way that the Woodstock Music & Art Fair symbolized American counterculture in the 1960s or Live Aid represented the global effort to address the 1980s famine in Ethiopia. Garofalo (2007) explains Woodstock as participatory, communitarian, and non-commercial—an opportunity for counterculturalists to seek "refuge in the social relations of an idealized past"; while Live Aid's loftier activism opened new spaces for cultural politics (p. 189). The immortalization of these events through mass media has given them a mythology of their own (Cunha, 1988). Richard Peterson (1973), comparing rock festivals to labor strikes of the 1940s and student protests in the 1960s, argues that such festivals represented a collective rethinking of fundamental social issues and conflicts. While the involvement of celebrity musicians and other entertainers is shown to be a longstanding tactic in social and environmental activism, its effectiveness has been debated. According to de Waal (2016), most people aren't persuaded by it, but they believe that most other people are. In this operating environment, the legitimacy of Neil Young and Willie Nelson through their longstanding connection to American farming and Indigenous issues—their own narrative fidelity—becomes paramount.
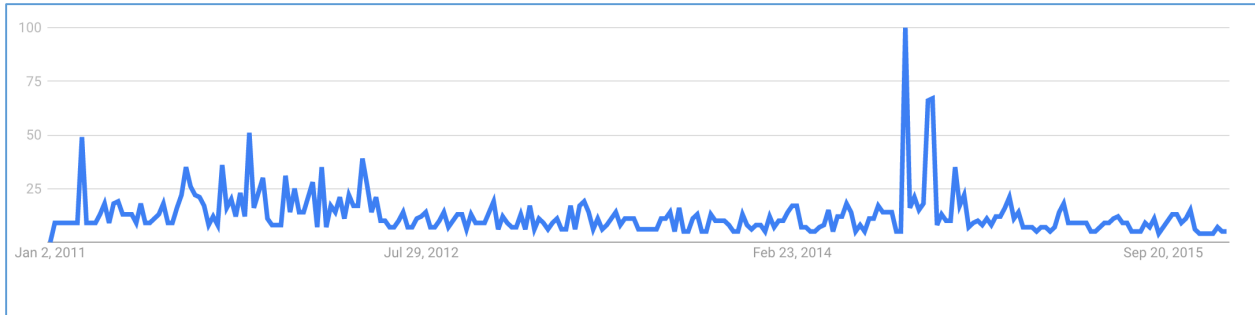
Figure 11: Usage of the search term "Bold Nebraska" between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2015, from GoogleTrends. Numbers represent search engine interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given timeframe. The value of 100, reached on August 18, 2014—the day the "Harvest the Hope" concert was announced—indicates peak popularity for Bold Nebraska on the Google Internet search engine.

At Harvest the Hope, it is Bold Nebraska's construction of a coalition involving primarily white American farmers and ranchers with Native American tribal members that stands out from other rock festivals. The image of the cowboy by itself maintains its symbolic power steeped in American ruggedness, adventure, and expansionism, but it also carries baggage that to this day divides many Americans. Among its many legacies, the conquering of the American West by white settlers is remembered for tragic conflicts with Indigenous communities, some of which included mass human atrocities, as well as sometimes devastating ecological impacts to land, water, and wildlife.

By itself, then, the cowboy is a contended symbol—representing at once histories of pioneering and violence. A cowboys-alone crusade could not do justice, then, to the simultaneously patriotic and environmental overtures of the Bold Nebraska cause. Yet the master frame evoked by the Cowboy and Indian Alliance at Harvest the Hope ultimately solves (or absolves) the American cowboy's reputation problem. It recognizes that the American West was founded not by one particular group, ethnicity, or nationality, but rather multiple entities. As first peoples, the role of Native American tribes is not merely complementary to North American Great Plains history, it is both central and absolute. To this end, the alliance implicitly recognizes the rights, responsibilities, and contributions of both groups to the land, even while skirting over

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the contended history between the two groups, both in Nebraska and nation-wide. It also

provides some cover to the negative narratives potentially adjoined to the cowboy. Here, the

farmer and rancher achieve ecological goals in harmony with their Indigenous neighbors. The

cowboy, then, continues to stand in for the American patriot fending off the Canadian interloper.

Yet he gains a greater moral authority by standing as an equal with a former adversary.

Figure 12: At Harvest the Hope, musicians Willie Nelson and Neil Young (center) are flanked by (left to right) Russel Eagle Bear, President Scott (Rosebud Nation), President Brewer (Oglala Nation), and Mekasi Camp (Ponca Nation) (photo by Michael Friberg for Bold Nebraska).

From the "Indian" perspective, the alliance raises key issues not only about challenges

and opportunities facing Native Americans in the environmental sense, but also in the political

and economic realms as well. As a partner in the Cowboy and Indian Alliance, and a host of

Harvest the Hope, tribal members shared many of the same objectives as non-Native farmers and

ranchers. Like their partners, they maintained an interest in protecting their geography in the

sense of ecology but also from hostile corporate or government acquisitions. Symbolically, the alliance with farmers and ranchers allowed these Native American environmental advocates to be seen less as adversaries or victims of the state, and rather as a part of the American fabric. Standing with cowboys, they too are situated as American patriots—protecting U.S. soil in the most literal sense from the imposition of global "big oil."

This bridging of cultures and histories creates a distinct American pluralism—one that fulfills Bridger's (2005) identification of the master frame as a rhetorically developed narrative to help the collective make sense of itself, to set the boundaries for discourse, and to create a new audience for subsequent appeals. This Cowboy and Indian Alliance metanarrative redefines American environmentalism, rendering it an act of patriotism and imbuing it with rural values. It also moves it away from its association with traditional environmental messengers, notably urbanites and radical protesters. It also serves as a vehicle for what Snow and Benford (1992) articulate as the punctuating and coding of reality, and the assignment of attribution. Here, the master frame of the Cowboy and Indian Alliance presents to its audience a novel yet innovative way to reconfigure the essence of rural America, including its history and its ecology.

There remain some disquieting tensions within this alliance, however. Though not likely intentional, the "Indians" still play second billing to the "Cowboys" within the Cowboy and Indian Alliance moniker. Given the historical marginalization of Indigenous peoples in the U.S., questions also linger about the usage of powerful Native American symbols in propping up a movement that serves a largely non-Indigenous constituency. The potential issue of cultural appropriation provides a reminder that movements are capable of exploiting cultural heritage and symbols to further specific agendas—even when the ownership of such symbols remains contended. A key insight here can be gleaned from Landsman's (1987) analysis of the

Mohawk/white conflict in the Ganienkeh community of Upstate New York. Media depictions of the Iroquois activists were outdated and romanticized, but they captured the attention and support of non-Indigenous readers. Mohawk leaders embraced this irony, and the coverage, because these representations achieved more ambitious and overarching political goals related to tribal sovereignty. Braroe (1975), writing about a small band of Cree Indians living in western Canada, refers to this tension within mediated performance as impression management, the importance of which lies in the necessity for participants to exert "a degree of control over what is communicated about themselves, since information that conflicts with one's intended self-image should not be allowed to slip by" (p. 26).

Alongside the concern of appropriation is one of commercialization. On March 15, 2015, a curious headline appeared in the pages of the *Omaha World-Herald*: "Bold Nebraska sues for beer revenues from Willie Nelson-Neil Young concert." After the Harvest the Hope festival, Bold Nebraska had litigated against "the husband and wife owners of a small-town restaurant that contracted with the organization to operate the beer garden at the September show"—for $25,000 damages based on sales of 12,000 cans of beer (Omaha.com, 2015, para. 2). Here is a reminder that Bold Nebraska, even as a not-for-profit entity, engaged in commercial activity to sustain its operations and amplify its message. The 8,500 tickets available for entry to the event were hardly given away; they were sold for $50 each. While this is not a shocking cost when one considers the exorbitant ticket prices for high-profile rock artists such as the Rolling Stones and U2, or even Neil Young and Willie Nelson themselves, it represents a major cost for working families and economically marginalized citizens. Even as a fundraiser, the necessary commercialization of Harvest the Hope, including ticket and beer sales, highlights hierarchy of

participation that is possible in movement events—a stratification between movement member "haves" and "have nots."

Figure 13: A poster promoting the Harvest the Hope concert. Bold Nebraska charged patrons $50 per ticket for the sold-out music festival, with event proceeds going to Bold Nebraska and the Cowboy and Indian Alliance.

The funds raised from Harvest the Hope were distributed to Bold Nebraska, its associated Cowboy and Indian Alliance, and the Indigenous Environmental Network. The positive net impact for recipients is obvious, as the funds generated from fundraising events such as this (Harvest the Hope cleared $125,000, according to Kleeb) sustain operations for not-for-profit entities and inject necessary capital into current and new projects. At the same time, commercialization of this order makes issue advocates vulnerable to accusations (whether

justified or not) of co-optation by business interests or the selling out of the grassroots base. Harvest the Hope provided a pipeline metanarrative for Nebraskans to rally around steeped in powerful symbolism; yet it also posted a very concrete market price for this high-profile and historic rock concert.

Being a protest movement did not stop the group from suing a small-business vendor in arrears over beer sales, nor did it mitigate commercialization of the movement in more subtle ways. A case in point comes from the "Bold Store" on Bold Nebraska's website. Like other consumer-oriented retailers on the Internet, the store allows viewers to browse through a variety of Bold Nebraska protest artifacts and make purchases instantly through debit or credit card payment. Several of these items, inspired by the Harvest the Hope festival, emulate what is always on offer at stadium rock concerts, athletic events, or amusement parks: t-shirts, hats, and other trinkets and souvenirs such as pens and coffee mugs. These for-sale items include the official Harvest the Hope shirt (retail price: $20); the Pipeline Fighter Trucker Hat ($15); a Bold Nebraska and Cowboy and Indian Alliance travel coffee mug ($6), and a pen engraved with the words "President Obama: This Machine Stops Pipelines. #NOKXL") ($3). This commercialization of grassroots appeals is also evidenced with the "I Stand with Randy" and "Windmills Not Oil Spills" t-shirts (both $15).

Figure 14: T-shirts and trucker hats are among the items for sale at Bold Nebraska's online store. Sale proceeds are directed toward the fight against Keystone XL, according to Bold Nebraska's website.

An online visit to the Bold Nebraska store reveals no major surprises—since it is not uncommon for members of not-for-profit and advocacy organizations to show their loyalty to a social or environmental "brand" through the wearing or display of merchandised goods. Greenpeace, after all, launched a store of its own in 2010 that included a myriad of wildlife-themed buttons, stickers, postcards, and greeting cards available for purchase. It too feeds an appetite for member participation and accrued cultural capital through the merchandising of commercial products. The merchandising of movements, then, not only raises important operational funds for organizations. It also provides a means for audiences to weave the appeals of the organization into their personal lives and life narratives. However, such consumption activity can render activism more vulnerable to outsider charges of commodification.

An example from Australia shows how merchandising adds to an organization's appeal even while its followers are dismissed as "armchair activists." Recognise, a movement addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights in that country, offers an array of t-shirts, hoodies, buttons, and badges for sale that is similar to the Bold Store. A critic in

Australia's mainstream media used the merchandising to undermine Recognise's credibility and authenticity: "The Recognise brand offers a great deal to the consumer-activist… It offers a sense of participating in something morally good, without the requirements to make sacrifices, forego pleasures or endure discomforts that usually accompany a moral cause" (Pholi, 2014, para. 1). Such a critique is overwrought, but its basic premise—that the commodification of activism can have unintended consequences, including being taken less seriously by outsiders—is not completely without merit.

Even so, the merchandising of Harvest the Hope served to reinforce Bold Nebraska's engagement with its audience, not undermine it. Consumption of the organization's "brand" played an important role in fostering an identification between its audience and the anti-pipeline movement. In addition to the concert, these commercial items were worn by participants during community gatherings, demonstrations, and other public events—which in turn were mediated through photographs and video published on Bold Nebraska's website and social media platforms. In this sense, these commercial items, incorporating phrases such as "Pipeline Fighter," "Windmills Not Oil Spills," and "I Stand with Randy," provided key visual, contextual, and metaphorical rallying cries. Importantly, these t-shirt appeals were adorned not just by Bold Nebraska's leadership, but by the disenfranchised community members, including farmers and ranchers, it ultimately sought to influence and mobilize.

At the individual- and group-levels, these ideology-infused rhetorical appeals provided what Burke (1969) explains as the "symbolic means of inducing cooperation" (p. 43) while fostering the adoption of a particular style of speech and writing within Bold Nebraska's established discourse community (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). Given this, Bold Nebraska's merchandising was especially well-leveraged at Harvest the Hope,

an event that crucially developed Bold Nebraska's meta-narrative. The sloganeering embedded in commercial products provided small but powerful image events (DeLuca, 2005) that helped to shape public consciousness—and what McGee (1980) describes as a "vocabulary of ideographs as a prerequisite for belonging" (p. 15).

Yet for Bold Nebraska, the intersection of a harmless (and arguably necessary) commercialization with the potential appropriation (whether real or perceived) of Indigenous symbolism does make its message more vulnerable to charges of exploitation. The usage of sacred Native American artifacts in fleeting editorial appeals and special events is safeguarded as activism and free speech. However, it is harder to qualify the commodification of an Indigenous headdress in a retail store with the same distinction. Without adequate context, a t-shirt design featuring the tribal prophecy of a black snake destroying land and water can either represent support for Indigenous environmental justice, or more ominously can be construed as profiteering from Indigenous culture. To Bold Nebraska's credit, this particular t-shirt was modelled by a tribal member. However, the Bold Nebraska Store reminds communicators tasked with forging identities in the name of pluralist causes that they hold a special responsibility to dignify the cultural heritages and identities of all represented. Bold Nebraska's usage of such cultural artifacts and symbols is ultimately legitimized by the engagement and support of many Indigenous tribes and tribal members at Harvest the Hope. Nonetheless, it highlights the fact that anti-pipeline activism, including the variety deployed by Bold Nebraska, operates within a larger framework of coalition responsibility and communication ethics.

A return to environmental ethics.

At the heart of much environmental discourse there lies an underpinning of ethics—in the sense of moral ecological action and environmental behavior that serves the well-being of

communities, nation-states, larger geographies, and indeed the planet. As this study's framing

analysis bears out, through the lens of Ten Eyck and Williment's (2003) scientific discourse

frames, mainstream media coverage of Bold Nebraska's fight against TransCanada's pipeline

incorporated "ethical concerns" in a majority of articles. It is worth noting that while Bold

Nebraska raised ethical problems related to its opponents in government and the oil sector, it was

also on the receiving end of ethical questions and criticism. Some discourse from pipeline

proponents painted Bold Nebraska's activism and communication as less than genuine. A

spokesperson for TransCanada labelled group leader Kleeb as "a very effective misinformer"

who staged a rural uprising for the benefit of East Coast environmentalists: "She uses hyperbole

and fear to make reasonable people think that something awful is about to happen. She's

embellishing to susceptible people" (New York Times, 2014, para. 39).

Here I invoke Fisher's (1987) conception of manipulative rhetoric, a term used for when

an audience is being "played, worked, or otherwise used" (p. 117). Evidences of this

manipulation include communication expertise used in a self-serving way; the fostering of

dialogue that distracts from or dilutes the truth; and communication that serves personal ambition

over social knowledge or public action (Fisher, 1987). I argue here that while Bold Nebraska's

communication did prop up key messengers and spokespersons to elevate a broader narrative

about the organization's mission and work, it did so with the intention of creating a new interest

in the pipeline's construction and environmental impacts among rural Nebraskans. In this sense,

it produced what Fisher (1987) describes as social knowledge—an account of reality that is

shared among citizens—as well as civic action, by encouraging broader public participation

through engagement in live-time and mediated venues. It is true that Jane Kleeb elevated her

personal profile during Bold Nebraska's half-decade of opposition to TransCanada. This includes

a feature profile in the *New York Times' Sunday Magazine* entitled "Jane Kleeb vs. the Keystone Pipeline." However, such profile-building always occurred in the name of bolstering pipeline opposition. This is persuasion informing public life, not the self-serving manipulative rhetoric cautioned against by Fisher (1987).

From public relations to grassroots civic persuasion

A primary objective of this study was to garner a better understanding of how strategic communication advances the priorities of activist organizations. Another key goal was to assess how such activism in turn influences the field of public relations. Contentious battles over the logging of old-growth forests in the U.S. Pacific Northwest during the 1980s spurred much discussion about the changing nature of public relations, including the heightened role of the practice in potentially resolving confrontations with environmentalists (L.A. Grunig, 1989). A two-way symmetrical approach was considered necessary not only to mitigate the fallout from public demonstrations and negative media coverage but also because the reaching of mutual understanding was preferable to engaging in conflict (L.A. Grunig, 1986; Grunig & Grunig, 2008). L.A. Grunig's (1987, p. 55) assertion that activism represents "the organization of diffused publics into a powerful body attempting to control the organization from the outside" is proven true through the case of Bold Nebraska's years-long fight against TransCanada. Yet such an argument has positioned public relations as an institutional activity, the domain of corporations and governments. Such a normative model for public relations places such entities at the center of an ecosystem surrounded by "stakeholders": customers, shareholders, community members, and finally activists. This was clearly not how Bold Nebraska saw itself.

This study did not examine the specific public relations strategies of TransCanada during this years-long battle over the pipeline's construction, nor does it purport to judge the adequacy

of the company's strategic communication during this timeframe. However, this study of Bold Nebraska's communication shows that very little of the activist appeals were comprised of dialogue or engagement with TransCanada, even though a vast majority of communication missives were *about* TransCanada and its Keystone XL pipeline effort. The plentiful dialogue in Bold Nebraska's communication was driven by conversations with Nebraskan farmer, ranchers, landowners, tribal members, and more generally the Nebraska public. Bold Nebraska had little incentive to sit down with the company because, outside of early routing concerns, the pipeline became an all-or-nothing scenario, symbolic at once of the future of America's hinterlands but also the global ecological crisis. To this end, TransCanada provided the perfect foil for Bold Nebraska's rural environmentalism: a foreign corporation serving the interests of "big oil" and perpetuating a cycle of global fossil fuels addiction and unsustainable carbon emissions. Any serious degree of communication engagement would have distracted from Bold Nebraska's establishment of TransCanada as the chronic antagonist or "other." To do so might provide a means for TransCanada to amplify its corporate social responsibility message, one that includes its thousands of well-paid employees in Canada but also the United States; its contributions of millions of dollars to thousands of non-profit organizations across North America; and its own investments in protecting biodiversity, improving environmental stewardship, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Bold Nebraska's mission was to win "hearts and minds," not to reach mutual understanding nor provide TransCanada with an endorsement. The two-way model of public relations is problematic for marginalized publics and activist groups because it assumes that the mutually-satisfactory outcome better serves society's interest, even when it forces compromise or even co-optation.

Such a dynamic for public communicators conjures up Habermas' (1993) discourse ethics, emphasizing the importance of equitable societal participation in communication procedures that are different from institutional arrangements—ones that "that obligate specific groups of people to engage in argumentation" (p. 31) including corporate meetings, government hearings, and university seminars. The discourse ethics tenet of the ideal speech situation, which provides opportunity for all to participate and for participants to be themselves, is manifested in the pipeline activism through the prolific usage of public events, social media conversations, and action items encouraging political impact. By encouraging hyper-local grassroots participation both symbolically and in practice, it also provided what Habermas explains as the opportunity for participants to have the equal ability to influence each other. It is through Habermas' lens that Bold Nebraska's strategic communication can be best understood—as a vehicle for civic action and social change. As Sommerfeldt (2013) pointed out, public relations as applied action is a means to coalition-building and by extension strengthening democratic institutions. Public relations infused with civic engagement situates audiences less as formalized "stakeholders" and more as the "neighbors, friends, families, co-workers" described in Mundy's (2013) spiral of advocacy.

In this light, Bold Nebraska's communication toggled between activism against TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline and advocacy for the rural citizenry of Nebraska. Such advocacy took on several forms including raising collective awareness of climate change impacts on the state's ecology, empowering its audiences to engage with alternatives to fossil fuels such as solar and wind power, and placing the pipeline fight in a broader context that situated Nebraska's agricultural industries as necessarily intertwined with a healthy ecology. Here, Habermas's discourse ethics situate this advocacy as facilitating an exchange of ideas in civic

and community contexts. Environmental activism against the pipeline provided Bold Nebraska with its organizational "raison d'etre" and drove its narrative for five years. Yet it was the work of community- and regional-level advocacy that facilitated the viability and power of this activism, through its ability to forge the coalitions, bipartisanship, and long-term civic engagement that were foundational to the pipeline fight.

Habermas' utopian model, alongside emerging considerations of public relations as a practice that props up civic life instead of institutional objectives, does not exist in a communication vacuum, however. Bold Nebraska's arrival at a narrative-driven grassroots communication style was built upon powerful rhetorical devices and the activation of the innate core values of its audience. This communication strategy harkens back to the legacy of public relations pioneer Edward Bernays, the nephew of Sigmund Freud, whose early-20th century PR campaigns integrated charged emotional appeals and extravagant visual displays and events to sway public opinion in matters of consumerism, health, government, and war. While he is sometimes considered the originator of modern public relations, and is well-known to undergraduate students of public relations and psychology, his legacy has fallen out of favor in some scholarly circles. This is because his ability to single-handedly construct events as news, garner third-party endorsements of his ideas, and pull the levers of human emotion to sell consumer products and political ideologies, has been described as everything from manipulative to dangerous propaganda.

Yet Bernays was not the first communicator to infuse acts of persuasion into civic dialogue. The environmentalist John Muir, an early advocate of wilderness preservation in the U.S., is considered "one of the patron saints of twentieth-century American environmental activity" for his prolific writings about wild landscapes, which helped ordinary Americans

rethink their relationship with nature (Holmes, 1999). Such preservation efforts led to the establishment of Yosemite National Park, among other nationally protected geographies. Muir also co-founded in 1892 an environmental group known today for its wide-ranging green advocacy and activism across the U.S.: The Sierra Club—one of Bold Nebraska's key allies in the fight against Keystone XL. The origins of the scholarly field of environmental communication can be traced back to Oravec's (1981) analysis of Muir's "sublime" conservationist appeals (Cox, 2010). Bold Nebraska's foray into rhetorically-charged environmental appeals merely continues an American tradition dating back to the 1800s.

The integration of environmental persuasion into civic discourse creates what I refer to here as a *civic environmental persuasion*—contingent upon the building blocks of hyperlocalization, narration, civic engagement, and bipartisanship. It emphasizes both the ability of the communicator to gain legitimacy through contextual factors (localization, personal interaction, appeals to culture and heritage) and the willingness of the audience to embrace such activisms or advocacies as part of their broader cultural and individual narratives. This environmental advocacy is underpinned by a hyperlocalization that recognizes environmental and societal challenges contextually, whether they take the form of affected family farms, local lakes and streams, or community air quality. It also positions local advocacy as a form of social engagement, fostering civic action as a virtual but also face-to-face endeavor. Environmental master frames are energized by a narrative fidelity that tells the hopeful story of American communities, celebrates their cultural heritage, and bridges gaps between different social groups. This bipartisanship fosters a coalition politics where groups work together for a social good, and are ideally positioned to press for changes in public policy.

Measuring the success of the organizational mission

Did Bold Nebraska ultimately achieve its objective of stopping the pipeline while transforming Nebraska's political landscape? The answer to this question is likely contingent upon who is being asked. Within its communication, Bold Nebraska was not shy about celebrating (or taking credit for) political developments that aligned with its mission of stopping the pipeline. However, the battle over pipelines is far from over in the state (and will likely continue indefinitely), and Nebraska's political landscape remains predominantly Republican. After five-plus years of campaigning against TransCanada's pipeline, this would appear to be a discouraging result for Bold Nebraska.

Yet through a strategic communication lens, the organization's accomplishments emerge as more successful. Industry practitioners call for strategic communication that amplifies a message but also fosters behavioral change (Sledzik, 2006)—emphasizing mediation but also face-to-face communication, relationships, and involvement. To this end, Bold Nebraska deployed thousands of website articles and social media messages to people in Nebraska and beyond. Its strategic communication also resulted in hundreds of newspaper articles and television stories, reaching Nebraska's population of 1.8 million residents. Such coverage also garnered millions of views nationally and internationally through outlets like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Thus, amplification of Bold Nebraska's message was certainly achieved. Yet by the aforementioned benchmarks of behavioral change and interpersonal engagement, of equal if not greater significance were the hundreds of engagement opportunities embedded within the communication, themselves a natural outgrowth of Bold Nebraska's activism and involving Nebraskans from all walks of life. Individuals such as Randy Thompson, the Republican rancher who steered clear of politics previously, came to embody the opportunities for civic engagement on the part of citizens outside of the political establishment.

The mediation of Bold Nebraska through public and media relations, then, was always with a larger purpose: to enable the civic engagement necessary for Nebraskans to have a voice in their state's political and social policies. Website and media discourses gave way to community gatherings, fundraisers, information sessions, political actions, and an event like Harvest the Hope—all of which influenced the way thousands of participating Nebraskans previously viewed Keystone XL, itself a symbol of a contested political, economic, and environmental future. By such a measure, then, Bold Nebraska's ambitious objective of transforming politics in Nebraska was realized—not through one grand political gesture but instead through hundreds of engagements and micro-mobilizations. Such a transformation was not reached strictly through the influencing of state and national policy, but through the ongoing projection of a localized environmental meta-narrative, and the non-mediated engagement of thousands of Nebraskans from across the state who normally might not have participated in such politics. The ultimate fate of Keystone XL specifically remains a critical outcome by which Bold Nebraska will be measured in the long run; but the organization's legacy rests upon much more than the potential construction of one pipeline. Its activation of rural community members as vocal, visible participants in the public sphere may be its most important achievement.

Beyond Nebraska: Environmental activism in a post-Keystone XL world

On November 6, 2015, U.S. President Barack Obama provided some closure to the pipeline saga by rejecting the Keystone XL permit on the grounds that it was not in the national interest. Bold Nebraska hailed the decision as a "historic victory for farmers, ranchers, Tribal Nations and the unlikely alliance that formed" in Nebraska to fight a battle that lasted well over a half-decade. The threat of the pipeline, while not dead, was at least temporarily rendered immobile. Months later, to mark its victory, Bold Nebraska set out as the "Bold Alliance" to

bring its message to three new states—Iowa, Oklahoma, and Louisiana—to "focus on fighting big fossil fuel projects and trying to pass legislation to outlaw eminent domain for private development" (Omaha.com, 2016, para. 7). It is also providing expertise and consulting to anti-pipeline activists in West Virginia, Virginia, Minnesota, and Wisconsin (Omaha.com, 2016). In this sense, it looks set to emulate ProgressNow's focus on state-based advocacy, albeit with a particular focus on environmental issues. It also is poised to expand the footprint of its original Bold Nebraska communication strategy. The Alliance describes itself as "a network of small and mighty groups in rural states… We fight fossil fuel projects, protect landowners against eminent domain abuse, and work for clean energy solutions while building an engaged base of citizens who care about the land, water and climate change." The degree to which the Bold Alliance aspires to emulate the original Bold Nebraska approach is striking. The fight against Keystone XL will serve as a template for fights ahead across rural America against fracking, offshore drilling, and other petroleum pipelines.

The emergence of the Bold Alliance also underscores the potential evolution of social movement organizations. Through strategic communication and public engagement, they have the ability to coalesce with different organizations and publics on different issues. Saliency with publics situated Keystone XL as the defining issue for Bold Nebraska. In turn, Bold Nebraska's communication elevated the pipeline debate to a symbolic fight over climate change and the ecological future of America's hinterlands. It was inevitable that rural dwellers in other states would look to Bold Nebraska for direction in their own environmental battles, giving way to the emergence of a Bold Alliance. Even as this ambitious undertaking brought Bold Nebraska's activism recipe to new jurisdictions, leader Jane Kleeb remained politically active in her home

state, and was elected as chairwoman of the Nebraska Democratic Party during the summer of 2016.

Two other, unrelated environmental events during 2016 evoked memories of Bold Nebraska's hinterlands activism. During the summer and fall, Native American protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline emerged as a much larger rallying cry for Indigenous rights and environmental justice. Like Keystone, what became known as the Standing Rock protests emerged as a focal point for discourse about energy consumption, fossil fuels, and the rights of Native Americans. With supporters like the Bold Alliance and 350.org and a national profile, the Dakota Access Pipeline protests have been dubbed "the new Keystone" (New York Times, 2016).

Earlier in the year, in the high desert of eastern Oregon, a very different kind of protest saw armed ranchers, militants, and self-styled "patriots" from across the American West seize the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, citing grievances over the federal government's management of public land. The refuge occupiers came under heavy criticism from environmentalists and Oregon's tribal communities for this act, which set off fierce debate about their protest tactics. Yet in the wake of a not-guilty verdict on federal charges related to the standoff later in the year, some patriot group members called for sympathy and alliance-building with the Standing Rock Sioux fighting the Dakota Access Pipeline (OregonLive, 2016, para. 2). Such overtures, while largely rejected by Dakota pipeline protesters, do underscore shifting values in rural America, and an environmentalism that contextualizes contemporary grassroots environmentalism as a historic resistance against unfriendly government policy and corporate intrusion.

Both the vastness of the American heartland and its natural riches mean it will continue

to be the sight of environmental conflict and exploitation. As pointed out by historian Gretchen

Heefner (2012), who traced the deployment of nuclear missiles across the American prairie a

half-century ago, "we are still meant to overlook the plains." Heartland environmentalists, then,

have no choice but to remain vigilant. This is especially true in 2017, as the inauguration of a

new U.S. leader promises significant changes to environmental policy, including energy and

climate change, and new life for Keystone XL itself. President-elect Donald Trump argued in

favor of constructing Keystone XL during the 2016 presidential campaign; and his advisors have

since explored ways to reverse Obama's earlier decision (Dlouhy, 2016), culminating in a

presidential executive action to advance the pipeline's approval on January 24, 2017. Trump's

selection of Rex Tillerson, the chairman and CEO of Exxon Mobil, to the Secretary of State

position further emphasizes the inevitability of a revived showdown over the pipeline's future.

Ironically, the sharp downturn in the price of crude oil since 2014 has made Alberta's oil

sands projects less solvent in 2017, and the province's economy has been beset by job layoffs

and declining investment. The downturn has also raised new questions about the economic

viability of the pipeline. Yet for both its supporters and opponents, Keystone XL remains more

than just resource infrastructure; it is a symbol of how humanity will choose to interface with the

natural world in the century ahead.

However, even as debates over Keystone continue—as viable oil project or once-rejected

symbol of the climate crisis—such discussions are likely to be overwhelmed by new project

proposals for fracking, mining, and of course, more petroleum pipelines. It explains in great part

why Bold Nebraska has expanded its footprint as the Bold Alliance. The American hinterland

will continue to be the site of localized ecological exploitation. Such degradation emerges a

proxy for the social, economic, and environmental injustices facing marginalized populations in

the U.S. and globally. Bold Nebraska's nuanced framing of Keystone XL provided the means to achieve success with its short-term strategic objective (stopping the pipeline), but it also set the stage for the organization to expand its footprint and tackle future contentious extraction projects beyond Nebraska through bi-partisan, localized, and culturally resonant appeals. An embrace of strategic communication and media fostered Bold Nebraska's ability to generate frames that served collective action and member beliefs, as well as those that helped attract new supporters, garner national media coverage and public attention, and affect policy change at the state and national levels.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

This study originally set out to understand the role and construction of strategic communication in contemporary environmental activism through both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Bold Nebraska's years-long campaign against the TransCanada Keystone XL petroleum pipeline is but one case, and as such is not necessarily generalizable to the many other environmental protest movements that exist globally. However, in setting out to understand the unique attributes of contemporary environmental activism as a form of strategic communication, it sheds new light on the potential prominence of communication and media in current environmentalism. It did so by examining an activist organization's public relations materials over the course of five years, as well as national media coverage predicated on those activist appeals. It also examined a key rhetorical artifact and master frame driver in the form of a largescale music festival.

The analysis of Bold Nebraska's website communication shows the effectiveness of a strategic advocacy framing taxonomy, which calls for specific framing elements in constructing persuasive messaging within environmental communication. It also showed that such elements can and do co-exist with one another. That is, framing elements do not exist in a communication vacuum. Rather, they can complement one another in projecting environmental messages and propping up coalition-driven activism. An overwhelming majority of Bold Nebraska's website articles featured multiple framing elements, and some of these elements enjoyed significant associations with one another. For example, the strategic framing element of context was linked with elements such as metaphors and populism. In combination, they provided the underpinning to what Gilliam and Bales (2001) point to as the bridge between fact and narrative.

Furthermore, the usage of multiple framing elements can also be used in conjunction with environmental issue frames. For example, elements such as populism and context were particularly prominent in Bold Nebraska's stories dealing with agricultural land rights as well as globalization. Reber and Berger (2005) point to issue frames as being able to attract and mobilize supporters, even while they dilute the potential power of any one single frame. However, this study has shown that activists can control the degree to which these issue frames are utilized, thus intentionally giving greater power to some frames over others. Climate change and global warming were a significant part of Bold Nebraska's messaging, but they did not supersede the even more salient issues of farming, land rights, or environmental threats, all of which had a more localized and contextualized dimension.

At the same time, this study affirms the role of public relations within social movements, providing further evidence to Bob's (2002) assertion that successful social movement organizations are results-driven entities dependent on strategic "pitches" that resonate with specific publics. Such a connection may seem obvious from the perspective of public relations scholarship, but it challenges understandings of social movement organizations from other scholarly domains that minimize the impact of communication, particularly strategic communication, or dismiss public relations approaches to social or environmental change as being anathema to movement purity. This study also connects Bob's thesis to the construction of the messages themselves. While Bold Nebraska's ultimate objective of stopping the pipeline never wavered, its pitches to publics and the media were malleable, evidenced by the variety of framing devices employed. For example, as land rights and eminent domain became a key issue for Nebraska landowners, so Bold Nebraska was able to leverage the prominence of this issue with matching messaging. When Indigenous communities voiced their opposition to Keystone

XL, Bold Nebraska was well-positioned to integrate this perspective, including a Cowboy and Indian Alliance, within the organization's environmental activism. To this end, they were able to reach different publics based on the construction of their messaging and an especially acute understanding of their immediate environments and publics. Far from impure, this communication was rooted in local and historic civic and ecological concerns. Environmental movements are therefore wise to evolve alongside the changing circumstances of both the local (civic discourse) and the material (ecological conditions)—not only to serve as conduits for effective change, but also to secure further resources and mobilize/persuade supporters and the general public. Through the lens of public relations, such a trajectory of activism fulfills Sommerfeldt's (2013) civic vision for the role of public relations in a democracy, by cultivating relationships based on common interests and facilitating the participation of organizations and individuals in public dialogue.

Over a five-year period, Bold Nebraska campaigned against the Keystone XL pipeline using a multitude of pitches or appeals. Some of these proved more prolific or effective than others, but all of them contributed to what ultimately became Bold Nebraska's meta-narrative or master frame. This was demonstrated through one of Bold Nebraska's highest-profile moments, the staging of the Harvest the Hope concert. The event, with its incorporation of historical symbols and rhetorical tropes, helped attendees and audiences make sense of both the organization and the movement. Harvest the Hope builds upon Fisher's (1987) call for narrative fidelity through rhetorical performance. By bringing rural and Indigenous communities together, it justifies Bold Nebraska's broader pipeline activism and helps audiences see the pipeline through the lens of this coalition. It fulfills both Cunha's (1988) vision of the iconic rock festival as a creator of mythology, and Peterson's (1973) assertion that such events create a collective

rethinking of social issues. For strategic and environmental communication scholars, Harvest the Hope is an important reminder that persuasive appeals within activism and public relations are effective when steeped in narrative, storytelling, and performance. This perspective is evidenced in explanations such as "culture jamming" (Harold, 2004) and "carnivalesque activism" (Weaver, 2010), but it has been widely overlooked within public relations scholarship.

Finally, this study addressed media coverage of Bold Nebraska and media framing of environmental activism. It found coverage that included Bold Nebraska as a source of news, a messenger of anti-Keystone XL activism, and a counterpoint to pro-pipeline perspectives. As with Bold Nebraska's own website communication, national media stories tended to include multiple strategic framing elements. In addition, the most prominently used elements carried over from Bold Nebraska's communication into the domain of national journalism. In addition to providing organizations with an effective blueprint for communicating to publics, the strategic framing elements taxonomy is also effective in influencing media coverage. It provides ready-made angles and approaches for media coverage about an environmental topic (such as messengers or statistics) that helps a movement organization garner sought after media coverage. Secondly, it helps impart a media narrative about the organization that is reflective of how the organization sees itself. As public communicators, activists do not control media coverage, but through deliberate framing choices they can wield some influence in how media discourse about organizations and issues is shaped.

This study is not without its limitations, however. As a case study devoted to one campaign—specifically Bold Nebraska's activism against the Keystone XL pipeline—it was not able to fully incorporate other environmental and political organizations in North America who were also resisting the pipeline. While it did take into account Bold Nebraska's repurposing of

third party content from organizations such as the Sierra Club, it did not analyze the latter organization's own environmental communication efforts outside of Bold Nebraska's communication. To this end, further research would be wise to examine the ecosystem of activists across North America, and how such an ecosystem fulfills communication goals at the global, national, regional, and local levels.

This study's media analysis focused on coverage at the national level. While national publications play an important role in influencing political and economic debates, the Keystone XL saga has also highlighted the role of regional media, including metropolitan but also community newspapers. Newspapers from Omaha, Lincoln, and other Nebraska cities and towns provided their own coverage of Bold Nebraska and the Keystone proposal. Future research should investigate both the relationship between state- and regional-level activism and regional media, as well as differences between coverage of environmental topics between national and regional media. Highlighting the role of regional and local media would support a growing call for journalists to pay heed to civic issues and concerns outside of the major media and political centers of the United States, and would contribute to a greater understanding of the media's role in potentially propping up civic engagement in rural communities.

Lastly, this study did not examine the communication originating from Bold Nebraska's chief opponent in its campaign, TransCanada. An understanding of TransCanada's public relations strategy and tactics, and its reception by audiences and the media, helps provide a perspective of pipeline development from the oil and gas sector. Such an examination should also account for how the company responded to Bold Nebraska directly and indirectly. In addition to providing a corporate perspective of environmental activism, such an approach would further scholarship in the growing realm of corporate social responsibility as a form of public

relations practice. For companies connected directly to resources extraction and the environment, such as TransCanada, corporate social responsibility is an especially complex affair.

In navigating the subject of anti-pipeline activism in its entirety, this study encountered a communication terrain rich in symbolic- and values-laden messaging, which helped to drive Bold Nebraska's activism and strategic communication. This idealism—asserting the mental and spiritual conceptions of ecology—enjoys a longstanding tradition in environmental communication. Yet this study also encountered a style of communication borne of the natural environment itself—emphasizing the soil, water, plants, animals, and wider rural ecology in Nebraska. Such materialism emphasized the role of natural matter and its role in shaping phenomena and human consciousness.

Ultimately this study revealed a communicative approach that toggled between these philosophies of ecological idealism and materialism. A hyper-localized, contextually-rich environment became symbolic for the history, heritage, and values of these Great Plains residents. Hopes for cleaner energy sources were made manifest in the renewable energy barn, built in the path of the pipeline. The importance of (and threat to) agricultural crops was represented through the sacred Ponca corn planting—the so-called "seeds of resistance," planted at the Tanderup farm in Neligh. One rancher's fight against the pipeline's intrusion onto his land became a symbol for individual rights and a formidable rallying cry: "Stand with Randy." In other words, the strategic communication deployed by Bold Nebraska did not emerge in a vacuum. It was directly connected to the environmental elements and prairie ecosystems Bold Nebraska wanted to protect—linking lofty ideas about ecology to the raw materials that underpinned Bold Nebraska's discourse.

The historian and communication theorist Harold Innis argued that natural resources extractive processes helped explain not only the growth of civilizations, but the attributes of their societies, including their communication and media functions. To this end, oil and gas pipelines have emerged as the railroads of the 21st century, crisscrossing and networking the North American continent as they transport one of the world's most sought after commodities—and ushering in a new era of profit, protest, and associated media coverage. To paraphrase his University of Toronto colleague Marshall McLuhan, who brought Innis's deterministic vision to media scholarship, the environment *is* the message. Bold Nebraska's activism—embedded in a specific rural history and geography and connected to Nebraska soil and water, was a grassroots undertaking in the most literal sense. Such a ground-up advocacy approach underscores not only the materiality of communication but also the foundational role of the environment to our democratic processes and institutions. The activists who are successful in fighting the construction of new pipelines through precious wilderness areas, productive family farms, and sacred tribal territories are those who recognize the linkage of their strategic communication to their sense of place, their connection to communities, and their existence within the natural world.

Addendum 1

Codesheet (Website_Articles)

_____ Story ID

_____ Coder

_____ Data Entry

Size of article:
_____ 1. 2 or less paragraphs
_____ 2. 3 to 5 paragraphs
_____ 3. 6 or more paragraphs

Formal press release
_____ Yes = 1; No =0

"Action item" (or call to action):
_____ Yes = 1; No =2

Authorship:
_____ 1. Bold Nebraska staff/leader
_____ 2. Bold Nebraska member
_____ 3. Outside contributor
_____ 4. Media reprint/submission

Issue Frames:

Agriculture/ranching:
_____ 1. Discussed
_____ 0. Not discussed

Indigenous communities
_____ 1. Discussed
_____ 0. Not discussed

Climate change
_____ 1. Discussed
_____ 0. Not discussed

Land rights/eminent domain

_____ 1. Discussed
_____ 0. Not discussed

Alternative energy
_____ 1. Discussed
_____ 0. Not discussed

Environmental threats
_____ 1. Discussed
_____ 0. Not discussed

Globalization
_____ 1. Discussed
_____ 0. Not discussed

Strategic advocacy framing elements

_____ 1. Numbers
_____ 2. Messengers
_____ 3. Visuals
_____ 4. Metaphors
_____ 5. Tone
_____ 6. Context
_____ 7. Populism

Populism style
  People-centrism
_____ 1. Discussed
_____ 0. Not discussed

  Opposition to elites
_____ 1. Discussed
_____ 0. Not discussed

Environmenal Framing Metaphors:
_____ 1. Finance
_____ 2. Religion
_____ 3. Dieting
_____ 4. Battle/War
_____ 5. Journey
_____ 6. Othe

Story Analysis Form Instructions

Fill out one form per story.
Below you will find definitions of each question and how to answer them.

Story ID

Newspaper Date (6 digit) – Story # (2 digit)

November 12, 2001 newspaper story 4 would be: 111201-04

If analyzing more than one newspaper title, add another code at the front indicating paper.

For example 2-111201-04

Coder

Initials of coder

Data Entry

Initials of data entry person

Article Size

Physical length of website article (by paragraph count)

Formal Press Release

Is the article formatted as a traditional press release for media (including such features as the words "Press Release" or "For Immediate Release" or "Media Release," as well as media contact information?)

"Action Item" or Call to Action

Includes:

- Call to sign petition
- Invitation to attend community event, rally, fundraiser, sit-in, or demonstration
- Phone numbers or website URLs for making donation or signing petition
- Links for providing feedback/advice to government officials
- Opportunies to make a purchase

Origin/Source of Story

1. **Staff:** Members of the Bold Nebraska leadership.

2. **Members:** Members of Bold Nebraska who are not part of the leadership/organizing team.

3. **Outside:** Other advocates/contributors, typically from other organizations, who are not members of Bold Nebraska.

4. **Media:** Contributions/reprints/rebroadcasts from other print/broadcast/Internet media services.

Issues

What issues are described in the story? Agriculture/ranching; Indigenous communities and issues/tribal nations/First Nations/; climate change and global warming; land

rights, land ownership, and eminent domain; alternative energy and clean energy; environmental threats/disasters, including threats to land and water; globalization, including foreign nations/leaders, and international trade/emissions/environmentalism/politics. To answer the questions, use the following guidelines:

1. Look at the actions or developments in the story, rather than the context in which they occur.
2. Discuss the story with another coder if you're still uncertain

Framing Elements

1. Numbers: usage of statistics, measurables, numbers to describe topic
2. Messengers: involvement of sources or organizational representatives
3. Visuals: incorporation of photos, images, logos in story
4. Metaphors: rhetorical effect in which something stands in for the environmental issue
5. Tone: polarizing or oppositional emotion/tonality in communication
6. Context: recognition of time, place, and community
7. Populism: communication style promoting united citizenry or opposition to elites

Populism

Indicate if the article advocates for "we the people" "our country" "we citizens" AND/OR if it attacks "elites" such as representatives and leaders from companies, politics, and government.

Conceptual Media Metaphors:

Is the issue described as one or more of the following: 1. Finance (ie, Nebraska "can't afford" cleaning up after the pipeline); 2. Religion (oil and gas as a saviour or devil); 3. Dieting (pipeline issue positioned as a nutritional/health threat); 4. Battle/war (Bold Nebraska positioned in battle against company or government); 5. Journey (Bold Nebraska and its followers on a journey to a destination).

Addendum 2

Codesheet (Media_Newspaper)

_____ **Story ID**

_____ Coder

_____ Data Entry

Newspaper

      _____ 1. NY Times
      _____ 2. Washington Post
      _____ 3. Globe and Mail
      _____ 4. National Post

Front Page of Newspaper

_____ Yes = 1; No =0

Section Front

_____ Yes = 1; No =0

Size of article:
      _____ 1. Small (up to 500 words)
      _____ 2. Medium (501 to 1000 words)
      _____ 3. Large (over 1,000 words)

Treatment:
      _____ 1. General News
      _____ 2. Feature/Magazine
      _____ 3. Commentary/Editorial

Strategic Framing Elements:

      _____ 1. Numbers
      _____ 2. Messengers
      _____ 3. Metaphors
      _____ 4. Tone
      _____ 5. Context
      _____ 6. Populism

Metaphors:

      _____ 1. Finance
      _____ 2. Religion
      _____ 3. Dieting
      _____ 4. Battle/War
      _____ 5. Journey

Environment/Science Media Frames

_____ # Progress
_____ # Economy
_____ # Public Accountability
_____ # Ethical Concerns
_____ # Pandora's box
_____ # Runaway resources extraction
_____ # Globalization

Story Analysis Form Instructions

Fill out one form per story.
Below you will find definitions of each question and how to answer them.

Story ID

Newspaper Date (6 digit) – Story # (2 digit)
November 12, 2001 newspaper story 4 would be: 111201-04
If analyzing more than one newspaper title, add another code at the front indicating paper.
For example 2-111201-04

Coder

Initials of coder

Data entry

Initials of data entry person

Origin/Source of Story

1. **Wire/News Service:** stories from the AP, Reuters or any other news service. We also include stories credited to another newspaper (not the home newspaper).

2. **Staff:** stories with or without a byline that are identified as coming from the newspaper. Includes "special to" and correspondents of the newspaper.

3. **Reader:** use only on either editorial pages where readers write columns or letters for the website, or in cases where stories are specifically identified as being written by readers.

4. **Unknown:** use when the source of the story is not stated.

Treatment

The way that the story is written, not to be confused with the subject of the story:

1. **General News:** any story that emphasizes facts of a recent event. Often uses a straight news or inverted pyramid style of writing.
2. **Feature:** longer, more reflective tone; often humorous or entertaining.

Can be on a serious subject but tries to tell a story rather than just regurgitate a series of facts.

3. Commentary/Criticism: any story that offers a first-person opinion or is a stated opinion of the newspaper, e.g. editorials, opinion or advice pieces, art, music and entertainment criticism and product advice etc.

4. Other

Environmental frames:

1. Progress: Environmental issue positioned as a significant advance for humankind
2. Economic Prospect if the issue is framed in financial or economic impacts.
3. Nature/Nurture: the dichotomy between science/culture/upbringing
4. Ethical Concerns: environmental issue framed in moral terms (ie, good or evil)
5. Pandora's box: the environmental issue generates many complicated and further problems
6. Runaway resources extraction: indicative of resource extraction will only grow
7. Globalization: internationalism of environmental issue; involvement of global finance or global impacts; involvement or naming of foreign countries

Strategic Framing Elements

1. Numbers: usage of statistics, measurables, numbers to describe topic
2. Messengers: involvement of sources or organizational representatives
3. Visuals: incorporation of photos, images, logos in story
4. Metaphors: rhetorical effect in which something stands in for the environmental issue
5. Tone: reasonable or polarizing
6. Context: recognition of time, place, community
7. Populism: "we the people" "our country" "we citizens" and/or attacks against "elites" such as representatives and leaders from companies, politics, and government

Environmental Metaphors:

Is the issue described as one or more of the following: 1. Finance 2. Religion 3. Dieting 4. Battle/war 5. Journey

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