ORGANIZATIONS, MEDIA & POWER IN A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER CONFLICT:

THE COLORADO ROADLESS RULE

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Edward R. Murrow College of Communication

MAY 2010

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to a number of people, including my committee members and colleagues, who have encouraged and supported me throughout my two years at Washington State University. I am specifically grateful to Dr. Todd Norton, who reviewed this manuscript many times and became more of a life-coach than a graduate adviser during this process. His professional and personal guidance has helped me to discover who I want to become as a scholar and, more importantly, as a person. I feel lucky to have had an adviser who so openly allowed me to question my own beliefs, boundaries and purpose. I would also like to thank his wife, Amy, for her friendship, advice and support; it made a world of difference.

My colleagues, Jessica Fitts and Cassie Norman, also helped me immensely by offering critical feedback and unwavering friendship. I hope that I will one day be able to return even a fraction of the support they have given to me. I would like to acknowledge the support I received from my family, Richard, Cheryl and Jordan Smith. I could not have completed this project without their constant encouragement. I would also like to thank Shafer Brown, who has made the past year one I will never forget. I will never be able to relay how appreciative I am to Shafer, for he has offered me unconditional love in a way I have never known before. I love him and will be forever in his debt. Lastly, I would like to thank God, for all the opportunities He has given me.

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Abstract

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May 2010

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In this paper I use two complementary frameworks to study discourse and the public sphere in environmental decision-making. I use a case study of the Colorado Roadless Rule to explore public participation processes and media coverage of federal environmental conflicts.

In the first analysis, I argue for a re-examination of the conceptual "public" in federal environmental public participation processes; to place an emphasis on the evolving role of organizations, rather than individuals, in environmental decision-making. I examine how the underlying structures of public participation processes (re)produce power disparities between organizations and unaffiliated citizens.

In the second analysis, I turn to an examination of media discourse. I performed a quantitative content analysis of one year's worth of news coverage surrounding the Colorado Roadless Rule to build upon scholars' previous findings that journalist routinely rely on government and elite sources when covering environmental issues. Findings highlight an evolving reliance not only on government figures, but environmental organizations as sources for information, and inequitable amounts of coverage given to different stakeholders.

Through this analysis of public spheres and stakeholder engagement it becomes clear how critical it is to examine discourse and its relationship to the material environment. It is evident in both analyses that the public is being defined only as "organized publics" and unaffiliated citizens have limited access to deep engagement with issues of public land management. I hope these analyses offer a trajectory for scholarship that leads to more collaborative engagement with all stakeholders involved in environmental policy issues.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPENDICES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

The Colorado Roadless Rule: Stakeholders and Media

Since the first inventory of roadless areas in 1926, what to do with national forest land in the United States that had not been utilized for timber extraction or developed recreation has been a primary topic of contestation between the government, industry and public. The most frequent points of debate typically include the purpose, management of and access to these areas. Yet such debates are also partly driven by the deeper divisions of meaning about nature; long-held beliefs underpin continuous debates about how to properly manage these natural resources. While there are various divergent viewpoints present in land management cases, most seem to be rooted in two competing ideologies: multiple-use and preservation. The multiple-use paradigm is based in utilitarian values; the worth and value of a piece of land is dependent on how it sustains life and social development. Preservationists conceptualize wilderness in a slightly more idealistic and romantic fashion, emphasizing the land's aesthetic values and intrinsic worth beyond economics (Nash, 1982). It is helpful to characterize these divergent worldviews as they inform and impact people's actions and beliefs, but it also important to understand all people don't completely conform neatly into one category or another (Randolph, 2004)

The struggle between stakeholders with different worldviews has grown more intense and garnered more political attention in the past decade than possibly at any other time in history. Perhaps this increased consternation is due, in part, to people recognizing their right to participate in decision-making. Citizens are now

more than ever demanding an increased level of involvement in how environmental decisions play out (McLagan & Nel, 1995, Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000).

Understanding stakeholder conflict and how to manage different worldviews is becoming an increasingly important dimension in crafting successful environmental policy because two-way flows of communication have emerged as the preferred mode of engagement in negotiation of environmental disputes. As Cox (2009) argued, stakeholders now realize the importance of "talking with opponents across the table, working through differences, and in many cases resolving conflicts that have festered for years" (p. 120). The contemporary context of the United States places a high value on negotiation and collaboration among stakeholders. The past 20 years have produced a "dramatic increase in participation by ordinary citizens, scientists, environmental groups, and others" (Cox, 2009, p. 83), who have competing ideologies, in environmental decision-making. Federal roadless areas are an ideal subject for study because citizen participation and collaborative management are mandated by federal legislation (USDA Forest Service 2005).

Public land debates and especially contestation over roadless areas serve as an ideal space for ideological battles as divergent stakeholders vie for control and power of the land and its use. Therefore, public land debates unearth the underlying relationships among stakeholders, power and the material environment. The understanding of these relationships is critical to understand how different groups approach environmental conflicts and use power to negate democratic decision-making processes.

I approached this project through a critical-interpretive perspective (Harter & Krone, 2001; Norton, 2008), focusing on understanding how power and discourse shape and regulate social issues. The critical-interpretive approach relies upon a dialectical view of social relations – parsing out both organizational power structures among participating stakeholders and how key policy issues are presented in media outlets (Norton, 2008). The critical-interpretive perspective allowed me to understand how different stakeholders involved in the roadless conflict view and make sense of the material world. This overarching perspective allowed me to examine how stakeholders use discourse to reify power structures; structures that privilege some worldviews over others by legitimizing certain knowledge claims and invalidating other claims (Fine, 1998). It thus facilitated exploration of divergences and potential convergences among stakeholder worldviews and the role communication played in reproducing those dynamics.

In the following section I give a brief history of the Colorado Roadless Rule and an introduction to the two analyses in this study.

Case History

In 1999, the Clinton administration proposed a plan to protect millions of acres of national forest lands from development. These were inventoried as Roadless Areas and under the Clinton proposal received a high level of protection close to an existing classification of land known as Wilderness Areas. In 2001, the United States Forest Service published the Roadless Area Conservation Rule based on the 1999 proposal. The rule banned the creation of new roads on nearly 60 million acres of national forest land. This national rule was a significant precursor to

the Colorado Roadless Rule and laid the groundwork for my exploration of stakeholder power dynamics during public participation periods. For the national rule, the public participation effort undertaken was lauded by the Forest Service as an unprecedented public outreach effort to solicit public comments (Furnish, 2000). The United States Forest Service largely measured its public participation success quantitatively, emphasizing the number of meetings it conducted and comments it reviewed. However, the resultant contestation made clear that the *amount* of public participation efforts undertaken did not equate to a successful policy outcome.

In 2005, the Bush administration repealed the 2001 rule and enacted the State Petitions Rule. The repeal made available the previously protected forest to road construction for logging, drilling, and recreational purposes in accordance to local forest management plans. State governors had 18 months to submit a petition for a state-specific roadless area rule if they chose to. A national advisory committee would have then reviewed petitions before making them law. Only two states, Colorado and Idaho, petitioned for a state-specific policy.

Colorado quickly created The Colorado Roadless Areas Review Task Force, a 13-member task force that was meant to be representative of stakeholders involved in Colorado's roadless petition, to draft a policy and make recommendations to the state about how to manage its more than 4 million acres of forest land. In conjunction with the collaborative task force, the state facilitated traditional forms of public participation, holding open houses and encouraging written comments. However the policy process was cut short by legal uncertainty concerning the national rule. In 2006, a federal judge reinstated the 2001 rule on the grounds that

the Bush administration did not comply with environmental impact assessment regulations. The judgment invalidated the 2005 policy and the subsequent state-specific roadless rule petitions (Harden & Eilperin, 2006). Even though the petitions were invalidated, Colorado's governor decided to petition the federal government for control of the state's roadless areas. The governor resubmitted the 2005 state petition as an "insurance policy" to protect some of the state's forest land in case the national rules were again overturned (Kohler, 2008). The policy has been in legal gridlock for 5 years as every decision made up to this point has been appealed in court and the media.

The Colorado Roadless case thus provides a compelling example of how stakeholder and media discourses can gridlock environmental policy by halting genuine participation and productive decision-making. The case engaged stakeholders through several dimensions of communication in the public sphere. Stakeholders engaged in both traditional and innovative structures of public participation while trying to negotiate a policy that would garner support from all. This case exemplifies the complex nature of crafting truly innovative and democratic environmental policy because it highlights how various dimensions of stakeholder engagement influence policy outcomes and implementation. It allows for a greater look at how structural dimensions of in environmental decision-making processes facilitate the privileging of dominant discourses. This case could be used a benchmark for future policy decision regarding the interplay between state, federal, and interest group collaboration involving the management of federal land.

Study Preview

      This case study of the Colorado Roadless Rule occurs in two complementary trajectories. First, I utilize a critical organizational lens and specifically the concept of discursive closure to interrogate the public participation structure and process in the Colorado Roadless Rule. Second, I attend to the media dimensions of the policy, examining how certain groups are given privilege in the print media. This focus highlights how public participation processes and the news media have parallel purposes in the environmental-decision making, both serving as a public sphere where multiple stakeholders discuss different options and divergent ideologies. Studying each form of participation allows for a more holistic view of how stakeholders use discourse to gain control of power and space during decision-making processes that involve multiple stakeholders and the public. Following this trajectory, the remainder of the thesis is as follows.

      In Chapter 2 I examine the power dynamics that pervaded the public participation process of the CRR and how public participation was a mere façade for unaffiliated citizens and the public. The process functioned more in facilitating engagement with organizations rather than the public. I use semi-structured stakeholder interviews to more fully understand how stakeholder's used discourse to negate one another's participation. This chapter provides a historical lens that engages critical organization literature to understand how stakeholders use discourse in their relationships with one another to gain control of debate. Findings demonstrate that certain stakeholders were able to control the debate by using strategies of discursive closure (Deetz, 1992) and also bring to attention the power

of the material spaces that decisions are made in.

In Chapter 3 I analyze print media to understand which stakeholders most thoroughly shape discussion and what is considered relevant to the CRR. Utilizing one year of local and national newspaper articles, I quantitatively analyze which stakeholders were given greatest prominence in the public discussion about the CRR. The use of quantitative content analysis allowed me to understand which stakeholders were routinely being used as authoritative sources in the CRR debate. Results showed government sources and environmental organizations are dominant sources that appear in print news coverage of the conflict, while other stakeholders play only a minor role in the public debate, if they have a place at all.

Chapter 4 explores the complex relationship between these power imbalances and how to move forward in understanding ways to better foster democratic decision-making in environmental issues. I contend that a more balanced view of symbolism and materiality can make a difference in creating a more democratic process of public participation. I also contend for a more theoretically-informed discussion about the importance of news media in environmental issues would harbor more democratic participation among environmental stakeholders.

Through this analysis of public spheres and stakeholder engagement it becomes clear how critical it is to examine discourse and its relationship to the material environment. It is evident in both analyses that the public is being defined as "organized publics" and unaffiliated citizens have limited access to deep engagement with issues of public land management. I hope these analyses offer a

trajectory for scholarship that leads to more collaborative engagement with all

stakeholders involved in environmental policy issues.

CHAPTER TWO

A Critical Analysis of Stakeholder Participation

The demand for effective and democratic public participation in environmental policies in the United States has been evolving since the inception of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 1969. Public participation has become an increasingly important dimension in crafting a successful environmental policy when dealing with multiple stakeholders. The dimension of public engagement is especially important in the contemporary context of the United States because the past 20 years have produced a "dramatic increase in participation by ordinary citizens, scientists, environmental groups, and others" (Cox, 2009, p. 83) in environmental decision-making.

The bulk of public participation literature primarily has focused on examining 1) the shortcomings and procedural constraints of public participation processes, and 2) the changes needed to achieve more democratic and meaningful participation from citizens and stakeholder groups. Both lines of research are based in the assumption that democratic public participation is possible in the United States' current political structure.

In this chapter I argue for a critical examination of participation—looking beyond the procedural level and to the underlying structures and the micro-practices of discourse that (re)produce power disparities. Drawing upon a dialectical view and ideas from critical organization studies, public participation functions not as a site for deep negotiation of values and ideologies among the

American public but, rather, as a space for organizational interests to participate in decision-making processes. To be clear, I am not arguing that deep engagement between stakeholders and the public is undesirable. What is problematic and explored in this manuscript is that the political structure of participation functions to reproduce external power disparities and produces little more than illusory democracy, which is necessary to assure the implementation of any environmental policy.

To explore public participation in the context of environmental conflicts, I first explain the history of the Colorado Roadless Rule (CRR). Second, I review the traditional forms of public participation, focusing on the downfalls scholars have explored and their call for innovative approaches. Third, I review critical organizational literature with particular attention to discursive closures (Deetz, 1992) as sites of power (re)production. Fourth, using specific constructs of discursive closure, I thematically analyze discourse used by stakeholders involved with the Colorado Roadless Rule, focusing on how discourses (re)produce structures of power and negate space for democratic decision-making in relation to the CRR public participation process. Lastly, I interpret the themes manifest in the CRR case and how they can provide insight into the political nature of space as it functions to facilitate organizational discourses in public participation processes.

Literature Review

Preview

To fully engage organizational communication and public participation literature and place each into context with the CRR, I will first briefly explain the

10

case and highlight the public participation measures undertaken. I next explore

scholars' critiques about traditional public participation and their call for more

innovative approaches. I then explore how organizational communication literature

can be applied to environmental debates to reveal how organizations gain power

through discourse.

The Case

In 1999, the Clinton administration proposed a plan to protect millions of

acres of national forest lands from development. These areas were inventoried

Roadless Areas and under the Clinton proposal received a high level of protection

close to an existing classification of land known as Wilderness Areas. In 2001, the

Forest Service published the Roadless Area Conservation Rule based on the 1999

proposal. The rule banned the creation of new roads on nearly 60 million acres of

national forest land. The public participation effort undertaken for this rule was

lauded by the Forest Service as an unprecedented public outreach effort to solicit

public comments (Furnish, 2000). The Forest Service measured its public

participation success primarily in quantitative terms, emphasizing the number of

meetings it held and comments it reviewed, but it is clear in this case that the

amount of public participation efforts did not equate to a successful policy outcome.

We need also an assessment of the quality of participation and decision-making.

Since its inception, the 2001 roadless rule has been a topic of controversy

among multiple stakeholders including lawmakers, development, multiple-use and

environmental groups. In 2005, the Bush administration repealed the 2001 rule and

enacted the State Petitions Rule. The repeal opened up the previously protected

forest land to road construction for logging, drilling, and recreational industries in accordance to local forest management plans. State governors had 18 months to submit a petition for a state-specific roadless area rule if they chose to. A national advisory committee would have then reviewed petitions before making them law. Only two states, Colorado and Idaho, petitioned for a state-specific policy.

Colorado quickly began crafting the public participation processes to design a state-specific rule. The state decided to incorporate both traditional and innovative structures into the public participation process. First, a 13-member task force was intended to be representative of stakeholders involved in Colorado's roadless petition was created. Second, the state facilitated traditional forms of public participation, holding open houses and encouraging written comments. Data from these two processes were merged because the task force was directed to listen to public comment and draft a roadless policy to recommend to the state about how to manage its roadless areas that considered and reflected the public will. In this way, the 13-member Task Force was positioned to be the critical gate keeper and decision body such that it sat atop the participatory structure from the general public. What is more, the policy process was cut short by legal uncertainty concerning the national rule. In 2006, a federal judge reinstated the 2001 rule, on the grounds that the Bush administration did not comply with environmental impact assessment regulations, therefore invalidating the 2005 Bush policy and the subsequent state-specific roadless rule petitions (Harden & Eilperin, 2006). Even though the 2001 rule was reinstated in 2006, Colorado resubmitted its 2005

petition as an "insurance policy" to protect some of the state's forest land in case the national rule was again overturned (Kohler, 2008).

In July 2008, officials conducted a 90-day public comment period to get feedback about the latest draft of the CRR proposal. The draft allowed less road building than the 2005 policy; however, it was not as stringent as the 2001 rule. It would have protected some of the state's roadless lands, but would have also opened a small amount to road construction for logging, drilling, and recreational industries (Jaffe, 2008). At this time, the CRR is still in flux and no official policy has been adopted for the state.

Public Participation

Scholars have criticized traditional modes of public participation for privileging technical discourse (Kinsella, 2004), being administrative in nature (Walker, 2004) and lacking adequate space for informed dialogue (Senecah, 2004). These and other scholars have called for innovative forms of public participation that "emphasize face-to-face deliberation, problem solving, and consensus building among a relatively small group of participants selected to represent the wider public" (Beierle & Cayford, 2003, p. 53) to correct the power imbalances between stakeholders involved in environmental policy decisions (Daniels & Walker, 2001). These innovative methods are being used more frequently as a strategy for dealing with mistrust among stakeholders and the resulting conflict and litigation that can gridlock environmental policy (Beierle & Cayford, 2004). The state of Colorado tried to envelope both types of participation with the creation of the CRR, by incorporating a task force and traditional public participation methods. In this

section I review the traditional types of public participation used in environmental policy since the inception of NEPA in 1969, with a focus on scholars' noted criticisms of them. I then briefly review how both traditional and innovative approaches did not facilitate deep public engagement with the CRR.

Historically, public participation has been implemented through public hearings and letter-writing and other public comment periods involving the federal government and American citizens (Cox, 2009; Walker, 2004). Public hearings have been criticized for being ineffective because of the "conditions that are typically imposed by crowded hearing rooms, limited time, volatile emotions, and long waiting times for speaking" (Cox, 2009, p. 106). Walker (2004) criticized traditional public participation as being more "consultative than collaborative," and for emphasizing "highly controlled communication rather than open interaction" (p. 121). This parallels Hendry's (2004) claim that public participation is used to decide, announce and defend environmental policy decisions instead of giving reasonable power for the public and decision-makers alike, for example the opportunity to both define problems and solutions.

Traditional participatory efforts thus have been criticized for "significant limitations related to real or perceived limits on the abilities of ordinary citizens to participate in technical discourse" (Kinsella 2004, p. 89). For example, Walker (2004) argued the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule was a missed opportunity for meaningful public participation because the Forest Service relied on "prototypes of traditional public participation" (p. 134) In response to such command-and-control tactics, public participation scholars have called for more innovative

approaches to public participation, with the key element being collaboration. Innovative approaches to public participation should "foster both dialogue and deliberation" (Walker, 2004, p. 123), but I question how the political nature of space, particularly in collaborative participation, facilitates discourse to (re)produce power structures that are present in traditional forms of public participation. As Cox (2009) noted, collaboration is not always possible and may not always be the most appropriate path to a solution.

The Colorado state roadless task force integrated both traditional and collaboration-centered approaches to public participation, yet failed to create and implement a successful roadless policy. This raises questions about what undermined their collaborative attempts, and what lessons can be learned for future decision making efforts that rely on both traditional and innovative methods for involving the public. Walker's analysis and other case studies (Hendry, 2004; Kinsella, 2004) have illuminated what makes public participation *unsuccessful* and *ineffective,* but that does little to examine the systemic and structural dimensions, of both innovative and traditional public participation, that negate the space for any democratic and meaningful engagement to even take place. To explore this gap, I turn to critical organizational studies for a theoretical framework.

Organizations, Power and the Environment

This analysis explores the processes that (re)produce social power structures vis-à-vis land management. In the following section, I review critical organization literature, focusing on recent attempts to bridge the gap between the cultural, organizational and environmental domains (Norton, 2008; Shome, 2003). I

then outline how critical organizational theory serves as an ideal lens to examine multi-stakeholder controversies. Lastly, I utilitze Deetz's (1992) concept of discursive closure to explore the power differentials in environmental conflicts.

The critical perspective is largely grounded in the assumption that power relations are biased, purposeful, and serves some dominant interest. Taking a critical organizational approach to land management studies will have important implications for practical on-the-ground management by providing insight into ways stakeholders can make communicative processes more representative and meaningful. Deetz (2005) argued organizations can serve as "positive social institutions providing forums for the articulation and resolution of important group conflicts over the use of natural resources, distribution of income, production of desirable goods and services, the development of personal qualities, and the directions of society" (p. 94). Understanding how the structure of environmental decision-making can lead to the (re)production and reification of unsuccessful public participation is necessary if open and democratic forums are to ever take shape.

Critical organizational literature has largely bypassed conflicts in the environmental arena in their focus on production and management-based contexts. This lack of scholarship has been attributed to a focus on economic factors that can be traced to Marxist theory. As environmental conflicts become more contestable and public in nature, there has been recent scholarship that attempts to bridge the gap between organizational and environmental literature and unveil the political nature of material spaces (Norton, 2009; Shome, 2003). Public land debates serve as

an ideal site for ideological battles because divergent stakeholders vie for control and power of space. Therefore public land debates enable the exploration of the underlying relationship between stakeholders, power, and the material environment.

Deetz's (1992) concept of discursive closure explains how certain groups can gain control of discourse through eight basic processes: disqualification, naturalization, neutralization, topical avoidance, subjectification of experience, meaning denial, legitimation and pacification. These processes are important because the very concept of public participation is discursive in nature. Stakeholders are asked to participate by engaging in discourse with other stakeholders. In public participation, discourse ideally functions in helping multiple stakeholders gain mutual understanding of different ideologies and find collaborative solutions to environmental problems. While exploring all eight processes of discursive closure is beyond the scope of this analysis, taking a look at how some of these discursive strategies were used by stakeholders in the CRR seems well justified.

Discursive closure takes place when certain discourses are privileged over others, thus constraining participants' capacity to engage in meaningful communicative processes, and potential conflicts are suppressed for the sake of organizational unity (Deetz, 1992). These practices virtually halt other alternative discussions or understanding of an event or topic, such as roadless policy. One discourse can become the dominant way of thinking about roadless policy, seeming natural, while alternatives that might have produced more open and representative

debate among stakeholders are obstructed from ever coming into the political arena for debate. This presents numerous concerns from a critical perspective regarding the equality of all stakeholders, including private citizens, when it comes to being included and heard in environmental discussions. Examining the use of discursive processes stakeholders utilize to gain power in land management contestation will follow in the path of other critical scholars (Deetz, 1992; Deetz, 2005; Habermas, 1984) who are concerned with making communicative processes more democratic and representative of all stakeholders involved. My research was guided by the following questions:

> RQ1: What discursive closures are evident in the Colorado Task Force?

> RQ2: Did participants feel the innovative and collaborative structure of the task force was representative of the public will and gave equality to all stakeholders?

> RQ3: What, if any, structural dimensions of public participation processes facilitate the privileging of certain discourses over others?

In sum, I will explore how dominant discourses potentially naturalize in CRR policy processes; how stakeholders negotiated and justified power relations; and how alternative discourses were negated from being discussed in the policy creation process.

Methods

In this research I drew upon a critical-interpretive perspective (Harter & Krone, 2001; Norton, 2008), focusing on understanding the ways power and knowledge relationships shape and regulate social issues. The critical-interpretive

perspective allowed me to understand how participants view and make sense of the world. This overarching perspective allowed me to examine how stakeholders use discourse to reify power structures; structures that privilege some worldviews over others by legitimizing certain knowledge claims and invalidating other claims (Fine, 1998). A dialectic approach facilitated a critical-interpretive approach to flesh out not only what power structures are present, but how they are being (re)produced through stakeholders own discourse and actions. This approach has been used previously to explore power relationships and meaning systems in environmental disputes (Norton, 2009). In the following section I explain selection and gathering procedures for primary and secondary data. I then outline the methodology used for analysis before moving to my interpretation of findings.

Data Sources

For this analysis I logged approximately 150 hours in the field; conducted 25 qualitative interviews with stakeholders whom were involved with the CRR, gathered documentation of all legal proceedings from court cases pertaining to the CRR, collected news articles about the CRR published since July 2008, and took detailed field notes. The primary data source for this analysis was semi-structured interviews conducted with stakeholders. I identified participants by reviewing newspapers articles about the CRR and contacted people who had been cited as sources; I also contacted all members of the state task force. Interviewees were recruited via email and telephone. I then used a snowball technique (Creswell, 2007) to gather additional participants, asking participants for references to other people who would either agree or disagree with their opinions and could talk about

the CRR, or roadless issues more generally. I spoke with participants from a wide variety of interests, including extractive industries (oil, gas, and mining), cattle ranchers, federal government officials, community government officials, recreational user-groups (both motorized and non-motorized), non-profit environmental groups, sports groups, industry lobbyists, non-partisan representatives, and citizen groups. I also interviewed the majority of people who served on the state task force.

I conducted interviews with participants in a mutually agreed upon location and at the participants' convenience. Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders gave me an opportunity to explore different stakeholders' experiences and perspectives of the CRR case. Lindolf & Taylor (2002) noted that qualitative interviews "are a storytelling zone par excellence in which people are given complete license to craft their selves in language" (p. 173). Interviews are also a method for eliciting the language forms used by stakeholders in their natural setting. For example, several stakeholders explained their various worldviews by telling stories of their childhood interactions with nature and how those experiences shaped their participation in this and other environmental issues. Semi-structured interviews followed a basic set of questions (Appendix A). Additional questions were asked to follow up on certain topics the participants brought up during the interview and to facilitate dialogue. Interviews ranged in length from 30 to 90 minutes. I took detailed notes and tape-recorded each interview. Following the interviews, I transcribed the recordings verbatim.

Secondary data sources were field notes and legal proceedings from court cases pertaining to the Colorado Roadless Rule. Field notes were useful in reflecting on the contextual space of interviews and my observations of different participants' use of discourse toward certain groups. Legal proceedings allowed insight how court cases have played into shaping and limiting certain stakeholders' participation in this policy creation.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data utilizing a thematic approach. Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information. I looked for prevalent themes discussed throughout interviews as well as significant discrepancies among participants. Both types of themes emerged through process of comparing different pieces of data known as constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A theme is a pattern found in data that "at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at a maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4). Thematic analysis allowed me to identify how stakeholders used discursive closure to gain power through discourse (Creswell, 2007). It allowed insight into the specific ways participants used discourse to legitimize or discredit the public participation process and other stakeholders involved in the case, and how certain discourses became dominant. It also allowed exploration of how stakeholders perceive the democratic public participation process used in the CRR and what dimensions of it led to the production of a policy that has yet to be agreed upon or implemented.

Interpretation of Findings

The following section describes the five themes and supporting content identified during data analysis that highlight stakeholders' use of discursive closure. There was an overarching interest in how stakeholders used discourse to reify power structures in the policy process and how those discursive moves negated the influence of the public participation process. I first provide a brief overview of the five themes. Then, I critically explore each theme in relation to the overarching interest of this study, focusing on how and when discursive closure was used in creation of the CRR.

Participants expressed concerns over many dimensions of roadless policy in Colorado and more generally the United States, and five themes emerged throughout the data. These themes exemplify how discursive closure functioned in the creation of the CRR. The themes are: Disqualification fostered through a structural lack of information; Neutralization of the task force and its representation of the general public; Naturalization of the policy process and management of land; Neutralization of the government's role; and legitimation of politics & economy in land management policy. The majority of participants directly expressed concerns in each of these areas that they believe contributed to the stagnation of Colorado's state rule being drafted and implemented. The following exploration of each theme demonstrates how participants' concerns exemplify negotiation of power structures in environmental conflict.

Disqualification: Structural Lack of Information

Disqualification occurs when all groups don't have access to the same information to negotiate with. There was a deficiency of information throughout the CRR process. No stakeholders had access to adequate maps and information about the roadless areas in Colorado to make up-to-date decisions because the maps don't even exist. Participants expressed repeated concern that decisions were made after looking at maps from as far back as 1979. Scholars have noted the problem with certain groups not being given access to information in public participation processes, but what happens when no one has access to the necessary information to make informed decisions? Perhaps the lack of information that was apparent in the CRR fueled the cycle of perpetual ineffective public participation, litigation, and gridlock. One Forest Service official stated:

> Well, the 2001 inventory, they were in a big hurry to write the 2001 rule so they didn't have to do maps, A; and B, the mapping technology was much more primitive. They used maps that were as old as '79. So our mapping technology was like taking a highlighter and drawing a thing around it.

If the government cannot provide correct acreage and maps of federal land that is being discussed, how can any other productive discussion take place? Everyone in the process recognized this shortcoming of information, and some stakeholders tried to use the opportunity to fill the gap with their own maps and information. The strategy of disqualification was used when groups tried to fill these gaps because the information they produced was only given to certain groups who may influence the process. For example, one representative of a non-profit environmental group

said interest groups had been providing the Forest Service with maps to make forest

plans and other decisions off of:

> And in terms of roadless, they've been utilizing that information, now this isn't confidential but it's not public knowledge yet because nothing's public knowledge in terms of their process stuff opposed to their outputs, but they've been using our roadless maps from our citizens' inventory and overlaying it with theirs. And the word we've been getting is that they're finding more roadless acres and possibly even some new freestanding roadless areas on our maps that they hadn't identified and it's influencing, it's influencing their way of thinking, their process.

This example makes clear the perceived lack of information that Task Force

participants were facing and difficulty of trying to produce good policy based on this

lack of information. Yet the system has been running off the same information for

the past 30 years, since the first roadless inventories.

The problem is not merely the lack of information but also how select groups

of stakeholders deal with this structural gap. As the participant stated, "it's not

public knowledge," which means the public is being denied access to what

information the government does have. It also means that other interest groups and

stakeholders probably do not have access to the information either. While it seems

none of the stakeholders have complete information, the information being

produced by interest groups is being traded and negotiated in a nearly invisible

process to systematically yield influence on what amount of acreage is protected,

and what is not. This dimension of the system negates the very essence of public

participation, by disqualifying certain stakeholders from gaining what Senecah

(2004) called the trinity of voice: Access, Standing, and Influence. The American

public and certain interest groups are actively denied access to information being

used, the standing to contest that information, and the influence to change the outcome of decisions being made by this hidden process. Yet the system has facilitated such exchanges to occur in the creation of the CRR.

Participants recognized the need for change and most suggestions began with getting all stakeholders the same information to start working from. One forest service official said:

> So if we had our own system, if we we're going to have the dream system, and I think even some wilderness society person said that, that if we were going to have a new national rule the first thing we should do is get our maps straightened out. So there's really only two pieces to roadless: One is get the maps straightened out and two is decide what you can and can't do. We haven't been able to settle on either one of those things.

While participants agreed there was no baseline system or information to work from, the creation and renegotiation of roadless policy has continued to take place on the national and state level. It's as if the need for accurate mapping is noticed as a significant gap, yet stakeholders are unsure about how to start building a bridge to the other side so they stay safely, if unhappily, on one side of the gap. Because of this perceived double-bind, stakeholders have continued to try and graft innovative ways of creating democratic land policies without addressing the fundamental flaw of insufficient information, as can be seen in their attempt to have a task force discern and represent public opinion about the CRR.

Neutralizing Representation of the Public

Neutralization occurs when an organization or discourse is presented as value-free, when it is actually value-laden. Stakeholders indicated that CRR discourse and specifically within the task force had neutralized power dimensions.

Many participants talked about the importance of considering public input in creating a policy.

The CRR task force was meant to be a representative and bipartisan group, charged with creating the policy: "all recommendations by the Task Force (should have been) based on a substantive analysis of the comments during (that) process." (From SB 05-243, Section 1: Legislative Declaration) Thus, the task force was designed to be representative of the stakeholders involved in the CRR, with members speaking on behalf of extractive and recreation industries, environmental organizations, politicians and nonpartisan mediators. The Keystone Center, the organization that designed and implemented the process, stated the "task force gathered and weighed Colorado's interests through 9 public meetings, 40,000 public comments, and 7 task force deliberative meetings" (Keystone.org, 2009).

However, many participants, including several task force members themselves, said the structure of the task force and its ability to analyze and adequately represent public opinion was insufficient. While participants agreed the task force was a good conceptual model of collaborative decision-making, it became just another arena for interest group leaders to negotiate for their needs, even if those needs were contrary to what the American public expressed desire for. Neutralization happened as certain stakeholders continued to promote the task force of being bi-partisan, with no hidden value systems or agendas influencing decisions. Participants agreed that the concept of the task force was neutral and gave fair consideration to all stakeholders; but the material equivalent turned out to be anything but neutral. One participant highlighted this point:

So we created this thing then that had enormous political buy-in, or at least perceived to have political buy-in, and as far as I know there was no one who ever came out and said that the policy was good, we always kind of stuck to this message that the process was a fair process.

This participant highlights how discourse was used to create the image of a fair and equitable process, even though the policy didn't reflect that structure. Participants said the very idea of having a task force creating the policy reduced the influence of the public and negated the importance of public participation at all. As one participant stated,

… the problem with the task force is that it was basically a stakeholder group of interest groups making decisions. It was not the public weighing in and making decisions. So to some extent we're better off when we have a politician who's actually accountable to the public versus an appointed task member who doesn't need to get reelected for anything, and that's a whole different level of accountability.

Participants thus expressed concern about a lack of structure to ensure that what was said in those meetings and hearings being crafted into the CRR. To be clear, this is not an individual but, rather, a structural power imbalance. Without an adequate structure to make sure public sentiment and ideas were reflected in a policy outcome, participation approaches an illusion of empowerment. The structural barriers put in place between the public participation and the Task Force decision-making process suggest that the public participation undertaken in the CRR was merely pro forma—a pretense to make the outcome seem more legitimate and representative than it really was. As one participant clarified, many important discussions took place outside of the public meetings:

A lot of time all the different stakeholders who were on that task force, usually would just meet internally and then go to the public

27

meeting and battle it out there . . . But you have to have those discussions with those people instead of just bashing it out in public meetings.

This reinforces Walker's (2004) claim that agencies may consult with the public without providing any assurance of including those information exchanges in the decision process. He argued that this "traditional public participation process may embody a decision space façade" (p. 121). I would go further; collaborative approaches of the task force are more disingenuous than classic technocratic decision rationale because the former gives the illusion that participation and public involvement will matter. Participant discourse from the CRR suggests that citizen involvement approached inconsequential. Participants said the public participation process and the public will was all but disregarded because the task force was the one making the decisions and all force members "were just fighting for their piece of the pie." One participant said the task force was nothing but a guise to hide the political structure that allowed extractive and revenue-gaining industries to craft the policy that would benefit them the best. The participant expressed frustration with the "illegitimate" process:

> They like to promote the task force as bipartisan. There were 13 members and 9 of them were republicans. It took 8 votes for a super majority. Now, is that democracy? ..... So it was, as far as I'm concerned, an illegitimate task force and an illegitimate process and *at the very least they absolutely turned their back on the public will*, of what was needed for the wildlife and everything. With the exception of knowing a whole lot more about detail and language, (the task force) could have voted the very first time (it) met without any public meetings and the vote wouldn't have been much off because everybody was there to get something, and everybody got something.

Many participants expressed similar concerns, which mean the issue is not if public

participation processes actually measure the public will, but, rather, if such

knowledge claims make a discernible impact on the generation of policy. Ironically,

the task force was created to be representative of the will of the Colorado public.

However, the task force became nothing more than a game of political interest

groups negotiating while the Colorado public played spectator. One participant, who

wasn't involved with the task fore, captured this point:

> The issue is there is so much fatigue around this issue, it has been
> going on for so long, and so many people have already
> spoken….but they get burned out of doing the same thing over and
> over again when the actual decision is being made in Washington
> D.C.

Another non-task force member agreed:

> It is very unfortunate to see this battle moving forward because it
> is one of those things I don't really believe there is a lot of conflict
> amongst the public, it is conflict that comes from powerful political
> circles.

My point is not that these issues are the will of a particular land manager or agency.

Rather, these issues are structural. As one Forest Service official simply stated:

"Interest groups represent the public." Given this logic, it would seem that public

participation, particularly in this case, is a misnomer and should more appropriately

be called organizational participation and organizational control over public

resources.

Many participants said they were unhappy with the structure of the task

force and only participated because they were forced to "play ball." The next theme

explores how these stakeholders used naturalization as a key technique to describe

their participation in the task force process, the policy process itself, and the way the federal government manages roadless land.

Naturalization of the policy process and management of land

There were questions about whether the public was really being represented by the appointment of the task force members, but as one Forest Service official pointed out, everyone understands that's just how the system works: "Our rulemaking is a regulation for how we treat the land, so people are involved, mostly interest groups to tell you the truth, but that's our system." This Forest Service employee and numerous participants used discourse of naturalization when speaking about the system, as if they had no choice but to perform certain actions because that's just the way it works. These references to the system of policy creation as a concrete object were interesting as they immediately stop discussion about possibilities to change it. Deetz (1992) noted this is the point where discussion should be started, by asking, "How is it just that way?" This use of naturalizing discourse appeared throughout participant interviews and overwhelmingly framed the system as something that just was, never to be questioned.

Participants couched the system in interesting terms, making it seem as if it were almost invisible. One participant stated:

> We really need to do something different and it sounds like (the Obama administration) is going to be doing something different, but like I said we don't really have a system....we have a reactive system; we react to whatever court case it is or whatever interim directive we have.

The lack of a perceived proactive system is the system itself, but participants didn't

recognize their contribution to it. Non-profit environmental groups

overwhelmingly used the metaphor of being forced "to play ball" to explain their

positions and strategies on the task force.

Naturalization was also used to explain why Forest Service officials keep

using the status quo as management standards. The attempt to naturalize

management decisions drew criticism from non-profit organization representatives.

As one participant said:

> And obviously they are unwilling to question the decisions of their predecessors. They've been managing it; they just kind of inherited it. There's a lot of turnover in the Forest Service of course and they just inherited this stuff and they don't really know the origin. They say, "I've been here 6 years and when I got here it was considered a road."

Again, this discourse was used to justify stakeholders' actions as if those actions

were the only logical choice. It negates the opportunity to have meaningful

contestation about what actions should be taken because naturally the preferred

action is the one that has been taken before.

This exact same strategy was used by incoming Governor Bill Ritter, Jr. to

justify his decision to go forward with the state-specific policy when stakeholder

groups were encouraging him to hold off. One participant explained:

> The governor at the time and the new governor after him both found themselves feeling that because there was a variety of people involved, because this was public process, there was a bunch of public hearings and people worked hard, then they shouldn't be the ones to throw it out; we've got to respect this work, I've got to honor their effort, and I've got to do something even though I'd just as soon let the feds do it.

This illuminates how dissatisfied stakeholders were at various stages of the CRR creation and public participation process but justified remaining in the process because it was the way the system has always worked. Not questioning the decisions of those who came before allowed for this policy process to become *the only* process possible. The discourse of naturalization was widespread throughout the data and appeared to be a way for participants to justify why the current result happened, without taking responsibility for providing an alternative for the current structure. Participants also had interesting conceptualizations of the government's role in this process, and divorced the government from value systems by utilizing neutralizing discourse.

Neutralization of the government's role

Various participants neutralized their roles in the system by claiming to either be value-free or forced to behave a certain way. As one participated stated in regard to the federal government, "each public servant isn't supposed to have a philosophy, each public servant is supposed to carry out their duties according to law and regulations." This discourse takes individual accountability and choice out of the conceptualization and leaves responsibility to law and regulation. Participants had a view of federal government employees that removed personal values from the land management. One participant noted this, stating:

> I've heard Forest Service people say "my hands are tied and this is what I've been told I have to do." As public servants employed by that, they're doing their job. Now, are they doing the right job? And are they doing the best job they could? Now, I think it could be done better with that.

This participant noted the attention was not being paid to the job Forest Service

officials were doing; just that they had no choice doing it. Metaphors, like

employees' hands being tied or employees being put in a strait jacket, were

frequently used to naturalize the government's role in this policy creation. It was as

if the law and the regulation were completely divorced from the federal government

in participants' minds. The laws made federal officials participate in this system,

absent of the fact that laws were created and influenced by political party

representatives, government officials, and interest groups. However, some

participants did question the current structure and what interests are being served

by it, as is exemplified by the next theme.

Legitimation of politics and economy in land management policy

The creation of the CRR exemplified how land management debates serve as

another container for ideological debates rather than being about the material and

ecological consequences to the land itself. At its surface the CRR might seem to be

primarily a debate about how best to preserve federal lands for future generations

but as stakeholders expressed, the contestation is about more than just land. Some

participants felt like the structure was set up to favor revenue-gaining industries

and placed precedence on economy over public will. This legitimation of revenue-

boasting industries was seen throughout the data. Participants frequently noted the

ski industry and how it was in a position to negotiate for gains while not sacrificing

anything. The ski industry brought more than $2 billion in revenue to Colorado in

2004 (Walsh, 2004) and its role as an economic powerhouse seemed to permeate

participants' perceptions of task force negotiations. As one participant stated:

> The only industry that seemed to have the whole deal rigged was the ski industry because the democrats supported it; a lot of them, including the current director of the DNR, made a lot of money off of that industry so they are closely tied to it. So they got off scot-free.

Another participant noted similar concerns:

> "[The ski industry] has always had a very special favored place in politics Colorado; no one really stomps on them, specifically with wilderness bills in the past 20 years. Anytime the ski industry wants something, they pretty much get it."

Participants voiced concern over the ski industry's position in particular but reflected on the sway the economy had concerning land management policy. Consumerism and revenue seemed to be drive decisions in this case, even though they were never stated explicitly in the policy. Participants seemed to accept that the policy needed to be a compromise between a landscape's economic and ecological value. And, participants seemed polarized on which should be a priority. As one oil & gas representative stated:

> What I would say, just between you and me, it was a piss poor way of planning roadless areas. Number one they weren't roadless and activities were ongoing, and it would have been laughable if it weren't so pathetic to endanger an ongoing economic resource there in the valley.

The participant voiced an opinion that it would be nonsensical to endanger any economy-boosting resource extraction in these areas. This discourse creates natural order, legitimizing economics over ecology. This is not to say that this mindset didn't meet opposition from environmentalists, as others voiced the same sentiment with regard to the land's ecological health being put as the top priority. Yet participants clearly expressed that some industries had to sacrifice more than

others by way of economic resources and opportunities. As one participant stated:

> ... I don't think they're considering that big picture of what is that vision of what our public lands should be because it's been very much of a consumer mentality from the inception. Like they are there for multiple-use and it's more of a consuming kind of attitude and I think that needs to change for the long run and the health of those public lands.

Another participant legitimized the policy because of the role recreation plays in

Colorado's revenue base, stating, "We feel that recreation is our economic lifeline

here." Another participant felt the same way toward extractive industry:

> And you know, it's oil and gas [companies] saying it [offers] a lot of jobs and a lot of money and revenue for the state, and it is a lot of money and revenue for the state. I think that's why the state was ok with some drilling.

So how does consumerism, when it is not in harmony with public will, play into

what happens to federal land? Does it have a stronger presence than what is

expressed through public participation? The legitimacy and subsequent power of

consumer-driven industry in America's environmental policy decisions cannot be

discounted, as can been seen through participants' experiences with this process. As

one participant noted, economics is the only thing everyone could talk equitably

about: "It seems as you can feel one way or another about recreation or your own

personal values, but if you put things in terms of economics then everybody

listens....the economics seem the be a really powerful tool."

Discussion

In this chapter I argued that stakeholders in the CRR used strategies of

discursive closure to privilege certain discourses over others, which (re)produced

power structures that influenced policy creation. In this way, the discursive closures

unearthed actually undermined the Colorado state task force process, which aimed

to blend traditional and innovative public participation processes. In the following

discussion I critique the corporate colonization (Deetz, 1992) of the CRR process,

and highlight how the political nature of space may influence public participation

processes and environmental decision-making. To be clear, I'm not arguing that

democratic participation is impossible, I'm arguing that the way the decision-

making process was set up in the CRR facilitated a dialogue that allowed interest

groups to have more power than the comments of the American public; that there

was no system of check and balances to measure how the American public was

included in this process. In extension of this argument, I also provide suggestions for

future research in studying public participation processes and the (re)production of

power structures in environmental policy disputes.

Consumerism and corporatization (Deetz, 1992) manifested itself

throughout this process on a structural level. This privileging of organizations and

interest groups is exemplified by the decision to let representatives of private

organizations make decisions on behalf of the American public. As one citizen

stated: "(This process) moved the whole level of debate away from how are the

citizens of the country, all the citizens of the country in every state, and the agencies

and the congress going to administer the public lands." The participatory process

about what to do with 4 million acres of public land became defined by

representatives from organizational interest-based stakeholders. Whether these

stakeholders represented are non-profit or industry organizations, they

transformed this process from public to private. The very process was structured in

a corporate manner, with 13 task members in a boardroom negotiating exceptions

and allowances. One participant highlighted the interesting space in which these

meetings took place:

> It is odd that a group of 13 people met for most of a year, almost
> always indoors, sometimes indoors with no windows, and always,
> always in big cities . . . far away from roadless areas, far away from
> trees, and tried to craft policy for trees and lands and roadless
> characteristics and watersheds for a whole state. It happens all the
> time, city councils do it, the state legislature does that, Congress
> does it. You make policy based on information brought to you, but
> the physical separation from the actual place you're talking about
> always was a little odd, always is, and was in the task force. So we
> would sit there and we would look at paper, look at maps, and we
> would craft sentences and debate words.

The corporate nature of the entire creation process brings into question if certain

ideologies are being privileged by this structure. If the structure for negotiation

about federal land is set up in a corporate and capitalist manner, does it

automatically set up for certain interests to have more sway than others? I argue

yes; the material space decisions are made in have influence on the discursive

nature of those decisions and the (re)production of dominant ideologies. For

example, I wonder how differently the CRR policy would have been if meetings were

not held in a boardroom, or if many members of the task force had even seen the

roadless areas they were debating over.

The results of this analysis and the policy itself make apparent the way

materiality influences and politicizes discursive processes. Other scholars have

indirectly noted the political power of space in public participation processes,

highlighting how the formality and structure of public hearings likely discourages all

stakeholders from speaking out because "only the most motivated people will

overcome their fears to address the group" (Walker, 2004, p. 122). These results

suggest that we need to more thoroughly and closely analyze the power of

materialities on the discursive. Placing emphasis on the discursive nature of public

participation is important, but equal attention should be paid to the way materiality

influences decisions and the reproduction of power structures. In regard to what

groups are being included or benefited by these power structures, I argue that it is

groups that are highly organized and have enough financial backing to efficiently

run and organize campaigns and lobbyists. Not all groups are represented the same

in policy. As one participants stated: "There's 24 million birdwatchers in this

country and nobody ever talks about them." Statements such as these highlight the

power of money and organizational efficiency. Another citizen paralleled this

statement and noted the power disparities between large organizations and smaller

alliances: "I think you can do different kinds of things if you have the advocacy and

the lawyers and the policy writing type of things, I think you can make more visible

changes if you have some of that."

Certain land users even felt *forced* to organize to have a spot at the table:

"Groups like sportsmen who hadn't raised their voices, at least on the political level,

very loud, (George Bush) forced our hand and forced us to organize....to try to

protect the roadless lands that remain." Another citizen with different interests

echoed the same sentiment and gave reason for the increased organization of

citizens:

> One thing that comes to mind is when we limit the existing access
> to public input in public lands decision making, as which has
> happened in a number of different instances in a number of
> different ways in the Bush administration, we are creating more

and more potential interest groups, whether it be a neighborhood association next to a national forest or anybody with an interest in public land. If we're limiting them we're creating more and more problems with access to public land input decision-making and creating more and more groups

Participants who were associated with industries that didn't significantly bolster the revenue of the stated continually stated they felt they were forced to organize to be heard in relation to recreational industries, such as the ski industry and oil and gas. If people feel like their comments don't matter in democratic decision-making except when they are aligned with well-funded and organized interest groups, the structure of decision-making should be questioned because not all people have the ability or the resources to even belong to such groups.

The issue is important to consider because the very nature of what is being negotiated is something that is supposed to be based in democracy. Federal forest land was designated for use that would provide "the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run" (U.S. Forest Service, 2009, p. 1). The interest group involvement in federal land management, as evident in the CRR process, should be questioned because it almost invisibly gives precedence to organizations over public will. As Deetz (1997) noted, "virtually all proactive decisions regarding the use of natural resources, the development of products, the distribution of income, work relations, and even education and child-rearing practices are now being made in commercial sites. The state, at best, reactively promotes the commercial enterprise and cleans up the various social messes created by the commercial system" (p. 120). The last theme discussed in this analysis demonstrates how CRR stakeholders viewed consumerism as driving force

in policy creation, even if there were valid arguments against it. This dominant consumerist ideology needs to be questioned and placed in tension with other value systems if meaningful contestation and change is ever to happen. The importance of these questions relates to the very heart of stakeholder equality and democracy itself. As one participant stated:

> … if you can stand back and aren't personally invested in the issues you can just laugh at it all and wonder how it works; but when you're busting your butt to save something that is important and right and when you care about democracy being a democracy, it's heartbreaking, it's hard to keep going.

Stakeholders' emotional involvement in this and other land management debates highlights the highly contestable nature of the environment and humans' relationship to it. Stakeholder discourses about public participation processes and environmental disputes can offer an analytical tool to understanding the political nature of space and how that influences efforts for democratic public participation. As Shome (2003) noted, space functions as a medium "of power that is socially constituted through material relations that enable the communication of specific politics" (p. 40). The exploration of this symbolic-material tension in environmental disputes will offer insight into the political and complex nature of space and its relationship to discourse and policy. Further investigation of the relationships between discourse, space, and environmental conflict will serve researchers and practitioners alike in their development of innovative ways to foster more democratic public participation processes.

CHAPTER THREE

Voices in the Media: An Exploration of Source Use

The environment has been the topic of recent discussion in media, government, and world forums. Researchers have devoted significant time to understanding how the media informs and shapes the debate about the material world and humans relationship to it (Corbett, 2006; Corbett, 1992; Cox, 2009; Greenberg, Sachsman, Sandman, & Salomone, 1989; Lacy & Coulson, 2000; Liebler & Bendix, 1996; Smith, 1993). Cohen (1963) suggests the news media are powerful because media personnel are "stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (p. 13). Researchers have documented the agenda-setting influence of newspapers in environmental issues (Ader. 1995; Eyal, Winter, & DeGeorge, 1981; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987); and journalists' reliance on government and elite sources when covering environmental issues (Corbett, 1995; Greenberg et al., 1989; Lacy & Coulson, 2000; Liebler & Bendix, 1996; Smith, 1993).

Little research has been done, however, to understand how source citation impacts environmental policy. Policy decision-making presupposes the democratic participation of multiple stakeholders including citizens, environmental groups, the government, corporations, and anti-environmentalist groups (Cox, 2009). But little is understood about how weel media discourse represents this diversity of interests and stakeholders. This study attempts to fill that gap, highlighting, unfortunately, how print media reflect limited source diversity when covering the environmental policy debates. This research also contributes to scholarship on source frequency,

highlighting how some sources are given more space than others to relay messages to the public, and therefore are given more influence in shaping the public debate. To do this, this study is focused on media coverage about the creation of a specific federal land policy, the Colorado Roadless Rule (CRR).

This study unfolds as follows: First, I briefly discuss literature that has explored trends in news source diversity, focusing on the intersection of this line of research with environmental policy decision-making. Second, I present three research questions to guide the analysis of media coverage. I then outline data collection and content analysis methodology. Third, I present results that support limited source diversity in environmental policy media coverage, while highlighting the emergence of Non-Governmental Organizations as a primary source of information in news construction. Lastly, I call for more research in understanding the complex relationship between dominant news sources, public versus private discourse, and environmental policy decision-making processes.

Literature Review

Source Diversity & Agenda Setting

News source diversity is critical when reporting on environmental policy issues because environmental conflicts are typically constituted by multiple and divergent stakeholders and interests (Cox, 2009). The critical function and social good from an enlivened media sphere is to be a forum where "*all* sides of an issue are presented" (Bender, Davenport, Drager, & Fedler, 2009, p. 581). Cox (2009) identified seven broad categories of stakeholders most frequently involved in environmental discussions: citizens and community groups, environmental groups,

scientists and scientific discourse, corporations and business lobbysists, anti-environmentalist groups, media and environmental journalists, and public officials and regulators. Therefore, it should be assumed that if the press is providing "fair and comprehensive accounts" (Bender et. al., p. 597) of environmental issues, the diverse voices of the various stakeholders should be included. Previous research, however, has indicated journalists routinely rely heavily on government sources when reporting about the environment, with representatives of environmental organizations and non-affiliated citizens being cited far less frequently, if at all (Corbett, 1995; Greenberg, et al., 1989; Lacy & Coulson, 2000; Liebler & Bendix, 1996; Smith, 1993).

Source diversity and frequency is important because of the media's agenda-setting role in shaping public discussion (Cohen, 1963). Sources often hold more power than reporters to set the media's agenda by controlling what information is given to the public (Sigal, 1973). Corbett (2006) noted the "most crucial decision in the construction of a news story is who is chosen to speak authoritatively on the subject at hand: the news source" (p. 230). Sigal (1973) found that source diversity in the print media, as a whole, is severely limited. Reporters routinely rely on authoritative sources who are considered to be experts or politically powerful (Brown, Bybee, Wearden, & Straughan, 1987; Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973) for the majority of news information. Sources who are routinely cited in the media meet two basic criteria: availability and suitability (Gans, 1979). Sources must have the resources to supply journalists with information and fit the suitability criterion by meeting standards of reliability, trustworthiness and authoritativeness. Reporters

often turn to government sources for information because the bureaucratic structure of the government lends itself to fit both these criteria, allowing for official spokespeople and public relations specialists to be available at all times to maintain contact with the press. Elite government sources account for a major component of sources in print media (Brown et al., 1987; Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973) and therefore are given the power to inform the public's discussion on national and local issues.

These elite government sources have a formidable amount of agenda-setting power because news reporters are "dependent on (them) for information" (Corbett, 2006, p. 231). Gandy (1982) suggested these elite sources routinely supply journalists with information to ensure it reaches specific audiences who have the ability to shape and change policy agendas. As Brown, et al. (1987) note, "By controlling the information available to these target audiences, sources are able to define decision-making options and, ultimately, to control the decision-making process" (p. 46). This highlights the importance of not only source diversity, but also source frequency. With the column inches it takes to relay information to the public, it would seem that the source cited most frequently in news stories would have more power to shape public discussion than those given only infrequent mentions. With sources controlling the majority of information that reaches the public, it is warranted to study how the media uses sources to portray the creation of environmental policy.

Research Questions

This study examines how the print media, specifically newspaper outlets, used sources in coverage of the Colorado Roadless Rule. The CRR is a state policy

that regulates the management of federal roadless land. It was first drafted in 2005 and has been a controversial issue for various stakeholders since its creation. The policy has been through numerous revisions but has yet to be put into place.

Few studies have examined source diversity and frequency in federal environmental policy issues. Media coverage of environmental policy is important because the discourse used by prominent sources could be used to set the public's agenda as viewing the policy on one specific light or another. What discourse receives primary attention in print media could play an important role in influencing what policies are supported or discredited by important constituencies. To explore whose discourse was privileged in media coverage of the CRR, I posited the following Research Questions:

> *RQ1*: What groups are being cited as sources in print media coverage about the CRR policy?

> *RQ2:* Is there a difference in the amount of space given in the print media to various stakeholder groups?

Audiences concern with environmental issues and responses of support and waning interest go through peaks and valleys during an environmental conflict's lifespan (Guber, 2003). One would also hope that during a critical period for public discussion about a proposed public policy, like a 90-day public comment period, the media would have a heightened awareness of the need to include comprehensive coverage of the diverse sources involved in the discussion. To ensure results from *RQ1* and *RQ2* were representative of CRR media coverage on a broader level, and not skewed by events happening at certain time frames, I examined two distinct time

frames during the year's worth of coverage. To guide this analysis, I posited the following question:

> *RQ3:* Is there a statistically significant difference in the diversity of sources used during public participation period and the following nine months?

Addressing these research questions can create a better understanding of how sources are strategically utilizing the news media to talk about the CRR. This information will allow researchers and stakeholders to understand if all voices present in environmental conflict are being represented in the print media.

Methods

Data Collection

The primary data for this study was newspaper articles printed from July 23, 2008 to July 23, 2009. The rationale for selecting this time frame was two fold: First, time span of one year allowed me to observe if there were patterns in source diversity in media coverage at a general level, instead of coverage that was spurred by one specific event. Secondly, this time frame enveloped the 90-day public comment period (July 23, 2008-Oct. 24, 2008) that allowed me to verify my findings were consistent over two distinct time frames in this policy's creation, and weren't just influenced by what Guber (2003) calls the definitive peaks and troughs of environmental interest. The data for this study was local, regional, and national newspaper articles that centered on the CRR. Data consisted of articles written by paid newspaper or AP reporters; all opinion articles, briefs, editorials, and letters to the editor were omitted.

The USDA Forest Service, Colorado Office, had been archiving print media coverage of the CRR controversy when this project began in 2008. It provided links to the archived coverage as a starting point. I then monitored online coverage of the CRR controversy in local, regional, and national newspaper outlets. I used LexisNexis and Google News to retrieve the data, using search terms including "Colorado Roadless Rule" and "Roadless Rule". I deemed it necessary to use Google News in addition to LexisNexis because LexisNexis was not retrieving all the local articles that Google News monitored.

Data Analysis

A content analysis was completed of 69 newspaper articles. No differentiation was made between local, regional, or national newspaper articles in the data set; they were all weighed equally in importance to the data set. Articles that occurred during the 90-day public comment period accounted for 57% of the data, while 43% came from the following nine months of media coverage. Coders analyzed each article using two units: the sources present (in response to *RQ1*) and the amount of space, measured at the sentence level, given to each of those sources (in response to *RQ2*). For example, if the federal government had 13 sentences attributed to it in one article, the first unit coded would be 1 because it appeared as a source; the second unit coded would be 13 because it was cited 13 times.

For the first part of the study, individual sources were the units of analysis. Coders identified sources present in every newspaper story. A source was any identifiable person or group that had a statement or general information attributed to it. Again, the number of citations given to a source is irrelevant in this unit of

47

analysis, because this level of analysis only addresses presence of diverse sources. For example, if a representative from GreenPeace was cited once in a news article while the Rancher's Association was cited ten times, they were both only counted once. Coders chose from 13 possible categories of source affiliations, which included: Federal Government, State Government, Local Government, National Non-Governmental Organization, Local/Regional Non-Governmental Organization, Business, Non-Affiliated Citizen, Unnamed Sources, and Other.[1] Documents were coded as sources and grouped with the parent institution from which they were released (i.e. a Forest Service press release was coded as a citation of the Federal Government).

For the second part of the study, sentences were the units of analysis. Once a source had been identified in an article, coders counted the number of sentences attributed to that source. This was done to understand if journalists were giving diverse sources varying amounts of space to get their messages out. It is common in newspapers for paragraphs to be comprised of only one sentence. Therefore sentences were chosen as the level of analysis because it would be a more precise way of measuring the amount of space each source was given, rather than an analysis at the paragraph level. This allowed me to understand if certain stakeholders were being cited more frequently than others and the degree to which it was happening.

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[1] The category National Non-Governmental Organizations was comprised primarily of national non-profit environmental organizations such as the Wilderness Society and Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership; Local/Regional Non-Governmental Organizations was comprised primarily of non-profit environmental organizations based in Colorado. The category Unnamed Sources includes statements that were attributed to blanket, yet unspecified, categories of people, such as: "environmentalists", "critics", "conservation groups", and "groups".

Three graduate students, including myself, coded the articles. Inter-coder reliability was calculated with a random sample of 13% of the articles using Krippendorff's Alpha, resulting in an acceptable reliability level of .815.

Results

The following section describes diversity and frequency of sources identified during the analysis of data. It highlights how news sources routinely rely on governmental and non-governmental organizations for information. It also highlights the emergence of non-governmental organizations as a major player in shaping public discussion and how journalists give more space to certain sources.

RQ1 asked: What groups are being used as sources in newspaper articles about the CRR? **Government and non-governmental organizations were the two most prominent sources throughout the data.** Information attributed to government documents and officials (federal, state, and local) appeared in 82.6% of the articles. This supports past studies that indicate journalists most frequently turn to government sources for information to create the news. However, non-governmental organizations were found to be equally as visible as government officials, appearing in 84.1% of the articles. This finding deviates from past research that has found environmental sources aren't used as sources as much as government officials (Corbett, 1995; Greenberg et al., 1989; Lacy & Coulson, 2000; Liebler & Bendix, 1996; Smith, 1993). The categories of business, unaffiliated citizens, and others appeared in only 23.2% of the articles when *combined* (See Table 1).

Table 1

Source Presence in Media Coverage of the Colorado Roadless Rule

Source	# of Articles Source is Present in	% of Articles Source is Present in
Government Sources	57	82.6
NGO's	58	84.1
Businesses	5	7.2
Unafilliated Citizens	3	4.3
Unnamed Sources	43	62.3
"Other" Sources	9	13

Table 1

Table 2

Source Frequency in Media Coverage of the Colorado Roadless Rule

Source	# of Sentences Attributed to Source
Government Sources	342
NGO's	336
Businesses	18
Unafilliated Citizens	13
Unnamed Sources	90
"Other" Sources	14

Table 2

RQ2 asked: Is there a difference in the amount of space given in the print media to various stakeholder groups? **Government and non-governmental organizations were cited equally and most frequently. Each of these source categories individually was cited 7 times more frequently than businesses, unaffiliated citizens, and other sources *combined*.** Overall, journalists cited the

government (federal, state, and local) 342 times; Non-governmental organizations

336 times; Unnamed

"environmentalists" and "critics" 90 times; Businesses 18 times; Unaffiliated

Citizens 13 times; and Other sources 14 times (see Table 2).

RQ3 asked: Is there a statistically significant difference in the diversity of

sources used during public participation period and the following nine months*?*

There were no significant differences in source diversity during the public

comment period than the other time frame. Government sources appeared in

79.5% of the articles during the 90-day public comment period (n=39) and 86.7% of

the articles outside of the public comment period (n=30). Non-governmental

organizations were cited in 89.7% of articles during the 90-day public comment

period and 76.7% of articles outside of the public comment period. These

differences were not statistically significant (*p ≥.164, equal variances not assumed*).

Interpretation of Findings

This study adds to the body of literature that confirms journalists routinely

turn to government officials for information when covering issues of social

relevance, including the environment (Corbett, 1995; Greenberg, et al., 1989; Lacy &

Coulson, 2000; Liebler & Bendix, 1996; Smith, 1993). It also highlights how

journalists turned to Non-Governmental Organizations as reliable sources when

covering the CRR. This finding challenges previous research that found

environmental organizations have not been given as much media presence as

government sources (Corbett 1998; Fishman, 1980). This study also shows

government and NGO sources were given far more opportunities to speak in media outlets than other stakeholders in the CRR.

I contend the emergence of Non-Governmental Organizations as a primary source can be partly attributed to the structural efficiency of these organizations. Many of the sources cited in the NGO category were from national organizations that have resources devoted including staff to the interaction with the media on this one specific issue. The Wilderness Society, Pew Charitable Trusts, Trout Unlimited, and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, among others, are all organizations that work toward conservation and each has a national and local communication department to maintain relationships with the media. While many of these non-profit organizations work from the bottom-up, pushing grassroots advocacy, they are still highly organized and efficient. This organizational structure and the employment of "experts" in environmental issues allow these organizations to easily meet the source criteria outlined previously: availability and suitability.

The dominance of these two categories is significant because it falsely frames the debate as a dichotomy. The categories of business, unaffiliated citizens, and others appeared in only 23.2% of the articles when *combined.* Business sources (which included the ski, outfitting, timber and energy industries) were only present in 7.2% of the articles; Unaffiliated citizens were present in 4.3% of articles; Other sources, which were most frequently other media outlets, were present in 13% of the articles. These findings highlight how unrepresentative media coverage was when covering the debate about the CRR. Stakeholders in the CRR have been identified by the selection of a Roadless Area Task Force, which created the policy,

and many of those stakeholders disappear in the media coverage. Timber, mining, and oil and gas industries were rarely represented. Other stakeholders, such as cattle ranchers and ski industry representatives, appeared in 0% of the coverage.

The second notable finding was the presence of unnamed environmentalists and critics. These sources appeared in 62.3% of the articles. Journalists often attributed paraphrases and general statements to a blanket source of "environmentalists" or "critics". This calls into question the proper use of veiled sources. The use of these sources was most often in reference to a pro-environmental statement, or pointing out conservation concerns with the CRR. This is interesting given the next section about source frequency. In a sense, because these comments were pro-environmental in context, they add to the space and influence given to non-profit environmental organizations by repeating or supporting their sentiments.

In response to *RQ2*, results indicate that media favor federal and state government over local governments for information. Federal government officials were sourced 182 times, state government officials 159 times, and local governments only once. The prominence of state and federal government officials could be explained again by the bureaucratic structure present at these levels of government. It could also be explained because these two sections of government were most heavily involved with the creation of the policy: the state creating it and the federal government overseeing and administering it.

Journalists used state and regional non-governmental organizations as sources slightly more frequently than national non-governmental organizations.

State and regional non-governmental organizations were sourced 186, followed by national non-governmental organizations with 150 cites.

These results highlight how the press is using routine sources for information, and is giving these routine sources equal amounts of space and ink to relay their messages. This is not surprising, given the emphasis in contemporary journalism on balance, fairness and objectivity. Journalists often balance a controversial viewpoint or statement with an opposing opinion (Cox, 2009, p. 166). Scholars have recently argued that balance is not always desirable or representative though (see Boykoff and Boykoff, 2004) because it may be misleading to the public. I agree, but in the sense that presenting complex environmental policies as debates between two divergent groups: the government and environmental NGO's can be misleading as to who is really impacted by the policy and who has a right to even be present in the debate. The silencing of interests like cattle ranchers, the timber and ski industries, as well as off-highway vehicle users doesn't give all the groups that will be impacted by the policy the opportunity to relay messages to the public.

This imbalance in stakeholder citation is also disconcerting because it effectively shuts private citizens out of the debate. This way of reporting dictates what is considered appropriate as private and public discourse about the creation of environmental policy. Journalists privileged organizational sources when reporting on the CRR, rarely giving private citizens or businesses the opportunity to openly discuss the policy at the public level. I realize it would be impossible to give all stakeholders equal coverage when it comes to such complex issues because of practical financial, space, and time constraints that face journalists today. However,

when two groups of sources are cited 7 times more frequently than other groups combined in media coverage, questions of balance and power seem to be fitting, if not necessary.

In response to *RQ3,* results support that journalist relied on official sources for information when covering an issue and adds insight into how source use stayed constant during different time periods of the CRR's creation. This finding is notable because the public comment period is supposed to be a time when all voices are given a chance to be heard in environmental decision-making processes. If that were so, then the media coverage should accurately relay that discussion to its audience, giving various stakeholders a forum for expressing their viewpoints.

Discussion

The interdependence between the media and organizational sources should be examined to see what is really contributing to and who is benefiting from this relationship. The news media and environmental decision making process have parallel purposes, both serving as a space for multiple stakeholders to discuss and debate different ideologies of managing the material world. With journalism's purpose to present all sides of a story so the public can make informed decisions (Bender, et al., 2009), it should ideally more accurately depict the discussion that is taking place around environmental policy. Severe imbalances have been documented for more than 3 decades in source diversity (Brown et al., 1987; Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973), yet little has been done to improve journalistic practices and increase source representation in the media. Lacy and Coulson (2000) argue for more training of journalists to combat this imbalance when covering environmental

stories, so they can better "identify the multiplicity of views surrounding complex environmental issues" (p. 23). However, I contend this topic would be better informed by looking critically at the power relationships of *organizations* that are involved in the overall production of news. Brown and colleagues (1987) concluded, "the true power lies not only in the decision-making arena, but, perhaps most importantly, with those who can determine which issues will be debated" (p. 54). I agree, but argue we need to critically examine why *organizations* are getting more of a say in public discussion than citizens or smaller collective groups. Perhaps the structure of the media, which lends itself to rely on efficient bureaucratic organizations for information, and the corresponding structure of the organizations themselves (with PR departments and media professionals), should be questioned. Who is benefiting from this relationship dynamic? Is it really allowing audiences to get an accurate description of the debate happening on the ground? And is this imbalance between organizations and citizens forcing unaffiliated citizens to organize and conform to these structures so like feel like they have a say in any meaningful discussion on public issues? I contend a more theoretically informed discussion of power relationships in the context of organizations and the production of news, with critical reflection of who is allowed to participate in discussion at the public level, will provide insight on how to more meaningfully engage with more diverse stakeholders.

Future Study

The other topic that also seems to be understudied in the area of agenda setting and source diversity is that of textual prominence, or how quickly in a news

story a source is allowed to make a claim. The inverted pyramid style is a metaphor used by journalists and other writers to illustrate the placing of the most important information first within a text. It is the most widely preferred method in writing news stories. The "inverted" or upside-down pyramid can be thought of as a triangle with one side drawn horizontally at the top and the body pointing down. The widest part at the top represents the most substantial, interesting, and important information the writer means to convey, illustrating that this kind of material should lead the article, while the tapering lower portion illustrates that other material should follow in order of diminishing importance. It is also sometimes called a "summary news lead" style (Errico, et. al, 1997).

The format is valued because readers can leave the story at any point and understand it, even if they don't have all the details. It also allows less important information at the end to be more easily removed by editors so the article can fit a fixed size. With the preference of journalists using inverted pyramid style it brings into question the influence a source's textual prominence has on agenda setting effects. If the most important information is placed at the beginning of a story and that information is attributed to one specific source, perhaps a government official, does it make that source's claims have a greater impact on what readers think about? This and other questions relating to the possible relationship between textual prominence and agenda setting could be a worthwhile endeavor to understand in future research.

I was unable to find any literature that studied the order in which sources were used in news stories and if that textual prominence had any meaningful impact

on the audience. It would be useful to have a statistical tool that allowed researchers the ability to account for textual prominence in studying source usage. For example, if a source was used in the lead paragraph that source would be given more statistical significance than a source who was used only in the last paragraphs. Such a measure does not exist, but could be useful in future media studies to not only understand source diversity but also source prominence.

Limitations

This study was limited in its scope because of the narrow focus on one specific environmental policy. The majority of newspaper articles analyzed were smaller and community based in Colorado, however there were articles included from national newspapers such as *The New York Times.* Results are specific to this one policy, however it would be interesting to see if the attention paid to environmental sources in this study is reflected in media coverage of other environmental policies, at both the state and national level. The other limitation noted is that of time. One year's worth of articles were used as the data for this study, allowing a snapshot of the political and media climate at that time. However, this time frame does not allow for a diachronic view of media coverage, highlighting trends that appear over extended periods of time in environmental policies.

Conclusion

Scholars have criticized the news media's bias in its reporting style and selection of news. I agree with these criticisms and contend that researchers need to rethink the way the press is studied as a conduit of information. The press is a conduit of information, but it contains its own filters as well. Not everything is going

to be published and not everyone is going to be given the opportunity to speak. This study highlights how press organizations, as a system, favor information that comes through routine channels of organizational spokespeople.

While this tells us that, diachronically, reporters are relying on reliable power structures for information, it does not reveal much about those power structures and the relationships between the media and sources. As Brown et al., (1987) concluded, "the true power lies not only in the decision-making arena, but, perhaps most importantly, with those who can determine which issues will be debated" (p. 54). Power relationships, then, influence not only source selection but also news selection. The public is mitigated as a worthy stakeholder before they can even engage in discussion by the very fact that by the time issues ever make it onto the printing press, "the key decision making has already been exercised" (p. 54). This finding makes it necessary for us as scholars to reconsider how we look at and study the production of news; with a need to make a critical turn to find out who is not being allowed to speak and what needs to change for more stakeholders to be represented in this media forum.

CHAPTER FOUR

Interpretation and Concluding Remarks

This study explored many of the tensions present in environmental conflicts that influence if decision-making processes will be democratic or bureaucratic. The most prominent of tensions were conflicts between organizations and individuals, the media and public, traditional and innovative public participation processes, and materiality and symbolism. In the following section I re-visit these tensions and highlight the areas that need to be considered more critically in order to harbor more innovative and effective ways to approach environmental decision-making processes.

Organizations and Individuals

The most important finding of this study is that scholars and practitioners need to re-evaluate the role played by public and non-profit organizations in environmental policy decisions. Both analyses show the role of organizations in environmental decisions is evolving and is far more powerful and pervasive than the general public. The prominence of organizations is important because it takes power from the individual, unaffiliated citizen. Representation in participatory democracy means "everyone who might be affected by or have an interest in the plan is involved, particularly non-activist, nonaligned members of the public" (Moote, McClaran, & Chickering, 1997, p. 878), so the conceptual "public" should include organizations and individuals equally.

Decision-making processes should be tailored to solicit and give weight equally to organizations and unaffiliated citizens. This study reveals how this concept of the public did not materialize in the Colorado Roadless Rule decision-making process. Some groups

expressed the need they felt to organize and make a difference by aligning forces with other organizations. As one participant stated, "These groups are now rising up from their voiceless past in some instances, and when you combine their efforts with some of the mainstream groups…. it's changed the dynamic of being able to do some good."

Implications should be considered and the process studied so scholars, practitioners, and stakeholders can better understand how to change the decision-making process to fit the ideal of participatory democracy. I contend participatory democracy is the ideal, yet don't know how all individuals and organizations can truly be represented and involved with environmental decisions on a national or international scale. There needs to be more scholarship devoted to understanding how to implement participatory democracy when dealing with resources on such a broad scale. In this case, the federal lands were just in one state but national organizations were very much present in every step of the process. With groups and individuals varying so widely in worldviews and interpretations of the best solution, it would be hard to imagine a truly collaborative process that satisfies everyone. As Amy (1990) concluded, no amount of communication will bring about agreement when deeply held values are in conflict. Even the groups involved in the process realized this gap between theory and practice. As one participant stated "The problem is… it's really tough to come to a compromise when you're trying to get 20 groups to agree to the wording (on a policy)…. I think the next step for us here is to be a little bit more realistic."

The last implication regarding the sway of organizations in public participation is how their presence, and perhaps prominence redefines the very nature of democracy. If organizations really are the ones participating in and making decisions at the federal level,

it would be detrimental to the idea of citizens being able to make a difference in the decisions that affect their lives. After experiencing the decision-making process, one state task member poignantly stated, "I came out of there thinking, my God, how has this country ever amounted to anything if this is the way democracy and politics always work, and by and in large it is." If citizens need to be aligned with an organization to have their voice count, they should be told so up front, and the process redefined to be negotiations between organizations instead of the public.

The Media and the Public

The press has been criticized for being bias in its reporting style and selection of news. I agree with these criticisms and contend that researchers need to reconceptualize the press as a contributor to environmental disputes, rather than a conduit of information. The press is not an unbiased entity and is itself a powerful organization that needs to be considered a stakeholder when studying public environmental issues. This study highlights how press organizations, as a system, favor information that comes through routine channels of organizational spokespeople. Yet questions remain about who is shaping that system. Are organizations using the press to shape public debate? Or is the press using organizations to shape the public debate? One environmentalist I interviewed said he saw the media as a very important space for interorganizational debate:

> ...its amazing to me that (big industries) have got all this money and they're really kind of terrible at PR, well I shouldn't say that, they run really beautiful commercials you know on television, but in the news stories it's kind of a mixed bag... and we can sometimes beat 'em there."

Participants thought they sometimes were using the media to have their message trump opposing viewpoints, but in all actuality only organizations that fit certain criteria were even being allowed to put out their messages. As one participant stated, it most

always come back to money: "Well, money talks and B.S. walks, and a lot of these environmental groups are funded by national trusts…so when it's millions of dollars versus thousands of dollars, money often times wins." This and other similar statements show how participants in this contestation viewed interaction with the media. The media was a place where certain organizations, ones with money, could compete for public attention and support.

While this tells us that ,diachronically, reporters are relying on reliable power structures for information, it does not reveal much about those power structures and the relationships between the media and sources. As Brown et al. (1987) concluded, "the true power lies not only in the decision-making arena, but, perhaps most importantly, with those who can determine which issues will be debated" (p. 54). Power relationships, then, influence not only source selection but also news selection. The public is mitigated as a worthy stakeholder before they can even engage in discussion by the very fact that by the time issues ever make it onto the printing press, "the key decision making has already been exercised" (p. 54). This conceptualization of power relationships parallels critiques of traditional public participation methods; that the public is given a chance to "participate" only after decisions have been made by a few key players.

Traditional and Innovative Participation Processes

Chapter 2 highlighted the downfalls of public participation in the CRR, most notably the privatization of the decision-making process. As scholars, we need to re-examine the very structure of public participation to understand how it privileges certain discourses and stakeholders over others. Understanding how the structure of public participation facilitates engagement across groups is essential to making good policy choices that can be

successfully implemented. Public policy decisions, such as the CRR, are ultimately social value choices and government agencies cannot effectively make successful choices without significant public participation (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000). Yet, scholars note that rather than eliciting participation from as representative a sample of the public as possible, traditional agency public participation procedures tend to foster participation by organized interest groups while limiting participation by the general public (Facaros 1989, Shannon 1990). The process undertaken in the CRR tried to overcome that traditional limitation by blending together open houses and public hearings with a collaborative task force of stakeholders. Unfortunately, the collaboration did not result in a representative group of stakeholders and a successful policy decision has yet to come to fruition. This attempt at democratic public participation was notable, but its failure point to a systemic structural problem, rather than access, information, or representation issues.

It is clear the system we have now to solicit the public's opinion isn't working. We don't need to find new ways of incorporating collaboration and cooperation in the system we have; we need to find a new way to structure the entire system itself. If collaboration isn't working, and traditional methods of public participation aren't working, we as scholars need to really look at the foundation of environmental decision-making processes to figure out where people are being left behind. Ideally there should be a way to get everyone to the table, if not to agree, at least to negotiate and share the same information. Ideological divergence will never allow for complete consensus, and I don't contend that should the goal; but our goal should be complete inclusion of all stakeholders, and knowledge sharing when making important environmental policy decision that will affect everyone.

Materiality and Symbolism

I hope this study has cast a lens on the need for scholars to pay equal attention to materiality and symbolism when studying environmental disputes. Focusing too much on either side of the spectrum can hinder scholar's holistic view of variables at play in environmental policy. Both material elements and symbolic discourse and interaction must be considered to avoid oversimplifying the role of communicative processes and generate a more complete view of stakeholder dynamics in environmental decision-making. I contend that materiality and symbolism inherently cannot be studied independently, as the concepts cannot be conceptually divorced from one another. Symbolism must be viewed as being rooted in the relations and environment present in the material world. Materiality serves as the base of all symbolic constructions, which in turn affect human relationships with that material world, causing an infinite system of codependence between the symbolic and the material.

While Deetz (1992) focused on the discourse used to privilege certain groups over others, I think it is equally important to note that discourse is *rooted in* and *influenced by* material factors. As Shome (2003) noted, space functions as a medium "of power that is socially constituted through material relations that enable the communication of specific politics" (p. 40). Participant's statements highlighted the political nature of material space and how material places can influence discursive processes (Norton, 2008; Shome, 2003). It would be hard to imagine that the same policy would have been crafted had the meetings taken place in another venue. The very nature of placing a meeting in a building, or outdoors, or changing between the two, can change the symbolic nature of discourse and what topics are and are not discussed. There is a need to critically examine the power of

material space in how it influences the symbolic nature of discourse, instead of focusing solely on one or another. Placing emphasis on the discursive nature of policy creation is important, but equal attention should be paid to the way materiality influences decisions and the reproduction of power structures.

The importance of balance or dialectic among these forces is important when looking at systems of symbolic and material influence, and also in attempting to bridge the gap between studies of environmental decision-making. I examined two dimensions of environmental policy in this analysis: public participation and print media representation. The focus on two different avenues for participation allowed me to note how the two dimensions were much closer *theoretically* and *practically* than I first imagined. The function of material spaces, including the press, and symbolic exchange, such public participation, should be viewed in context with one another instead of as completely divorced concepts. There is a large gap in literature between communication studies and mass communication, yet the fields are more similar and undoubtedly intertwined on the theoretical level. Scholars can try to bridge that gap by placing an increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary scholarship that harbors more holistic views of communication-based issues.

Conclusion

It is my hope that studies such as this can highlight the changing political nature of environmental policy decisions and encourage interdisciplinary scholarship that focuses on harboring more democratic and representative public engagement. Communication scholars can break from systematic procedures of gathering data and looking at problem by engaging with scholars from natural sciences, political science, sociology and psychology. I

contend that many of these fields theoretical foundations run parallel to one another and can serve as a checks and balance system to our own research validity and generalizability. I also hope that scholars within the communication field can begin to bridge the gap between the lines of literature dealing with symbolism and materiality, and study the interdependence of the two. Looking at environmental decisions through these varied lenses will provide us with innovative approaches to engage stakeholders and policy makers in a discussion about creating environmental policies that can be successfully implemented and supported. It will only be through change at the political level of discussion that changes will begin to shape the material world for future generations.

In retrospect, as a scholar it's interesting for me to see what issues were the highlights of debate in this process. I went into this project thinking oil and gas, as well as energy, would be a high point of debate, but those topics rarely surfaced. Participants were more concerned with the uncertainty of wildfire science, politics and persuasion between the various groups, and what the proper definition of "roadless" was. Language pervaded every aspect of this study and the discourse used was very revealing. It's amazing how much contestation showed up just out of the title of "roadless" because in reality, these areas do have roads. In the end, I learned that most participants understood they were never going to come up with a solution that everyone was happy with, yet many were still hopeful for the process to produce a solution that was at least agreeable. I hope the study of this case can produce meaningful change

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Appendix A

Semi-structured Interview Protocol for
Stakeholder Dynamics in the Colorado Roadless Rule

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1) How do you feel about humans' relationship to federal public land in the United States?

2) The idea of roadless areas seems to a common topic lately. What do you think about roadless areas?

3) Do you think there are a variety of ways for the United States to manage roadless areas? What are they?

4) In your opinion, what is the best way for roadless areas?

5) How do your views differ from other people engaged with roadless areas?

6) How do you feel about the roadless areas here in Colorado? And what have been your experiences with them?

7) What is your biggest concern with the management of roadless areas here in Colorado?

8) Do you have other ideas you would like to share?

Thank you so much for your time. Here is Todd Norton's business card with my name written on the back. Please feel free to call him should you have any additional concerns or thoughts.

Appendix B

Code Book for Quantitative Content Analysis

Coder_____**Article #**_____**Date of Article**_____

CATEGORY 1 : FEDERAL GOVERNMENT   **Present**   **# of Sentences**
Forest Service Employees   _____ _____
Forest Service Document (press release/analysis/projections)   _____ _____
Bureau of Land Management Employees   _____ _____
Bureau of Land Management Document   _____ _____
Federal Judge   _____ _____
Federal Court Documents   _____ _____
White House/Administrative Motions/Documents   _____ _____
Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack   _____ _____
RACNAC committee member   _____ _____
Other Federal Government Representative   _____ _____

CATEGORY 2: STATE GOVERNMENT   **Present**   **# of Sentences**
Department of Natural Resources Affiliated   _____ _____
Governor/Spokesman   _____ _____
State Senator/Representative   _____ _____
Division of Wildlife Representative   _____ _____
Other State Government Representative   _____ _____

CATEGORY 3: LOCAL GOVERNMENT   **Present**   **# of Sentences**
City/Town Mayors/Elected Officials   _____ _____
Other Local Government Representative   _____ _____

CATEGORY 4: NATIONAL NON-PROFIT ORG   **Present**   **# of Sentences**
The Wilderness Society   _____ _____
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership Representative _____ _____
TRCP Document   _____ _____
Trout Unlimited   _____ _____
Trout Unlimited Reports/Documents   _____ _____
Backcountry Hunters/Anglers   _____ _____
Pew Environmental Group   _____ _____
Pew Reports/Documents   _____ _____
Earthjustice   _____ _____
Natural Resource Defense Council   _____ _____
Other national (including coalitions of National NGO's)   _____ _____

CATEGORY 5: NON-NATIONAL N-P ORGS   **Present**   **# of Sentences**

Wilderness Workshop   _____ _____
Colorado Mountain Club   _____ _____
Environment Colorado   _____ _____
Central CO Wilderness Coalition   _____ _____
SLV Ecosystem Council   _____ _____
San Juan Citizens Alliance   _____ _____
Western Colorado Congress   _____ _____
Ridgway/Ouray Comm. Council   _____ _____
Colorado Snowmobilers Assoc.   _____ _____
CO Energy Research Institute   _____ _____
Colorado Wild   _____ _____
Colorado Wildlife Federation   _____ _____
Wild Connection   _____ _____
Western Resource Advocates   _____ _____
Headwaters Economics   _____ _____
Other Non-national non-profit organizations(incl. coalitions) _____ _____

CATEGORY 6: BUSINESS   **Present**   **# of Sentences**

Timber   _____ _____
Williams and Co   _____ _____
EnCana   _____ _____
Other Business Owners   _____ _____

CATEGORY 7: NON-AFFILIATED CITIZENS   **Present**   **# of Sentences**

                                             _____ _____

CATEOGRY 8: UNNAMED SOURCES   **Present**   **# of Sentences**

"Environmentalists"   _____ _____
"Critics"   _____ _____
Other unnamed sources   _____ _____

CATEGORY 9: OTHER   **Present**   **# of Sentences**

                                             _____ _____
                                             _____ _____

· Stakeholders with weak bargaining power could influence other more powerful stakeholders. Stakeholders when united 'collectively' can often exert stronger influence over the organisation e.g. labour trade unions or consumer groups can often exert a stronger influence over an organisation because of the 'membership' they represent. 5. It can also be driven by social pressure, media and education. Tools for non-market strategies are: events, demonstrations, networking, sponsoring, research, publications, but also the consequences of law suits. Stakeholders are those organisations or people that have an interest in the organisation, these interests varied and for many reasons. They can be a source of potential conflict for.