

Framing and Identity in the Gwich'in Campaign Against Oil Development

Pam Graybeal

Graduate student

Department of Environmental Science, Policy, & Mgmt.

University of California at Berkeley



Overview

- Climate Justice framework
- Gwich'in
- Method
- Claims
- Identity (Collective, Individual, & Public)
- Community Images
- Future Directions
- *Not included:* Framing, Community of Interest, Social Networks



Climate Justice Framework

“...from which indigenous peoples, the environmental justice movement, fence line communities affected by oil refineries, students and anti-globalization activists can begin to assert leadership on the global warming issue” –CorpWatch



Gwich'in

- Native population
- Porcupine Caribou Herd for food, shelter, clothing, medicine, or tools
- Resisting oil development for decades
- Entrance of CJ framework into enduring campaign
- Several shifts in political and popular sentiment
- Examine influence on CJ framework, and vice versa



Method

- New Social Movement (NSM) approach
- Identity formation and framing related to the construction of
 - community images
 - communities of interest
 - social networks
- Written material only



Gwich'in & CJ Claims

- Subsistence livelihood threatened by decreased caribou numbers
 - coastal plains calving grounds
- Environmental degradation from accidents
- Temperature increase
 - reduces ability to fish and travel



Exemplary Case?

- Brought together
 - climate change
 - wilderness conservation
 - environmental justice
 - indigenous
- Population characteristic: subsistence
- Nature of threat: oil extraction
- Experience full cycle of negative effects



Identity



Collective Identity

- Group norms including boundaries, the meaning of membership, and appropriate group actions
- Gwich'in group identification as “The Caribou People”
- Bolstered community members' images of themselves and their community



Individual Identity

- Interpret how others receive the individual as they act out different roles
- Frequently equated with the collective identity
- Benefit members when positive collective identity utilized



Public Identity

- Individuals respond to public's perception and response
- Influences individual and collective identities
- Sources of reflection: media and non-members of movement
- Promoted by Gwich'in Steering Committee & representatives



Community Images

- Objective features and subjective individual opinions
- Influence interactions and willingness to participate in formal and informal community organizations
- Cultural and physical value of eating caribou
- “Ecological Indian” myth



Future Directions

- Holistic approach to campaigns
- Essentializing?
- Right to create or select a public identity?
- Effects of subsistence image?
- Unique opportunity to evaluate effectiveness of framework?
- Compare to case where CJ framework used by urban community?
- Does connection among different parties strengthen campaigns by introducing a diversity of actors, issues, perspectives, skills, tactics, and resources?



Questions/Comments



Communities of Interest

- Individuals that share common interest or trait
- CJ framework
 - created expansive community of interest through effective utilization of identity fields
 - appeal to wide audience
 - environmentalists (conservation and EJ)
 - anti-globalization and social rights activists
 - indigenous peoples
 - general public
 - loss of migratory birds, pristine wilderness, and the ability to enjoy publicly-owned Alaska reserves



Framing

- Collective action frames (diagnostic)
 - draw interest to issues
 - impacts on wildlife and humans
- Prognostic
 - propose alternatives
 - increased fuel efficiency and overall reduced consumption of fossil fuels
- Motivational
 - provide rationales
 - drilling as vital to decreasing the trade deficit, creating jobs, and boosting the national economy



Social Networks

- Within Gwich'in communities
 - dynamics among Gwich'in leaders and community members
- Among Gwich'in and environmentalists
 - environmentalists' altering community image
- Among different interest groups
 - growth of existing social networks
 - rely heavily on the support of existing groups and networks
 - contributed to the diversity of ideas, tactics, and resources available

