

Frames, Fear, and Identity in the American Environmental Movement

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by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family who helped me make it through this process with their constant support.

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ABSTRACT

FRAMES, FEAR, AND IDENTITY IN THE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

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As more Americans become increasingly concerned with the dangers associated with climate change, the environmental movement in the United States continues to grow. With a recent surge in participation from younger activists in the movement there is the increasing likelihood of a generational clash that will have to end in compromise or conflict. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews with environmental activists in incorporated environmental organizations we make a number of conclusions. There is a generational divide between older and younger activists on the diagnostic and prognostic frames. Activists all feel an intense fear around climate change and that influences their personal and strategic decisions. Younger activists have a hard time identifying with the activist identity due to the standards they believe are necessary to consider oneself an ideal activist.

INTRODUCTION

Scientists, academics, and nations alike have come to regard climate change as a global threat that will fundamentally alter the way humanity lives. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a special report in 2018 that examined climate change impacts and listed the various dangers the current climate future entails (IPCC 2018). These threats include rising sea levels, extreme droughts and weather events, species loss and extinction, food insecurity, water insecurity, economic decline, human insecurity, and declining human health. “Global warming” is causing increasing concern in Americans with roughly 73% of them believing that it is occurring and 69% expressing worry about climate impacts in 2018 (Lieserowitz et al 2018). In 2020, more than half of Americans reported feeling significantly increased stress resulting from worries about climate change (American Psychological Association 2020).

In responding to the climate crisis, the environmental movement has taken a global spotlight. Recent intraorganizational actions in the United States against anthropogenic climate change have seen significant growth with numbers reaching into the tens of millions (Swain 2019). Existing organizations are switching gears and new ones are being established to address climate change where particular attention is paid by media and political figures to a growing youth element. Media portrayals of the movement note a stark divide between generations and gender as young activists protest the decisions of older leaders (Sengupta 2021). Younger

people are participating in mass actions through organizations as one of their preferred methods of political engagement to fight against climate change (Fisher 2019). These waves of action differ from those prior by bringing larger numbers of newcomers including greater numbers of girls and school children (de Moor et al 2021). These waves also brought a shifting of targets away from state actors and towards fossil fuel companies and transnational corporations.

Within the environmental movement there is growing potential for a division that places a neoliberal branch against a radical branch. The neoliberal branch seeks change through market-led reforms, business regulation, and mobilizing within existing institutions while the radical branch looks towards system change. While the radical branch has existed for some time, major political shifts diverted them from the civil and political sphere. The course of the movement has seen these divisions expressed in differences in frames, reactions to failures, and institutionalization. While activists are often working towards the same goal, they have differing rationales, tactics, and ideas for what problems are and what solutions should look like. Though climate activists from different groups may seem to share some motivational frames, their prognostic frames for problems and solutions vary. Collective action frames are those understandings that are widely shared within a social movement that spurs participants towards specific actions (Benford and Snow 2000). Given that collective action frames are created within movements or movement organizations, individuals might not agree with them entirely given their ideology. These differences in frames correspond with different messages and actions.

Generational differences may account for differences in frames between activists. Activists of different generations within the same movement often have different

understandings that influence the way they perceive the movement and its frames. These differences may result in conflicts both intra and inter organizationally. Often, however, on issues of climate change, activists with significantly different beliefs will end up working together (Corry and Reiner 2020). While there is a surge in youth participation that should indicate differences being bridged for the sake of the movement, there is evidence that instead the existing movement absorbed this youth led surge (Fisher and Nasrin 2021).

Environmental activists share similar conceptions of what climate change is but have varied understanding of the impacts. These different perceptions of the risks and severity of climate change can arise from various factors including age and gender (Searle and Gow 2010). Those perceptions are often associated with fears that can encapsulate the hopes of activists and deteriorate their mental well-being. Since their hopes are always framed relative to their fears, it comes to influence the decisions that activists make in movements and in their personal lives. Scholars refer to this as eco-anxiety (Verplanken et al 2020). An activist's mental well-being has an influence on their participation in collective action and their desire to take action to defend the environment. This can be in either direction, making people both more or less likely to participate (Norgaard 2006; Helm et al 2018). An examination of environmental activists will give a clearer picture of how fear can spur individuals towards engaging with the environmental movement.

The factors that influence the fear activists have to climate change impacts will also influence their understandings of their own identities. Collective identity has been an important aspect of scholarly discussion of social movements since the 1980s. The collective identities of movements cannot be understood without an examination of identity as it pertains to the

individual. In that regard, activists have varied relationships to the activist identity. Each individual environmental activist has their own perception of what it means to be an activist, as well as whether they themselves are an activist. These self-perceptions vary in ways including having too high of standards for activists, an utmost confidence in being an activist, as well as negative stereotypes associated with activism. Whether an activist claims the identity is the result of a reflexive process. Gaining insight on these individual reflexive processes can inform us about internal movement dynamics. Often the amount of time an activist has spent with a movement can indicate a propensity to consider oneself an activist, which is another potential difference between older and younger activists. A historied movement experiencing a surge in youth participation is an opportune case for examination to understand variations in identity within social movements.

Conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with activists in multiple incorporated environmental organizations, provide opportunity to examine the understandings of climate change that activists, how those understandings influence the goals of the movement and their impacts on both individual activist's sense of identity as a movement member and collective identity. These methods are also effective at highlighting the ideologies and identities that influence activists. By examining these factors, we can better understand the potential for future shifts and divisions within the environmental movement. This becomes increasingly important as the risks and danger around climate change continue to grow.

Thus, this thesis examines the frames of the climate crisis, fears of climate change, and the activist identity of environmental activists within incorporated environmental organizations in the Mid-Atlantic region through in-depth interviews. With my study, I find

that there is a generational difference in the diagnostic and prognostic frames with younger activists tending to center capitalism and neoliberalism while older activists tend not to.

Activists express fear of the impacts of climate change which they see as inevitable, and this fear has affected their mental state and decision making. Younger activists also have trouble identifying as activists due to the standards of action they see as requisite for the activist identity, while older activists either confidently accept or deny the activist identity.

THE SOURCES OF FRAME DIFFERENCE WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

Activist Biographies and their Movements

Being involved in activism, particularly at a young age, is known to influence a person's life course significantly (Whalen and Flacks 1984; Whalen and Flacks 1989). Whalen and Flacks discovered in their study of the life courses of activists that many young activists often had revolutionary beliefs and radical tactics that waned over time. Part of that waning is attributed to differences between the revolutionary expectations activists had versus the reality of what they were able to successfully accomplish. Another aspect of that is the ability for activists to return to mainstream society without fear of punishment or reprisal from having participated in the movement. This is not to say that activists eventually became like their non-activist cohort members, rather long-time activists had substantial differences in their life course when compared to non-activists. A survey that compared individuals who had participated in activism in the 1960s to those who had not, found that those who had participated were much more likely to be involved with activism as a professional occupation (McAdam 1989). The survey also indicated that those who had participated had significantly lower incomes and were much less likely to be married, further indicating that participation in activism leads to differences in life course outcomes. Many of the activists from the 1960s retained and expressed their ideology and many continued to have a committed participation to social movements in some form (McAdam 1999). Participation in activism even leads to entirely new patterns of life courses that then begin to diffuse into society and become more common.

Surges in youth activism and harsher criticism of social institutions tend to happen in periods where society is deemed to be restrictive or youth expectations for what society should provide are not being met (Braungart and Braungart 1990). Periods like this occurred in the 1930s and 1960s but they differed in their life-course effects based on their respective movements and the historical context with which they ended. As such an expectation exists that if society becomes restrictive than younger people will attempt to challenge social structures and will continue to do so if they are unable to join mainstream society. Social movements offer youth the ability to change those social structures to meet their expectations.

Social movements are an integral process in the reconstruction of society and can operate and organize with a wide range of variations. Social movement studies sometimes deal with the periods of rising mobilization known as “movement waves”, in which movements are observed to rise in prominence and power before subsequently declining in a cyclical pattern (Krinsky and Baker 2016). Tarrow and Tilly defined and developed this “cycles of protest” model for social movement studies, which assumes movement cycles are an inherent part of social movements (Tarrow 1993). Activist and collective biographies offer an alternative approach to the “cycles of protest” model. Collective biographies offer the benefit to scholars of gaining of a deeper understanding of internal movement conflicts. Scholars can examine the components of these collective biographies to see the driving factors of movement transformation as those often arise from internal differences within the movement. Overly structural cyclical approaches to explaining movements can also obscure activist agency, and therefore, the knowledge production and strategic movement building activities of activists (Manski 2019). Approaches that acknowledge the role activists play in movement building are vital toward gaining specific

insights into movement construction and can determine commonalities that are relevant to the larger period of struggle. Activist biography approaches avoid those issues and place more attention on the activists themselves. Thus, they offer insight into both the individual and into the movement. They are of particular importance when there are multiple generations committing to the same movement in order to understand the differences that arise from that. While the two approaches can be combined into a singular approach, the concepts in this analysis rely on an understanding of just collective biographies.

Social movement organizations are often important elements of social movements. Social movement organizations are organizations that advocate for or against changes in institutions, social relations, and culture (Andrews and Edwards 2004). These organizations and their frames influence public opinion and political agendas as their method of engaging with the United States government. Social movement organizations act as institutionalized elements of a movement and have strong influence over the larger social movement. They do this by controlling mobilization, available political opportunities, and the spread of framing processes which then dictates much of the flow of collective action (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996).

Social movements from the period that Whalen and Flacks had studied have changed drastically, moving from collective actions taken by groups of people organized informally and interpersonally to those organized through formal organizations (Sampson et al 2005). The number of organizations and institutions in an area can serve as a predictor for the rate of participation in collective action. Social movement organizations are of particular importance within the context of the environmental movement given the growth of environmental organizations with close to 20,000 operating within the United States in the year 2000

(Carmichael et al 2012). Environmental organizations can emerge from new understandings of problems as well as changes in methods and tactics for addressing them.

Frames and Framing Processes

Frames and the process of creating frames are integral elements to both the structure and study of social movements. Activists will come to define integral meanings and ideas relevant to their movement as a collective action frame (Benford and Snow 2000). These collective action frames will define the conflict activists have with society and act as driving forces behind a movement. Frames are not shared meanings that are inherent within the movement but are generated through processes that meld the various interpretations of participants (Gamson 1992). These discursive processes are known as frame articulation and frame amplification and involve both the collection of life experiences and then highlighting of specific experiences to construct the larger frame (Benford and Snow 2000). Along with those, there are strategic processes such as frame extensions which are used to extend the purview of the movements focus to contain other issues beyond the primary one. Activists also use frame transformation to change the meanings contained within existing frames.

Two of the purposes of collective action frames are to establish diagnostic frames and prognostic frames. Diagnostic frames identify problems and prognostic frames identify solutions (Snow and Benford 1988). Disagreements during framing processes, known as frame disputes, are what eventually result in the collective action frame that is utilized by a movement (Benford 1993). Frame disputes often come from different factions within a movement clashing, such as a more radical wing versus a non-radical wing but can also occur intra-organizationally (Benford

2013). These are different than the frame disputes that occur between movements and society or frames from counter movement organizations. Institutions and other aspects of society can also influence and transform frames (McAdam 1996).

Movements and their members dictate the aspects of the frames such as who the movement is for, who the movement is fighting, and other involved parties (Snow and Benford 1988). One of the key factors that relates to social movement participation and mobilization is the way these frames resonate with populations. Thus, the factors that make up a frame can lead to varied levels of mobilization across different groups depending on how they perceive that frame, or how much it resonates with them. How much an individual believes in the credibility of a frame, as well as how salient it is to them, influences the frames resonance (Snow and Benford 2000). Salience indicates that the more a frame lines up with an individual or populations ideology the more they are likely to engage and mobilize. The process by which an individual's and a social movement's interests come to be aligned is known as frame alignment (Snow et al 1986). As such individuals will only continue to participate in a movement so long as their frames are aligned, though this alignment is constantly in flux.

Frames must be understood as they relate to ideology to create a more fleshed out picture of a movement and their member's beliefs (Oliver and Johnston 2000). Frames often are embedded within ideology resulting in ideologies being directly involved in framing processes or framing processes being discussions of ideology (Zald 1996). Ideology is the beliefs that are pertinent to a person's political orientation; both those who advocate for existing systems or challenging systems, and they are usually more intricate and logical than frames. The relationship between ideology and social movements studies has ebbed and flowed particularly

in relation to the notion of frames but the two concepts examine different things. Often frame disputes and frame transformations can be viewed as differences in ideologies, which surround frames, or changes in ideologies over time (Oliver and Johnston 2000). One such instance from the environmental movement was the debate over immigration that occurred internally within the Sierra Club, which is one of the United States most prominent environmental organizations (King 2008). These ideological differences translated into different factions within the organization pushing for different strategies on migration issues. These distinctions in ideology led to differences in frames that had to be resolved to form the collective action frame that the organization would utilize. Ideological differences are known to cause fractionalization within movements, but often a participant's actions within a movement will contradict their ideology (Snow 2004). Ideology needs to be better understood in social movements particularly in cases where an individual's ideology contradicts their actions within a movement.

Environmental Social Movements

The United States environmental movement is large and growing with various branches that attend to different issues and adopt different tactics. These branches are united by a common cause in protecting the environment, though what that means can vary. Several factors are known to influence an individual's perception of the environment and their likelihood to take action to protect it. They include, but are not limited to, gender (Davidson and Freudenberg 1996; Uyeki and Holland 2000), race (Uyeki and Holland 2000), access to resources (Uyeki and Holland 2000; Marquart-Pyatt 2011), political ideology (Dunlap and McRight 2008; Hamilton 2011), economic beliefs (Longo and Baker 2014), knowledge about the environment (Hamilton 2008; Marquart-Pyatt 2011; Fung and Adams 2017), and concerns about the impacts of the

environment (Lubell 2002; Hansla et al 2008). As environmental organizations have different goals and membership demographics (Taylor 2015), they often have different motivations and frames. The organization an activist chooses to join is likely a result of those factors.

Participation in environmental organizations leads to the formation of specific collective identities that differ from those of the broader social movement (Saunders 2008). The collective identities of individuals influence the way they engage with social movements and how they understand the goals, accomplishments, and tactics of those movements (Poletta and Jasper 2001). The general self-identity of an individual also influences their interpretation and worldview in regard to movements (Brewer and Gardner 1996). An individual's collective identity and self-identity both will affect how they understand climate change and thus the collective action frames they find most salient.

In the United States environmental movement, there are a number of different and sometimes contradictory frames used for issues of the movement's goals, tactics, and more meta level questions about the state of the movement (Dietz 2014). Regarding climate change, activists often disagree about approaches involving green capitalism and market based measures. Those kinds of approaches are often criticized by the more radical wing of the movement. Even within the more market based and corporate branches of the movement there are a wide range of relationships to businesses and other institutions (Hoffman 2009). Though across the movement the frame around 'Climate Justice' remains popular (Dietz 2014; Cassegård and Thörn 2017), in the Global North, movement frames posit climate change as a future threat whereas frames in the Global South discuss it as a threat in the present (Kleres and Wettergren 2017).

Different branches confront varied problems given the way institutions will interact with them based on their frames. There were two different and prominent branches of the environmental movement in the United States in the early 2000s; one with a grassroots focus and the other policy driven (Hadden 2017). Other branches existed which focused on anti-capitalist issues and systemic change, often though these branches have had their frames get coopted by more institutional elements (Cassegård and Thörn 2017). Part of this results from the way that different branches of the movement try to amplify frames. Particularly media coverage has been found to not focus on more radical aspects of the environmental movement (Soneryd and Cassegård 2017). Media coverage instead looks towards institutionalized organizations that do not stray far from mainstream discourse. Environmental activist groups and movement organizations that utilize systemic critique or more radical action are excluded from coverage in certain instances.

Portions of the environmental movement have historically moved from adversarial frames to collaborative approaches that sought common ground with those they had viewed as antagonists (Pellow 1999). This occurred because of an inhospitable political environment. Now in a state of politics that is more conducive to their goals, collaborations are forming with more closely aligned organizations. Activists who believe in radical social change and distrust government will work with more formal organizations towards policy solutions within the climate change movement (Corry and Reiner 2020). Environmental justice organizations are also starting to incorporate as formal organizations more frequently and shifting strategy through collaborations with traditional mainstream organizations (Perez et al 2015).

The Environmental Movement, Policy, Institutions, and Neoliberalism

The United States environmental movement has had connections to labor movements and critiques of business that have ebbed and flowed over its history. There also were aspects of the movement that were largely focused on issues of class and industry that stood in contrast to the more familiar preservationist and conservationist branches (Montrie 2018). These aspects were lost to history incidentally due to the publication of Silent Spring and the surging environmental movement that emerged from that. This new aspect of the movement took over the public conscious and waylaid the existing aspects of the movement out of the public and civil sphere. The disappearance of this labor history, as well as the history of black environmentalism, has come to influence the course of modern environmentalism in the United States and hinder its effectiveness. As such the construction of business and industry in the environmental movement's frames have varied over time.

The period in the 1970s of the post-Silent Spring environmental movement coincided with the more globalized institutionalization of the movement, which then subsequently led to neo-liberalization of some portions of the movement, shifting a focus to market based solutions, privatization, and individualized change (Stoner 2021). Various definitions exist for neoliberalism that vary in their focus on neoliberalism's existence as an ideology or as a political project (Cahill and Konings 2017). For the sake of this analysis neoliberalism will be understood as the use and advocacy of the usage of institutions and policy to promote business, capital, and markets. This neo-liberalized environmentalism shifted the movements focus to consumerism and personal sustainability as the methods to protect the environment. While there was not a formal institutionalization of the movement in the United States, policy discussion now incorporates

parts of the movement (Hadden 2017). This included major environmental groups that were brought into discussions and conferences centered on the shift towards neoliberal environmental policy (Asserson 2007). In some cases, the movement has entirely purged a class and capitalist focus. Some branches, such as those formal organizations in the United Kingdom, have even gone so far as to create barriers for working class participation or active hostility towards the working class (Bell 2020). Institutions of neoliberalism and economic rationale have captured the frames centered around environmental protection globally to the point that it has become seen as a requirement for environmentalism (Bernstein 2001).

Within the United States, the policy wing of the environmental movement was dealt a clear loss in 2010 with the defeat of an Obama administration's cap and trade bill (Hadden 2017). This defeat left the environmental movement struggling with their collective action frames. While there was extensive debate about that loss, the shift in strategy that came as result was towards broader targets that did not necessarily require legislation such as pipelines, the fossil fuel industry, and climate resiliency. This indicated a shift away from a more institutional focus towards more social norms. The loss caused the movement in the United States to focus more on fossil fuels and practices like sustainability.

Scholars have noted that the aspects of the environmental movement that have rooted their discourse in apocalyptic thinking have done so in a way that depoliticized moving away from capitalism (Swyngedouw 2010). Depoliticization is the processes and mechanisms by which politicians or people in power attempt to convince the public that they harbor no responsibility for particular issues (Flinders and Buller 2006). As part of the integration of green organizations into institutionalized neoliberalism, the two have utilized the rhetoric of apocalyptic impacts

from climate change to make moving towards alternatives to capitalist systems less palatable (Swyngedouw 2010). The shifting of responsibility and limiting the scope of discussion are both part of this process of depoliticization, as the process of depoliticization is centered on the relationship between neoliberalism and climate change. This exclusion of elements from entering the discussion of climate change or becoming politicized by powerful social actors is the depoliticization (Felli 2015)

In turn, international climate focus and policy has become representative of the interests of neoliberalism through advocacy of marketization as a solution (Ciplet and Roberts 2017). This refocus of interests resulted in inequitable solutions that favor wealthier nations in terms of the distribution of climate change burdens. When movement frames arose that criticized these systems with anti-capitalist bends, such as the global justice frame, they would be taken and co-opted to suit the needs of neoliberal environmentalism through reinterpretation of the term justice (Cassegård and Thörn 2017). The solutions that arise from these market based prognostic frames often end up not resolving any of the problems and in some cases making the situation worse, particularly in the case of climate change and mitigation strategies (Dunlap and Sullivan 2020). Often the solutions end up creating other problems in territorializations and colonialism pushing local populations out so that governments can use the land to accumulate or sell resources (Ramussen and Lund 2018). The resulting policies end up creating institutional and systemic problems without resolving the environmental issues.

While neoliberal environmentalism stretches across the globe, there are distinctions between the environmental movements in various countries in how they focus on and address issues of neoliberalism. While the United States and the United Kingdom have environmental

movements that do not center these issues (Montrie 2018; Bell 2020), that does not hold true in other parts of the world. Elsewhere younger and older generations are united in their focus on neoliberalism as part of their movement frames (Bertuzzi 2019). The movement in France began to incorporate more elements of civil disobedience as a result of crackdowns on protests by the government (Wahlström and de Moor 2017). In Japan environmental organizations have been institutionalized but have been shifting frames to focus upon criticism of governance and collaborations with grassroots organizations (Cassegård 2017). There are also international organizations and frames that offer global collective action frames to the environmental movement (Cassegård and Thörn 2017). These are all to say that environmental movements globally are constantly shifting and going through processes that bring them closer and further from institutionalization and the neoliberal mindset that encapsulates those institutions.

While the U.S. environmental movement has not centered critiques of neoliberalism since the 1990s, there are indications this will change. A survey taken of participants at the major climate marches of 2014 (The People's Climate March) and 2017 (The March for Climate, Jobs, and Justice) indicated that participants of these events were significantly more likely to believe that we needed to shift away from capitalism to overcome climate change (Beer 2020). This survey also indicated that gender, race, education, income, and political ideology also had a significant relationship with the belief. Beer's study did not find a statistically significant correlation between the age of respondents and their stated beliefs about capitalism.

Generational Difference in Activism

The definition of what a generation is can vary. When groups of people enter into notable periods of their life, they form into a generation that is distinct from other generational

units (Mannheim 1952). Generations act as identities that exist in relation to other generational identities as both distinct identities themselves and through a process of transformation from one to the other. These generations are cohorts of people who have specific cultures and habitus that share some collective memory that binds them together under that specific identity (Eyerman and Turner 1998). Differences between cohorts are based on a number of social factors. Often these generation effects are the result of experiences that these generations have had in their own personal lives as well as major events that have occurred in their collective history (Schuman and Scott 1989).

Within social movement studies there exists political generations. Political generations are comprised of collections of micro-cohorts which are groups of individuals who join a movement at the same time with similar experiences distinct from other groups (Whittier 1997). These distinctions between micro-cohorts can be in identity or preferred movement direction and have led to disputes between generations. Sometimes this occurs when activists create subgroups based on age and experiences, such as bracketing out those who did not participate in certain protests that had occurred prior to their joining (Zamponi 2019).

There are a number of differences that distinguish the experiences of older activists and younger activists (Earl et al 2017). Often the life stage of an individual or the state of society at coming of age pushes the youth in a society to have a stronger desire for social and institutional change (Braungart and Braungart 1990b). Examinations of cultural cleavages can see how these different ideas and understandings can form between generations (della Porta 2015). While some scholars have contended that youth political participation is on the decline, they have also found that younger people instead changed styles of participation to engage through techniques

like volunteerism, direct action, or usage of social media whereas they participate less so in standard methods like voting (Dalton 2020; Shea and Harris 2006; Winston 2013). Youth generally have distinct understandings of social structures and systems due to a variety of factors including family, educational institutions, and political organizations that result in differences from previous generations (Younis et al 2002). Online activity has had an influence on the styles of civic engagement that youth utilize such that it makes them distinct from the previous generation (Kahne et al 2013; Xenos et al 2014). These differences in engagement also leave way for differences in issue conceptualizations. Youth can have different conceptualizations of larger systems, systemic issues, and social factors that come into contest with the dominant ones in their society (Helman and Kaminer 2018; Malinga and Ratele 2018).

Within each social movement, the distinctions between generations are understood differently based on various factors (della Porta 2019b; Milan 2019; Zamponi 2019). Historically younger activists have been important to the rise and prominence of both movements and movement organizations across a variety of domains (Earl et al 2017). Younger activists often feel organizations and spaces where multiple generations of activists meet are dismissive of their concerns (Gordon 2007; O'Donoghue and Strobel 2007; Taft 2010). This can create more barriers for movements as if younger activists do not feel that their actions are effective or they are not required, they will be less likely to participate in activism (Velasquez and LaRose 2015; Winston 2013). Younger activists will also acknowledge and change tactics if they feel they are not being recognized or discriminated against within organizations based on their age (Gordon 2007). Compromises, however, to facilitate the interests across generations are known to occur through negotiations, open discussion spaces, or from shared ideology (Portos 2019). Notable

differences between generations in activism seem to occur between preferred tactics, vocabularies around problems, organizational structures, and frames (Bertuzzi 2019; Chironi 2019; Hall 2019; Portos 2019).

Youth and the Emergence of the New Precariat

Over the course of the last three decades the social risks and challenges people face have begun to differ greatly than those experienced by previous generation, particularly in the transition from school to work, dependency on parents and families, and the labor market (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Around the globe diverse coalitions of people find themselves confronting systems of neoliberalism (della Porta 2015). Millennials and younger generations have very contentious understandings of neoliberalism and institutions as they suffer from economic crises that have led to unemployment, cuts in social services, and loss of opportunities (della Porta 2019). As such, they have aggressively pushed back against issues of austerity that they see stemming from those economic crises (Sloam 2014). This growing number of people, who lack reliable income, social safety nets, community support, are living as the 'Precariat' or close to 'Precariatization' (Standing 2011). While the economic situation grows more tense, the people who are within or close to the 'Precariat' increases and they suffer the consequences of their new position, including alienation, anxiousness, anger, and anomic angst (della Porta 2019b; Standing 2011). People who had no expectations of ending up as the 'Precariat' now find themselves there as the scope widens (della Porta 2015). As conditions worsen, these generations turn to new forms of political action to find spaces where they feel their politics and their concerns are being represented (Milan 2019). In fact, this feeling of precarity becomes a

point that is central to the frames activists posit for their generational identity (Zamponi 2019).

Thus, structural conditions and social processes are often experienced generationally:

“The contemporary crisis of neoliberalism (in particular, the financial crisis), which is accompanied by a political crisis as well, has transformed social settings to various degrees and in various ways, creating new grievances, reshaping opportunities and restraints on mobilization, and triggering or exacerbating social and political conflicts. [...] The economic and concurrent legitimacy crisis is altering the societal participation of young people. It creates or exacerbates grievances among certain parts of the youth population” (della Porta 2019:1414).

The conceptions that young people have of these structures is altering the way they approach social conflict. They are becoming skeptical of politicians and democratic institutions, causing multiple movements to shift collective action frames towards centering neoliberalism as a problem and reforming institutions as a solution (della Porta 2015; Loader et al 2014). It is also not just young people doing this. Outside of the United States, younger and older generations are united in their focus on neoliberalism as part of their diagnostic frames (Bertuzzi 2019). Within the United States there are indications of a renewal in socialist thinking in politics that would stand in contrast to the current neoliberalism (Manski et al 2021). These indications include socialist political wins, growth in socialist political parties, as well as prominent political figures espousing goals that socialist groups within the country had promoted.

Pessimism, Fear, and Mental Health

The impacts of climate change are known to have a detrimental effect on an individual’s mental well-being (Clayton and Manning 2018). These range from being directly affected by

catastrophic impacts but also more subtle impacts such as rising temperatures. This can result in individuals feeling anxiety, distress, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder (Clayton and Manning 2018; Helm et al 2018). These general distresses around climate change are known as eco-anxiety (Verplanken et al 2020). Those who feel anxiety or depression about the environment are also known to have higher levels of general anxiety or depression, though the opposite is true for those who experience anger about the environment (Stanley et al 2021).

The understandings people have of climate change are also known to have an impact on their mental well-being. Anxiety towards climate change affects many groups of people and it particularly affects younger adults based on how each individual understands climate change (Clayton and Karaszia 2020). It is also known that having a greater understanding of climate change leads to a combination of motivation, distress, and adaptations in individuals (Reser et al 2014). This then raises questions about how it affects those involved in environmental activism.

The extent of this problem impacts more people than one might think, as around 55% of Americans reported feeling stress due to climate change in 2020 (American Psychological Association 2020). As well, there is a divide in the United States with perceptions on the state of “global warming” with 51% of Americans feeling helpless about it while 48% feel hopeful (Lieserowitz et al 2018). There are differences across factors such as age and gender that influence the amount of fear that people have towards climate change (Searle and Gow 2010). Younger people in general tend to have higher levels of stress about climate change when compared to other generational groups (Searle and Gow 2010; American Psychological Association 2018). Studies show that there is a correlation with what an individual thinks they can do to stop climate change and them acting to address climate change, with people who

perceive themselves as powerless being less likely to act (Aitken et al 2011; Williams and Jaftha 2020). This feeling of powerlessness contests against the increased likelihood to act individuals feel from their perception of risk.

Emotions, and the interactions between them, are understood to have an important influence on the way that social movements play out through collective action and identity (Coşkun 2019). Fear exists as both an enabler of action as well as potentially preventing people from acting (Kleres and Wettergren 2017). That effect is mediated by hope, with people acting for the sake of generating hope for the future. Fear is also known to inhibit the effects of anger and lowers the likelihood of people to engage in actions that are driven by anger (Miller et al 2009). Hope and fear, then play an important role in social movements but have a unique effect in the environmental movement. Particularly in the Global North, fear is an emotion that is utilized to make people aware of the dangers of climate change but then has activists become providers of hope (Kleres and Wettergren 2017). Frames around climate change in the Global North are also attempting to shift towards a politics of hope. However, there is an emerging frame that exists in competition to that which focuses on the idea of a post-apocalyptic environmentalism which rejects the hopeful nature and instead embraces that loss is coming due to climate change (Cassegård and Thörn 2018). This style of environmentalism is directly contrary to that of mainstream environmental organizations within the Global North and proposes approaching the idea of the world post apocalypse to build a better world from the proverbial ashes. It is often within the more radical branches, those groups with less trust in institutions and capitalism, where this discourse around post-apocalyptic environmentalism is predominant.

Emotional responses to environmental issues and the climate crisis can vary in how they manifest and their influence. In some cases, the general public may avoid considering issues related to climate change in order to avoid the negative feelings that they associate with it to the degree that it may prevent social movement participation (Norgaard 2006). Different kinds of concerns about climate change illicit different reactions from people. Those who are concerned about the impact on themselves and on future generations are less stressed than those who are concerned about the state of the planet (Helm et al 2018). Those who experience these negative emotions are more likely to engage in coping strategies which includes behavior they see as protecting the environment (Helms et al 2018). Often adaptations that people undertake as a response to climate change includes personal responsibilities, such as reducing their personal carbon output through modifying their behavior (Reser et al 2014). Those who feel anger or depression related to the environment are more likely to engage in collective behaviors, whereas those who feel an anxiety about it are more likely to be disengaged (Stanley et al 2021). Though there are studies that disagree with that notion and point to anxiety leading to pro environmental behaviors in individuals (Verplanken et al 2020).

Identifying as an Activist

Identity is an important aspect for understanding social movements and their participants. Collective identities are particularly valuable to understanding social movements because they offer potential reasons for an individual's involvement with a movement or a movement organization through their cognitive, moral, or emotional connections (Poletta and Jasper 2001). Collective identities are examined for activists because collective identities feature multiple people working towards common interests with common understandings of

grievances, enemies, and social integration (Gamson et al 1984; Simon and Klandermans 2001). There are multiple kinds of collective identities within movements of which Gamson indicates in a typology of organizational, movement, and solidary (Gamson 1991).

While a person may be a member of a social movement organization that does not necessarily mean they identify as an activist. Generally, there are variations between organizations and their member's tendency towards ascribing to the identity (Corrigan-Brown 2012). Given factors like their own personal experiences and ideologies, some members may identify more so with an organization or certain values rather than the identity of an activist. There are also a number of barriers to people who want to claim the identity of activist including high standards for activists (Bobel 2007; Chalhoub, Ciavattone, and Wetzel 2017; Craddock 2019; Maher et al 2020), negative stereotypes of activists (Bashir et al 2013), gender (Craddock 2019; Taft 2010), and race (Elliott et al 2017). Activists over time can find that their connection to the identity might have solidified as they age, even if they do not find themselves participating in actions of the same nature as they did previously (Whalen and Flacks 1989). Often younger activists in particular express feelings of inadequacies when negotiating an activist identity (Chalhoub, Ciavattone, and Wetzel 2017; Maher et al 2020). Activists have a notion of an 'ideal activist', which often comes with high standards that result in them rejecting the activist identity (Bobel 2007). They look towards more direct action as what the 'ideal activist' does, and this can leave activists feeling guilty or inadequate (Craddock 2019).

These conceptualizations lead to three different kinds of activists that Cortese conceptualized as Emphatics, Demarcators, and Reconcilers (Cortese 2015). Emphatics see activists in an extraordinarily positive sense and strongly identify with it. Demarcators set up

distinctions between 'Good' and 'Bad' activism with Cortese noting they define their identity based on what they do not do. Demarcators construct these definitions by placing themselves as 'Good' activists and those who engage in other styles of activism as 'Bad' activists. Reconcilers set up definitions of activism that allow them to fall within the purview of the standards they set even if they do not fall within the perfect standard. Understanding the ways that people affiliate themselves with the activist identity can also be an indicator for future movement success by showing how likely someone is to sustain their activism or engage in activism in the future (Corrigan-Brown 2012). Individuals with a stronger affiliation with the environmental activist identity are much more likely to express intentions to participate in environmental activism (Fielding et al 2008).

Reflexivity in Activism

Reflexivity offers an important through line for the concepts discussed as it exists as an important process in determining activists' frames, the fear individuals have, as well as their identity. It is the capacity an individual has in understanding the structure of society and how best to operate within that structure and differs from person to person (Archer 2007). It is one's ability to understand oneself based on the social structure and the social structure based on oneself. Reflexivity is an important process when examining self-identification because it is the capacity and method with which one examines oneself and thus determine if oneself is of a certain identity (Jackson and Hogg 2010). Reflexivity must be understood to determine what motivates people to act, as well as to understand how social factors influence which actions they take (Archer 2007). One reflexive process is the internal conversation which involves a person both asking and answering questions internally to create beliefs, attitudes, and goals

(Caetano 2017). This is important because it shows how the social structure influences the individual and through its understanding, we can see how an individual is transformed by their society (Archer 2003; Archer 2007). Individuals engaged with addressing climate change are known to have participated in extensive internal conversations to determine the scope of the problem, and the possibility of success within the movement (Davidson 2012).

Social movement participants, within Archer's typology, are most likely 'meta-reflexives' as they utilize the process of self-critique to eventually produce critiques of society and thus have a desire to change society (Archer 2003; Archer 2007). Determining if oneself falls within the confines of the activist identity would also fall within the process of self-critique that 'meta-reflexives' utilize. In the case of the activist identity the process one goes through involves both the construction of what an 'ideal activist' is, as well as whether oneself meets the standards set in place. It is not done through an explicit social process in the movement, but the movement and its members define a number of constraints and enablers that the individual then utilizes based on their own understandings. Hence an examination of activist identity formation should draw upon the reflexive process to understand how an activist might form the criteria for the 'ideal activist' and how they examine themselves against it.

Additionally, this internal conversation is important to understand concepts related to frames and fear. Reflexive processes decide which actions individuals take and the rationale behind those actions through the processing of social factors in a way that is distinct for each individual (Archer 2007). Strategic choices in frames made by activists are the results of reflexivity and the understanding of enablers and barriers to determine what problems need to be confronted as well as the methods to confront them. Differences between groups collective

action frames would thus imply a difference in the internal conversation and thus their reflexivity. Climate change is understood as a distinct problem and this depends upon the reflexivity of the individual (Davidson 2012). An individual's understanding of the impacts of climate change then dictates their fear which would then come to influence their understanding of society as well as then influencing their strategic frames. Several factors can be associated with a large concept like climate change but then it is on the individual, through their reflexive processes, to determine which are important for them. While an important element for understanding this research, we only need to understand reflexivity as an aspect that is always occurring inherently in each individual.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Methods

This study builds a theory grounded in open-ended questions posed in face to face semi-structured in-depth interviews. Grounded methods such as these allow for exploratory research as well as more thorough descriptions that help distinctly illustrate specific cases (Charmaz 2006). Grounded theory allows us to focus on participants' understandings instead of attempting to contain their explanations within another existing theory that might exclude relevant factors (Tavory and Timmermans 2009). Grounded theory also privileges the knowledge of the population that is studied, mitigating issues inherent within the researcher researched relationship by allowing collaboratively generated information (Sprague 2016).

The usage of grounded theory allowed this research to eventually turn its focus upon the factors that influence activist's frames and identities as those concepts emerged from the data. Open-ended questions allow for examining multiple layers of cultural meaning as they apply to an interviewee's motivations and beliefs (Pugh 2013). Face to face semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to better examine these multiple layers through probing responses with follow up questions and clarifications. Due to concerns about Covid-19, the interviews were conducted using the online video call service Zoom. Though it is not true face to face interviewing most of the same benefits are still applicable. While interviews are often best combined with observation, we can examine the frames and understandings of activists without observation (Lamont and Swidler 2014). This research was designed for the sake of an

exploratory look at the tactics and strategies of climate change activists that allow data, and not theory, to form conclusions.

This research utilized inductive coding in order to ensure its focus on an exploration of the data. Inductive coding does not utilize a codebook and instead relies on the data that is available to determine themes. Themes were pulled from the data and then grouped together into appropriate categories using descriptive coding. Of those categories, three were pulled out for full analysis and further coding causing the research to pivot towards prognostic and diagnostic frames, fear and hope, and the activist identity. Coding was done using the NVivo software on transcripts of the video interviews.

Sample

This study was conducted by interviewing members of incorporated environmental organizations that utilized messaging or actions directed towards combatting climate change. Whether an organization fit the criteria was determined by looking at the organization's websites as well as public history of actions. This would include organizations solely focused on climate change as well as environmental organizations that mentioned climate change as part of their action plans or in their problem frames. These organizations included local chapters of national organizations, locally based environmental organizations, as well as local student organizations. Each organization selected was incorporated under U.S. law and registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(4) or 501(c)(3), or in the case of student organizations, operating within the corporate form of their university. These kinds of organizations were used to provide a level of consistency amongst groups. These groups were also more likely to have public points of

contact, and easily accessible information about membership and actions. Each group was based in the United States within the same state in the Mid-Atlantic area.

I selected interviewees through directed sampling, reaching out to organizations and interviewing members in public facing roles. I followed this with snowball sampling that targets other members of those organizations. Often this would result in interviews with the members who responded to emails, but also participants of the organization that were recommended as potential interview participants. Sample criteria included being an official member of the organization as determined by the standards of that organization and having been a member of that organization for at minimum one month. By applying these criteria, we improve the likelihood that our research subjects have a higher level of involvement with the environmental organization as that is an indicator of a stronger commitment to environmental activism. Research that uses criteria for who is interviewed improves its ability to be used to inform future projects by giving more concrete definitions of who this could be applicable to (Robinson 2014). I conducted 20 interviews within a two month period from April 2021 to May 2021. Most interviews were roughly one hour, which was the time that was discussed with participants, but ranged from 30 minutes to two hours. Interviews were recorded using the Zoom recording service, and those recordings were used for coding.

Data

Interviews utilized synchronic reporting and primarily engaged with the topics on how activists think about their organization, their organizations actions and messaging, themselves, the dangers of climate change, different kinds of activism, self-identity, and the movement.

Interview questions remained largely consistent amongst all members of each organization but with additional questions based on the specifics of a person's role or distinctions with their respective organization that arose during the interview which is a feature of theoretical sampling. As well, overtime certain questions were lowered in priority and additional clarifying questions were added. Determining an individual's relation to the environmental movement was based on questions that explore how an interviewee feels relative to their organization and their organization relative to the broader movement. Questions about the danger of climate change focused on the dangers posed to the world as well as the dangers posed to the interviewee. Certain questions, like "What do you think the world will be like in 30 years?", act as points where those dangers can be better framed around long term impacts, how respondents understood the reverberations of those impacts, and the way they see the fight against climate change going. It also expands upon the notions of what else maybe contained within the frame of climate change to the interviewee. Questions that were added sought to clarify additional points relative to the activist understanding of their own organization by first obtaining how they perceive themselves and then three other prominent environmental organizations and are marked as such in the Appendix.

There were questions related to issues of specific identities that are known to be important to environmental activists such as the activist identity and the environmental identity (Clayton 2003; Horowitz 2017). Questions like "What comes to mind when you think of activism?" and "What do you think of as nature?" are broad questions that allow for potential in-depth exploration of these identities. Since this study is based in grounded theory there were not many questions as they relate to these specific identities to allow for more information to

come naturally from the interviewee and to allow for questions about identities that are noted as relevant during the interview or in past interviews. Open-ended questions allow identities to emerge that could be relevant to the individual. Questions for each topic area were adjusted mildly as interviews were conducted. There is a case to be made for integrating role-based analysis as opposed to solely collective identity, especially given the way that social movement participants negotiate their own identity (Horowitz 2017). The barriers to gathering data on role based identities, however, make it difficult to utilize.

Activists tended to use terms like business, capitalism, and neoliberalism in very similar contexts when explaining their frames and understandings of institutional problems. Hence for the sake of analysis each issue will be explained as they relate to the sociological concept rather than what the interviewees necessarily mentioned, though quotes will retain their original terminology. As well, while not all activists identified themselves as activists they will be referred to as activists since they are all acting as change agents.

Given this study's focus on generational differences most social factors will be omitted from reporting in order to ensure anonymity for participants. Due to the grounded theoretical approach certain factors were not ascertained as part of the original interview and follow up questionnaires had to be sent out. Due to missing responses on the questionnaires some ages are approximated based on context clues from the interview, but those participants are marked accordingly on the table.

Table 1 Participants approximate age and generational category for research

Participant	Age	Generation	Data Categorization
Sage	Early 20s	Gen Z	Youth (Younger)
Sandy	Early 20s	Gen Z	Youth (Younger)
Riley	Early 20s	Gen Z	Youth (Younger)
Taylor	Early 20s	Gen Z	Youth (Younger)
Sydney	Early 20s	Gen Z	Youth (Younger)
Robin	Early 20s	Gen Z	Youth (Younger)
Morgan	Mid 20s	Gen Z	Youth (Younger)
Sam	Late 20s	Millennial	Zennial (Younger)
Ashley	Early 30s	Millennial	Zennial (Younger)
Adrian	Early 30s*	Millennial	Zennial (Younger)
Frames and Ideological Difference Point	~~~	~~~	~~~
Jordan	Late 30s	Millennial	Xennial (Older)
Briar	Mid 40s	Generation X	Xennial (Older)
Elliott	Mid 40s*	Generation X	Xennial (Older)
Max	Late 50s	Generation X	Xennial (Older)
Tony	Late 50s	Generation X	Xennial (Older)
Whitney	Mid 60s	Boomer	Elder (Older)
Tracy	Late 60s	Boomer	Elder (Older)

Pat	Late 60s	Boomer	Elder (Older)
Casey	Late 60s	Boomer	Elder (Older)
Blake	Early 70s	Boomer	Elder (Older)

**- Age was approximated by researcher due to lack of response on follow up questionnaire on demographic information*

Participant ages ranged from early 20s to early 70s and given this range when determining generational cohorts, four broad categorizations were used for age. While cohort effects are discussed, those cohorts are often on a much smaller scale and depend partially as well on insulation from major historical events. Age ranges from 18 to 27 are the youth generation, 27 to 35 are the Zennials, 35 to 59 as the Xennials, and 60 and upwards as the elder generation. In this study “Younger” is used for participants 35 and younger while “Older” will refer to those 36 and above. This point demarcates a significant difference in frames between activists as indicated on Figure 1. Participants were also predominantly women and white, which has been historically understood to make up the largest portion of the environmental movement in the United States. All older participants were white but younger participants had more ethnic diversity as well as more gender diversity though were still primarily white women.

Limitations

This methodology has a high level of internal validity but has lower levels of reliability and external validity. This is in line with the general understanding that in-depth interviewing has high internal validity but lower reliability. The low levels of reliability are a result of using semi-structured interviews with open ended questions. As respondents can give any possible

answer to a question and interviewers can follow up with unique questions means there is no reliability in measures (Carr et al 2017). Face to face interviews give the researcher better ability to read information that comes from body language and tone of voice (Carr et al 2017). This can help a researcher determine whether an interviewer might be giving inaccurate information. It can also help reveal more emotionally based information that is valuable in determining the underlying cultural meanings needed to understand motivations (Pugh 2013). While interviews over digital video communication platforms like Zoom allow for this same style of communication, issues with the platform and issues with connectivity can prevent certain lines of questioning from being pursued as well as data loss from connection issues. Semi-structured interviews allow for probing through follow up questions that can also explore inconsistencies and contradictions that reveal themselves from open ended questions. These are all major benefits towards improving internal validity as it allows the researcher to determine with great accuracy what are the actual factors that influence an individual.

Convenience sampling reduces generalizability (Robinson 2014), but this lower level of external validity was already expected due to the smaller sample size. By doing interviews repeatedly, continuously refining interview questions, and eventual purposive sampling the data collection can attempt to reach saturation on these specific cases rather than attempt a level of generalizability (Small 2009). Though this maybe limited as the research utilizes time constraints rather than saturation as the marker for the end of data collection. Further there is a high likelihood of small issues with internal validity as not all factors that affect the messages and actions of activists were discovered as a result of time constraints. The factors that the research did discover are highly valid but without full saturation there is the chance the picture is

incomplete. Due to issues with obtaining interviewees from the same organization, multiple organizations had to be contacted for the sake of this study. This made analyses that examined the actions and messaging centered around organization strategies much more difficult to accurately obtain so the focus of the study has been honed to differences in frames and identity on an individual level.

Due to the difficulty in obtaining participants, partially due to the issues of the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted with members of 11 environmental organizations which was a variation from the original research plan. Given this difference in sampling, certain aspects that could potentially have been explored had to be ignored. As well, since certain social factors were not asked about during the interview, such as questions to roughly approximate social class, the analysis could only allude to those factors. This style of sampling also suffers greatly from gatekeeper effects, as organizations can select interviewees to offer. This could be mitigated in future research but here it was partially due to inaccessibility from the Covid 19 pandemic.

Ethical Considerations

There were several ethical considerations that needed to be addressed when conducting this research. In sampling exclusively incorporated environmental organizations there are a number of voices and aspects of the environmental movement that are omitted. The process of becoming an incorporated organization already represents a barrier that is known to effect certain populations more so than others (Gleeson and Bloemrad 2013). Resource inequality makes it easier for privileged populations to form organizations and start movements (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). Sampling unincorporated groups could also improve this

research, but the time constraints and lack of accessibility made it an issue. Acknowledging in this study that the groups being examined are only a small segment of the environmental movement and that examining incorporated organizations is often looking at privileged populations can prevent some of the harms this might cause. This is made evident as every individual interviewed had some level of higher education with younger participants having their bachelors or were in the process of getting their bachelors, whereas older participants would frequently have PhDs and Masters degrees. Further, research that requires participant's time can be an issue for members of these groups who do not have extra time which further privileges certain voices (Sprague 2016). There were cases where interviews could not be conducted because financial resources were not available to properly compensate individuals for their time.

Using public facing roles as an entry point to the sample can also create an issue as these positions can likely be leadership positions in these organizations. Leadership roles in these organizations are often white men while women and racial minorities are passed over for these positions (Taylor 2015). There are also ethical issues that can result from gatekeepers that becomes more problematic as a result of requiring snowball sampling as they choose who to extend the interview request to. Interviews were mostly conducted with members of these organizations that had prominent roles in leadership or positions on advisory boards within the organization, which is a factor the research must account for. While most participants in this way were not white men, they were still predominantly white and multiple organizations claimed to have diversity issues with their membership. The analysis must acknowledge this as a potential influence on the data and a limitation of its scope.

In terms of the interview questions, there was potential for issues in the conduction of the interview. With the ever-increasing likelihood that climate change has affected a person's life, it is important to recognize that participants could have difficulty talking about these topics. Climate change can cause people to deal with a variety of mental health impacts such as stress, anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Clayton et al 2014). Hence any interviews conducted must be sensitive to the traumas and stress that climate change can inflict upon a participant. Two methods that were utilized to prevent harm in this way were informed consent and continued consent. Informed consent is helpful as it involves letting potential respondents know beforehand what the subject of the interview is and the questions that make up the framework of the interview. This allows them to be better equipped to deal with questions that might bring up some of those stresses or have the choice to avoid them completely. One potential issue with informed consent in open ended interviews is that the direction of questioning can vary from what participants had initially agreed upon but through the use of continued consent these issues are avoidable (Allmark et al 2009). Continued consent, in this instance, is ensuring that interviewees are okay with lines of questioning before they are pursued. There was no instance of these issues arising over the course of this research.

ANALYSIS

Generational Differences in Diagnostic and Prognostic Frames

Globally the current sociopolitical moment is a shift towards neoliberalism as an integral element of activist's frames in a variety of movements (della Porta 2015). The environmental movement is no exception. There exists within the environmental movement an undercurrent of anti-capitalism, anti-neoliberalism, and a desire for systemic change. Though these aspects have existed for some time, they had experienced decline (Montrie 2018). While it had previously been relegated to outside the mainstream movement's discourse, it is now rising to prominence within mainstream movements. The collected data here shows that this aspect exists within the frames posited by younger members of incorporated environmental organizations and is not matched by the older members. These separate conceptualizations of the roots of the problem in the more institutionalized element of the environmental movement shows a divide within that collective identity as collective identities often have shared understandings of who the enemy is (Klandermans and Simon 2001). Given what we know about generations as an identity, there is an expectation that people in similar age groups will tend towards similar conceptualizations based on their shared history and notable life events (Mannheim 1952; Schuman and Scott 1989; Eyerman and Turner 1998). As well, we suspect that these frame differences are not a factor of age but are a result of a combination of cohort effects that happen to parallel with generational groups. These differences in frames are also indicative of an ideological divide that exists within the movement. Thus, there is a distinction in

the diagnostic and prognostic frames of activists by generation within incorporated environmental organizations.

Frames: Capitalism, Corporation, and Neoliberalism

There is the potential for a turn towards anti-capitalism and anti-neoliberalism given our current political moment. As paralleled with the rising anti-neoliberalism in other movements (della Porta 2015), some activists within the environmental movement seem intent on articulating the barriers and issues the movement should focus on as capitalism and systems of domination in general. The activists I interviewed who fall into this are the younger ones while the older activists do not use these frames. Zennials are using frames similar to youth activists, while Xennials align with older activists. Often young activist's frames explain that corporations and other powerful entities are exerting control on the environmental movement causing problems for the movement's efficacy:

One of the things that I think that people don't consider, or that gets left out of the conversation, I guess there's some, discussion about consumer culture, capitalist structures. To me they seem incompatible with any meaningful or effective environmental change, and I think because that's kind of a big scary like system level topic that people don't bring that up as much, as there is a lot of the hope that, even within capitalism, we can find solutions to ecological degradation and climate change more broadly. But I don't really, I mean, I guess, personally I don't see how that can happen. I just think that people, you know, aren't talking about the actual systems of power that are at play. So, I wish people were talking about that. Ashley

Ashley, whose work focuses on policy at the state level, wants to see the movement confront systemic problems that they see as the underlying cause of ecological degradation. They feel they do not see enough discussion around businesses, consumerism, and the components that make up capitalist structures. The movement's actions remain focused on surface level environmental harms, but those harms are rooted in systemic issues. It becomes impossible for Ashley to see a world with a viable solution to climate change so long as those solutions are contained within capitalist structures and not about capitalist structures. Other younger activists saw the actions of corporations as potentially "*major sources of failure*" (Riley) for the movement. They believe if corporations are allowed to continue normal operations, then the movement will make no progress. They also find it is a difficult topic to broach within the movement because it exists in opposition to the movement's current collective action frame. They believe the movement is pushing for solutions that promote capitalism and solutions that reject capitalism would be too much of a difference. For these activists, if these solutions do not target the right problem then they will never truly be effective.

Sandy, whose work focuses on environmental justice advocacy, sees confronting capitalism as an inevitability. They see the world reaching a tipping point due to inequality where people will have to take action. "*I do see there just being a point where it's like, we can't live like this anymore [...] People recognize that there is no other option but to like dismantle these institutions that are causing the environment harm.*" (Sandy). Their hope is in a revolutionary dismantling of institutions, and they do not see the issues of the environment being resolved in another way. Sandy's hopes of a revolution are similar to those of the activists of the sixties that Whalen and Flacks studied. Some of the activists they examined felt that the

revolution was an inevitability as they saw the woes of society getting too bad to bear (Whalen and Flacks 1984). When those revolutions did not come to pass, some became disillusioned with their revolutionary agenda but did not abandon their politics entirely. While this is not to say that Sandy's dreams of revolution are destined to fail, this does indicate that these sorts of hopes that are being expressed are not new aspects of social movements.

For others it is simpler. Morgan, who works with a sustainability organization, sees corporate interests as the only "*clear like opposite force*". Even when their analysis focuses on issues that they do not directly connect to capitalism, such as ignorance towards the impacts of climate change, they feel that the roots of those problems are in corporate interests. Morgan constructs frames that explore these barriers for the environmental movement and connects them with capitalism. As well, these younger activists contained their conceptualizations of the impacts of climate change within capitalism. They see disastrous sea level rise, increased systemic inequality, difficulty accessing water and resources for marginalized populations as a world that is reduced to "*who has the most money to acquire resources*" (Robin). Each part of their fight has some aspect of capitalism, economic thinking, or neoliberalism in their diagnostic frame.

The frames of the older activists I interviewed had some similarities with the younger activists when examining the problems of climate change. They discussed rising inequalities as well as an uneven distribution of impacts but differed in how much that was a focus of their conceptualizations of those issues. Of note is that these impacts are contained within the climate justice frame that the environmental movement has utilized for some time (Cassegård and Thörn 2017). These older activists are unlikely to frame capitalism, neoliberalism, or

economic thinking as the roots of these impacts or that systemic and institutional change are requisites for the movement's success. Even when discussing the goals of the movement, they did not frame capitalism, neoliberalism, or economic thinking directly as problems. These older activists instead looked towards carbon emissions or unsustainable living.

Diagnostic frames of the older activists relied more on 'consumption' such as Max stating, *"We have to change our mindset and we can't rely on tech to get us out. So, I worry about people who rely on it, because they want to keep to business as usual. But that's one of the problems, you know, the massive consumption and marketing"*. Elliott stating *"Climate change is really, I think of it as, you know, this path that humanity to put the earth on and pushing it to, through our consumption activities, push the earth beyond the brink of what is sustainable"* is also evidence of this. They see the problem as businesses overconsuming resources. It is not the fundamental basis of capitalism in our society but rather the practices of business that have brought us to the brink and the movement needs to focus on that. The diagnostic frames of the older activists stand in juxtaposition to the younger activist's gaze towards fundamental problems in the structures of society. To further clarify, Jordan, who focuses on education about sustainability, argues that *"I just think that people are missing an opportunity to really get together and carry on and keep the world going as it is you know. Like we have been on a pretty good trajectory, but we've just overconsumed a little bit"*. This perspective sees the systems of society as straining the world and not as the problem in itself. Limiting the exploitative consumptive practices of business are necessary but the organization of society can stay as it is.

There are distinctions in the frames that present the starkest difference between how these generations view business. Morgan offered that the opposition was *“corporate interests”* that sought to profit off environmental exploitation. The corporate interests which caused *“overexploiting”* was the issue and not necessarily the overconsumption that the older activists indicated. Sydney, who works in communication and outreach for an environmental organization, also sees what they oppose as a profit seeking mentality rather than overconsumption. They stated, *“Those are the people that I guess I’m in opposition to. [They] go ‘This sucks dude but like I’ve made my profit and I’m going to die in like 10 years, so best of luck to the rest of you losers’”*. Their issues with businesses are not that it gotten out of hand or confronting ignorance. For them it is the people who feel that climate change is not a concern for them. They construct similar problems in their frames as the older activists did but the nature of their diagnosis of those problems is different.

Older activists did offer some criticism of capitalism and neoliberalism, like Whitney who sees individuals’ intent on *“making a profit”* as not caring about climate change. They do not, however, frame those people as a barrier that needs to be overcome or that the movement’s solutions should confront capitalism. While older activists did not criticize capitalism or neoliberalism directly, the term *“money”* was used occasionally to describe an antagonistic force. These older activists described people seeking money or the power of money in politics as being in opposition to the movement. These can be construed as criticism of capitalism and neoliberalism, but their frames are still not focused on these issues, rather they are aspects of a more directed criticism of the fossil fuel industry which the United States environmental movement has focused on for some time (Hadden 2017). As well, several

younger activists indicated that within their organizations there are people who agree with them on issues of capitalism and systemic change. They note that these members do not have say in the practices of the organizations and seem to be in the minority in terms of membership. The environmental movement in the United States has historically ebbed and flowed on its criticism of neoliberalism and institutions (Asserson 2007; Hadden 2017; Montrie 2018), so it is possible that these members are remnants of those shifts.

The older activists framed businesses as potential or necessary elements for success in fighting climate change. They see the possibility for businesses to change their behaviors away from over consumption and point to small changes as signs they can be reformed. The idea they can act as allies is also expressed, like older activist Whitney stating, *“There's big benefits in talking to banks and insurance. I'm not really in opposition to them, but if we could educate them about not funding these things, not insuring the fossil fuels”*. As well there is an expressed interest in collaboration beyond just particular industries, like Jordan who sees it as a necessary step for success:

[BlackRock/BlackRock's CEO Joseph Fink] has \$9 trillion in assets under management. Its larger than Vanguard, which is the second largest money manager. He's speaking about the importance of climate change and investing in importantly climate change. Voices like his are heard, you know, and they can make changes in those organizations that are polluting the most. But we need more people in that stature and more youth. We need everyone to really get up and say, this is not acceptable and to take this from being seen as a fringe movement to just being seen as the reality Jordan

This potential collaboration serves a dual purpose for Jordan. One is to bring the movement away from the fringes and the other is the potential of a world where the interests of larger corporations can change the wider practices of business. They perceive this as already happening with powerful business figures making changes for the sake of the climate, as well as younger people's purchasing patterns. They explain that they do not see businesses as being run by necessarily evil people. For them, businesses only operate in this way because it is in their general interest. They believe the climate movement needs to shift the interests of these businesses to the point that it is beneficial to the climate. Rather than changing the economic system, it is a market based solution that Jordan expresses as *"Increase the friction [...] so they can start to feel the pinch, in a way, that doesn't extinguish the business necessarily, but like, cause them to change their practices"*. They also see this shift happening through a gradual wealth transfer to younger people and those younger people purchasing more sustainably. Businesses would then align to the demands of the youth and become more sustainable themselves.

The younger activists actively contested market based solutions seeing them as no longer a viable path forward. Rather than not utilize economic frames, Adrian described those market based solutions as not focused enough on the economy. Whereas punishing or creating incentives can do small change, it is not a focus on creating *"good paying jobs"*, *"healthcare"*, or *"general economic security"*. Adrian, who works in organizing, states that they had previously believed in market based solutions but had shifted their perspective. They now view people who provide market based solutions as being unable to conceptualize a world beyond it, and that

they reduce concepts like climate change down to what they know. They are trying to transform the economic frames to align more with their ideology instead of abandoning them.

Max, who works in educating others about sustainability, has a belief in the value of economic thinking that is the result of previous work they had done in nature conservancy. They found economic thinking was required to make the impacts against nature and the environment meaningful enough to others to illicit change. They had to equate nature to an economic value as it was difficult to articulate the value that nature could provide. While younger and older activists disagreed on the value of economics in prognostic frames, they both acknowledged it as a part of the movement because it is perceived as effective for messaging. Younger activists then took the issue beyond that and argued that it serves to obscure the underlying logic that then perpetuates environmental degradation. To these younger activists the solutions that frame issues around the economy will never resolve the problems. Robin, who works for an organization focused on promoting sustainability, stated, *“If that’s the lens we’re focused on, we’re not going to see the changes we need”*. Similar to Ashley’s concerns about a lack of focus on systems and institutions, Robin sees the necessary changes will never be possible if the collective action frames of the environmental movement are contained within market based frameworks.

When these younger activists took stances that were pro-business they did so in different ways. Younger activist Sydney felt that businesses can act as potential allies but makes the distinction between businesses and *“smaller local businesses”* who they see as potentially having a positive effect. This is distinct from the stance of older activists which looked at large corporations, investment funds, and entire industries as potential allies. Other young activists

saw partnerships with businesses as a necessary evil. Robin felt that partnerships with business were necessary due to the *“short time to make a change”* as well as the belief that people will not be willing to drastically change their habits. They rely on these businesses and see them as potential allies only because they do not see the alternative path as a viable solution, partially due to their fears of failure and impending doom. It is an aspect of the environmental movement that Robin felt they had to *“come to terms with”*.

Some younger activists see business as having the potential to change but still a problem for the movement to face, such as with Taylor who says *“I'd say largely big corporations [[are the opposition]] and I don't think that they necessarily have to be our opposition, I just think that in a lot of cases, that is the case. It's not everyone, but a lot of them, and I think that, it's the profit driving the bottom line for most of those corporations. So, they're not as interested in the social implications and environmental implications of their business”*.

They see business as often the opposition but not inherently the opposition. While their criticism focuses on profit seeking, they leave their conceptualization open for businesses to be able to change. This is a difference in ideology but one that is more closely aligned with those of their fellow younger activists rather than the older activists. This is not a belief in businesses as necessarily good. Taylor, who centers their work around environmental justice, sees certain barriers the movement faces being utilized by corporations *“to continue making profit instead of having to change the way that they work and lower profit margins temporarily. So, it's definitely a point of frustration for me”*. The diagnostic frames they use are different than the other young activists and is articulated as a strategic choice rather than actual faith in business.

Those who see businesses as giving the appearance of change do not necessarily believe those changes are genuine and instead are just efforts to abdicate responsibility:

I feel like, you know, corporations are a major issue. I feel like, especially recently, the oil and gas companies are kind of, in the last couple of weeks, like now realizing that like it would benefit them to actually act in a way that acknowledges their role in climate change. Do I think that's actually like just a big ol PR play to a certain extent? Yeah, I don't think all these corporations are going to, the ones that are most responsible for damaging our environment, are going to recognize they should probably shut down shop, like shift gears completely Sam

The neoliberal parts of the movement's successes in getting corporate entities to discuss the problems of climate change are viewed by these younger activists as "ploys". The younger activists saw this as part of neoliberalism's manipulation of institutions in order to squirm out of responsibility and shift focus towards individuals.

There is a noted distinction between the interviewed older and younger activist's diagnostic and prognostic frames for resolving the issue of climate change. While both groups pointed to similar impacts, younger activists pointed to systemic and institutional causes in their diagnostic frames. For them, corporations, capitalism, and neoliberalism are seen as issues that the movement will have to overcome. The older activists, who did criticize businesses and saw them as a problem, did not use the same diagnostic frames. They framed issues relative to industries and business, but not in the same systemic way. Instead, these older activists examined overconsumption or businesses' exploitative behavior. These differences in frames are indicative of differences in ideologies. The younger activists had a more anti-capitalist

ideology which reflected in their frames. The older activist's ideology was contained within the existing institutions and in line with the current frames of the mainstream environmental movement within the United States.

The distinction is made further between the two groups as the older activist's prognostic frames involved economic rationale and having businesses change their ways. By cooperating and using the same frameworks of economics that already exist, they see a pathway forwards to resolving the crisis. The younger activists saw that as an impossibility, and the ideas behind market-based approaches as part of the problem. Though some do find themselves cooperating with businesses, these younger activists are not pleased about that. Younger activists are in opposition to what they see as the mainstream collective action frame and desire to transform it to something with a more systemic critique and anti-capitalist focus.

Activists Address Frame Difference Within the Movement

The activists who were interviewed were cognizant of the frame difference that exists between generations in incorporated environmental organizations. Robin acknowledged the distinction and saw it as an ideological difference between the two groups:

I think that's more like, an intellectual, perspective that's different between anyone that's like under 30. I don't know what the cutoff would be but, just like having that more grounded perspective about the reality of capitalism, and perpetuating systems of inequality, and understanding the need to like move away from that system. I don't think any of them see that as an issue Robin

Robin often finds themselves having to handle the personal ideological difference they have with the more neoliberal collective action frame they must promote. Within their organization

they feel a bit of a push and pull as they do not believe the movement can solve the climate crisis under a neoliberal framework, but they do not see a realistic way forward without it.

Sandy felt the “*neoliberal way*” of the larger environmental movement inevitably just creates more problems. It is an issue for Sandy, who then seeks to solve it by directing people away from that mindset. They believe the movement must overcome this barrier for any real success. Sydney saw other members of their organization as “*neoliberal progressives*” and it gives them doubt about whether they will find a solution to climate change. To them the solutions of neoliberal progressives do not directly address the systemic issues or underlying logic that perpetuates environmental degradation. It gives them a sense of uncertainty for the movement’s success. Sydney feels the movement’s discourse is expanding though. They see groups acknowledge how vulnerable populations are more disproportionately affected by the climate crisis and they see that as a sign that things are “*trending in the right direction*”. Ashley felt that the focus and resources spent on aggressively pursuing carbon zero was a distraction from addressing more inherent systemic problems like inequality. They saw too many resources being spent on solely sustainability, and they do not see that solution as promoting their ideology and instead actively contradicting it. The focus on carbon zero is a difference diagnostically and prognostically in the collective action frame from what Ashley desires ideologically.

The older activists also perceived differences in the movement but not along the same lines. Some saw more youth focused organizations, that promote systemic change or more aggressive tactics, as too radical or pessimistic. Though some older activists argued that the movement should be multi-faceted and saw value in these other branches. Those who see parts

of the movement as too radical or pessimistic also saw them as detracting from the potential for success but do not frame them as a prominent barrier like younger activists do for the neoliberal branch. For these younger activists, the neoliberal branch does not serve the same goals they want and is seen as detrimental to the movement. While they do not actively oppose these aspects of the movement so outwardly, they still feel an obligation to influence the collective action frame to be more line with their ideology.

The Barrier of Privilege

The diagnostic frames of the younger activists that center neoliberalism and capitalism are not just based on profit seeking and businesses but also with the affordances of privilege that comes with being a member of wealthy society. While many young activists saw privilege as an issue, they gave different explanations for why. Sage, for example, stated:

White middle-class people in cities, who kind of know climate change is happening, but they're like "I'm affluent, my family's affluent, this is not going to affect my children for at least like five generations", you know and that's like a very privileged position to take. To be like "Yeah we can keep the polluting the earth and, like some people overseas can die, but like my kids will be alive", like you know that's a very individualistic approach and not very global in scale Sage

This extended lens on the problems of climate change looks towards the privilege afforded to those populations who believe that they will avoid the brunt of climate impacts due to the safety of living in a wealthier nation. This corresponds with Sydney's criticism of profit seekers who did not believe they would face the impacts of climate change because of their age but refocuses it on middle class people in the western world who see climate change as a problem

for others. Both Sydney and Sage see it as a problem as it acts as a barrier towards dismantling the systems that perpetuate the climate crisis and as a factor of misinformation. These activists believe that everyone is already being affected by the climate crisis and those who think otherwise are misinformed. These young activists see privilege as a barrier for convincing those who think their wealth will insulate them from climate crises. Some of the alternative explanations of the barrier of privilege focused on those who work in office jobs and do not deal with the effects of increased heat on outdoor labor. Others point to situations where even when a crisis is acknowledged, privileged people shift to apathy when they become more comfortable. Sandy sees it as an inability to understand the extent of the crisis because of a *“lack of experience”* or *“knowledge”*.

These younger activists all understand the barrier of privilege exists, but their frames indicate different reactions to those with the privilege of ignorance. Riley, whose work focuses on teaching others about environmental justice, expresses an attitude towards them of disdain at their indifference. They state, *“Who cares that this group, of like low income minority people have like, you know, 10 times more particulate matter pollution when compared to like the next community over or something like that. Like that's not me, so why do I care,’ so I feel like that is definitely kind of, how, some people are indifferent”*. In Taylor’s case, the discussion on indifference was less disdainful:

[[Significant amount of people]] are just indifferent because they don't know enough or don't take the time to know. And I think within the US or countries that aren't directly experiencing the impacts of climate change, I feel like that's more feasible

because they're not dealing with it on a day to day basis. So why do they need to know about it. So I'd say, like the uninformed or uninterested public could be indifferent Taylor

Both acknowledge that this group of privileged and indifferent people exist but take different approaches to how they see the problem as either a general ignorance or a willful malice.

These younger activist's frames of privilege examine it as not only a barrier for the upper class but also the working class. They note that working class people have time constraints preventing their participation due to working multiple jobs and having to do their own childcare. Sydney saw this while trying to get working-class people to start participating in the movement. They stated, *"How we can organize people in a concrete way that doesn't require so many resources from their day to day lives that they feel overwhelmed and that they can't participate"*. These are barriers Sydney feels they must overcome so working class people can participate. This stands in contrast to criticisms of the mainstream environmental movement as an elitist space that constructs barriers themselves to prevent the working class from participating (Bell 2020). These activist's responses indicate that these problems are being recognized and the attitudes of the movement could be shifting.

Older members of the movement also discussed issues of privilege as a barrier to participation and education though it was less common and less of a focus for them. Activists generally see an issue with privilege but there are differences in its conceptualization as a barrier for the movement. Across generations they see it as a barrier as privileged people do not believe climate change will impact them. It is also seen as a barrier towards education as privileged people believe they will be fine and thus do not care to learn. Additionally many

activists see privilege as a temporary barrier as they feel the ability for people to ignore climate change will not last with the drastic and catastrophic impacts that are on the horizon.

Attitudes Towards Fossil Fuels

While the older activists interviewed did not levy criticism of neoliberal institutions, they did criticize the fossil fuel industry and examined it as a deeply set systemic problem. They did so in a similar way to how the younger activists criticized capitalism. For these older activists their frames of the movement's barriers are centered around fossil fuel companies. Some also include the United States Republican party which they see as intertwined with fossil fuels. They view it as an entrenched interest and center their criticism around entrenched industries that do not change. Their usage of "entrenched" is akin to how younger activists focus on the word systemic. Both use the terms to refer to deeply set problems that they see as difficult to remove and as the causes for the more surface level problems the environmental movement faces. The older activists focused on fossil fuel industries while the younger activists examined broader concepts like capitalism and neoliberalism. Casey exemplifies this sort of thinking for the older activists:

There's a well-entrenched fossil fuel industry that is the most wealthy industry in the history of the world. And they have been very successful in mobilizing against action on climate change, and it's interesting to think back to the early 90s, when there's a famous commercial where Nancy Pelosi and Newt Gingrich, who was then in the republican in the House of Representatives. The two of them were sitting on the couch together talking about climate change and how important it is that we all get going on it and that it's not a partisan issue, it's a issue that affects everybody. So after that, the

fossil fuel industry started really mobilizing and started spreading doubt very actively and you know, maybe, to a large extent to the news media fostered that. Like if they would have a program on a news program about climate change, [...] they would find some outlier who disagreed, so they'd have a pro and con about climate change and that kind of approach helps the public to think "Oh well, the science isn't settled. Well, there's no reason to get involved if the scientists still are not sure about climate change." [...] They have poured money into Mitch McConnell's campaign and so many other Republicans, who are just flat out say whatever they want them to say. Whatever the fossil fuel and interests want them to say. [...] Because they've been so successful, we have many, many Americans who support these candidates, and they're in turn supporting the fossil fuel industry Casey

Casey sees a lot of barriers resulting from conservatism and the United States Republican Party and draws a connection between them and fossil fuel companies. Whenever they sought to explore either issue, they would inextricably link the two. They do not point out the two as an institutional problem, rather seeing them as two bad actors working in tandem to support one another. They see the flow of money enabling these industries to generate profit, obscure information, and influence legislation such that it becomes impossible to deal with. In some ways it mirrors younger activists criticisms of institutions but does not use the same language. In essence their criticism is of neoliberalism but a neoliberalism solely within the fossil fuel industry. We see similar focuses on fossil fuels and on energy utilities from other activists, such as Whitney's beliefs that banks and insurance companies should target fossil fuel groups as *"the bottom line is the bad guy is the fossil fuel industry"*. The older activists with more explicit pro-

businesses stances also criticized fossil fuel companies but focused their criticism on emissions, pollution, and a resistance towards change that were contained in their overconsumption frames. This follows as scholars have indicated the shift in the American environmental movement towards refocusing on the fossil fuel industry (Hadden 2017).

These older activist's criticisms of the fossil fuel industry contained problems beyond surface level environmental issues like treatment of workers in the industry. Tracy sees them suffering due to coal companies focus on "*efficiency*", "*land tenure*" issues from privatized land, and avoiding "*responsibility*" on the environmental issues they have created. Those who live within "*coal country*", such as Briar, see the problems of the fossil fuel industry and the misinformation generated through them with a distinct perspective. They see them as a lifeblood for people who must rely on those businesses and they frame their goal as shifting the mindsets of those who see fossil fuels as the only way for their community to survive. Briar focuses on entrenchment, but the entrenched part of the business extends to within their community. This criticism resembles how the younger activists criticized capitalism as an economic system that people cannot look beyond. The question of how to expand the mindsets of people to look beyond their existing frames is something that both groups see as necessary but in different ways.

The younger activists also had specific frames for the fossil fuel industry but their thoughts reflected their anti-capitalist ideology. Their criticism of fossil fuels is still of capitalism, institutions, and neoliberalism:

You know, obviously it's the fossil fuel industries right. It's [Energy Utility], right and they're shifting over, but I think it's because they realize there's more profit in going

to solar and renewables and they're not doing out of the goodness of their hearts, and they've definitely been a huge roadblock for a lot of local change. A huge roadblock. So yeah, energy companies are a huge problem. I mean politicians that are clearly in the pockets of these energy companies are a huge problem. Just these gigantic corporations as a whole man are, are the problem right. They pay lip service to it, and when enough people complain they make small little changes that you know matter, but they could do a lot more right? They could definitely pay their taxes, and we can use that money to solve some of these problems that they're very actively creating. Sydney

Rather than leave the explanation at fossil fuel companies and energy utilities, as older activists would, Sydney articulated that it is not just them but “*corporations as a whole*” who are behaving in this way and creating problems. They direct their attention on the profit seeking nature of these organizations rather than just the pollution and environmental exploitation.

Both groups give extensive and scathing criticism of fossil fuel companies, and both see it as a problem that the movement will have to confront. The distinction lies in their diagnostic frames. While the older activists and younger activists levied largely similar criticisms, the older activists saw it as a problem contained within a single industry and younger activists saw it as an aspect of a deeper set problem. The older activists saw it as entrenched and in need of removal, while the younger activists saw it as rooted in other systems.

Sustainable Living as a Path Forward

There is a generational divide in prognostic frames on sustainability and sustainable living within incorporated environmental organizations. The divide rests between whether sustainability is a viable path forward in combating climate change. The older activists believed

in the potential for businesses to change to more sustainable practices and they felt individual sustainability was a viable pathway to success. Often their prognostic frames look at the effects that could occur if large swaths of the population were to change their behavior. The organizations that they participate in focus their resources on moving society towards sustainability. This is usually done through educating people on how they can alter their personal lives to have a better carbon footprint and similar activities. Tracy exemplifies this frame, stating:

There's an awful lot you can do, in a small way and, and I do know that that millions, millions of people doing little things adds up extraordinarily. And the fact that millions and millions, hundreds of millions of people made small changes, especially in the initial part of the Covid lockdown, that the difference it made in air quality, in energy consumption was extraordinary, and a lot of these changes are not huge changes, but they added up Tracy

The strategic rationale behind this frame is that they believe small lifestyle changes are attainable goals for individuals.

They also believe that educating people about potential changes they can make will then contribute to them taking action. The barrier for this solution, in the frames utilized by older activists, is that people are unaware of their options. Few people are actively choosing to hurt the environment and they just do not understand whether it is feasible and what is possible. It is about “*helping others go green*” (Max) by helping “*people see the small things they can do. To realize that if lots of people do lots of small things than then those are going to do that. That’s going to help*” (Blake). The frames they use focus on large scale mindset shifts as they

hope for major portions of the population to realize that they can be arbiters of change for the environment.

Part of their belief that sustains the frame arises from their ability to make changes in their own lives to be more sustainable. This includes small changes, but many also focus on larger things like purchasing electric cars, having their homes redesigned to be more energy efficient, or installing solar panels. Largely these frames revolve around concepts like carbon footprints, and they feel obligated to take action to improve their footprint as well as inform others about how they can improve theirs. Tactics utilized for this revolve around spreading information around sustainability and hidden ways things can tax the environment.

I don't really try to convince people, other than just talking like I've just talked to you about like how much water it takes to make a smartphone. I'm not saying that everyone should stop using smartphones but I'm saying that we can be aware that we also have a water footprint to go along with a carbon footprint, and there are things that we can do as individuals that will help to minimize our footprint Tony

Sometimes, as in the case with Tony, these methods are just more conducive to their identity. As Tony ascribes to the identity of scientist and sees that identity as not compatible with activism, this method of delivering information but not expressly endorsing it is more in line with how they view themselves. Similarly other older activists use these sustainability tactics because they feel like they are making actual change as opposed to those engaging in direct action that they see as just yelling in the streets. These older activists made the distinction that individual sustainable living was only one step of the solution and that they also felt that it was incumbent upon businesses to “reduce their carbon footprint” (Blake). Some had prognostic

frames that saw individual changes inciting businesses to follow suit, as markets would react to shifting desires of consumers and produce products sustainably to compete.

While it was uncommon, some of the older activists did feel that individual sustainability would not resolve the climate crisis. Casey, whose work focuses on education about sustainability, felt messaging that revolved around individuals was a result of fossil fuel companies trying to avoid responsibility:

Another approach the fossil fuel industry has successfully done is putting it on individuals. They'll say, well to people in general, "Well you drive a car, don't you? it's your fault" or you have to say you're never going to buy anything packaged in plastic and you're never going to drive your car. You know, and I, on the one hand, I do think we individuals should be doing what we can personally, but that's not enough. It's not enough to turn the tide, we have to go be fossil fuel free by 2035 or so, if we want to really deal relatively successfully with the climate crisis so for them to succeed putting it all on individuals, is a huge setback it's a disservice that makes it hard to fight Casey

Of note is that while Casey feels that the focus on individual responsibility had risen from fossil fuel interests, they still consider it important and spend time educating others on sustainable living.

The younger activists interviewed raised issue with sustainability and individual responsibility believing it as not the direction to take to combat climate change and instead as a barrier that is undermining the movement. While the older activists saw individual responsibility and curtailing of fossil fuels as a dual venture, younger ones felt the former was a distraction from the latter:

If, for example, like large corporations, things like that, continue to do what they're doing, the way they are doing it. That might be like a major source of failure, and just like a lot of these messages that they are producing of like pushing, you know, actions kind of onto the individual level and just being "Oh you know you're like wasting energy, by having your light on" or whatever. But if you compare to like what they're doing it's just like they're kinda just trying to like cover it up. So yeah, I feel like if they just continue to do things that they are doing, the way they're doing it, like that will lead to a failure Riley

Riley sees it as a letting corporations control the narrative around environmentalism and it becomes a source of failure for the movement. They see it as the corporations trying to protect themselves and shift the blame and as a result are not interested in committing to individual responsibility. If one accepts the idea of individual responsibility then it creates space for businesses to continue their destructive actions:

One thing that makes me really frustrated is when I see like environmental activists promote like sustainable products, [...] I've come to realize like that you can't really consume your way to a sustainable world, and I feel like not a lot of people recognize that right now. People are kind of stuck in a mindset that we, like society has forced us into that [...] everything is about consumption so like buying like the stainless steel straws or like recyclable stuff is important but, I think people start to focus so much on that, that they lose like the main goal Sandy

For Sandy there is an implicit problem with consumption and the idea that through sustainable capitalism there is a pathway towards a solution. They perceive it as a mindset within society

that is intertwined with consumerism. While sustainability and products that are less wasteful are good, it can never contend with the inherent issue in capitalism that is causing the problems in the first place. *“I think, in the end, like capitalism and sustainability just don’t coincide”* (Sandy). To them, it is impossible to resolve environmental issues if the environmental movement is focused on sustainability as the solution.

When these younger activists do engage with sustainability, they utilize different diagnostic and prognostic frames than the older activists did. Adrian incorporates the language of sustainability and directs it towards what they see as systemic problems stating that *“Reduce, reuse, and recycle is like never been a real focus of ours we’re always about the larger systemic reducing [...] coal and ash in the atmosphere”*. They understand these problems as a fault of institutions that have enabled the increased pollution. For Taylor, any sustainability solutions must also *“support all communities as opposed to just supporting like an exclusive few”*. This is a known criticism of sustainability campaigns (Bell 2020), but requiring sustainability solutions address equity issues is a central element younger activists utilized in constructing both their diagnostic and prognostic frames.

Some of the younger activists felt that the pursuit of sustainability ends up making other problems worse by obscuring them:

I think a lot of people think that the most critical piece is getting to carbon zero as fast as possible and then we’ll solve some of the equity concerns. Whereas I think you know, especially coming out of recent conversations around environmental justice, it’s become national over the past year, I think, more concerns over like, well are we just perpetuating the system of inequality that is currently in place or are we really trying to

transform it and understand that really trying to change things. That systems change is going to be a longer process. Ashley

Ashley feels like there are elements within the movement that have been acting with a sole focus on getting to carbon zero rather than resolving systemic problems. These sustainability focused organizations direct people and resources away from systemic problems and never look beyond that carbon zero goal. Ashley sees these sustainability solutions as not addressing any of the actual issues, and instead making the mainstream collective action frame so dead set that it is difficult to transform the frame to contain other problems.

Sydney contextualizes their issues with the viability of sustainable living and individual responsibility against systemic issues of poverty and racism:

There's just so many more issues that working class and frontline communities have to be concerned about right. And so, how do you overcome that and then go "Oh and, by the way, can you also like pay five extra cents to get a plastic bag? Can you also pay a little bit more to put solar on your roof? Can you also pay a little bit more to do this and that?" And like you talk to people, and you say it out loud. You're like this is absolutely ridiculous, how can I like ask these people to do these things for us? To do these things that are more expensive when it's more important to focus on health care, it's more important to focus on, you know, making sure your kids go to a good school and have the help that they need to succeed in school. So, it's that to me, I think, is the biggest challenge Sydney

It is difficult for them to advocate for these solutions knowing that it remains out of reach for some people. As they want to keep the movement open for the working class to participate,

they do not think that advocating for sustainability will do that. They also feel like omitting working class voices only serves to undermine the movement. They see it as efficacy issue, not just an issue of exclusion. Some of the older activists echoed Sydney's criticisms agreeing that there are people who cannot commit to either learning how to or doing any of these sustainable actions because of a lack of time. Those older activists, however, still consider sustainable living as a necessary pathway to success, and their strategies often involve trying to lower the barriers on educating oneself in sustainable living.

A similar contrast is seen with two older activists Pat and Tracy and younger activist Robin who all look towards helping expand the use of green energy in school districts. All three have goals of helping to expand these programs to areas where there is less wealth but differentiate in their explanations why. Pat and Tracy contextualize it to reducing their carbon footprint. Robin sees it as helping them avoid the costs of the transition and using those cost savings to provide funding in these underfunded schools. Pat explains their case as such:

Let's make sure we take care of the schools that are not in the most wealthy areas, even in [Location]. Let's make sure that when, you know, we're working on electric school buses, let's make sure that the electric school buses go to the schools that are disadvantaged because those folks are more exposed to pollution, and we can help mitigate some of that with busses that don't put off all that evil particulate matter Pat

Robin explains it as:

The school should, could decide. So, whether that is textbooks, whether that is teacher salaries, they can decide how to use that money to best benefit their students.

We just want to help create that surplus for them and accelerate solar deployment

Robin

Both groups are advocating for the same thing but for different reasons. One focuses on the dangers of pollution towards these populations while the other focuses on how it can help mitigate the lack of funding. Their tactics are similar but the way they understand the problem is different. Both are trying to solve problems within these communities that stem from systemic issues, but one retains a focus on how pollution affects them while the other looks towards their monetary problems.

Both the younger and older activists found some value in sustainable living, and both see curtailing corporations as a necessary part of that. The viability of sustainable living is however viewed differently between the two groups. Some of the younger activists pushed back against the idea of sustainable living. They saw it as more than just a distraction but a shift in responsibility from corporations down onto individuals. Other younger activists saw this pursuit of sustainability in tandem with capitalism as an impossibility and even a distraction from the systemic problems they feel the movement should address. These older activists believe in the power of making small changes to fight against climate change. Some see that power as thousands of people taking small actions, while others see it as having reverberating positive ramifications. Younger activists will look towards how systemic issues make it difficult for working class people to participate for several reasons. Older ones will share the sentiment but tend towards seeing that it acts mainly as a barrier towards education and time to participate. While it remains an aspect of the movement's collective action frame there is an underlying

tension on sustainable living that illustrates ideological differences across generations within incorporated environmental organizations.

Systemic Change as a Path Forward

The prognostic frames of the younger activists interviewed saw systemic change as necessary in the fight against climate change. Part of that arises from an ideology that reflects a general belief that they should *“start challenging those systems”* (Sage) and getting others to view these problems as a result of social systems. They see actions in the movement that do not tackle structural problems as inadequate. *“Preventing like the unnecessary killing of wildlife and poaching. But I don't know that they help with the structural aspect of things. So, they serve a very necessary purpose, but I don't know how much they contribute to like the broader shift to preventing those poachers in the beginning. So, but this is with anything. Like you need the immediate response like they are, and then the structural change as well”* (Taylor). While Taylor agrees that these actions are helpful, they do not see it resolving the problem. This follows a larger trend in movements around the world that are now bending towards a more systemic focus (della Porta 2015). These movements also frame their actions relative to systems change.

The tactics around education remain but shift towards teaching others about how systemic problems persist and influence the world around them. *“Educating [[people]] that come about these different issues, letting them see how they're involved in a lot of different systems and how, even though we are talking about systemic change, there are individuals that help drive these systemic changes”* (Sage). Those who focus more on direct action see themselves as challenging these institutions and systems as their methods for solving climate change.

Intersectionality within the environmental, environmental space and climate space. Creating deep change, institutional level change, from the bottom up. Having the public see massive injustices being paraded before them. Getting clean air, water, and land for all people. Confronting and addressing and speaking out against, against neo colonialism and imperialism, however people would like to describe violence, state violence, which would also include like police brutality, so I think [Organization], we like to view things not as siloed but, as you know, all things being connected Adrian

What is required to resolve the climate crisis becomes contingent on resolving these other crises. It is not a question of reaching carbon zero but of resolving systemic problems that produce the carbon in the first place. As a result, they also frame their successes and actions as trying to reduce these other issues, *"We will have a more positive future. Not to say that, you know, over the next 30 years will see a substantial reduction in the empire of America. That kinda imperious project and corporations and things like that. I think we'll probably take a dent in, you know, combating that"* (Adrian). Even though Adrian is not hopeful that dramatic change will occur they still feel like they are chipping away at institutions and systems that are the roots of these crises. While this shift in frames from younger activists might have ties to previous environmental movements that challenged institutions, it also has ties to a slew of other movements that are also addressing issues of inequity, imperialism, and police brutality. The frames they posit are aligned with those of other movements and they see their goals as not just mutually beneficial but required to tackle the systems that are the source of these problems.

The younger activists in organizations with older leadership try to negotiate these goals of systemic change into their groups collective action frame. Some find themselves working with

members they see as more radical that were within the organization's structure but that did not have control of its direction:

I think I'm more radical than some program managers think I am, which I think is actually a good thing, because then when I talk to the more radical members of staff, who are afraid to raise an issue or push something too hard then I will agree to do it. Because it, you know, being fairly new still and not knowing a lot of my coworkers that well because of covid, I think I'm kind of in this like strange place basically they think that I'm less radical than I am, but I'm also you know, raising something that was brought to me by someone who maybe has a different perception on staff Ashley

It is a pseudo subversive system to help them achieve their vision of the movements goals within the confines of what their organization is already doing. This is not always done subversively however as there are often elements within these groups who these younger activists feel are more supportive of their ideology. Some draw a distinction between “neoliberal” members versus “Bernie (Sanders)” members while others see them as supportive of more aggressive tactics than the organization conducts.

Robin's hesitancy towards personally working towards solutions that did not confront systemic problems were resolved by speaking to one such member.

I had this conversation with a coworker that was very impactful about the, like sort of talking about everything I said of, like, the disaster, and he was like, “you know what, you're probably not used to hearing this but you're right and we are fucked, and you need to do something that's going to get you through at the end of the day” and like

I don't know, I feel like I have reached that point where I feel like I am making an impact.” Robin.

Whereas in some instances their desire for systemic change led to more subversive strategies, in this instance it was a hurdle they had to deal with because they felt like they were not advocating for what they thought was necessary in their ideology.

Some of the younger activists expressed hesitancy towards advocating for systemic change even when they saw it as necessary. While there are organizations that these activists view as promoting the idea of “*completely like dismantle like capitalism*” (Riley) they are unsure how to feel about dismantling systems or how expansive of a change they should advocate for. Others do not see it as a viable path forward as revolutionary goals may not work out as effectively as people hope they will. *“I think calling for broader shifts that are not feasible. So, I'd say like more socialist leaning solutions that don't have, how do I say, like, call for these big solutions and shifts without having smaller steps to get there. So, I'd say like having those radical goals without those smaller steps is kind of lacking forethought”* (Taylor). Their fear of an inevitable failure in the fight against climate change also makes them hesitant to attempt this. As a result, a revolution is seemingly beyond the bounds of what is realistically possible for the goals of the movement.

The younger activists expressed a desire for systemic change that they hope to incorporate into their movement tactics. Many want solutions to directly address these systemic issues and do not see a viable movement without that. Those who cannot participate in those activities in their organizations hope for those organizations to shift in that direction. There are

some who do not believe in the viability of revolutionary systemic change as a potential solution but still see it as a desirable goal for the movement.

Section Conclusion

The process of constructing collective action frames within social movements is filled with conflict and compromise. In the case here we see differentiated frames from different generations both diagnostically and prognostically within incorporated environmental organizations. In terms of diagnostic frames, the older activists saw the problems the movements trying to prevent as a result of consumption, fossil fuels, and the Republican party in the United States. Younger activists saw the root causes as capitalism and neoliberalism. These younger activists also saw problems with the mainstream movement not directly challenging systems and institutions. They believe that solutions will never be viable until those are confronted. Both groups see privilege as a problem the movement needs to confront both in upper class people not thinking climate change will affect them as well as working class people being unable to participate. Younger activists want to tackle systemic barriers to allow working class people to participate while older activists want to lower the barriers to education and sustainable living for the same reason.

Table 2 Diagnostic frames found in data with associated group and generation

Frame	Group	Generation
Climate Change result of Capitalism and Neoliberalism	Younger	Generation Z, Z-Ennial
Climate Change result of Overconsumption and Fossil Fuels	Older	X-Ennial, Boomer

Privilege is a barrier	Both	All
Privilege makes educating upper class harder	Both	All
Privilege makes working class participation harder	Both	All
Capitalism in direct opposition to environmental movement	Younger	Generation Z, Z-Ennial
Capitalism can never be sustainable	Younger	Generation Z, Z-Ennial

Table 3 Prognostic frames found in data with associated group and generation

Frame	Group	Generation
Businesses are capable of being sustainable	Older	X-Ennial, Boomer
Working with businesses is viable and realistic	Older	X-Ennial, Boomer
Working with businesses is required because of time constraints	Younger	Generation Z, Z-Ennial
Market based solutions are ineffective and make things worse	Younger	Generation Z, Z-Ennial
Sustainable living not a viable solution to climate change but should be done	Younger	Generation Z, Z-Ennial
Sustainable living is a viable solution	Older	X-Ennial, Boomer
Sustainable living shifts blame from business	Younger	Generation Z, Z-Ennial
Systemic change is a necessary solution	Younger	Generation Z, Z-Ennial
Systemic change is not viable due to time constraints	Younger	Generation Z, Z-Ennial

In terms of prognostic frames, the older activists believed that sustainability and individual responsibility are viable solutions, and the movement should combine them with tackling the fossil fuels industry. The younger activists saw sustainability, when it is a movement strategy, as a distraction though still some take effort to live sustainably. The older activists saw market based solutions and economic thinking as potentially viable, whereas the younger activists saw them as re-entrenching capitalist mindsets. While the younger activists still utilize them, they do so unwillingly. The younger activists believe that the movement should strive for systemic change, but some are unsure about its viability. The younger activists within organizations that do not advocate for systemic change attempt to shift their organizations collective action frame towards systemic change.

Prognostic Frame Differences Between Generations Within the Environmental Movement

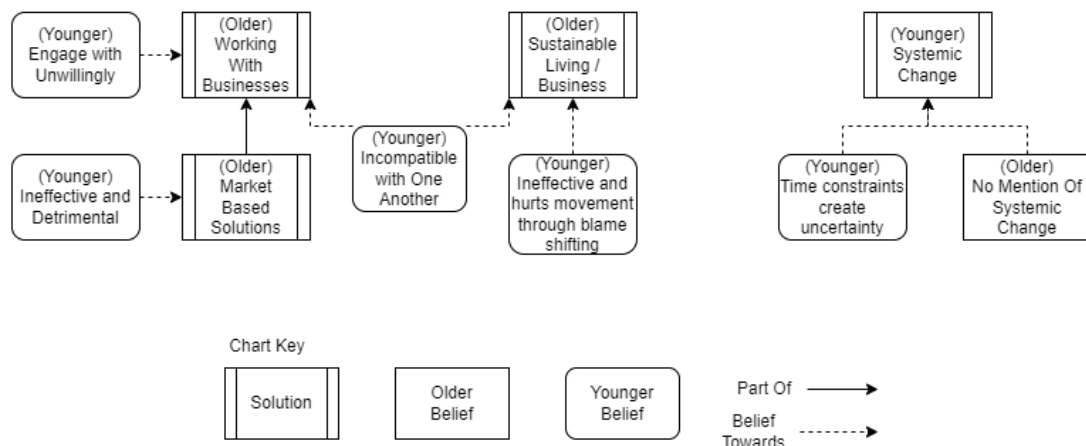


Figure 1 Prognostic Frame Differences Between Generations within the Environmental Movement

Ideological differences appear to be the basis for these frame differences. As the older activist's political ideology is more contained with neoliberalism, they are unlikely to challenge those systems as part of their frames. The younger activist's frames reflect their more anti-capitalist beliefs and systems focus within their ideology. As the ebb and flow of movements is affected by these differences and internal conflicts within them, it is important to recognize that these differing ideologies are already in competition between generations within these incorporated environmental organizations. Since frames need to be able to align between individuals and organizations for movement mobilization to maintain its effectiveness (Snow et al 1986; Snow and Benford 2000), the potential for these divisions to grow can come to affect that mobilization.

Diagnostic Frame Differences Between Generations Within the Environmental Movement

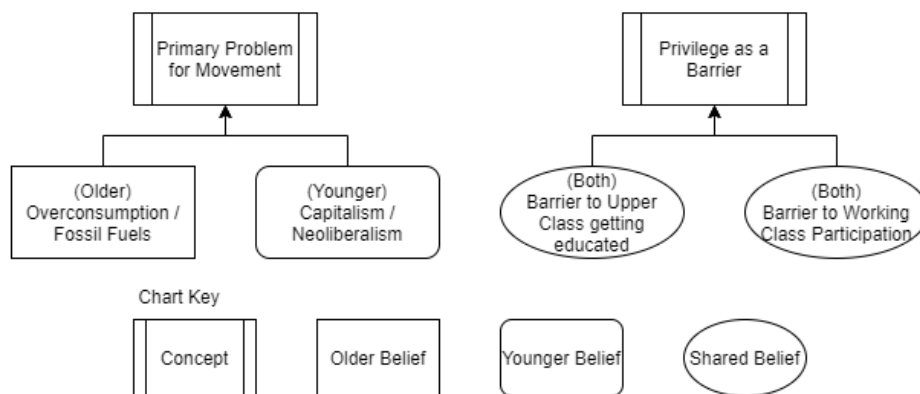


Figure 2 Diagnostic Frame Differences Between Generations within the Environmental Movement

There are a number of potential explanations for these ideological differences. It is important to remember that this ideological shift is similar to frame transformations that have occurred in other movements around the world that have focused on systemic change and tackling neoliberalism (della Porta 2015). This is likely due to a greater amount of the population finding themselves within the “Precariat” and thus feeling that they should change their economic institutions. The difference between generations within the activists who were interviewed is both sharp and blurry. There is a gap between Ashley/Adrian and Jordan where the difference in ideology seems to occur. People younger than that point express an anti-capitalist ideology and a desire for systemic change, and people older want to keep old systems and stick to reform and sustainability. This certainly is not a function of age but possibly an indicator of different cohort effects. There is also the chance that younger activists are less weathered down on a desire for broad change. Studies of activist’s biographies have noted that failure and compromise occasionally wear down this radical nature the activists had in their youth (Whalen and Flacks 1984; Whalen and Flacks 1989). While this research does not give a reason as to why this ideological divide exists or why that divide seems to occur at the generational level that it does, it does give evidence for its existence.

Fear and Hope

"I guess, it's just like a sense of impending doom, maybe, for a lot of people, and I feel it too. Just like uncertainty about what's going to happen in the future, and what's going to survive and like I think fear. It's like fear of how quickly we can act to prevent those things from happening" (Sandy). The activists that I interviewed were afraid of the future. The way that they understand the urgency and state of the fight against climate change instills them with uncertainty, dread, and fear of a seemingly inevitable apocalypse. These interpretations vary between individuals, but many see the world as irreparably damaged given their expectations of the future and the eventual impacts of climate change. While not many expect the end of humanity, some conceive it as the end of the world as they know it. They describe the world that will exist as enduring various catastrophes and disasters with references to the *"Titanic"* (Tracy) or *"Mad Max"* (Sam). Activists were split in discussing the catastrophe with some listing every impact they could conceive of while others had much shorter answers:

Interviewer: *What comes to your mind when you think about climate change?*

Robin: *The greatest threat to humans.*

Interviewer: *Any specifics with the threat?*

Robin: *Currently to the continuation of the species.*

Interviewer: *Just an all-encompassing destruction or?*

Robin: *Yeah, and destruction*

The understanding that these activists have of the direness of the situation comes to influence aspects of their lives, their conceptions of the fight against climate change, and the decisions that they make.

Fear of the Failure and Inevitability

Activists do not conceive of impacts as an if, but instead as a matter of when. They believe that the fight against climate change is largely going to fail, often drawing upon what they see as a lack of change occurring in people's behaviors, in conversations, or in legislation to address these problems. Their understanding of this inevitably arises from their view of the inefficacy of the movement. When Ashley thinks about using more "radical" tactics, they feel like it will be for naught because they view larger events like "The Climate March" as having brought about no serious change. Other activists see the lack of change in people as an indication of the fight failing:

I didn't see civilization doing very well once global warming really got going, and I don't feel lots of confidence now that we're- while we're not going to avoid all of it obviously, but it's quite possible that we will get very bad because there are many, many people who don't care about what it's going to do to the rest of humanity, as well as like the worst effects of it, and also there are people who are good at lying to themselves about it. So, they lie to other people very efficiently on that basis. Tracy

They have feared the failure of the fight for some time. As the impacts get closer, they look towards what they see as inaction and the spread of misinformation which corroborates their belief in humanities inability to prevent climate change. Max feels a similar fear. They draw upon those issues stating that, "I'm scared. I am. It's going to be massive. It's a lot of worry. I don't think people are changing, are even aware of the message. And, you know, I'm dedicating my life to trying to fight it, but I'd- and I know I'm making a difference, but I feel like I'm still kind of preaching to the choir". They feel like climate change is going to be devastating, and people

are not changing. This makes them doubt themselves and their actions. While they see themselves as contributing to prevent the impacts, they do not think it is enough and it is reflected in their fears and their beliefs about their own efficacy. For these activists their fear is compounded by their doubts in the movement.

As these activists see the fight against climate change failing in a myriad of ways, they begin to conceive of how the impacts are going to happen and prepare to mitigate it. *“A feeling of sadness and inevitability”* (Ashley), *“very pessimistic”* (Morgan), or a *“kind of a slow, slow impending doom”* (Adrian) take root in their minds when they start to consider what the world will look like. For Sydney they see catastrophic impacts like species extinction, melting ice caps, and devastating wildfires as an inevitability:

I don't know if we'll successful there. I don't. Do I want to stop so many of the species on our planet from going extinct? Absolutely. Do I think that that's going to be successful? Probably not. Do I want to stop ice caps melting or wildfires from happening? Yes, absolutely, but I don't think that that's realistically going to happen. I think again in terms of success, our success will be humanity continues to exist Sydney

While they wish these impacts could be stopped, they feel the situation is dire enough that they cannot prevent them. For Sydney it has become a question of species survival. Some activists point towards *“thresholds”* (Robin) that are not being met and seeing the cascade of disastrous scenarios unfold. Even though they express wanting to approach these issues with a level of optimism, they do not feel like it is possible for them to do that.

They see the upcoming decades as being incredibly bleak and are putting hope in *“by the time we reach like, you know, would it be 2051. I think things will start looking up again. I*

really do. [...] I think that there'll be a bleak period and a very hopeful period" (Sydney). Sage, who does environmental justice education and advocacy, looks towards other groups who have suffered devastating crises

In one of the books that we read 'As long as grass grows', she talks about how indigenous people have already kind of lived through an apocalypse on the Northern United States and so they're already living in a post-apocalyptic world. Like realizing that people have already seen the end of the world and are still going and trying to fight the second end of the world, like there's not, I don't think the fight is going to end or fail
Sage

They see indigenous communities who have had their worlds destroyed and use that to reflect on the oncoming crisis. They see that the world may already be lost but understand that there will be a world beyond the one now. In a way, for these younger activists, there is an acceptance of the direness of the situation and hope that there will be a chance to recover after the fact.

This is sentiment echoed not just by younger activists as well but also some older activists who think that *"The world will probably go on. [There] will be life without, you know, like it'll be different life, but there will continue to be life"* (Jordan). Climate change will destroy the world but there will be a new world post climate change. Part of that is incorporated into the ideas of mitigation that some activists have been pushing for. Pat sees their actions as incapable of preventing the impacts, but *"it's going to be less bad if we do the right thing"*. These sorts of notions are inspiring a shift to tactics of mitigation in some groups. This blend of embracing inevitable disaster and planning for the society that is beyond it is within the scope of post-apocalyptic environmentalism.

Many of these activists believe the worsening impacts will make it easier to overcome privilege as a barrier in convincing others that climate change is a serious threat they need to address. They see the direness of the situation and their own fear as an opportunity to convince others. Some even see this as the moment the movement will begin to succeed. *"I think it will succeed when people are personally affected, start to be personally affected, and they want to know what they can do, and that's what [Organization] is for. To be a site where people can go once they realize, 'Oh my God, you know, we need to do something'"* (Max). Some felt the opportunity was already here with extreme weather events, noting that others were seeing that as the reality of climate change. *"I think it's growing more difficult for the average American to kind of escape the disaster aspects of climate change. I think a lot of them [were] more familiar, were like me, were more familiar [with] like the kind of side effects of it. Now we're just all coming together and seeing you know, 'Wow there was a forest there we go and then a fire came, and everything's gone'"* (Adrian). It is these spectacles of destruction and not more subtle impacts that will overcome the barrier of ignorance. They point to these larger disasters as opportunities for people to understand the reality of climate change and how they are not safe from the impacts.

Though they are actively fighting climate change, many of these activists fear the impacts are inevitable. They see their efforts as not to prevent but instead reduce the severity of disaster. Rather than focus on the impacts, they instead look at the potential for humanity to survive the impending doom. This focus on mitigation then becomes an element of their prognostic frames. Some have looked past the inevitability of these impacts and instead begin to think of what to do once the impacts have occurred. In the world where these impacts are

occurring more regularly and with greater severity, they see some barriers the movement faces as being easier to overcome. The fear of the inevitable then begins to influence aspects of these activist's lives and their movement strategies.

Fear affecting Decision Making

These activists try to understand their own futures relative to how they see the impacts of climate change unfolding. The older activists often stated that they felt they were fighting for the future of the youth, both of their family and more generally. Young activists felt like they were drawing upon those fears as their motivations to participate in the movement. *"I think as a young [person] who is devoting time to combating climate change and feels called to this work, because I view climate change as the most pressing issue of our time. I think I've been affected by- in that way, it has influenced my career path, my life path"* (Taylor). Others were hesitant to even consider their future or the future of the planet. Multiple activists felt they had trouble thinking about having children given that they saw the state of the world would be dire. Those who already had children or had grandkids also felt like they had to make decisions for the sake of the future of their own children. *"I think, in part, because of sort of the resignation I feel around climate change, I don't indulge myself in thinking into the future"* (Ashley). When asked to describe what they thought the future was going to be like, Ashley thought their own answers were too vague and could not come up with any concrete details because they did not want to think about the future.

Some activists find that their fear is making them opt for movement strategies that they do not agree with ethically or strategically. Robin is very set on the idea that capitalism and sustainability are not tenable with one other, but they find themselves partnering with

businesses in their fight against climate change. They do because they do not believe that other solutions would be viable soon enough to prevent the worst impacts:

I'm like younger than the rest of my team, so I think I have a different perspective about like, the future and capitalism's role. But also, we have like a short time to make change, and so I think as many solutions that we can advance that help reduce emissions as much as possible are key, and like people aren't going to not drive. Like I don't know, is the way I came to terms with like- Something I didn't love at first in like one of the, three years ago, like slide decks we're celebrating like business, big businesses buying clean energy, but like because Google, and Nike, and Kraft set up like, actually already all are 100% clean energy, like ignoring the fact that their servers are responsible, but like they also helped drive down the price of solar and make it more affordable for everyday people and for- made it easier for schools and cities and governments to electrify their grid. And I don't know if that would have happened at the rate of did is they didn't also spend the money that they had on it Robin

Partially it is a feeling that the general public is hesitant to change but also that other solutions would not happen fast enough. They see these alliances, which they do not agree with ideologically, as a necessary step. They are afraid if they do not partner with businesses then they would not be able to reduce emissions in time and the vulnerable communities they want to help would suffer. *"We want to grow, and I want to do that because that's the most- the program that I see that could have the most benefit for all students and really help uplift communities that need it most, but like that means we have to buy into capitalism get there"* (Robin). In a similar sense, Sydney thinks that disagreement within the environmental

movement would be *'suicidal'*. Though Sydney felt the tactics of these other groups were confusing and *"bums me out"*, they still think that these partnerships are necessary. They wish that they could teach these other groups important aspects of these problems that they felt they were ignoring but continue to support them because they believe disagreement would be disastrous given the impending crisis.

Another variation in tactics is being utilized by these activists who feel that since impacts of climate change are inevitable they must mitigate the damage. Some have started to shift away from a focus on education towards building up resiliency. *"People know about climate change. They either kind of accept it, or they don't. And so, you know, I mean we'll still do some of that education piece about climate, but we now need to sort of pivot. It's like okay what do we need to do to make sure that we're going to reduce their carbon footprint and the other things that we need to do to leave the world to our children and grandchildren."* (Blake). While education is still an aspect, it is taking a backseat towards actions they believe will reduce the impacts as best they can for the next generation. Blake portrays it as an understanding of *"the science"* and thus they have to make the switch not because of fear but scientific measurements. They feel they are making the best decision possible *"to survive, you know as a species"* (Blake).

Others are turning their focus towards community by building networks to help resist against potential disaster scenarios. *"We also have to be building communities of resistance and engaging in that kind of mutual aid. That means talking with people in our community getting to know our neighbors and building up relationships with them, so when disaster does strike, we aren't working alongside strangers. We're working alongside people we know and we're*

preparing for the worst, while hoping for the best” (Adrian). While Adrian does indicate that they are *“hoping for the best”* they are still acting based on their fear of the impacts. They have determined that their fears are not overblown based on what they have seen, so they act to start resolving potential vulnerabilities in the inevitable crises. Rather than just focus entirely on trying to stop climate change, these activists are changing course towards mitigation and resilience because they fear the impacts of climate change are going to occur despite their best efforts to prevent it.

The fear that these activists are all feeling is having an impact on how they make decisions in their personal lives and how they make decisions in their activism. Part of that shift in personal decision making is joining the movement to prevent climate change. Once they are in the movement though; they see themselves making partnerships they do not agree with ideologically. Some have also started to build up resistance to potential impacts as they see them as being unpreventable. Though these activists are joining the movement to prevent these impacts they still feel that the future is lost.

Hope contextualized with Fear

Activists often only express the hope they feel in the movement as a reaction to, or contextualized against, their fear. Any successes they achieve are tempered by their belief in lack of progress or the scale of potential disaster from climate change. *“I think it will be in substantial trouble. [...] I'm feeling more cheerful about it this year than I did last year, because we are, as a country, you know we're back in the Paris Accord, we're setting fairly aggressive goals that could be more so- People are getting more awoken to the danger. But inertia, combined with sociopathy, is going to keep us from making the progress that we need to make”*

(Tracy). Any hope they feel for success in the fight against climate change is always placed against the fears that they have. *“My hope is that we’ll have enough people to turn the tide and I hope that some of the legislation and action at the federal level and the state level is going to help but, you know. Then you’ve got all these other folks that want to deny all this, in other parts of the country, so it’s, you know, it’s an uphill battle”* (Blake). Rather than just having hope, they feel the need to express that their hope is still outweighed by their fear. Blake did feel hope in the movement’s success, going so far as to say if they did not have hope they would not participate, but felt that those barriers are still standing in the way.

Others take a more dire approach in examining the impacts they see coming due to their clash of hope and fear. *“I am very hopeful that I think that those things will happen, even if we do have to go through this tremendous period of upheaval. But I don’t think in terms of my personal goals of keeping the planet as it is today or making it better than it is today. I think that that’s probably not going to happen”* (Sydney). Sydney has hope in the movement’s success, but they only see hope after several crises have occurred. Other activists echo similar ideas but can find themselves leaning more on starker differences. *“I would hope that we’ve got, we’re smarter, we’re more understanding, we’re more unified. I would hope it’s either going to be that we’re working toward common carbon free, everybody’s on board with things happening like this, either that or it’s just going to be that we’re going to blow each other up because we’ve got so much, war and guns and violence and I don’t know”* (Briar). Briar, who works in educating others about sustainability, still sees their hopes running up against their fears and pulls on a different outcome than Sydney. Once the impacts occur there is no world afterwards. They

come with different conceptualizations of the post-climate change world that they both fear and then contextualize the hopes they have for the movement against them.

Whitney, whose work centers on education, expresses this blend of hope and fear in a different way. They still feel fear but draw upon their experiences in the movement to feel hope:

Fear, but also hope. I say fear, but also sadness because being here in [Intermountain Region] I'm really dreading the summer. Last summer was horrible with the forest fires [...] and I'm worried, I don't want to see those kinds of fires. But I'm also hopeful I, you know like I said, here 4000 people get trained again in one fell swoop, to become leaders that want to take action that's encouraging. [...] seeing that there's so much, and it seems like such a short time ago, but there was like, I said it was like everybody, just like glazed over if you said anything about the environment. Nobody really was talking about it, and now I'm hearing a lot of discussion about it. So that gives me hope Whitney

They find hope in how the movement overcame barriers in the past and the growth they see in the movement now. Where they felt previously that nothing was being done, the progress they have seen the movement make and how they have seen society becoming more susceptible helps to assuage their fears. Whitney however uses it to frame their fears and they are one of the few cases where they express feeling more hope than fear. While the other activists still struggle for hope, Whitney uses their hope to get past their fear which is how movement scholars have noted hopes effect in studies prior (Kleres and Wettergren 2017). To better understand how activists rely on similar conceptualizations and understandings, it is important to know how their mental well-being is affected by their fear.

Mental Impact

Almost every activist interviewed indicated a level of mental toll that they had felt they suffered due to their concerns over the impacts of climate change. They point to *“global grief and fear”* (Sandy) that they believe is being experienced when thinking about how climate change is going to impact the future. These activists expressed having feelings of depression or anxiety because of it. One activist even noted physical effects from their fear of the impacts and how they perceived the fight going. *“It’s such a huge obvious problem that I’ve been personally affected in that it causes me to lose sleep. After the election of 2016 I actually had pneumonia, I couldn’t sleep. It was so- and that was, I knew that Donald Trump would sabotage efforts to fight climate change and other environmental problems. He said he was going to. He certainly did. So that was, I would say it affected my health mentally and to an extent physical”* (Tracy).

For some the sadness they are feeling becomes an all-encompassing force in their lives. *“If I just think about it negatively, I feel consumed by climate change and think that there’s, you know, what’s the point in doing anything”* (Taylor). They feel an inability to accomplish much and an almost purposelessness. They think the impacts of climate change will be so devastating that there is not really any value in doing things. Adrian expressed feeling a *“slow impending doom”* when thinking about how impacts would grow more severe. The fear they have about the impacts are building up as climate change related events continue to worsen. They worry about one eventually being devastating enough to destroy the things they care about. Others expressed similar sentiments about feeling disempowered and purposelessness due to how they understood climate change:

I have a couple of years of despair probably, and I think for a couple years, especially when I for a while was like “Oh climate changes is this thing that's going to happen if we don't act”, but then quickly realized like it's already happening, and so, you know. I think I still grapple with like depression or sadness about it, just kind of feeling like I’m constantly saying goodbye to the places and plants and animals that I like to see, the world as I know. It really, I guess, but I don't necessarily feel like disempowered by that anymore although I did for a while Ashley

While they still feel a deep sadness and depression, Ashley notes having pushed back against feelings of disempowerment by getting involved in their organization and doing work. Scholars do note that people who fear climate change take action to push back against those fears (Helms et al 2018). Though in the case here, participation does not push back against the fears but does make it seem less futile to take effort.

For some they feel a sadness because of how they see future generations faring, both in that the world will be worse for them but also the loss of culture and personal history:

It makes me sad right. I think to myself, man I got a sister that's five years younger [...] Does she live her last decade out like in a nice happy life or does she deal with wildfires, floods, pandemics, you know tornadoes, the sky falling, like who knows right, who knows. And so that one of the first things that I think about the climate crisis. What's going to happen to my family, right? [...] What's going to happen to my kids, right? Maybe they live totally fine normal lives, like I did, but then do their kids right? Do my grandkids learn to surf on the same beach that I learned to surf? Is it no longer there right? Do they get to see the House that I grew up in or does that burn down in a wildfire?

*Do they live as long a life as me, or does a pandemic caused by the climate crisis, right?
Us being in more close contact with wild animals in factory farms, melting permafrost
[...] do they die their 50s because of a pandemic right? I think of all these things when I
think about the climate crisis, and it makes me sad Sydney*

Sydney notes their concern around various impacts in how they will affect their family and future generations. Some of their concern is relegated to how it will affect them physically but the other is their inability to share important elements of their personal history because climate change impacts will destroy them. Similarly, Casey makes note of how they fear for future generations inability to partake in the same nature they had. While they express that they “suffer emotionally” from the destruction of the natural world they also contextualize it to future generations:

*What I think about climate change, I think about great loss, and I think about
great hardship for those to come. For you, for your generation, and those younger than
you. And also, you know, a less alive gorgeous incredible planet. I mean each generation,
for many generations, now has inherited a less healthy planet than its parents and it, to
some extent, we don't know what we're missing. Each generation sees the world as it is
and hasn't experienced the way previous generations have so they are less aware of the
loss Casey*

The sadness they feel extends beyond the boundaries of the destruction of the environment but towards the things they feel the next generation will never have a chance of understanding. These activists expressed dismay at their inability to share these important aspects of their lives

with others or the inability for others to ever experience it, whether it is a family home or the richness of nature.

Most of these activists expressed feelings of despair, anxiety, and depression as a response to their conceptualizations of the impacts of climate change. There were some distinctions such as how they see the world without a future and just how that future might affect themselves or other generations. Some even felt a level of disempowerment that came with their understanding and had to find a way to push past that. These activists understand climate change as a foreboding and devastating destruction that is inching closer to their lives.

Avoiding Mental Impacts

While activists often have feelings of despair when thinking about the state of the world post climate change, many activists have developed strategies and techniques to push back against these feelings. Similar to Ashley's participation in the movement to not feel disempowered, these strategies help push back against the sadness and fear they feel. Sometimes these are for the sake of themselves but sometimes they are for the sake of their fellow activists. They find being a part of a community or at least speaking with other activists as beneficial in this way. Some activists, such as Adrian, note that their organizations have communication networks that double as support systems for people who are feeling overwhelmed by climate change. Whitney, instead, finds that teaching people about how their lives are impacted by climate change often leads to emotional moments that are handled within the group. *"It was such an emotional, like when they really connected all the dots, it was just like, whoa! It was heavy but then they also felt, you know, the encouragement when you have all these thousands of people with you, working towards a solution, you know, and so they felt the*

energy the synergy to the group but that they felt the impact” (Whitney). Rather than just educate and inform people about how climate change impacts their lives, they also feel like they are involved with a support system for these activists who join their ranks. Part of their movement strategy then becomes acting as a space for members to process the emotional impact of understanding the severity of climate change and the associated fear from that.

Often the movements actions are an integral part of pushing back against those fears. These activists utilized both their own actions and the actions of the movement to help them handle the emotions they feel regarding climate change. They point to their own successes and actions as well as those of the movement to push back against those feelings of hopelessness or depression:

I'll just realize like wow this this conversation was really dark. Like there really wasn't any hope in it because there's not much, like, being given to us. Like there's no optimism [...] People I know, try to like, either change the subject, or like, you know, make people feel better about it, even though, like deep down, maybe, like their feelings haven't changed. You can at least like, you know, try to make them feel better and be like, well this is what these groups are doing to fight against this problem Sandy

This is similar to how activists join movements and participate in actions to alleviate their fear and depression related to their understandings of climate change. While Sandy utilizes current actions, Sage speaks with people that have been in the movement for longer and uses their successes to assuage their own fears. *“Talking to older folks in the environmental justice movement it's like, wow like things in some areas were much worse than they are now, and things have gotten better, [...] if things have gotten better before like, we can keep pushing them*

to get better now" (Sage). They also talk about solutions as a method to try and push back against their climate anxieties. For Robin, they found that when they could not find purpose in their actions given their despair, a fellow member of their organization told them to embrace the work they were doing despite those feelings. They felt it helped them feel better as they knew they were making an impact even though it was a smaller impact than they would have liked.

Others are taking more active responses to their negative feelings. Taylor sees it as something they can get people to rally around. *"I also am training myself to view it as an opportunity for us to come together, across communities and work for a better change. So, I'm trying to shift the focus from being negative, to viewing it as a chance for us to actually make a better world"* (Taylor). They are attempting to consider those fears as ways to push the movement further. As they sense more fear in the world, they want people to see the opportunity within it as a moment for potential change. Similar to the previous focus on actions to push back against negative feelings, they try to see those fears as actions and turn them into positive things. Taylor notes this is a strategy given to them by others to avoid being *"consumed"* by climate change fears. Adrian also recontextualizes their fears as an opportunity. Rather than keep them solely framed as disasters they instead see them as a pathway towards the environmental stewardship and changes in behavior that they believe as necessary for the change to protect society. *"You know my immediate visualization is disaster but. My hope is that we can use those disasters as points to become better stewards of the environment and better people to each other"* (Adrian). These are indicators of a post-apocalyptic environmentalism as they embrace oncoming disaster and hope to build a better society from it.

Some, like Morgan, focus on just ignoring it and trying not to think about the world post impacts. Notably they still conceptualize impacts and how they will affect the world but try not to think about how that world will function. Other activists take the ignoring approach further and actively try to get others to ignore fear and embrace hope for the sole reason of not losing said hope. Casey, who noted feeling fear and suffering due to how they understand the impacts of climate change, said *“We have to believe that it will [[succeed]]. I think about Bill McKibben whose, as I’ve told you I admire greatly, he says, we do not have the luxury of despair. We cannot give up. We just can’t. No matter how dire or how discouraged, we have to keep going with all our might. It’s just too important to those who come after us”*. They heed advice from a prominent climate activist who tells them that they cannot give up and that they always must look to a hopeful solution. Similarly, there are activists who find any defeatist attitude as counterproductive. They see it as preventing other people from joining the movement by making the fight seem unwinnable and unappealing, or they find the expressions of despair can become so over the top that it makes the dangers of climate change seem unrealistic to those who may doubt them.

These activists have found ways to overcome and push back against the fears that arise from their understanding of climate change. Some find networks of support in their organizations, and some find the participating in their organizations is enough to keep them going. Often this involves relying on other members of the movement in a variety of ways. This includes just speaking to them or acknowledging their actions. They recognize that despair is a part of the movement and have had a myriad of reactions to it ranging from an embrace to a rejection.

Section Conclusion

The conceptualizations that these activists within incorporated environmental organizations have of how the impacts of climate change will occur have a significant impact on their lives and mental state. For many it has led to a deeply set fear. This fear takes root in how they see the disasters of climate change as an inevitability and the movement they participate in as failing. That then leads to them making different decisions in their personal lives and in how they approach movement tactics. They express having feelings of sadness, anxiety, depression, impending doom, and having climate change become an all-encompassing force in their lives that they struggle to look beyond. Activists find themselves trying to work past those feelings, and they rely on several strategies to do so. Those who have hope run those hopes up against their fears. Others find themselves relying on the other members of the movement to help settle their negative feelings. Others just ignore their fears and continue to fight because they feel that they must.

This research reconfirms evidence that people who understand the state of the environment as being in dire condition exhibit symptoms of fear, anxiety, and depression which falls within the purview of eco-anxiety (Reser et al 2014; Clayton and Manning 2018; Verplanken et al 2020; Stanley et al 2021). While previous studies show that those who feel powerless are less likely to take action against climate change (Aitken et al 2011; Williams and Jaftha 2020), there is an indication in this data that shows that those people who feel powerless still take action. The activists interviewed, who feel powerless and afraid but are still actively engaged, are evidence for that. This research indicates these activists feel an obligation and responsibility based on their concerns for future generations or other groups. This research also shows people

participate in the movement because they want to feel like they are making some impact or to push back against feelings of powerlessness. While previous research has stated that people take action because they feel fear (Helms et al 2018), this data indicates that those who participate in organizations do not get rid of that fear but rather find ways to utilize or embrace it. As well, previous research indicates those who feel depressed about the state of the climate will participate in collective action (Stanley et al 2021), which the data here corroborates.

Scholars have noted that the movement to fight climate change in the United States has been shifting towards frames centered around hope (Kleres and Wettergren 2017). We see aspects of that here with some activists expressing an outright denial of fear. From this data we can tell that while activists do utilize hope to mitigate fear, there are some activists who are embracing tenets of post-apocalyptic environmentalism. This focus on the inevitability of the impacts of climate change, embracing a coming loss, as well as the focus on building a better society from the remnants from the last are all parts of that frame (Cassegård and Thörn 2018). None of these activists are parts of organizations that embrace these tactics, but some did discuss using the opportunity that comes with the apocalypse. This stands in contrast to the dominant frames utilized in the Global North. This contrast potentially indicates that this emerging frame of post-apocalyptic environmentalism is starting to take hold there. We see many frames around climate change that focus on the impacts as already taking place, which is a frame element that was more common in the Global South than it was in the Global North (Kleres and Wettergren 2017). As such these frames that were less common previously are starting to gain a foothold within organizations in the United States, at least within the activists who are a part of those organizations.

Given the way apocalyptic conceptualizations of climate change are utilized to stifle debate away from moving from capitalist systems (Swyngedouw 2010), we note two interesting things from the data. The first is that there are certainly climate activists with anti-capitalist beliefs who find themselves engaging with more business oriented and neoliberal groups because of their fears. Sydney and Robin both mention explicitly feeling like they are forced to engage because they do not believe in the viability of systemic change given the time span. Secondly, we note that there is an aspect of the movement that has similar frames around the post-apocalypse and acceptance of the inevitable. This reveals a potential path for those activists who feel that they cannot move away from capitalist systems to instead embrace inevitability and begin planning for a society beyond the apocalypse.

Activist Identity

Identifying oneself as an activist is a tenuous concept for people across various movements, and this remains true within the environmental movement. Notably all the interviewees are members of incorporated environmental organizations that participate in actions designed to either educate people about the state of the environment or progress the fight against the climate crisis. Though these members do not always struggle with the activist identity, many do. This analysis will continue to refer to them as activists as they all participate in changemaking. We look towards Cortese's categorizations of the activist identity with Emphatics, Demarcators, and Reconcilers and see them expanded upon here (Cortese 2015).

Many older activists are set in the idea that they are activists. When asked if they consider themselves activists, they gave definite answers followed by describing what their role within the movement or their organization is. *"I just feel like I'm one of the foot soldiers. As I said, I was always an activist. [...] I mean ever since I was a freshman in college, you know, I've been an activist"* (Blake). Others, while still as assured in their identity, would point to the meaning behind their actions as their explanation.

Interviewer: *Would you describe yourself as an activist?*

Pat: Yes.

Interviewer: *Okay and in what ways are you an activist?*

Pat: *I think up and stand up for things that would impact climate change.*

Older activists, through their history of involvement of this movement and others, have already negotiated their role and constructed their expectations for what an activist is. This assuredness

in their identity was not exclusive to older activists as some younger activists were also resolute in their identity. Younger activists, however, generally would provide additional caveats and contexts to explain their relationship to the activist identity.

Activist vs Good Activist/ I'm an Activist*

While some interviews revealed coherent activist identities, many other activists had a less definite connection to the activist identity. Bobel states that social movement participants do not always regard themselves as activists as they have high standards for what is considered activism (Bobel 2007). Given the data, that seems to be the case here as well. For some they feel like the ability to consider yourself an activist is a point of pride that they have not yet earned, others consider themselves activists but not quite good activists, and some find the identity of activist too loaded with negative associations.

Activists would often draw simply on the idea that they are new to these movements and believe that they do not have the authority to consider themselves an activist just yet. This was felt by younger activists and older activists who had gotten involved in the previous year. They see their fellow organization members as having a longer or a life-long commitment towards the movement that gives them a level of authority to consider themselves activists which they cannot match. As a result, they felt that over time they might find themselves more comfortable with accepting the identity but just were not able to currently.

Taylor encapsulates a good portion of the idea of being an activist with a caveat:

I don't know if I classify myself as a good activist, but I think in what I seek to do like, especially in [Organization], I would consider myself an activist. I just think that to be a good one, I would need to devote more time to it. I view like the classification of

activist as kind of as a point of pride, and I feel like I don't know if I've earned that with the amount of work that I put in Taylor

For them, they see the work they are doing as activism but look towards others they see as more dedicated as the 'ideal activists'. They find they are not doing a large enough amount of work to consider themselves a "good" activist. They need to do more because they think of the identity as a "point of pride" which they must earn. Additionally, they look towards large events that they helped organize and participate in helping build their activist credibility so that they can eventually have the authenticity to claim that identity. They see them as "*pivotal moments for me in starting to think of myself as an activist or wannabe activist*" (Taylor). The ability to point to major accomplishments on an activist resume is a part of them building an authentic connection to the identity.

Similarly, there are activists who feel they are not doing enough work to consider themselves any level of activist. They draw on what they see as the messages of true activists and use them as guidance for what it means to engage in activism and call oneself an activist:

A lot of Black activists has been saying, like, don't call yourself an activist until you're out here every day and like contributing almost all that you can to dismantle white supremacy, and I definitely know like I'm trying, but I definitely know I'm not on that scale. [...] I do prefer to say like advocate because, I'm talking about these issues, I'm signing petitions, I'm organizing people around me, I'm talking to my friends my family, but I am not doing the work, and we should be recognizing the people are doing that are doing the work and uplifting them Sage

They see this as a lack of commitment on their own end and decide to frame their work as advocacy rather than explicitly activism. This conceptualization is reliant on the distinctions they see between organizing, educating, and direct action. Part of their conceptualization draws upon what they saw as social media activism during the George Floyd protests. They witness others claiming the activist identity from exclusively posting on social media and believe that is coopting the identity. Sage feels like their own negative reaction to social media posting and the opinions of who they regard as ideal activists made it difficult to consider themselves an activist due to a lack of commitment and the style of actions that they take. Both Sage and Taylor are dealing with standards that they have set too high to achieve for themselves, which can be a problem amongst younger activists (Maher et al 2020).

Other young activists, who also struggle with associating themselves with the identity, have a different understanding of social media activism. *"I don't go to marches often. I do sometimes. I am passionate about the issues, but I don't necessarily like speak up on social media, which is like what kids, people my age, but that's the go to for activists. That going to Instagram, going to Twitter, going to Facebook and [xxx] information or voicing their opinion on certain things that are occurring"* (Morgan). Morgan's conception of the activist identity relies heavily on what they see as social media activism. Combined with the notion that they do not give off the impression of someone who is an activist, they feel they are still working towards reaching a threshold to achieve the activist identity. For them it is not a question necessarily of commitment to a level of work, but more so an attitude or persona that they associate with a stereotype of activists. Part of this also derives from believing that others need to be able to perceive you as an activist, and not proving it to oneself. As well, those two contrasting opinions

on online activism are interesting as scholars have noted that young people are opting for more digital political participation (Dalton 2020; Shea and Harris 2006; Winston 2013).

Ashley sees their own work as activism but struggles with the identity because their work is not within the stereotypical definitions of activism. *“My image of an activist [[is]] someone’s like chained themselves to a bulldozer. But, like my version of activism looks different than that”* (Ashley). While they consider their work as activist work and valuable to the movement, since it does not fall within the purviews of civil disobedience or *“in the street”* activism, they struggle to have a definite connection to the activist identity. Their work is activist work but their connection to the identity is tenuous because of the stereotypes they have of activists. Some activists make these caveats but not in a way that construes it as a negative. We know that younger activists tend to make these caveats when examining their own activist identity, if not just outright rejecting it, due to feelings of inadequacy (Chalhoub, Ciavattone, and Wetzel 2017). *“[[I’m]] Kind of a low key activist. I mean I’ve like marched and prot-, you know, done demonstrations that kind of thing. But the like more of the latter of what I described. Like talking about stuff then doing large demonstrationy anything”* (Sam). Similar to Ashley, Sam draws on demonstrations and adjacent activities to indicate what they see as the actions of a standard activist. Sam, whose work falls more into education and advocacy, does not regularly engage with direct action. They too consider their work as activist work but do not accept the activist identity outright. This falls in line with previous research that indicates that activists tend to draw on direct action as the methods they see as what the ‘ideal activist’ does and should be doing (Craddock 2019). Rather than disassociate themselves from the identity entirely, Sam

instead contextualizes their identity as a “*low key activist*” because they find their focus on education does not fall within the confines of what an ‘ideal activist’ would do.

Adrian also makes caveats by describing themselves as being an “*inactive*” activist because they had not recently participated in direct actions as they had done previously. They however fall upon this caveat partially due to feeling sidelined by the Covid-19 pandemic and their resulting inability to participate in person.

I think the pandemic has really stymied a lot of activists, especially like me. [...] I tend to be a pretty isolated person. I don't really like crowds and things like that. [[I'm]] An introvert so, you would think that like, yeah online stuff is really, you know, my bread and butter, but I really rather prefer like doing, you know, direct actions, doing sit ins, doing things like that, and over the last year, being unable to do a lot of those actions, and you know the decrease in those actions is kind of- cool down that kind of fire and, frankly, just because I haven't been doing a lot of, what for personally for me [[I]] consider activism, I don't know. I wouldn't say I'm an active activist more an inactive activist Adrian

Part of this comes from their own conception of activism but also a focus on online activities and away from crowd based actions. They consider themselves an activist and the actions they are doing as a form of activism. Adrian then points towards what they had done prior as a more valid form of activism. Thus, they consider themselves an activist with a caveat. Rather than place themselves within the confines of ‘Good’ activists as Cortese saw, these social movement participants who exemplify traits of Demarcators and Reconcilers take a more self-critical approach (Cortese 2015). They draw the line between ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ activist, as Demarcators

do, but then place themselves within the 'Bad'. These younger activists also draw the line differently seeing more direct action or radical action as the line of what is 'Good' activism rather than 'Bad'. They restructure the definitions of activist, as Reconcilers do, but then create alternative versions of the activist identity with caveats.

Conversely, some older activists wanted to push back against the activist identity to disassociate themselves from it because of negative connotations:

I don't like the word activism, in a general context, because I think it comes loaded with- people view it as radical activism. That they, just, associate it with somebody who's going out marching, gluing themselves to things, and just yelling and screaming, and, you know, it's the wrong impression. Activism means many, many things. It means being active. I'm an activist, but I don't go out and yell and scream. I find other ways to take action Max

Max considers themselves an activist but does not like the term because those negative associations. They instead want to oppose it with their own conceptualization of what an activist is. They do not want others to see themselves or their organization as activist since they think they will see them as radical activists. For them activism means a variety of things, but the identity of an activist is more of a pejorative that indicates only a few things within the spectrum of activism. Their viewpoint is almost a rejection of the direct action focused 'ideal activist' that others aspire towards (Bobel 2007; Craddock 2019).

Similarly, Jordan sees activism with these negative connotations but feels an attachment to the ideals the identity purports:

It's not a label that it really resonates with me, you know. Like I feel like a lot of that is probably just the connotations that have been lumped on to that, you know. Anybody who's in this world, who is, you know, looking out for nature, looking out for animals and plants, and, you know, humans and thinking thoughtfully about, you know, how we all coexist. I mean whatever that is, that's where I want to be. Jordan

They see the protection of nature and peaceful coexistence as what they aspire to and not necessarily what it means to be an activist. They also contend that they might have a skewed understanding from stereotypes of it as a pejorative and the “*connotations that have been lumped on*” (Jordan). Both Jordan and Max contend that they might have a skewed conceptualization around the activist identity that prevents them from embracing it, but both still have a tenuous connection to it. Previous research has indicated some people have ideologies that bring them closer to identities other than the activist identity within social movements (Corrigal-Brown 2012). Both Max and Jordan negotiate with the negative stereotypes they have of activists and that reflects upon their own identity. While we know that sometimes individuals will resist participating in social change to avoid those negative stereotypes, they both still participate but negotiate the identities differently (Bashir et al 2013). They fall more into the line of the traditional definition of Demarcators that Cortese described as they see others activism as negative and bad for the identity (Cortese 2015). They view radical actions as ‘Bad’ activism and define their identities off what they do not do. While only Max then views themselves as an activist, they go through similar processes.

One interviewee would adamantly consider themselves not an activist and refuse any association with the identity. Tony saw themselves as a scientist who had joined up with the

organization for the sake of education. They found the idea of associating their scientific work with activism as not compatible and were intent on explaining everything they did as not activism. This is a definite commitment to a sense of identity but one they saw in direct opposition to the activist identity. It was not a common theme in the interview data, but similar notions were expressed by others just without the refusal of the activist identity.

Expanding the notions of a 'Good' Activist

As previous research has indicated, activists create the standards of what an 'ideal activist' is by themselves and within their movement (Bobel 2007; Cortese 2015; Craddock 2019). This process involves placing direct action on a pedestal while regarding other kinds of activism as not true activism. This was seen frequently with many of the participants who would have these high standards that they compared themselves too. Some seem to respond to the notion of an 'ideal activist' by trying to expand the ideas of what is considered activism. While many still highly regard direct action, some activists attempt to expand the notions of what activism means to include other things. This is similar to the process taken by Reconcilers as Cortese described but different in that they try to expand the definitions of activism to be inclusive beyond themselves (Cortese 2015). Reconcilers would expand it for their own sake, whereas here we see activists want to have others embrace activism in their own way:

I think I've met a lot of people who- their only activism is just kind of doing stuff on Twitter and doing stuff on social media, and I think that it gets a bad rap, and even within activists circles, and I think that's a little unfair, because I think the distribution of information poses a really valuable- I think information distribution is really valuable for people, including activists [...] And also it's often not just like distribution of information

it's not just posting. A lot of kind of online activism is content creation, whether that is TikToks, or you know YouTube videos, or graphic design stuff, or you know now streaming things like that, I think. The advances in technology have made doing kind of virtual activism really, not as important mounted equal stage as in person activism but kind of you know. There are people live streaming in the last few days, who have raised thousands of thousands of dollars for Palestine and, you know, I'm more of an in-person person. I couldn't have done that. It's hard to raise thousands of dollars sitting on a computer playing a video game, but you can do that online, and I think that's valid work. I don't know if everyone, you know, even within [Organization], would consider that activism. I don't know if people who are doing it would consider it activism, but I consider it a form of activism. Adrian

Adrian, who had organized and participated in direct action, feels the need to expand upon the definitions of activism to include many other major elements that they see as valuable to the movement. They even indicate that there is resistance to acknowledging this style of activism within their organization but feel they should expand that definition despite that. Their desire for an expansion upon the conceptions of what it means to be an activist to include activism that is primarily online, and advocacy focused is a response to that.

Blake looks at various styles of activism as valuable since they see solutions as requiring multi-faceted approaches:

It takes all kinds of activist; it takes the people who are contributing financially. It takes the folks that were out there, you know, doing the shoe leather stuff and being out in the town square and bringing attention to things. And it takes people being

informed. So, I think activism can take lots of different forms and, I'm not ever going to say 'Well, you know, my activism is better than your activism', because we all, as one of my friends has [[said]], we're all limited and suffering Blake

They express the notion that everyone does what they can, such as financial aid or just educating themselves, as part of activism. Of note is that they look towards the limitations people face when trying to participate in activism and want to expand it for that reason. Sydney also sees these conceptions as a barrier for activism and tries to expand those notions outwards towards smaller actions. They believe this is necessary as it is difficult for working class people to contribute or feel like they are participating in a meaningful way when faced with the notion of the 'ideal activist'. They want to include less direct actions because direct action is time consuming and difficult to engage with.

Section Conclusion

Activists confront their conception of the 'ideal activist' when they try to claim the activist identity. The 'ideal activist' is a standard often associated with direct action and that standard is constructed by those within the movement. Through their internal conversations about the 'ideal activist', some have come to an unfettered embrace of the identity while others completely reject it. Many younger activists and some older activists find they do not have the authenticity to claim the activist identity. Given the tendency for activists to be highly self-critical meta-reflexives, this is not necessarily unusual (Archer 2007). Many activists express a tenuous connection that focuses on specific elements of how they understand what it means to be a good activist.

Some focus on the negative connotations they see as surrounding the identity, while others see it as something they must aspire to and work towards. Those who seek to embrace that label often find themselves placing additional caveats around the identity to explain away some of the issues they have embracing the identity. Some hope to expand the notion of what it means to be an activist, away from the high standards of the 'ideal activist', because they think it is necessary for success. While interviewees all engaged with change making in society at some level, only some felt they wanted and had the authenticity to claim to be an activist. Much of the interview data supports what scholars have already noted on the activist identity, however, we do see that there is some level of expansion upon the notions of Demarcators and Reconcilers. Some activists will create the divides between 'Good' and 'Bad' activists but then place themselves in the category of 'Bad' activists through the caveats they create.

Since many of these young activists find it difficult to achieve the activist identity in their incorporated environmental organizations, there is potential for a division or shift within this part of the movement. These activists believe that direct action is necessary and would help them gain the credibility needed to consider themselves activists. As these are not the preferred tactics of their organizations, this leaves the frames of the organization not wholly aligned with the frames of the individual. As such framing processes would need to occur to resolve that difference making the activist identity a potential point for future shifts within this part of the movement. Either these organizations will have to change, these activists will have to change, or the two will divide.

CONCLUSION

Through interviews with 20 activists in incorporated environmental organizations we can see frame differences that vary by generational cohort, the influence of fear on the behavior of activists, as well as variations on the reflexive process of determining what it means to be an activist. The conclusions presented here are not definite answers about the state of the movement but instead help set the table for future research. Given this, we can make contributions to scholarship in the field of social movements in three ways:

Firstly, the results find that younger activists want to focus the movement's diagnostic and prognostic frames on capitalism and neoliberalism. They find that the movements frames are inadequate to address the problems of climate change and believe that strategies must examine these aspects or be ineffective. They also desire system change, though not all believe it is possible due to time constraints for preventing climate change. Older activists see overconsumption and the fossil fuel industry as the root cause of the movement's problems and believe that sustainable living and working with businesses are the necessary path forward. Younger activists believe that both sustainable living and working with businesses will be ineffective and only serve to set the movement back.

The current discussion around the environmental movement is one that is focused on a growing surge in youth activism. As well there is a global shift in other social movements to

focus on neoliberalism and capitalism (della Porta 2015). Frame differences between younger and older activists within incorporated environmental organizations indicate that younger ones are shifting towards a focus on neoliberalism and capitalism as the main roots of the movement's problems and where solutions should be directed. Younger activists specifically note issues with the strategies that they see more widely used within the mainstream environmental movement. Both the frames and strategies of older activists corroborate previous research that says the environmental movement in the United States has become institutionalized and influenced by neoliberal interests (Bernstein 2001; Stoner 2021). Younger activists criticize those strategies that do not look outside the bounds of neoliberalism and serve to prevent the problematization of neoliberalism. Hence, we see the potential for a shift in the strategy of the environmental movement in the United States.

This strategic shift is currently limited by the same sense of urgency behind the desire for system change: Younger activists are concerned that system change may not be winnable with the very short time horizon presented by the climate threat. If younger activists continue to maintain frames that are not well aligned with the older leadership of the mainstream environmental movement, there is the chance for a drop in movement mobilization. This is due to the lack of salience that would exist in the mainstream collective action frames which would act as a barrier for frame alignment (Snow and Benford 2000). Given that young activists find themselves being concerned in some instances when working in organizations with older activists (O'Donoghue and Strobel 2007), there is a chance for this sort of shut out to occur here if it is not already occurring.

While this research shows an ideology focused on systems and institutions from younger activists, it may be attributable to young activist's tendency towards more radical behavior that is eventually worn away over time (Whalen and Flacks 1984). As well this research gives evidence for the repoliticization of neoliberalism. The depoliticization that has shielded neoliberal institutions from scrutiny by the environmental movement does not exist in the same way for younger activists. While some organizations are still not putting neoliberalism and capitalism into the purview of the issues they are confronting, young activists are trying to push for it within their organizations.

Importantly though, for the findings from this research, many activists in Whalens and Flacks's research turned away from the lifestyle because of economic insecurity and degrading social services that had helped them maintain the lifestyle before (Whalen and Flacks 1984). As such they entered into more standard jobs and employment and were integrated into the typical middle class. This means that the opportunity to enter and participate in the middle class was available to them which is an important distinction between that generation and this generation. As the scope of who is contained with the 'Precariat' increases, activists now do not have the same capabilities to be in a safe and secure middle class. While the previous radical and systemic focus of activists eventually wore down, part of what enabled this wearing down was that pathway to the middle class. As such there remains the potential for a shift towards a more radical environmentalism within the scope of these organizations even if previous cycles in the 1930s and 1960s did not result in the total system change that millions of activists at those times had desired. This data cannot answer why these differences in frames are occurring, it can give evidence that these differences exist. Where the mainstream environmental movement

had shifted away from systems focus and critiques of neoliberalism, there are indications of a potential swing back towards that focus due to young activist's ideologies and desired frames.

Secondly, fears of the impacts of climate change revolve around the inevitability of those impacts and the movement's failure to stop them. Activists make different decisions based on that fear, such as switching strategies from prevention to community resiliency from impacts. They work with partners they do not agree with ethically because they feel they do not have the option for internal conflict within the movement given the direness of the situation. Activists will rely on a myriad of methods to push back against their fears, such as focusing on the movement's successes, relying on support structures of fellow activists, as well as an outright rejection of fear.

Given that interviewees almost all expressed a level of anxiety, fear, or depression, this research corroborates the various studies that point to the detrimental mental health effects of awareness of climate change and its impacts (Clayton and Manning 2018; Helm et al 2018; Verplanken et al 2020). Climate activists seem to be uniquely susceptible towards eco-anxiety given their awareness and desire to do something about climate change impacts. Previous research indicates people take actions, such as joining movements, to mitigate their fear through hope (Kleres and Wettergren 2017). This research shows they still struggle to have hope in the face of climate change even when they take action for the express purpose of pushing back against that fear. Many have begun to accept that the world that they live in will not exist for much longer and that a new world post climate change is coming. As previous research notes that the climate movement of the Global North is pushing for more hopeful strategies (Kleres

and Wettergren 2017), the interviewees lack of hope in the movement indicates that the organizations may have discarded this strategy, or it has been ineffective.

Previous research indicates that anxiety about the climate maybe a deterrent towards collective action (Stanely et al 2021), but this research shows that many of those engaged in collective action express an eco-anxiety. That eco-anxiety is mixed with a number of other negative emotions. While it may still be a deterrent; it is not so strong that it would prevent all action and often those who engage still experience that anxiety. This research also finds that fear influences the strategic choices such that activists opt for strategies that might not believe in ethically but believe have a higher likelihood of being effective. Much of the research on the influence of fear over climate change uses metrics that involve pro environmental behaviors that fall within sustainable living and personal responsibility. Younger activists express a dissatisfaction with sustainable living strategies as they believe that it covers up for systemic issues and diverts responsibility away from businesses. While these activists do still engage in sustainable behavior this may indicate that pro-environmental behavior may not be an effective metric to determine whether fear of climate change spurs action for people in similar cohorts.

There is a branch of the environmental movement that argues that to build a better society, people must accept that the world is coming to an end (Cassegård and Thörn 2018). Only then can a society exist that is not contained within the problematic structures of the past. In the case of the environmental movement, activists join and gain hope by looking towards successes and actions of the movement but not enough to make the believe in the movement's success. They see the movement as failing but still make tactical decisions as if the movement has a chance of success, even when they find those tactics are problematic. Given this potential

for the acceptance of inevitability, the pathway exists for activists within the environmental movement to engage with a post-apocalyptic environmentalism. Through this, these younger activists can achieve their goal of a society that is free from the structures they see as problematic.

Thirdly, this research finds that not all activists within the movement consider themselves activists. While all act as social change agents within these organizations, they do not all feel they have the authenticity, have not been dedicated enough, or do not desire the activist identity. Those who did not desire it found it contradicted existing identities they already associated with or had negative stereotypes of activists. Some who viewed the identity of activist more as a pejorative felt the need to try and redefine what it meant to be an activist to suit their own desires. Those who did not feel they were worthy of claiming the identity pointed to notions of what it means to be an 'ideal activist'. They saw the standards of what it meant to be an activist as being constructed by other authentic activists and found they could not match those criteria. Many attempted to bridge the gap in their own activism and that of their own conception of the 'ideal activist' by creating categories of lesser activist such as a 'lay' activist or 'inactive' activist. They were not quite the level of an 'actual' activist, but they were still doing some level of activism. Others within the movement were attempting to expand what it meant to be an activist as a response to those who might hold direct action on a pedestal and disregard other kinds of actions. As well they wanted to expand the definitions of what it meant to be an activist in order to allow people who did not have the available time to participate.

This research reconfirms what is known about the activist identity within social movements. Activists would often have standards for what it means to be an activist that were

too high for themselves to meet. Many of these activists were engaged in self-critical processes that are acknowledged as integral in internal conversations for 'meta-reflexives' corroborating aspects of both the process of reflexivity as well as Archer's typology (Archer 2007). We also see evidence for Demarcators and Reconcilers for the activist identity (Cortese 2015). Activists demarcated what it means to be a 'Good' activist versus a 'Bad' activist as well as created specific definitions to reconcile their own activism with that of the activist identity. The research contributes to these categorizations specifically by showing that those who demarcate a 'Good' activist and a 'Bad' activist do not always do so to place themselves in the 'Good' activist category. Here many activists did so to distinguish themselves away from the 'authentic' activists they aspired to be. Those who reconciled their identity also attached caveats that they saw as negative because they could not meet their own standards of what it means to be an activist. In this data there is an expansion in demarcations and reconciliation in regard to not having the identity.

This research shows that parts of the movement are responding to the placement of direct action on a pedestal by trying to expand the definition of what it means to do activism to include various contributions they see as less direct but still beneficial. They also want to open up the space for working class people to feel like they can contribute to the movement with their time constraints. This follows with younger people's differences in approaches to political participation. Young activists noted distinct understandings of online activism, with some explicitly trying to expand the definition to include it. Though young activists seem divided on it, this research does show that digital participation ties into their conceptions of their own activist identity. The disconnect these young activists feel between themselves and the activist identity

marks another potential point for shifts within these incorporated environmental organizations and that branch of the environmental movement.

As the severity of the climate crisis continues to worsen and the environmental movement continues to grow as a response, the potential for shifts within the movements collective action frames could have drastic impacts on the course of politics within the United States. As elements within the movement desiring systemic change gain more support, there is a chance for this branch of the movement to confront capitalism or neoliberalism once again. It may however be another surge of systemic focus that gets worn away over time, leaving a movement with activists passionate for systemic change buried within incorporated organizations. Though as the fear of the climate crisis continues to worsen, hope to avoid disasters dwindles, movements around the world shift focus, and the scope of the 'Precariat' grows there is a unique opportunity for a mainstream environmental movement in the United States that challenges capitalism and neoliberalism.

Future Research

While differences in ideology and frames between cohort groups is evident, the delineation alludes to larger questions about precarity. Given the stark divide in frames and ideology between Ashley/Adrian and Jordan, we can tell that while generational differences are not necessarily the divisive factor they likely correlate with it. Attempting to further hone-in on generational differences likely will not approach the factors that were made evident from this data. Continued research on this subject should limit differences in sampling as well as focus more on the relation activists have to precarity. Research that deems it necessary to look at generations should take a more extensive approach and examine Age-Period-Cohort effects.

Future research may want to move towards larger N statistical analyses in order to seek higher reliability in generally answering related questions. These methods would also allow for more elaborate understandings of concepts related to the activist identity.

Activists often state a belief that the movement will fail but still participate in ways they disagree with ideologically. There are reasons that are alluded to in the interview data that indicate activists see no other choice but to participate to at least have a small impact. Given that younger activists do this and still hope for system change implies a barrier exists for them engaging in a post-apocalyptic environmentalism. While this study revealed time constraints there exists the potential for alternative explanations. Future research should examine why younger activists utilize tactics they believe will be ineffective and hurt the movement.

In the interviews with younger activists, they noted that within their organizations there were older members who held similar ideologies to them on capitalism and neoliberalism. This research was unable to interview any of these older activists due to access and time constraints on sampling. Future research should attempt to learn about these older activists with anti-capitalist ideologies who are within incorporated environmental organizations and are offering mentorship to younger activists.

Research Issues

The Covid 19 pandemic created issues that made sampling more difficult as organizations were harder to get into contact with and there was a lack of in person meetings to attend. Those issues were referred to in the research design section and addressed by not pursuing certain lines of inquiry that would require a more specific sample to properly assess. Follow up questionnaires were required to flesh out biographical information which were not

responded to by each participant. This is partially a result of using grounded theory and as such it has opened potential new pathways for further research. This research was also constrained by regionalism as the sampling pulled from an area that maybe very different politically from other parts of the country.

APPENDIX

Interview Guide

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

Organization and Strategy

How did you get involved with this organization? Can you describe what you do within the organization?

Can you tell me about the issues your organization addresses?

What kinds of key messages are you trying to get across? What do you think makes them effective? How do you deliver these messages?

Can you tell me a bit about the last big event you did? What went right and what went wrong?

What would an ideal event for your organization look like?

What would you change about your organization?

How do you feel your organization fits into the broader environmental movement?

What kind of groups does your organization partner with? Can you tell me about how one of those partnerships worked?

How do you feel about the Sierra Club?* Sunrise Movement?* Extinction Rebellion?*

What sorts of things do other organizations do that yours doesn't?

How would you describe your opposition?

Dangers of Climate Change

What comes to your mind when you think about climate change?

How did you become aware of the dangers of climate change?

How have you been affected by climate change?

In what ways do you think the fight against climate change will succeed? How will it fail?

What do you think the world will be like in 30 years?

What kind of things do you feel get left out of the conversation on climate change?

How did joining this organization change the way you think about climate change?

How do you feel when people reject the term “crisis” to describe climate change?

How do you feel about the switch to using ‘climate change’ rather than ‘global warming’?

General Organizational

What do you think of the other members of your organization?

What kind of role do you feel you have with this group?

How do other people think of you and this group?

What kind of people do you think care about climate change? What about those who don’t?

Activist Identity

What comes to mind when you think of activism? In what ways are you an activist?

What do you think makes people passionate about fighting injustice? What makes them indifferent?

Environmental Identity

What do you think of as nature? Can you tell me about your favorite place to go in nature?

Some people feel a special connection to nature, why do you think that is?

*- Denotes that a question was added over the course of the interviewing process

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