

SILENCE AS STRATEGY IN PUBLIC ENERGY DISCOURSE: OIL AND GAS
FRACKING IN EASTERN UTAH

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines silence in rural and national newspaper coverage of oil and natural gas fracking. Silence in public discourse reflects and shapes public discourse about the valuing of land. Silence about fracking may create and allow gaps where environmental and human health concerns are unequally considered in public news conversation. Fracking is a process of oil and gas extraction found in many rural communities, including an eastern Utah community called the Uinta Basin. While the safety and environmental impacts of fracking are avidly debated in neighboring states, such as Colorado and Wyoming, there is limited local news coverage or controversy surrounding the issue in the Basin, where local and federal policy makers, oil and gas companies, and fracking opponents are defining the parameters of future natural resource extraction and land use. A corpus of 91 *New York Times* articles and 63 articles from two rural papers, *The Uintah Basin Standard* and *The Vernal Express*, published over a 1-year period from April 1, 2012–April 1, 2013, is compared to identify topics, arguments, and themes covered and to identify stakeholder silences and the voices speaking on the issue. Interviews with local journalists are conducted to explore how particular geography, personal standpoint, and production processes may influence characterizations and silence about fracking. Local journalists articulate strategies for negotiating a personal and professional relationship with silence and offer insights into the complex process of message construction and silence negotiation. Identification of gaps and silences in the

national and local conversation on fracking highlights differences in the valuing and use of natural resources. Like language, silence in public discourse can strategically and powerfully communicate and impact the negotiation and valuing of land. Silence is apparent in topical omission, simplification, and amplification of some aspects of oil and natural gas fracking over others. A complex and critical look at the role that linguistic absences play in facilitating particular actions with the land may offer ideas toward greater collaborative efforts to forestall environmental mistreatment and open areas for discussion and further consideration of natural resources for a variety of interested stakeholders.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Rae Woolley Willoughby and C. Robert Whited, who inspired a love of reading, writing, and learning at a young age and who are also proud alumni of The U of U. It is also dedicated to my husband Chris for his terrific support throughout my higher education and always. I hope this work will inspire my own children, Donovan, Reilly, and Gabrielle, to have greater care and concern about the ideas and silences that shape their world.

Silence Matters: The Uinta Basin



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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Environmental communication scholarship is interested in the complex interplay of language, thought, and action. This emerging area in the discipline examines the ways in which language constructs and reflects shared cultural attitudes and beliefs that impact the environment. Language is not benign, but rather it has been shown to be a powerful force that can have material consequences in the physical world (Cox, 2007; Endres, 2009; Petersen, 1991; Rogers, 1998). Whether spoken aloud or written, the meaning attributed to language is culturally negotiated and deeply influenced by geographic and social contexts (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Carey, 1989; van Dijk, 1986). Because it can simultaneously reflect and construct cultural ideas, persuasive language has been used to great political advantage, with words and messages employed to accomplish a wide range of objectives. Powerful stakeholders wield language in a strategic fashion to empower certain groups and constrain and subjugate others. Historically, language has been used to justify inhumane treatment and incite disaffection and violence in particular geographies (Nofzinger, 2010; Salminen, 1999; Tan, 1984; Taylor, 2003; Yourman, 1939). Critical communication scholarship has primarily focused on the ways in which *language* can operate to persuade and influence and neglected the study of how an absence of language, or silence, can convey profound meaning and potentially shape public discourse and

social action as well (Acheson, 2008; Blommaert, 2005; Brummett, 1980; Huckin, 2002). Silence is an integral, but less studied aspect of communication that can influence awareness and attitudes about the environment. An understanding of how silence operates in discourse can aid in tracing the balance of power and the stakeholders in the debate over natural resources, something that is not always made plain, to reveal the cultural politics that undergird and support the use of land.

Just as there can be a strategy in using certain language in public discourse, there may be strategy involved with omissions in public discourse as well. Silence around an issue can have powerful consequences and reflect strong ideological beliefs. Particularly, van Dijk (2011) suggested a need to make more explicit “the complex processes of discourse comprehension, especially also how structures of discourse are related to broader social, political, historical or cultural macro contexts” (p. 609). His earlier work suggested that “the ideological nature of discourse in general and of news discourse in particular, is often *defined* by the unsaid” (as cited in Huckin, 2002, p. 353, emphasis added). If what is left unsaid in public discourse can be just as important as what *is* said, then what is not being said in public energy discourse is important to make plain, as it may have material and political impacts on how people live, value, and act with the land.

Current environmental scholars suggest a need for new ways of understanding and illuminating power relationships relating to the environment. Cox (2007) and Carbaugh (2007) urgently call on environmental communication scholars to identify novel ways for more critical study of extraction efforts that can “recommend alternatives to enable policy decision-makers, communities, businesses, educators, and citizen groups”—all of the interested stakeholders speaking on energy (Cox, 2007, p. 18).

Environmental scholars are said to have an ethical duty to critically attend to the gaps and silences in energy communication and provide ideas toward solutions to such pressing concerns (Cox, 2007). Few studies have explored how silence, or a lack of language, might contribute to disregard and consequent violence toward the environment. No essential scholarly definition for “environmental violence” currently exists, though resource scarcity and overuse, as well as population growth, have been linked to violence as *indirect* causes for civic unrest (Homer-Dixon, 1999; Lee, 1995; Reuveny, 2002). Resource use and commodification of land as described by Relph (1976) and Peeples (2011) offer some ideas about what “violence to land” might look like. Particularly, Relph (1976) described *commodification of place* as a type of violence to land, because it involves the “standardization of places that changes unique and geographically distinct places into generic landscapes, and distances people from land” (p. 221). This vein of study suggests that disconnection and distance from the unique and varied meanings and uses for land may contribute to less responsible use of land. Thoughtful critical work in environmental scholarship is needed to examine the nuances and subtleties in public discourse about land use and the valuing of land and to provide salient recommendations to illuminate disparities and offer alternative approaches. Such study can empower a variety of energy stakeholders and offer ideas for negotiating an urgent and important topic of energy extraction and resource use.

Environmental studies suggest that rural communities may value land differently than urban populations (Cronan, 1995; DeLuca, 2005; Farforth, 2006). Farforth (2006) describes a historical trend in “seeing landscapes as essentially ideological mystifications” such as lands to conquer or places to civilize (p. 13). These mythical

themes and depictions can be used to legitimate property and power relations and may function to disguise a deeper relationship with nature—presenting it as wilderness existing merely as an object for human use (Farforth, 2006, p. 13). Also important to consider is the complicated mythology between people and place—an embodied knowing and connection to the land that comes from working directly in it. These alternate ways of knowing offer a chance to identify and better understand how rural land is valued and offer a complex perspective about how “knowing” the land might further relate to actions in land (Petersen, 1991; White, 1996). This critical study of how silence operates in energy discourse answers this call for a novel and focused approach to environmental studies—an alternate way of knowing—offering needed methodology to study the deep complexity of relationships between people and land and silence.

Critical studies in the fields of rhetoric and linguistics have explored aspects of how silence has been used to constrain and enable discourse for particular gender groups and minority groups (Anzaldúa, 1985; Rodriguez, 2011; Tannen & Saville-Troike, 1985). Yet, fewer studies have been done to explore how silence, or an absence of language, may be used to enable and constrain discourse and influence actions surrounding land use (Carbaugh, 2007). There is a significant gap in the critical exploration of silence in concert with environmental communication study. Communication and silence scholars have identified a need for methodologies that illuminate and explore how silence operates in discourse, yet few models exist for doing so, and fewer still have been adequately taken up by the linguistic or communication disciplines (Blommaert, 2005; Carbaugh, 2007; Hansen, 2011; Huckin, 2010; McGee, 1990). McGee (1990) describes the need for critical textual analysis from a sociopolitical viewpoint as a necessary “test” that has to

do with “the effects of unmaking cultural imperatives, and giving voice to the silences of doxa,” which he defines as “the taken for granted rules of society” operating in public discourse (p. 281). Hansen (2011) similarly suggested that

there is a need for media and communications research on environmental issues/controversy to reconnect with traditional sociological concerns about power and inequality in the public sphere, particularly in terms of showing how economic, political and cultural power significantly affects the ability to participate in and influence the nature of ‘mediated’ communication about the environment. (p. 8)

A rare exception to this lack of silence methodology is found in Huckin’s (2002) study of homelessness and taxonomy of silence (Huckin, 2010). This work offers a model and method for exploring *how* a topic is being discussed in the broader conversation, as a necessary precursor to identifying where silences and gaps occur. Employing Huckin’s (2010) method, this study examines how silence operates in news discourse to influence the current public conversation on oil and natural gas fracking. Local news reports about an oil and gas drilling process called fracking are examined in this study to identify how the issue is presented and discussed in a distinct, rural context, where fracking is a major player in the economy. News texts from a rural locale were compared to national news reports from *The New York Times*, the national newspaper of record, over a 1-year period, from April 1, 2012 to April 1, 2013, as a way to highlight what may have been left out of the public conversation on this issue and to illuminate where gaps and silences occur.¹ In addition, interviews were conducted with journalists from this rural locale to add complexity and understanding. These interviews illuminate the process by which words and silence influence thought, which may then influence attitudes and actions in land.

¹ See also newspaper of record definition. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/412546/The-New-York-Times>. For a history of *The New York Times* see also <http://www.nytco.com>.

Silences are explored relating to the topic of fracking in an area of Utah where oil and gas extraction is a common practice, the Uinta Basin.

Fracking is a contested contemporary environmental issue (Stickley, 2012). Proponents of fracking suggest that the practice has been unfairly vilified (Brian Cave & Associates, 2012). Opponents insist it is harmful to human health and will cause longterm and irreversible damage to water and air (Sadasivam, 2014). Economic forecasters insist it is vital to a sustained and growing economic future. News reports about this drilling process offer an important discursive site to examine language and silence used in national and local news discourse surrounding this high-stakes environmental issue. This study offers a needed critical perspective to explore the sociopolitical nexus of silence, energy, and the environment. It will examine silence about fracking practices in Eastern Utah over a 1-year period to aid in understanding the ways in which silence is negotiated in the complicated energy relationship between rural communities, industry representatives, and government regulators. A great deal of infrastructure and profit hinges on managing public perceptions about the safety and viability of fracking. This study offers a needed method for study of environmental communication related to land and resource use. The aim of this research is to identify silence and increase understanding about how silence operates and is negotiated in local news discourse.

New Ways to Explore Environmental Communication

Previous news discourse scholarship falls short of a complex analysis when it investigates only “available” language and leaves silences and early processes of discourse as a sidebar (Blommaert, 2005). In this view too much focus on discourse that

readily presents itself leaves less opportunity to examine “discourses that are absent, even if these analyses would tell us an enormous amount about the conditions under which discourses are being produced” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 35). Carbaugh (2007) similarly describes a “linguistic lag factor” in environmental studies and a “hyper focus on some verbal part, over the larger parcel on which it [language] is dependent” (p. 72). A related and growing consideration in silence study is in the early *generating* portions of discourse processes, suggesting a need to explore the specific contexts from which discourse *generates*. This generating portion is made up of the context that influenced, led up to, or necessitated the choice to speak or not speak about a topic. Context may consist of internal or external factors—often a combination of both. Study of the context that surrounds a text or news article involves paying special attention to the organizational factors and influences that surround the texts—the wider culture and community that helps to produce these texts. This awareness of context relates to the idea of “doxa” put forward by McGee (1990) and others and calls for thorough examination of “common” cultural language and action, suggesting that discourse is a product—the result of a dynamic process that both shapes culture and *is* shaped by culture (Carey, 1989; McGee, 1990). Common ideologies require a complex and critical focus to better understand the relationship between particular ideas and actions. James Carey (1989) was one of the first to study communication *as* culture, suggesting that the very structure of communication can both shape and be distinctly shaped by the specific geography and community in which a text resides. His interrogation of the transmission and ritual view of communication successfully linked the ideas of community and communicating and highlighted the importance of analyzing cultural complexity in discursive content to

“enlarge the human conversation by comprehending what others are saying” (p. 79; as cited in Dewey, 1927, pp. 217–219).

Study of newspaper discourse and the context where news discourse is generated—the Basin and the news organization that produces the newspaper—acknowledges that the construction of language and silence begins long before there is symbolic coding to represent or express it (Blommaert, 2005). As Blommaert (2005) and de Vreese (2005) found in their respective studies about the production of news, the physical language of a text can be considered a *late stage* of the process of discourse construction. Undue focus on one aspect of discourse, such as on readily available language, may omit the context where language and silences germinate and either come into being, or do not. Silences and prelanguage are profound aspects of a news story’s construction. The genesis of the symbolic and representative selection of words, and the less explored *selection process* for silence, become evident through study of the processes and contexts that influence, produce, and create that discourse. For this study, silence is conceived of as an active and powerful part of symbolic and strategic communication.

Cox (2007) identified a need for the field of environmental communication to be considered a “crisis discipline” and called for a cross-disciplinary effort in communication and associated fields, much like the coalition-oriented field of conservation biology. He made this call because of what he perceived as “a pressing threat to ecological health brought on by actions in the land”—particularly related to energy production of coal, oil, and consequent impacts to ozone. This study answers Cox’s (2007) call for new ideas to address such a crisis by combining scholarship from

environmental communication, critical and rhetorical studies, and silence studies. This research is an attempt to explore the pressing threat that Cox delineated (p. 6). Cox suggested that “uncertainty” about impacts is not enough to justify inaction and saw the need for development of a timely and committed rhetoric of urgency surrounding energy use and possible misuse (p. 6). This research employs and builds on environmental communication and silence methodology in order to identify how silences can operate to both enable and constrain information and how silence may influence public discourse in the high-stakes negotiation of natural resources. A complex understanding of the role that linguistic absences play in facilitating particular actions with the land may offer ideas toward greater collaborative efforts to forestall environmental mistreatment and open areas for discussion and further consideration of natural resources for a variety of interested stakeholders.

Functions of Local News

Media have the power to direct and keep focus on issues they consider salient (Entman, 1993; Hollander, 2010; Poindexter, Heider & McCombs, 2006). The way a news story is represented is powerful and can “constitute an exercise (intentional or quite often unintentional) of journalistic power,” constructed by drawing attention to certain issues, and leaving out some issues (Lawrence, 2000, p. 93). The way news is generated and constructed can “confer legitimacy upon particular aspects of reality while marginalizing other aspects” (Lawrence, 2000, p. 94). Poindexter, Heider, and McCombs (2005) found that local news fulfills specific needs for readers. Rural news consumers have an expectation that local news coverage will be accurate, demonstrate unbiased

reporting, involve understanding of the community, offer solutions to community problems, and demonstrate caring about the community (Poindexter et al., 2005, p. 958). A close look at the production of news and the news texts themselves will aid in understanding how silence operates in local newspaper production and how it may influence and contribute to a news text. Silence is apparent in topical omission, simplification, and amplification of some aspects over others. Silence has the ability to concretely impact the way people are directed to know, feel, and care about a topic (de Vreese; 2005; Huckin, 2010; van Dijk, 1986).

It is important to understand the role that mass media and local newspaper journalists play in providing information and communicating about natural resources in order to fully analyze the choice for silence in the news. Hansen (2011) described that “since the emergence and rise of the modern environmental movement in the 1960s, the mass media have been a central public arena for publicizing environmental issues and for contesting claims, arguments and opinions about our use and abuse of the environment” (p. 8). In local news, journalists represent a variety of voices who have a vested interest in a specific geographic region, potentially including rural citizens, farmers and ranchers, local government, environmental activists, American Indians, a growing Hispanic community, federal and state government, and oil and gas industry representatives. News media filter these varied voices and select information through a particular perspective and journalistic orientation. Hansen (2011) further suggests that study of mass media must move away from what he calls narrow concerns with mainstream news coverage of environmental issues—often perceived in “simple journalistic terms of balance and bias”—and instead reach for “richer bodies of theories and approaches to help understand and

elucidate the broader social, political and cultural roles of environmental communication” (p. 9). This study invites richer and more complex study by looking closely at how local journalists negotiate silence on an energy topic. The silences and strategies found in the Uinta Basin are profoundly connected with sociopolitical themes of community, economic abundance, and land. This study explores the nexus of media processes and community “doxa,” or common cultural belief, and strives for a broader and more complex understanding that is vital for energy scholarship (McGee, 1980). Given the stakes for extraction and for environmental well-being, it is important to understand how fracking is reported in the news.

The Context of Silence: The Uinta Basin and Fracking

The context where talk and silence is occurring is important to study in order to understand the genesis and prominence of an issue. The context of news production can play a defining role on the product—the text itself. According to van Dijk (1986) and Huckin (2002), context consists of those features that are relevant to the topic at hand for the participants involved, described as the “text producers and text interpreters” (p. 353). This study involves a focus on the texts and the text producers, and the physical context, (i.e., the environment in which a text is constructed). The context for this study includes the wider community and cultural context where a fracking story is written, as well as the organizational workings of the particular local news organizations. Study of context can illuminate the outside influences that are relevant to a text (Huckin, 2002). This research focused on an area in Eastern Utah called the Uinta Basin, referred to as “the Basin,” where drilling in all its forms is very much a way of life.

The Basin seems a veritable moonscape, where high desert lands covered by sagebrush are only briefly disrupted by red sandstone bluffs and starkly crisscrossed by dry, dusty utility roads. The Basin is both a geographical location and a geological formation. Named for its bowl shape, the Basin includes three counties, Duchesne, Daggett, and Uintah, and encompasses the Ouray and Uintah American Indian Ute reservations.² Rich patterns of petroglyphs left by early Fremont Indians provide a visual reminder of a long history of human settlement in the Basin. The desert landscape appears untouched and uninhabitable, yet it is neither. Increasingly dotted with oil rigs, the Basin boasts a population of 32,588 residents, living among the operation of seven major oil and gas operations located in the area.¹ Though this area may initially appear barren and waterless, King's Peak, Utah's highest mountain, at 13,528 feet above sea level, is located in the county's Uinta Mountains, with major streams running through the county including the Strawberry, the Duchesne, Lake Fork, and Yellowstone rivers. Vernal, Utah, the most populated city in the Basin, is known as the gateway to Flaming Gorge, a popular hiking, camping, and river-running destination located on the Green River. Home to the world-famous Carnegie Quarry, visitors to the area primarily come to marvel at the nearly 1,500 dinosaur fossils visible in the cliff face at the Dinosaur National Monument.³ Containing a wide variety of wildlife, the area provides crucial big-game winter range and sage grouse habitat, and it is home to a number of indigenous plants, including the Uintah Basin hookless cactus. This small cactus, known as *Sclerocacuts wetlandicus* has sparked controversy as a federally listed threatened perennial found on river benches along the Green and White River formations running

² American Indian is becoming the more preferred term over a more pervasive identifier, "Native American." Retrieved from http://indian.utah.gov/faq/indian_heritage.html.

³ Demographic information. Retrieved from <http://www.vernalchamber.com>.

through Duchesne, Uintah, and Carbon counties. It produces pink flowers for only one month, from April to late May, according to the Utah Division of Wildlife website, and is only found “in fine-textured soils, among salt desert shrub and pinyon-juniper communities at elevations ranging from 1360 to 2000 meters.” The main causes for its near extinction are listed as “disturbances from oil and gas exploration and development, domestic livestock grazing, building stone collecting and off-road vehicle use.”⁴ These high desert lands support a variety of activities and a rich diversity of desert life.

What Is Fracking?

Hydraulic fracturing, commonly referred to as fracking, is a long-standing oil extraction process used to stimulate oil wells and encourage greater oil production. This process uses highly pressurized water, sand, and chemicals to break up tight rock formations in order to access oil and gas reserves in the earth. Recent economic incentives and industry innovations allow rigs to drill both vertically and horizontally to reach resource-rich areas that were previously inaccessible and uneconomic. Also referred to as unconventional drilling, fracking has been a part of drilling practices in the West for 60 years, but has primarily been used in *oil* exploration and development. Before there was a market or capability for natural gas capture, it was standard practice to allow gases to “flare off” into the air during what was considered the more critical work of oil capture and production (Kurth et al., 2011).⁵ Natural gas has always been a byproduct of oil production, but has become more central to extraction activities as an

⁴ Uintah Basin Hookless factsheet. US Fish and Wildlife Service. Retrieved from <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/plants/UintaBasinHooklessCactus/UintaBasinHooklessCactusFactsheet2012.pdf>

⁵ See Also “History of Hydraulic Fracturing.” Retrieved from <http://www.energyindepth.org/in-depth/frac-in-depth/history-of-hf>.

infrastructure has been built to capture and distribute these resulting emissions and as a market for natural gas has grown. The fracking process has become better known in the U.S. in part due to recent drilling booms for shale gas in northern and eastern states, such as in North Dakota, Texas, New York, and Pennsylvania. Large oil shale deposits in these new areas have spurred renewed economic interest and growth for oil and natural gas.

Fracking in the Basin

As an example of the large scale of oil and gas production in the Basin area, Newfield Exploration Co., the largest oil producer in the state, owns 230,000 acres in this northeastern corner of Utah. Newfield's "best asset" is the Greater Monument Butte Unit, which is said to produce nearly 25,000 barrels of oil per day (Haines, 2012).⁶ Haines (2012) described the company footprint as having 4,000 locations remaining in the Green River formation alone, spread over nearly 100,000 acres in Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado.ⁱⁱ The Basin, which includes portions of the Green River formation, is estimated to hold up to 700 million barrels of oil.ⁱⁱⁱ Oil and gas operators in the area also include Resolute Natural Resources, El Paso, E&P Energy Co., Wolverine Gas & Oil Co., Bill Barrett Corp., Ute Energy Corp., Berry Petroleum Co., Gasco Energy Inc., and Wapiti Oil & Gas II, LLC. A common side effect for an increase or "boom" in focused oil and gas development, such as in the Basin, can be the nearly *commensurate* increase in environmental concerns, as evidenced in other resource extraction communities, such as in areas of North Dakota and in the former boomtown of Midland, Texas. In the Uinta Basin, a citizen-driven environmental group called Utah Physicians for Healthy

⁶ Other operators in the area include Resolute Natural Resources, El Paso, E&P Energy Co., Wolverine Gas and Oil Co., Bill Barrett Corp., Crescent Point Energy [formerly Ute Energy Corp.], Berry Petroleum Co., Gasco Energy Inc, and Wapiti Oil & Gas II, LLC.

Environment (UPHE) has become a local advocate for greater emission regulation due to the increase in oil and gas activity. In 2012, this group sued the EPA and drilling operators over 126 air pollution infractions in 2010–11 (Bernard, 2012; see Appendix B, Article 15). Some of these air quality infractions are thought to be related to increased traffic patterns and oil rig equipment related to fracking and the flaring of natural gas found in oil exploration. Some infractions are being linked to the disposal and storage of “produced” wastewater from drilling processes—a concern centering on the condensate from open evaporation of fracking fluid. Fracking wastewater storage and evaporation is believed to increase harmful particulates in the air and contribute to air pollution and has prompted even energy advocates to describe air quality concerns as, “the primary lightning rod for environmental regulation and stakeholders disputes regarding oil and gas development in the intermountain West” (Harris & London, 2012). Air quality concerns in the Basin are described as “a big deal” by local journalists and are coming to represent a new health-related battleground in energy extraction.

Rural Citizen Voices

Local residents have a complicated relationship to the land and to the oil and gas industry. Although alfalfa, corn, and cattle farming are a major part of the economic makeup of the area, the high desert geography presents challenges for any large-scale farming production. The oil and gas industry is regularly referred to as the economic “bread and butter” of the area, and the connection to the land is based primarily on the rich minerals extracted from it, either from oil and gas operations directly, or from providing infrastructure to those who are in the industry, through equipment, lodging,

goods, and service (Ostermiller, 2009). Rural citizens are passionate in their support of the oil and gas industry. One vocal resident, George Burnett, gained national press attention by standing outside his business, in his cowboy hat, holding a sign that reads “Honk if You Love Drilling” (Bennet-Smith, 2012). Burnett’s “I LOVE Drilling” website and local juice bar proudly charges “liberals” an extra dollar for products and subtracts a dollar in solidarity with conservatives and oil field workers (Bennet-Smith, 2012).⁷ An oft repeated local statistic suggests that 70–80% of the community relies on oil and gas for employment. The local football team is the “Oilers,” and the July 4th Independence parade has long been called the “Oil and Energy Parade.” Energy extraction is widely celebrated in the Basin. The relationship of rural citizens to the oil and gas industry may seem simple, yet is complex and very passionately held, and in this community, energy may be considered of greater importance than other pressing issues, potentially including residential health concerns and environmental protections. This “working” relationship between people and land is important to acknowledge because it influences attitudes and actions in land and may result in land being “reified into property and property rights” and being less valued for its inherent contribution and existence (White, 1996, p. 174).

Silence Matters

The stakes for oil and natural gas extraction are very high. Hydraulic fracturing is currently being used in 25,000 U.S. oil and gas wells each year (Stickley, 2012). Natural gas campaigns ask Americans to “think about” the ways that natural gas can lower the national carbon footprint and describe it as a “cleaner” and “cheaper” alternative to coal.⁸

⁷ George Burnett’s I love drilling juicebar website. Retrieved from: <http://www.ilovedrilling.com/juice>.

⁸ America’s Natural Gas Alliance Advertisements. Retrieved from <http://www.thinkaboutit.org>.

Estimates suggest that in the past 7 to 10 years, since 2006, fracking has increased the U.S. recoverable reserves of oil by 30% and natural gas by 90% (Montgomery & Smith, 2010). In 2011, the International Energy Association (IEA), an international economic forecasting association made up of 28 countries, including the United States, credited natural gas extraction with ushering in “a Golden Age of Gas” (Birol, 2011; IEA, 2011). This report reflects the idea that an economic infrastructure is rapidly being created out of and created *because* of the promise of natural gas.

The practical reasons for resource extraction in the Basin cannot be overlooked. In a depressed economy, jobs creation and growth can become paramount to other issues (Schwarze, 2006). One of the dominant arguments in support of fracking is that oil and gas drilling creates jobs during a time of recession. One area businessman stated that in Duchesne County alone, one new oil and gas drilling rig can create as many as 350 jobs on an active well.⁹ From 2011 to 2012, 1,952 jobs were added in Eastern Utah, with 763 of those jobs coming from the oil and gas industry. Total employment for the Basin doubled in 2011-2012, bringing unemployment to 4.0—the lowest in the state, compared with a statewide unemployment rate of 5.7 and a national unemployment rate of 9.0. Gains in other related industries significantly increased as well, with 539 construction jobs added that year and significant growth in transportation and warehousing, wholesale trade, accommodation, and food services (Ostermiller, 2009). It is not an exaggeration to suggest that oil and gas extraction is, and for the near future will remain, an economic way of life in the Uinta Basin. With a predominant focus on the economic benefits of the industry in this area, something that is of timely importance given half a decade in recession, there is a concern that the potential detriments and long-term consequences to

⁹ Citizen/businessman quote from Duchesne Public Hearing, March 6, 2012.

rural citizens and the environment may take a back seat to more immediate and “booming” economic opportunities. Does an inclusive and complex conversation about the benefits *and* consequences of oil and gas extraction exist? Is there a public conversation available in the Basin about the long-term health and well-being of the people who live and work in these lands? Does environmental well-being have a voice in the local energy conversation? These questions inform and spark scholarly interest in how language and silence operate in public energy discourse in the Uinta Basin.

Research Questions

This research is concerned with exploring the role of silences in the reporting of fracking in the Uinta Basin. Specific questions are

- **RQ1a:** What does the national conversation communicate about fracking? What are the primary topics and subtopics in the paper? What does the local, rural conversation communicate about fracking?
- **RQ1b:** What is omitted and where do silences occur between the national and local conversations? How does silence operate in local newspaper coverage compared to the national conversation on fracking? How might these silences reflect and shape cultural attitudes and perceptions of the issue?
- **RQ2:** Which stakeholder voices are most prominently spoken in the two newspapers? Which voices are less prominent in the conversation about fracking?
- **RQ3:** What do local journalists identify as areas of silence? How do local journalists research, source, and construct stories about fracking? What strategies do they use to negotiate a personal and professional relationship with silences?

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND FOR SILENCE

Speech: A History of Power

In Sophist Greek democratic tradition, oration and the spoken word received a status of primacy and power due to its ability to influence public opinion. The power of speech was viewed as being inherent in the *performance* of language. From Plato's popularization of the dialectic to the crowd-pleasing argumentation of Demosthenos and Cicero, early performance of language spawned the long-standing traditions of public rhetoric and debate in politics and law (Conley, 1990; Corbett & Connors, 1990). The term rhetoric comes from the word rhetor, which comes from the Greek language, meaning "orator" and "speaker."¹⁰ From early times, spoken discourse has been viewed as powerful and able to influence and persuade, while other forms of communication, such as silence, have suffered in the comparison. Silence has historically been viewed as being less vital and less potent than speech. Early sociological views of written discourse primarily conceived of silence as a negative and passive state, regarding it as a weakness, emptiness, or lack (Derrida, 1978). As Derrida famously stated, "*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*," or "there is nothing outside of the text," which suggested the importance of context for *language* construction, yet did not adequately address prelanguage activities

¹⁰ See Poulakos (1999) for more information on sophist rhetoric. See also definition of rhetor. Retrieved from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/rhetor>.

for silence and neglected the specifics about what else might be found there (Derrida, 1967). Whether it is written or spoken, and whether spoken discourse is effective or *ineffective*, oral language has been viewed as preeminent to other types of discourse (Peters, 1999). Later, communication scholarship shifted somewhat from this “pure” idea of language and began to focus on silence with more interest, conceiving of it as a backdrop for talk and a necessary part of conversational turn-taking (Goffman, 1983; Lyons; 1977; Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977). Silence was viewed as part of an ordered interpersonal interaction, such as you speak and I am quiet, then I speak and you are quiet. These studies acknowledged the existence and even the necessity of silence, yet the focus was centered on studying the length of pauses in conversation and dialogic interactions, weighing a pause’s significance to the overall message conveyed, yet neglecting the full range of meaning that silence may communicate. This vein of study neglected the power and depth of meaning that silence may have in its existence and in the interaction with language, and *not* necessarily potency just in the *background* of language.

Current scholars have begun to view silence as more integrated and powerful in discourse (Huckin, 2010; 2002). The idea of a “linguistic bias” prompted a scholarly thrust to avoid such bias by looking more closely at how language and silence interact and not just interrogating “available discourse” (Blommaert, 2005). One way to conceptualize the interaction and *integration* of silence with language is found in musical notation, specifically with a musical silence called a “rest.” A rest is a distinct aspect of the melody related to and intertwined with the more obvious aspects, the notes. When a musical rest is ignored, it has the power to throw off the entire rhythmic structure of a

piece. Those who have sung out on a “rest” during a choral performance know the profound power of silence in relation to the more obvious linguistic aspects of music. The silences in music are distinct, yet *equally* related to the cadence and rhythm of the overarching melody. In much the same way, textual silences can be thought of as intertwined with language and as part of the “rhythm” of a text. Silence is beginning to be viewed as an integral part of discourse *building* as well, with a greater realization for how silence can powerfully reflect and shape cultural ideals and beliefs. Blommaert (2005) stated that “society operates on language users and influences what they can accomplish in language long before they open their mouths, so to speak,” suggesting the importance of prelanguage (p. 35). Binary thinking, which suggests that silence is passive or merely utilitarian, while language and utterances are given primacy, can neglect the interrelated nature of language and silence and leave out important aspects of how they relate to each other. The apprehension is that polarized thinking—which posits language and silence on opposite ends of a spectrum as polar opposites—might “prevent the realization of the range of meaning possible for silence” (Acheson, 2008, pp. 537–538).

Acheson (2008) stated that silence should be conceptualized less as a *backdrop* for language, and more as a linguistic gesture or “event.” She described the absence of language as “unavoidably spatial and temporal” and suggested that the characteristic of *kairos* or timeliness is evidence that silence has unrealized communicative power (Acheson, 2008, p. 544). A thoughtful understanding of the physical context is needed because a choice for language or silence happens in a particular physical space, but what is reported is also influenced by the *kairos* of silence, or what language or silence means in a particular time and place, also thought of as a “timeliness” for certain ideas or topics

(Kinneavy & Eskin, 1994). Kinneavy and Eskin (1986) defined an Artistotalian understanding of *kairos* to mean the “right or opportune time to do something, or right measure in doing something” (p. 131). The intentionality behind silence and the broad power of the unspoken in time and space have not been fully explored in environmental communication scholarship. The full range of meaning for silence has not been fully examined, and a profound need exists to explore silence in *all* its complexity, taking stakeholder voices, geographical context, and writer stance into consideration. As Carbaugh (2007) suggested, environmental scholarship must avoid “linguistic lag” and “become better attuned to those other expressive systems” by and through an urgent academic commitment to “understanding multiple discourses” (p. 72). This scholarship is interested in precisely looking at these “other expressive systems,” through a careful examination of the systemic and strategic use of silence.

Communicating Silence

Silence can communicate a variety of significant meanings. It can be used to convey shared understanding. The unspoken can be therapeutic by restoring calm, such as through meditation. For example, the Buddhist Zen traditions of *sunyata* and *zazen* involve a ritualistic chanting and a lengthy “sitting in silence” (Wang, 2001). Christian monasticism and Judaism both celebrate the reverence of silence as a necessary component for spiritual communion.

Silence can communicate both positive and negative associations. Keeping quiet can be a way to avoid conflict or demonstrate profound respect (Huckin, 2002). It can be a verbal and visual demonstration of self-control and restraint. Silence can signal

dismissal and disinterest by “tuning someone out” and not responding. Conversely, the absence of speech can also signal focused attention and involve intense, one-sided listening. Silence can be a means for expressing assent or solidarity. In some cultures, the absence of language is used to communicate profound disapproval, sometimes employed as a “silent treatment.” Cultural linguistic studies have shown that silence can punish or operate as a normative code of behavior and sometimes may act as a *requirement* for securing group membership (Hao, 2010; Medubi, 2010). Keeping quiet on a particular issue can signal agreement; in effect, silence can take the form of a requirement or “badge” of solidarity, which is “worn” to align with one group or another. Whether it is used as a positive or negative communication tool, the unspoken has power to convey distinct and powerful meaning.

Control Issues

The strategic power of silence can be overlooked and ignored, yet it is important to think about what a “stealth-like” status may offer. Silence has a power that allows it to operate below the level of conscious perception (Huckin, 2010). The subtle characteristics of silence make it of great interest for critical discourse analysis precisely *because* power and control are part of this language/silence dynamic. There is a profound lack of control associated with those who cannot speak, or are not allowed to speak for themselves. Consider the power dynamic involved in *keeping* someone from speaking, of *silencing*. The ability and opportunity to speak, or not speak, signifies a power differential. In studies of both gender and race, scholars have discovered far-reaching legal and practical impacts of not being allowed to have a public voice and of *being*

silenced (Rodriguez, 2011; Tannen & Saville-Troike, 1985). Just as persuasive language can have powerful consequences, strategic silence can communicate profound meaning as well. As seen, silence imbues particular meanings to the context in which it is situated and in this sense, controls discourse equally to that which *is* said. A strategic use of silence in energy communication can allow some ideas to proliferate at the expense of others. How silence operates in energy discourse may have concrete influence on attitudes and actions in land. How these silences are created, nurtured, and negotiated should be a primary consideration for environmental communication scholarship.

Unlike language, silence is difficult to point to, yet like language it can have weighty properties and consequences. For instance, consider the interpersonal power of “the elephant in the room,” or the intensity of rendering someone speechless, or think of the “unmentionables”— topics that are off limits in certain situations. There is powerlessness in being speechless because words cannot express the appropriate emotion or because one cannot adequately define the gravity of a situation. There is a power differential in *being* silenced. Conflict can result from a forced silence, where one is eager to express, but has no opportunity to speak. Silence can be used to communicate and convey multiple meanings, both positive and negative, but how can one determine what silence actually *means*?

There seems to be an inherent paradox in studying silence by studying *language*, yet because language and silence are not opposites, but are rather enmeshed and related, language offers a means of identification for silence (Acheson, 2008). The study of particular discourse can aid in identifying where talk is expected and where silence is found instead. In an early silence study, Brummett (1980) found that “strategic silence is

most easily studied by examining discourse, because discourse generated by the press and public expresses the *meaning* attributed to silence” (p. 296, emphasis added). His claim that “silence becomes strategic when talk is expected,” suggests that an intentional silence is revealed when talk is expected, but is omitted (Brummett, 1980, p. 289).

Foregrounding and Backgrounding

The use of silence can be obvious, yet it is often used to communicate meaning in a quiet and subtle way. In writing and linguistic studies, one example of this subtlety is found in information foregrounding and backgrounding, which is defined as the strategic positioning and privileging of some knowledge over other information (Brown & Yule, 1983; Grimes, 1975). In light of this definition, silence acts as a means of “protecting” or controlling others’ access to knowledge by placing it prominently, or less prominently. This type of “information control” in media studies is called “gatekeeping,” a situation whereby certain discourse is controlled in a strategic manner by those who hold and process the information. Originally studied as part of human behavioral studies, gatekeeping was later applied to media organizations and political decision makers (Cohen, 1963; Lewin, 1943; Lippmann, 1922; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; White, 1996). Later, gatekeeping was referred to as an aspect of agenda-setting theory, as part of media effects theories, a vein of communication study that suggests news agents “set up” what is considered to be important for readers to know, thereby determining the news to some degree (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Though these theories do a great deal to address the power dynamic involved in news activities, and so are important to consider, they fail to adequately consider prediscourse moves that are made

and often do not include the role that community and context can actively play in influencing the agenda for public discourse (de Vreese, 2005).

Silence as Strategy

Silence can be potent and strategic. Remaining silent in some situations may be wise—a way to accomplish certain objectives. Brummett (1980) found that silence is helpful if “mystery, uncertainty, passivity or relinquishment, are the most desirable meanings,” and defined “relinquishment” as a situation where one remains silent and gives someone else the opportunity to speak in one’s place (p. 295). Brummett suggested that stakeholders and decision makers may use silence strategically by remaining quiet while compelling others to speak their goals and motives, and in this way, silence may be used to manipulate and control. Silence can be directed at a particular subject or person, as “when one chooses not to speak, one is sometimes *not* speaking to a particular audience” (Brummett, 2005, p. 295, emphasis added). In order to identify the strategic use of silence, Brummett (1980) said that “a critic should note to whom the silence is directed and should examine the relationship between the silent person and the target, looking at how the silence affects the relationship (p. 295). As discussed earlier, not speaking to someone or *not* addressing something can be a kind of dismissal or snub. It may suggest that the target is not worthy of engaging with, or that directly addressing something or someone might be viewed as conferring a legitimacy or power that would *not* be given, if met with silence.

There are a range of strategic communicative uses for silence. Not every silence is of equal importance for this critical work. As Linde (2001) stated, “there are an infinite

number of things that are not said. However, what is relevant is what is *saliently unsaid*, what *could* be said but is not” (p. 26, emphasis added). To explore how silence operates in this specific context, it is important to identify the voices that are allowed to speak on the topic, those that may be silenced, and those voices that might remain purposefully or intentionally silent.

Huckin (2010) offered the most complete classification of silences, including, from least transparent to most transparent, topical silences (gaps surrounding a topic); genre-based conventional silences (such as obituaries or resumes, where information is left out due to convention); discreet, “sensitive” silences (social sensitivities); lexical silences (specific word choice); implicational silences (politeness/insinuations, subtle silences); and presuppositional silences (presumed or shared knowledge; p. 421). He defined topical silences as “the most rhetorically potent, yet least detectable type of textual silence, where some topic relevant to a larger issue is omitted from discussion” (p. 421). Each type of silence might be used unwittingly or unintentionally, and each silence can be considered manipulative if it is found to “elide relevant information in a way that surreptitiously disadvantages the listener or reader” (Huckin, 2010, p. 421). Here silences operate in a “stealth” mode because they are meant to be hidden. Huckin (2002) explained that these manipulative silences are “unlike other types of silence,” and that “these silences depend for their success on not being noticed by the reader or listener” (2002, p. 351). He found that manipulative topical silences are common in print media, yet also found that they are the least researched in news, perhaps because such silences are difficult to identify without revealing some prejudice on the part of the researcher (Huckin, 2002). To combat such criticisms, researchers should admit to having some

prejudice and bias upfront. It may be important to acknowledge that while truly objective work is a worthwhile goal, a purely objective study is a difficult and somewhat elusive endeavor. This absence of “pure” objectivity should not dissuade from the pursuit of silence research, however, because the ability to identify a gap or to have a sense of that something does not “sit well” with a text, or is absent from a text, may very well help to *expose* powerful bias or particular political orientation. It may precisely be that a somewhat “biased” orientation *makes* such identification possible in the first place. For example, the televised critiques found in a Republican response following a Democratic U.S. president’s state of the union address, are designed to directly refute and reference the “gaps” that were visible in the speech from a Republican viewpoint and way of thinking. Though clearly a biased viewpoint—openly favoring a particular political party—it is precisely the sense that something is “left out” or does not “sit right” in the primary speech that allows the responder to mark it as “incomplete” and thus *worthy of rebuttal* in the secondary speech, or Republican response. In this example, what is unsaid becomes visible and important in part due to conflicting political ideologies.

In this same spirit of disclosure, it is important to note for this research the existence of a family connection to the oil and gas industry in Eastern Utah—a connection that serves as a check and balance in this research and also served as a spark and an impetus for it. This connection provided important insight into this work, yet did not hinder the research—because in a very real sense, you as the reader and I as the researcher are *already* implicated in energy extraction in the Basin. We are complicit in the processes of energy extraction because we are energy users. And yet, it is precisely this fact that makes you and I equally *invested* in responsible energy extraction and use.

It is *because* we are energy consumers that we have a palpable stake in energy outcomes.

Huckin (2010) developed a methodology for identification and analysis of manipulative silences, a method that involves holistic research of current discourse about the issue, interpretation of whether deception is apparent, and whether something is misleading, and analysis of the prominence of some topics and subtopics over others (2010, p. 429). To determine whether manipulation was evident, he asked if there was evidence of a certain slant or concealment in the text. If so, one should determine whether there was an intention to deceive. Huckin (2002) suggested that this could be done by looking at what the actual writing contained, then determining what, if anything, was left out, and further investigating a writer's knowledge of an issue. "If the writer left something out that he/she had knowledge of, and could reasonably be expected to be included in the discussion, then it might be considered an intentional silence" (p. 368). These questions get at the "interest" or slant of the writer and who the writer regularly turns to as a source—suggesting that one way to understand the way silence operates is to understand the *intentions* behind the silence, if any, and determine if the discourse producer has something to gain from constructing the story a certain way.

Huckin's (2010, 2002) work provided a much needed model for studying how important social issues are being discussed by looking at *how* news frames are selected, simplified, and amplified—how a story is constructed. This method particularly involves looking at a topic's textual placement within the opening paragraphs in a news article, and whether that topic is foregrounded, or if certain aspects are given extra emphasis and importance than other related information. A number of studies have explored the textual impact of headlines, front pages, and first pages and found that where a topic is placed

directly correlates to the power of that topic to persuade and influence (Ashley & Olson, 1998; Kress & Mills, 1988; Marshall, 1998; van Dijk, 2009; van Leeuwen, 1985). In this view, an understanding of how a topic *is* being discussed is a precursor to identifying where silences and gaps occur in a text and to further identifying what may have been purposefully left *out* of the conversation (Brummett, 1980; Huckin, 2010).

Stancetaking

Huckin's (2002) method calls for an investigation of authorial interest or stancetaking, and demonstrates that stance can often be revealed through the positioning of language in a text, or the use of evaluative language, specific word choice, repetition of a topic, marked absences, modality (level of commitment in language)—all of which hint at a particular ideological frame for the article (Huckin, 2002; Johnstone, 2008). Therefore, an author may give hints and evidences of a particular stance on the issue of energy through positioning and word choice or through the use of particular quotes from certain groups and sources. Particular words choices placed early in an article, such as “significant,” “sincere,” “environmentally responsible,” or “shining example,” can convey more than just simple information about potential drilling projects. These word choices point to how the author aligns with the information provided. When things are defined in certain terms, it becomes difficult to view the situation any differently. What if a drilling collaboration is not “shining” for some of the stakeholders? What if a drilling collaboration leaves important stakeholders out? Does abundant job growth in energy equally benefit *all* members of this community? Does the writing allow for alternative ways of viewing the situation? There are explicit *and* implicit ways for a writer to use

language and silence to subtly align with information or negate a particular ideology.

Impartiality and Alignment in News

Ideological alignment with a story is typically discouraged in journalists. Cultural and professional conventions in the journalism industry encourage a journalist to strive for the ideals of impartiality and fairness. Objective treatment of information is a fundamental tenet of journalistic credibility and when language is too obviously connected to a particular stance, it threatens and undermines journalistic credibility. Credibility is broadly defined as “a central professional value for journalists” (Blackwell, 2013). The perceived credibility of the media may affect an audience’s choices about how to interpret and respond to news. A politically slanted news channel may readily acknowledge a slant upfront, and the audience then has a choice about whether to accept that explicit slant as part of their “membership” or affiliation. It is more problematic when a slant is subtle and not readily acknowledged or explicitly defined. Scholars and journalists may disagree about *what* exactly constitutes credibility, but generally there is agreement that “credibility relates primarily to the truthfulness and accuracy of the facts journalists report” (Blackwell, 2013). This definition equates “credible journalism” with reliability and believability, and even more deeply defines credibility as going beyond surface believability to include fairness, lack of bias, accuracy, completeness, and trustworthiness (Metzger et al., 2003). Audiences expect that credible journalists will act according to shared norms of honesty and fairness, and this expectation may impact the mindset an audience is likely to use in processing and “digesting” the news. These journalistic tenets of fairness and lack of bias may be widely espoused, but not always

practiced, as it is difficult to separate personal standpoint from professional goals. Often such norms can be violated unwittingly, without a conscious intent to manipulate.

Sometimes a particular slant is a conscious choice.

Assumptions about what readers want to read may also influence what is written. Organizational norms and community norms can apply pressure and shape a story. But whether reproduced unwittingly or consciously, credibility violations can serve to reinforce particular viewpoints and represent some agendas as “truth” when they more closely resemble a personal, regional, or organizational stance on an issue. Huckin (2002) pointed out that journalists are not the only group to struggle with impartiality. He suggested that scholars make the mistake of stating things too conclusively, too prescriptively, and can risk either too strongly influencing those who read their work, or projecting bias onto their own work. Blommaert (2005) similarly argued that critical linguistic scholarship can make the mistake of trying to suggest “absolute or pure explanation,” and may lose credibility in the process (p. 32).

Power in News Discourse

The power to construct and frame an issue is a structural part of how an issue is developed, presented, and experienced by others (de Vreese, 2005). Examining silences is inherently about identifying the selection and omission of information that takes place in the framing and construction of a story—simply defined as the way an author wants something to be read. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) defined a *frame* as a “central organizing or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them” (p. 53). Study in framing is associated with two main theories

mentioned earlier, one of “agenda setting” and one centered on the “gatekeeping” functions of news. Media gatekeeping theories suggest that journalists essentially stand at the “gate” of information, having the power to determine how others are allowed to view that information (Lewin, 1943; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; White, 1996). Similarly, media agenda-setting theories suggest that journalists have power to determine how a news story is presented (Cohen, 1963; Lippmann, 1922; McCombs, Maxwell, & Shaw, 1972). While the goal of *this* study is not to directly examine framing or agenda setting per se, it is important to acknowledge these areas of study are considered integral to the news production process and are related to stance-taking ideas that are used in this analysis. To address and analyze news discourse thoroughly, there must be some discussion of how framing of an issue functions in news discourse because what journalists decide to include and omit has the power to define the boundaries of an emerging story, reflecting a particular orientation toward some information and less focus on others. A decision about what makes the news, or a choice about what will be stressed or featured in an article, is not necessarily benign in its impact because absences “speak” in an article. Though there are limits and boundaries imposed by the profession, whether from internal organizational structures, community ideals, or from journalistic conventions, the way an issue is represented and outlined in a discourse can have impact on how others are allowed to process the issue.

Audience reception of mass media is an area that needs more research, yet one study of air quality by Durfee and Corbett (2004) found that “how communities and local media frame the issue has a direct impact on how citizens become aware of attitudes, form attitudes, and ultimately decide to act or react to the situation” (as cited in Hansen,

2011, p. 81). Though the present study does not offer an “audience” perspective, it does borrow on this idea that local media frames can impact attitudes and actions concerning the environment. The representation of stakeholder voices in the media and the news frames selected to tell a story can impact public perceptions of that story. Public information about oil and gas fracking is generally communicated through the news media, and the particular language used, and not used, about the environment in fracking discourse has power to shape public perceptions and actions in the land. This thesis offers a novel approach to examining fracking through the identification of silences in news articles in the Uinta Basin, an area where fracking is a vital and pronounced part of this community’s economy.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Study Design/Operationalization

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was used in this study to address the research questions because it allows for several levels of inquiry, including a macro-level perspective of the broader public discourse (news articles) and a more micro-level exploration of the texts and their links to particular elements such as journalistic stance (interviews; Johnstone, 2008). Movement between the macro and micro levels of perception required a recursive research procedure, where one regularly engages the text directly and then steps back from it to see a bigger picture or perspective of how silence is operating within the ideological patterns that shape and are shaped in a community. This type of meaning-making is how one can make determine “what is meant” by particular language and particular silences as well. This method of recursive study invites complexity. As Johnstone (2008) described it, this layered process of researching explores the abstract space where meaning is located, “between hearers, speakers, and texts, saying that meaning is ‘socially constructed’ or ‘jointly produced’” (p. 264).

Critical discourse analysis and qualitative content and stance-taking methodologies from Huckin (2010) and Johnstone (2008) were used to examine the national and local papers because these methods offer a more nuanced look at the

dynamics of how news is created and offer a way to examine how silence might be viewed as operating within specific contexts of power. News articles were analyzed with a combination of content framing and stance-taking methodology (Huckin, 2010, Johnstone 2008). These articles were examined using a systematic yet interpretive qualitative discourse analysis, which involves several readings of texts that become progressively tighter, and looking at language usage, placement, and imagery to uncover specific themes and strategies (Barton, 2002; Hall, 1997). Hall (1997) described this type of textual analysis as a way to “look at what and how meanings were constructed and what realities were present” (p. 15). Topical data and foregrounded data were collected and distilled with a simple numbering system that offered a way to understand a great deal of data across a series of topics and subtopics and then see a broader picture of *how* fracking is being depicted, what topics related to fracking are *not* depicted, and those topics that are depicted less often. The topics and subtopics that were addressed less often are considered to be *relative silences*. Manipulative silences, or what Huckin (2010) described as “silences that depend on not being noticed by a reader for their very existence,” were found not only where complete topics were omitted from the energy conversation, but also where topics were *differentially addressed*, with focus on certain aspects over others. Relative silences and gaps in the way a topic is addressed are less noticeable, more subtle, and so according to Huckin’s (2010) template, also have the potential to be more manipulative. Additionally, specific elements of journalist news writing and news production were examined through integration of in-person interviews. Finally, language and emerging themes were identified and analyzed from the national news, the local news, and journalist interviews. Results were interpreted and discussed

using a combination of both textual categorizations and descriptive data.

Participants and Materials

Study participants included three men and one woman, ranging in age from 35–60 years of age, each with between 10–20 years of journalism experience. Participants were identified through snowball sampling, which is a form of participant referral where a current participant suggests other potential participants for inclusion in the study. This type of selection can lead to interviews with likeminded individuals; however, at least one referral led to an opposing ideology about energy extraction. The sample was purposive as it included only those journalists who participated in written oil and gas communication during April 2012–April 2013 in the Uintah Basin. Interviewees were identified and contacted through email and telephone. Interview questions were provided to participants who requested them prior to the interview. Consent forms were signed at the interview, and permission to record and transcribe the interviews was requested, with the mention of appropriate confidentiality safeguards, including the option to refuse to answer any questions, to leave the study at any time, and to obscure identity with generic identifiers. One participant declined to be recorded, and so handwritten notes were combined with research observations from the interview. Interviews were conducted in the Basin, at two news offices located in Roosevelt and Vernal, Utah.

Materials for this study included 63 local articles on fracking, obtained from a combined news agency that prints *The Uintah Basin Standard* and *The Vernal Express*, two rural newspapers in Eastern Utah. Articles were collected over a 1-year period, from April 1, 2012, to April 1, 2013. One hundred and four articles were also identified from

the national paper of record, *The New York Times*, on the topic of fracking. *The Times* articles covered the same period and offered a voice to compare and contrast what was being said on the issue locally. Materials for the interviews involved the use of a handheld tape recorder to record the interviews. A laptop computer was used to transcribe interview notes and recordings. Files were kept on a thumb drive and stored in a locked cabinet. The biggest material consideration was time, as the Uintah Basin is more than a 3-hour drive east of Salt Lake City, Utah. Material considerations for the news articles and the interviews, including a rationale for each, are provided below.

Article Rationale: *The New York Times*

The Times is the third-largest metropolitan newspaper in the United States. It has long been considered the national “newspaper of record.”^{iv} The term “of record” suggests a historical veracity and consistent effort to provide less sensationalized, accurate, and unbiased reporting (Martin & Hansen, 1996). This prestigious title has been challenged at times, yet despite these blemishes, *The Times* is still generally considered to provide a representative snapshot of current public sentiment (Martin & Hansen, 1998). In this study, *The Times* was employed as a representative voice for reviewing the broader conversation on fracking and provided important comparison and contrast to what was being said on the issue of fracking locally over a 1-year period, from April 1, 2012, to April 1, 2013. This timeframe was historically significant, as it included coverage of robust political rhetoric from before and after the 2012 United States presidential election and the promotion of the Obama Administration’s “all-of-the-above” approach to energy production. This approach promoted a wide variety of renewable and nonrenewable

energy exploration, including oil and natural gas fracking. The preelection rhetoric focused considerable public attention on the negotiation of energy development and issues of environmental protection.

Article Rationale: *The Standard and Vernal Express*

Despite some changes in the way people access their news, there is strong evidence that people continue to orient toward local newspapers as a vital source of information (Chyi & Yang, 2009; Hollander, 2010; Poindexter, Heider, & McCombs, 2006).¹¹ Even with the advent of niche news on the internet, local papers continue to serve as a primary means of getting the news in rural communities (Hollander, 2010).¹² Newspapers are considered to have a powerful role in building and framing local community news, and local media in particular can have the power to direct the public gaze toward topics it deems to be important (Durfee & Corbett, 2004; Entman, 1993).¹³ Taking these trends about news consumption into account, two rural newspapers were selected for study: *The Uintah Basin Standard* and *The Vernal Express*. The rationale for the study was that local print news is very strong in the Uinta Basin and might have power to influence the news agenda for this community. Articles on oil and gas fracking were located from a combined news agency that prints *The Uintah Standard* and *The Vernal Express*. Both newspapers are owned by Brehm Communications, Inc., and cover a large geographic area of Eastern Utah, including Roosevelt, where the *Standard* is physically located; Duchesne, where the larger portion of fracking takes place; and

¹¹ Chyi & Yang (2009) found that online readership is about ¼ that of print readership for local news.

¹² Hollander (2010) surveyed a nationally-representative sample, over 10 years, and found that there is still a desire for print newspaper in local news.

¹³ A “gaze” is a concept put forward by Lacan and later used by Foucault to suggest that the ability to gaze and the ability to determine the object gazed upon, is a power position.

Vernal, the larger population center, where the *Vernal Express* offices are located. The *Express* and *Standard* share a website and interchangeably print many of the same articles with journalists from both papers working out of either office and coordinating daily. The *Uintah Basin Standard* and *Vernal Express* readership has a combined print newspaper circulation of 10,000 copies, with 5,000 facebook followers, and 300 online readers.¹⁴ This study focused on newspaper discourse in order to understand how written news discourse is related to context. One interviewee was with news radio rather than print news, and though the medium for disseminating information on radio news is markedly different from print news in some regards, the act of information gathering, writing, and summarizing was considered to have similar writing, sourcing, and preproduction processes to fit the inclusion perimeters for the interview portion of the study. This interview, Interview C, did not have the same potential for cross-comparison with the local news articles themselves and thus should be considered as important for understanding rural journalistic context and experience, but it should be acknowledged that radio journalism is quite different from print news and so must be separately considered from the print news analysis.

Interview Rationale: Local Journalists

In the *Standard* and *Express*, from April 1, 2012, to April 1, 2013, 70 authored texts on fracking were analyzed. All articles that particularly mentioned fracking in the headline, and the majority of articles in this corpus, were written by a small group of seven local journalists. Interviews with local print journalists were conducted to better

¹⁴ *Uintah Basin Standard* and *Vernal Express* website. Retrieved from <http://www.ubmedia.biz/ubstandard/news>

understand professional views about the topic, the way they were assigned the story, where the initial information came from (press release, regular assignment) and the sources and authorities used. Interviews added important context for silences, with a focus on sourcing techniques, some personal demographics and orientation, and an examination of how local and organizational context might impact a story (see Appendix A). The journalists' personal and professional identities were important to explore in this study, in order to understand the way that context and journalistic standpoint are connected to news production. In Burke's words, "only those voices from without are effective, which can speak the language of the voice within" (as cited in Tompkins & Cheney, 1983, p. 127). The "identity" and "role" of journalists within the Basin community and with the newspapers were important aspects to identify in order to understand how topics surrounding land and energy extraction are constructed and consequently represented.

Procedure: Article Selection: *The New York Times*

A ProQuest Newsstand online database search located 104 articles from *The New York Times* in the selected time frame, from April 1, 2012, through April 1, 2013, under the search headings of *fracking* and *hydraulic fracturing*. These results included articles that appeared both in print newspaper and online. A few op-ed pieces and letters from readers were part of that initial corpus and occurred across diverse genres, suggesting a certain legitimacy and pervasiveness for the issue of fracking as a national cultural talking point. Although these articles represent an important element in the discursive debate on fracking and signal public dialogue and "interaction," they were eliminated

from the corpus, as this study was singularly interested in comparing *news* articles on fracking. Taking into consideration these eliminations and inclusions, the search results yielded a total of 104 *New York Times* articles, with a resulting research corpus of 91 national articles for comparison.

Procedure: Article Selection: *Standard and Express*

There are some inherent difficulties with attempting to study silence on a topic, precisely because it involves study of something that is *not* readily apparent. Consequently, some inescapable inequities exist within the local and national samples, though each article was carefully considered and every effort was made to ensure the most parallel comparison possible. Local articles on fracking were located using an online search engine on the newspaper website under a direct search of *fracking* or *hydraulic fracturing*, which yielded only 10 articles with fracking in the headline or body (see Appendix B). To locate a representative sample for comparison, a larger local search was necessary under the broader search of “drilling.” This additional search was necessary as many of the local articles discussed extraction and extraction techniques, but did not use the specific term “fracking” in the headline. The corpus was further narrowed to 83 texts that specifically mentioned oil and natural gas drilling, out of the initial 152 articles located. This initial criteria for inclusion was guided by the assumption that most, if not all oil and gas wells in Utah utilize fracking technology. This assumption was strongly bolstered in the interview process, but was initially developed based on a government quote directly addressing local fracking in a major Salt Lake newspaper, *The Deseret News*, from March 3, 2013, where John Baza, a director of the Utah Division of

Oil Gas and Mining (DOGGM) stated that, “in Utah, most of our wells are fracked.”

While all feasible attempts were made to keep the samples exact, the local sample represents as close a match to the national sample *as possible*, precisely *because* of the relative silence on the issue of fracking in this local community. The limited use of the term fracking to describe local extraction activities had to be overcome to some degree in order for this research to move forward. Fracking is taking place, but was not referred to directly. It was necessary to parcel out where fracking was discussed in the local newspapers using drilling terminology that was reasonably related to fracking.

Additional articles were eliminated from the sample for not having a direct enough link to fracking. To further bolster the sample comparison, local articles were reduced after in-depth consultation with an oil and gas professional with 15 years of experience in the industry to include those stories that were thematically and logically connected to fracking. Because a direct search under *fracking* or *hydraulic fracturing* in the *Uintah Basin Standard* and *Vernal Express* yielded only 10 articles with fracking in the headline or body (see Appendix B), articles under a broader *drilling* search were included, but *only* if they had direct references to oil and gas exploration and operations; had particular mention of horizontal drilling, directional drilling, or unconventional drilling; and included mentions of the major oil and gas producers in the area known to employ fracking techniques, including Anadarko, Newfield, Devon, Bill Barrett, Co., Western Energy, and Ute Energy (now Crescent Energy). An article was included if it covered elements directly related to oil and gas extraction efforts, such as “produced” water, extraction safety protocols, and air containing volatile organic compounds (VOCs)—air emissions that have been linked to oil and gas fracking operations. Articles

were included that connected fracking either to the economic benefits of fracking to the area, or to the local infrastructure, including the use of water sources, funding for roads, and facilities management. The initial difficulty in locating a perfectly parallel sample does not negate the importance of conducting this silence research, but rather this omission *highlights* the need for such research—with the appropriate acknowledgement and full disclosure of the process utilized to overcome such difficulties for this study.

Eight articles were included that appeared in both papers, but had subtle differences in headline and content. Nearly all local articles on fracking were located in the *news* section of the papers, except one letter-to-the-editor, four editorials found in the *opinion* section, and two articles located in the *features* section. The local articles were narrowed for comparison with the national newspaper to specifically include *only the news articles*, omitting other types of news pieces for a final corpus of 63 articles selected for analysis over the specific timeframe of April 1, 2012–April 1, 2013.

Procedure: Interviews: Local Journalists

Interviews took place in the Uinta Basin in three cities, one at the *Uintah Basin Standard* offices in Roosevelt, Utah, two at the *Vernal Express* offices in Vernal, Utah, and another location in Vernal, Utah. Four interviews were conducted in person and were approximately 1 hour in length. Participants were informed about the intent of the study to focus on silence and language in media accounts of fracking and were given a chance to ask any questions about the research before it began. Interview questions were standardized and developed using a type of account analysis put forward by Tompkins and Cheney (1983) that seeks to encourage open-ended “accounts” from the interviewee

as a way to understand how the individual identifies with the organization, in this case, Brehm Communications, the local newspaper agency.^v Account analysis is interested in how someone narrows information, how alternatives appear, and how choices are finally arrived at (Tompkins & Cheney, 1983). This type of analysis follows Burke's (1996b) suggestion that both external and internal influences impact personal and professional (organizational) identity. Interview questions are available for review in Appendix A.

After initial interviews were conducted, interview recordings were transcribed and considered along with observational notes taken during and directly after the interviews. Language and emerging themes and arguments from the interviews were noted for analysis and placed into categories, which became visible through a methodical process of reading, identifying, and rereading. Transcription was done slowly by hand, rather than by machine, in order to understand subtle pauses, articulations, and mannerisms that might have meaning. Transcription provided a way to review the interview experience and it allowed for a deep familiarity with the interview content and expressed views of the interviewees. The length of each transcription varied, from Interview A, which was 20 pages in length, to Interview B, which was more condensed at 3 pages, as no recording was allowed, and so was reconstructed through extensive notes, jottings, and direct quotes. Interview C yielded 16 pages and Interview D was a total of 9 pages in length. Transcription took 3 full days to complete and yielded a total of 48 pages of interview notes. These transcriptions in their entirety are not appended, in order to comply with a promised measure of confidentiality for participants and the University of Utah's Institutional Review Board, though excerpts from the interviews are included as part of the descriptive results. Topical themes, main topics, and gaps were identified,

including: how the interviewee described and framed the issue of fracking, how they depicted land, representations of public reaction to the process, alignment and solidarity with stakeholders and sources, and expressed strategies for negotiating silences and differences in personal values and professional ideology. All of these areas helped in ascertaining the standpoint on the issue of fracking and offered an important window into how local journalists negotiate topics that might be considered “off limits.” Personal and professional strategies were articulated about how journalists operate around and through such cultural taboos and silences. The primary interest for determining stance was in learning how a participant gathered information, the relationship with their sources, and how a public and personal relationship with silence was negotiated.

Method

Articles from *The Times* and *The Standard* and *Vernal Express* were systematically analyzed by hand. A specific decision was made *not* to employ electronic means, though some technologies do exist, because these instruments can sometimes miss the subtleties, nuances, and evolution of an issue as it moves through an article. This analysis represented specific impressions and intuitions about what topics were represented and which topics were considered “foregrounded.” That being said, topical decisions for categories were arrived at through multiple passes of the 102 articles, a scholarly familiarity with the subject matter going into the project, and a verification process that involved double and triple checking impressions against article summaries, article headlines, and article content to ensure the proper elucidation of main points. Additionally, a random grouping of 10% of the articles was independently rated to check

that interpretations were not obviously biased or “off track” by a scholar with a more senior background in energy communication, to determine that these conclusions could reasonably be arrived at and similar conclusions drawn by an outside source.

Categories were created to analyze national articles under the following categories: *article title, author, news section, main topics, subtopics, voices (in order of appearance), terminology used to describe fracking, geographic location discussed, and foregrounding*. The foregrounding section was left blank until all of the other categories were completed and until several passes of the article had been made. The process of identifying categories and marking issues as foregrounded was systematic, but not mechanical. As Huckin (2012) warned, one of the concerns with this type of research is that results can become a “tabulation of lexical items” and subsequently may lack the nuance of human-based qualitative interpretation, and so attempts were made to include both tabulated results and more nuanced descriptive data (p. 357). The selection of topical and subtopical categories must necessarily be looked at as interpretive, though attempts were made to be as methodical as possible. As Barton (2002) suggests, “all of qualitative research is interpretive, but discourse analysis, to me, represents a specific kind of interpretation, a feature-based, pattern-based, text-based contextually related form of argumentation” (p. 23). The interpretive nature of qualitative research allowed for identification of patterns and “rich features” within a text, such as foregrounding, and after a frequent amount of repetition within the texts: rich features that began to highlight broader themes within a corpus (Barton, 2002, p. 23). Each of these categories was checked against article summaries and article headlines to ensure cohesion.

The selection of information in each article involved locating the headline, the

article “lead,” and the “nut graph,” a convention of journalism where the initial sentences and paragraph(s) contain the main focus and information of the story.¹⁵ Lead paragraphs, article summaries, and article headlines are conventionally constructed to encapsulate the main points of a news piece and provide a succinct way for the reader to quickly get to the point of a story. It was determined that this summary would constitute the first 20 full lines of text. Information after this point of a story was not *unimportant* to the story, but rather text after line 20 was considered “in the background” of the issue. Summarizing conventions of news, such as headline and lead paragraphs, offer an alternative of sorts to reading an entire article and were compared with topics and subtopics to ensure an accurate interpretation of the article’s main points (Huckin, 2002; van Dijk, 1986).

National Article Analysis: *The New York Times*

What are the primary topics and subtopics in the paper? Following a methodological template for news content analysis put forward by Huckin (2002), the review of 102 *Times* articles was conducted to identify the broader national conversation on the issue of fracking over 1 year, from April 1, 2012 to April 1, 2013. This process detailed above, led to the identification of 14 main topic areas surrounding the issue, including the way that fracking was related to *water, air/emissions, safety, health, rules and regulations, economy, land, environmental activism/protest, political, structural concerns, infrastructure/community, research, other energies, and cultural diffusion*. These categories represent both a method for categorizing and a result of sorts, as they offer a window into viewing the topics that were addressed related to fracking and

¹⁵ See definition of nut graph. Retrieved from <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=nut%20graph>

suggest some that are not addressed as well or addressed as much.

Categories emerged organically and methodically during multiple readings. Some overlap within the categories did exist, such as an overlap with safety, health, and air—all of which could be broadly considered environmental issues. But it would have been too simplistic to assume that all health or safety articles were environmental stories. Consequently, such categories were kept distinct in order to determine where gaps and silences might be happening *within* these categories (see Table 1).

These topics and subtopics were mentioned in the course of the article leads and within the first 20 lines of text. Forty-four subtopics were identified within the 14 topical groups that related directly to the main topic. For example, within the main category of water, the following subtopics were located in the national paper: the strain on water, contamination, wastewater, and recycling. In addition to topics, some topical arguments emerged from the articles and are detailed in a category of *emergent themes*. Three topical arguments emerged from the articles, including controversy related to fracking, abundance and transformation, and energy security related to the global market.

After topics and subtopics were identified, a weighted inventory similar to one used by Huckin (2002) was conducted, and topics were assigned a point value based on their placement in the headline and opening paragraphs and based on the amount of prominence for the issue early in the article, within the title, summary paragraph, and first 20 lines of article text. Partial lines (less than half) were not counted as part of the 20 lines for analysis. Topics and subtopics considered to be foregrounded, and identified as given added emphasis in the text were assigned an additional point. Points were added together to ascertain textual importance given to certain topics over others and to offer a

Table 1.

Article Categories: Topics and Subtopics in *The New York Times*

Main Topic: Water**Subtopic**

Strain on Resources
 Contamination
 Wastewater
 Recycling

Main Topic: Air**Subtopics**

Good Air Emissions
 Bad Air Emissions
 Impacts (Health overlap)
 As Environmental Solution

Main Topic: Structural Aspects**Subtopics**

Well Integrity
 Earthquake/Vibrations
 How To's of Fracking

Main Topic: Infrastructure**Subtopics**

Strain on
 Improvements

Main Topic: Safety**Subtopics**

Citizen
 Worker
 National Security
 Research/Scientific Role/Responsibility
 Accidents

Main Topic: Rules/Regulation**Subtopics**

Updating Regulations
 Response to Health/Envir. Concerns
 Us. Vs. Them (State vs. Federal)
 Commonsense Approach

Main Topic: Other Energies**Subtopics**

Comparison with Other Energies

Emergent Themes/Topical Arguments

Controversy (Fracking)
 Abundance /Transformation
 Energy Market Security

Main Topic: Economy**Subtopics**

Development/Potential
 Longevity/Viability
 Competition
 Losses/Losses from Regulation

Main Topic: Health**Subtopics**

Citizen
 Worker
 Quality
 Health vs. Business

Main Topic: Environment Activism/Protest**Subtopic**

Celebrity
 Other Activism
 Entertainment as Activism

Main Topic: Land**Subtopic**

Preservation/Specific Real Estate
 Land Use/Control Farmer vs. Fracking

Main Topic: Citizens**Subtopics**

Citizen vs. Government
 Concerns (against/for)
 Citizen interests vs. Corporate Interests
 Citizen vs. Law
 American Indian

Main Topic: Political/Policy**Subtopics**

Leaders
 Responsibility/Role
 Misconduct
 Supporters of Fracking

Main Topic: Cultural Diffusion**Subtopic**

Cultural Legitimacy

representative snapshot of what the national conversation on fracking contained over the year in question.

As mentioned earlier, foregrounding in literature is generally understood to be as a process of making certain things stand out from the surrounding words and images (Brown & Yule, 1983; Grimes 1975). Articles were considered using Huckin's (2002) method of assigning a simple point value to topics and subtopics considered to be foregrounded or receiving particular attention compared to others (p. 357). Initially, point values were assigned for topics and subtopics and the main thrust and emphasis for each article. Issues that came to the fore as the main thrust were typically recognizable in the headline, the summary, or even the first few lines of the articles. It was not enough to rely on a headline to determine the focus, for example, in an article titled, "Despite efforts of oil producers, fracking faces strong opposition in Europe," from November 14, 2012, in *The Times*, which may appear to be focused on opposition to fracking based on the headline, instead, the first few sentences of the article detail "the sort of shale gas revolution that has transformed the U.S. energy picture," and the first 20 lines contain only one short sentence to describe "the opposition" or "worry about the huge quantities of water that fracking uses" (Reed, 2012). When the question is asked, what is really foregrounded here? The article was much more about economic opportunity connected to drilling promotion than the headline suggested with its reference to "strong opposition."

A variety of stakeholder voices spoke about fracking in both the national and local news. These "voices" were located and analyzed within the texts by identifying and listing the stakeholders who were quoted first in the articles, in chronological order, with the first three groups or citizens mentioned, to see who was given an early opportunity to

“speak” in the articles, and who was not. Textual placement within the opening paragraphs in a news article is considered to provide foregrounding because it is given extra emphasis and importance than other information (Ashley & Olson, 1998; Kress & Mills, 1988; Marshall, 1998; van Leeuwen, 1985). The voices mentioned early in the article were identified and listed, which allowed one to see whose voice was represented more prominently and those voices that were represented less often, and less prominently. An additional effort was made to look at direct quotes within the first few lines of text to determine if the voices mentioned were mentioned abstractly, such as “rural residents” or more actively, with particular names or direct quotes. This was a way to determine if certain stakeholders were allowed to “speak” or were more abstractly “spoken for.”

Local Article Analysis: *Standard* and *Express*

Once there was good sense of what the national conversation entailed, a similar analysis was done of local newspapers to determine where gaps or silences appeared, when *compared with* the national template. Primary stakeholder voices were listed and tallied. Topical data were collected in very similar ways so that the papers could be easily compared. Using the national template on fracking identified from the newspaper of record, *The New York Times*, local articles were analyzed and categorized to identify where the papers matched up topically and where gaps occurred between the local and national conversation. Topical differences became apparent while assigning local articles to particular categories. For instance, early on in the process, a *conservationist* category was found to be a better fit for the Basin articles, rather than an *environmental activism* category used in *The Times* articles, because protests related to fracking was represented

in the local articles as “conservation” efforts.

Categories to address the research and aid in analysis were identified and delineated and included *article title, news section, geographic location, location in paper, main topics, subtopics, stakeholder voices, and fracking terminology*. Language used to discuss the land was also noted, in a section titled “language about land,” to aid in understanding how land is characterized locally. For example, in one article, drilling action in the land is depicted as something that can be “controlled,” “contained,” and “monitored” while simultaneously represented as “uncontrolled,” responsible for people being evacuated from nearby homes, and having no feasible timeline for control (Puro, 2013). The way that land was characterized through language may directly relate to how it is treated, and so it was important to note (see Appendix C). This list provides a concise way to view a wide dearth of data about the specific land characterizations in these articles. Geographic context was useful in understanding how land is divided up and referenced in the Basin, often based on where people live and work, and where drilling is situated on the land—as drilling rigs are found primarily in the western part of the region. The characterization and negotiation of land in these texts were vital to note as part of identifying and better understanding silences.

Special attention was given in *both* the national and local papers to the particular use of the term fracking, whether the popularized term, “fracking,” or the industry standards, “hydraulic fracturing,” “fracing,” “directional drilling,” or “unconventional drilling.” What emerged as being important was not so much these particular terms, but the descriptors used *around* these terms, such as “a controversial technique” or “miracle of the 21st century,” descriptions that through their repetition suggested specific topical

arguments. The way that fracking was initially described relates to how it was discussed and characterized as one moved to the later portions of the article.

A comparison was made that included results and findings from both papers. If one could reasonably link certain topical arguments together, such as safety and regulation, in the national conversation, but *only* safety was foregrounded in the local conversation, it might be considered a gap. This determination was made in conjunction with the consideration of authorial stance and intention. If a reporter had the textual space and opportunity to mention a subtopic and could reasonably have known about the connection or topic, then a manipulative gap or silence might reasonably be considered to exist (Huckin, 2002). Some news articles lend themselves to the inclusion of more information, while others, such as an incident report, do not offer the length or topical focus to explore the issue in-depth. These specific news conventions were important considerations to bear in mind as part of determining intention and stance. Each text was analyzed in conjunction with interview transcripts to determine the specific standpoint expressed, to identify aspects of the journalistic context that might have influence. This method offered a chance to highlight gaps and silences and present additional insights about how journalistic preproduction processes and standpoint might interact with and influence a resulting article.

Framing and Stancetaking

Local newspapers powerfully reflect and shape perceptions in rural communities. The power to frame an issue is structural and relates to how an issue is developed, presented, and how others experience the frame. De Vreese (2005) examined the agenda-

setting role of news media and offered the idea of frame-setting as a dynamic process of interaction between media frames, prior knowledge (or schema), and audience predispositions (p. 51). De Vreese's integrated model of framing suggested a need to explore how a frame was constructed and what elements went into its construction. His central finding was that factors external to journalism were as important as internal factors (2005, p. 52). The recognition that external factors influence production of the news highlights a need to understand more than the text by exploring the geographical and organizational context related to how the text is created. Interview questions for local Basin journalists were designed to get at the rural geographical elements that might impact stance (see Appendix A, background questions 1–3), as well as the organizational aspects that could impact the way a story was constructed. The story sourcing and research procedure were also important for understanding how an article was produced (see Appendix A, Questions 1–12). The sources that a journalist regularly turns to end up being the sources who are allowed to speak through an article and so are important to note. Using this rationale, one can begin to see the voices that are less able to speak and the sources that go without a voice. It is not enough to see one instance of silencing, but rather it is necessary to identify a pattern of reliance on particular linguistic features and sources used in order to suggest a systematic presence or absence (Huckin, 2010).

De Vreese found that frames in the news may affect learning, interpretations, and evaluation of events and stated that “communication is not static, but a dynamic process of frame building (how frames emerge) and frame setting (the interplay between media frames and audience predispositions)” (2005, p. 52). This study focused on the first two aspects of de Vreese's integrated method to study reporting on fracking by looking at

news production and construction, identifying major themes and topical arguments as they emerged, and by analyzing the particular frames and standpoints used to present the issue. The dynamic nature of news production is central to exploring the silence relationship with natural resources in the Basin.

Interviewing the texts and the producers of those texts added an important layer of understanding to rural news production and consequent attitudes toward the land. Though this study was not explicitly a framing study, it depended on journalistic stancetaking which is closely related and involved the identification of several ways of representing the issue of fracking. A look at journalistic stance is integral to answering the overriding question of how fracking is characterized in the Uinta Basin. What sociocultural values are communicated through language and silence? What is included about the issue? What is omitted?

Journalistic Stance

Johnstone (2008) defined stance or stancetaking as having to do with the “methods, linguistic and other, by which interactants create and signal relationships with the propositions they give voice to and the people they interact with” (p. 137). She suggested that by thinking about power and community we develop a broad, macro view of how participants engage in and produce discourse. The process Johnstone (2008) described is worthwhile to engage in, but can also feel quite abstract and requires fully immersing oneself in the texts themselves, as an initial step, in order to identify interesting features and reoccurring themes. Barton (2002) and Huckin (2002) also described locating topical arguments and themes as being part of “holistic reading” as a

necessary step for identifying “rich features,” which are defined as “linguistic features that point to a relationship between a text and its context” (Barton, 2002, p. 23). Once such features have been identified in a text, Barton (2002) suggests one can follow up on these impressions and identify broad themes by pointing to specific evidences within the text that support them. Determining stance is a circular process of immersing in the textual detail and then stepping back at regular intervals to ask, do these details have systemic or cultural impact on bigger ideas? Essentially, the process of identifying stance involves looking at *how* these language and silence acts connect to wider societal and cultural norms and beliefs.

Some additional micro-level tools were offered by Sillars (1991), who suggested looking at the text to see if “evaluation” is taking place because the “valuing process is built into our language,” and therefore a journalist’s choice of words must be viewed as personal and value charged (p. 131). Sillars’ value analysis found that specific values are “often used to express judgment about what the preferred state of things should be” and that this value-implicit language can reveal the journalist’s personal value system and at times, point to larger culturally shared values. In that same vein, the expression of one value can sometimes make more obvious another value that is *not* expressed, exposing a gap or silence. Hunston and Thompson (2000) similarly suggest a need to look for evaluation, something they defined as “the expression of the speaker or writer’s attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions he or she is talking about” (as cited in Johnstone, 2008, p. 137). Examples of evaluation may be found in expressions of certainty or uncertainty, and in language that describes the desirability of something, or an obligation to someone. Some examples of this type of

language from the local articles are seen in the use of “nominal” to describe the cost of recycling wastewater and a description of current water policy as “insufficient protection” (Bernard, 2012a, 2012b; 2012c; see Appendix B, Articles 16, 5, 5a).

Evaluation involves a use of language that suggests particular values. Hunston and Thompson (2000) offered three distinct aspects that can help locate this evaluative speaking that include locating the opinion of the writer/speaker by looking at the propositions being expressed; asking if the way something is characterized allows for other interpretations; identifying manipulation of the hearers/readers attitudes through these propositions by asking how their relationship is constructed and maintained; and finally, looking at how the discourse is organized, how boundaries are marked, and which parts are highlighted and given significance (pp. 6–13; as cited in Johnstone, 2008, p. 137).

This type of textual discourse methodology offers a flexibility to look at the specific signals and traces in a text—textual features that can signal what the author knows about the subject, how comfortable he or she is with the subject matter being discussed, and the attitudes present in his or her discourse that demonstrate a personal stance toward what he or she is talking about. The rhetorical power of CDA as an analytic orientation, and the challenge for this type of research, is in the combination of these macro and micro levels—working together to provide evidence and explanation of links between culture, power, and communication. Barton (2002) described this process as one that “involves looking at texts, identifying their rich features and salient patterns and then using these features of the text and offering up examples about the meaning relations between features, texts and the context, in an argument in support of some

generalizations and claims” (p. 23). It was appropriate to note evaluative assumptions from the text producers in order to highlight gaps and examine how silences are negotiated. Interviews with journalists offered a window into the relationships between sources and the expressions of journalistic standpoint expressed in the articles themselves. In the interviews, the journalists’ discussions about sourcing led each reporter to identify perceived gaps in sourcing. Topical gaps were identified by working with both the interviews and the texts these reporters produced. Without such complexity, and without a holistic familiarity of fracking, something Huckin (2010) and Barton (2002) suggest offers a heightened sensitivity to evaluative language and makes silence identification possible, these gaps would not have been so readily apparent.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Study results were interpreted using critical discourse analysis (CDA), which is an orientation toward discourse that views language and silence acts as dynamic and powerful. CDA views language as a social practice that “not only reflects and represents social entities and relations, but constructs and constitutes them” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 3). CDA recognizes that discourses are not neutral and that they have material impacts. This critical orientation encourages nuanced interpretations of how a text functions in the social and political world to privilege some groups over others (Rogers et al., 2005). If one views silence and language as having material impacts in society, then an exploration of what the linguistic choice for silence may *mean* to the larger social context is a logical next step for research.

Positioning of text, the tone of a piece, subtle discursive shifts, and particular

journalistic strategies all function in these fracking texts. A split focus on the structure that exists on a sentence level, as well as a focus “above the level of the sentence,” offers a way to directly interrogate macro-level influences, as well as the shifts, transactions, exchanges, and moves made by language, on a more micro level, which provide a complex and connected process of analysis (Mills, 1997, p. 37). This study attends to the issue of fracking through close analysis of discourses and “voices” on the issue of fracking, and uses a critical discourse orientation to reveal power structures, toward the aim of expanding the communication conversation in public policy discussions over land use and linguistic silences. Specifically CDA offers a researcher the chance to identify themes and language cues—linguistic traces that signal important shifts in the text. This research offers a complex way to study how silence might be operating within specific contexts and within relationships of power.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The New York Times: Conversation on Fracking: Positioning

The first part of the research questions was interested in what the national conversation communicated about fracking. It asked what the primary topics and subtopics were in the national paper. This question was also interested in what the local, rural conversation communicated about fracking.

The issue of oil and natural gas fracking was prominently discussed in this public newspaper discourse during the year in question, April 1, 2012–April 1, 2013. Eighty articles appeared in the early sections of *The Times* (A, B, and C sections) out of 91 articles in this corpus, providing evidence for the eminence of fracking in the national news. Fracking was addressed in the A section (world news/headlines) of *The New York Times* in 64 separate articles, eight articles found in the B (business/technology/science) section and seven mentions in the C (metro) section. A smattering of articles were found in the SR section (letters to editor, guest editorials), RE (real estate), F, E (entertainment/fashion), AR (arts review), D (calendar), and M (movies) in descending order of inclusion.

***The New York Times* Conversation: Topics and Subtopics**

National results were determined using critical discourse analysis scholarship from Huckin (2010, 2002), Johnstone (2008), van Dijk (1986), and Hall (1997). Initial analysis involved locating categories, topical arguments, topics, and subtopics related to fracking in the national conversation. The topics and subtopics that dominated the national articles are seen in Table 2. In *The New York Times*, the topic mentioned most often in conjunction with fracking was the *economy*, which included the subtopics of *economic development and potential, economic competition, the viability and longevity of oil and gas, and jobs*.

The least covered topics addressed in *The Times* were *structural aspects* of fracking. Several important topical arguments emerged from the articles and are included in the discussion of results, including themes of controversy; abundance; and common groupings of *farmer vs. fracking, health vs. business, and state vs. federal* government authority over land (see Table 2). This result suggests that in 144 instances, the articles in *The Times* over this year period were focused on economic topics, including 70 mentions of the economics of fracking (77% focus of the articles) before foregrounding was considered and 144 mentions *including* foregrounding.

Environmental activism was the next most prominent topic, with half as many mentions and foregroundings as the economy, meaning that 85% of the corpus focused on *environmental activism* including the subtopics of *celebrity activism* and *entertainment as activism*.

Political/policy related to fracking was found in 78 instances and was followed by *rules and regulations*, with 60 points, which included mentions and foregrounding.

Table 2.

Topics and Foregrounding: 91 *New York Times* Articles

	<u>Mentions</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>+ Foreground</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Main Topic:</u> Economy	70	77%	74	144	158%
Subtopics					
Development/Potential	21	20%	37	58	64%
Jobs	17	20%	11	28	29%
Competition	13	14%	12	25	26%
Longevity/Viability	9	10%	9	18	18%
Losses(5)/ Losses From Regulation (6)	11	11%	9	20	20%
*American Indian Interests	1	1%	1	2	2%
<u>Main Topic:</u> Environmental Activism/Protest	30	33%	47	77	85%
Subtopics					
Entertainment as Activism	14	15%	28	42	47%
Celebrity	14	15%	12	26	29%
Other Activism	2	2%	7	9	10%
<u>Main Topic:</u> Rules/Regulation	31	34%	46	77	85%
Subtopics					
Us vs. Them (Industry, Federal)	9	10%	25	34	37%
To Address Health/Envir. Concerns	13	14%	12	25	27%
Commonsense approach	5	5%	5	10	11%
Updating regulations	4	4%	4	8	9%
<u>Main Topic:</u> Political/Policy	30	33%	48	78	86%
Subtopics					
Responsibility/Role	15	16%	22	37	41%
Leaders	5	5%	13	18	20%
Misconduct	8	9%	6	14	15%
Supporters	2	2%	7	9	10%
<u>Main Topic:</u> Water	28	31%	27	57	60%
Subtopics					
Contamination	16	18%	16	34	35%
Strain on Resources	5	5%	5	10	11%
Wastewater	5	5%	5	10	11%
Recycling	2	2%	1	3	3%
<u>Main Topic:</u> Land	20	22%	33	57	55%
Subtopics					
Preservation/Specific Real Estate	10	11%	14	24	27%
“Who’s in Charge”/ Farmer vs. Fracking	10	11%	16	26	29%
<u>Main Topic:</u> Citizens	27	30%	13	40	44%
Subtopics					
Citizen vs. Government	8	9%	3	11	12%
Concerns (against/for)	8	9%	4	12	13%
Citizen vs. Corporate Interests	9	10%	3	12	13%
Citizen vs. Law	2	2%	3	5	5%
*American Indian Citizens	2	2%	4	6	7%

Table 2. Continued

Main Topic: Safety	29	33%	18	47	52%
Subtopics					
Citizen	12	13%	5	17	19%
Worker	4	4%	0	4	4%
Main Topic: Safety (continued)					
Subtopics					
National Security	4	4%	4	8	9%
Research	7	8%	5	12	13%
Accidents	2	2%	4	6	7%
Main Topic: Air	24	27%	19	44	47%
Subtopics					
Good Emissions	2	2%	0	2	2%
Bad Air	11	12%	11	22	24%
Regulation for	5	5%	6	11	12%
As Environmental Solution	4	4%	4	7	9%
Main Topic: Health	16	18%	19	35	38%
Subtopics					
Citizen Concerns	7	8%	12	20	21%
Worker Concerns	2	2%	0	2	2%
Health vs. Business	9	10%	5	15	15%
Main Topic: Cultural Diffusion	11	12%	20	31	34%
Subtopic					
Cultural Diffusion	11	12%	20	31	34%
Main Topic: Infrastructure	13	14%	16	29	32%
Subtopics					
Strain on	13	14%	14	27	30%
*Improvements	0	0%	0	0	0%
Main Topic: Other Energies	14	15%	10	24	27%
Subtopics					
Comparison With Other Energies	14	15%	10	24	27%
Main Topic: Structural Aspects	12	13%	12	24	27
Subtopics					
Earthquake/Vibrations	3	3%	8	11	12%
Well Integrity	5	5%	2	7	8%
How To's of Fracking	3	3%	2	5	5%
Emergent Topical Arguments					
Controversy					
Abundance/Transformation					
Energy Security/Independence					

Water concerns garnered a high number of mentions within *The Times*, as did *land, safety, and citizen/resident concerns*, followed by *air, health, cultural diffusion, infrastructure, other energies, and structural aspects* of fracking. Ranked in order of their topical impact within the national articles, the top 10 topics and subtopics are included in a simplified list (see Table 3). This type of distillation allows for ease in viewing the issues mentioned most often, the topics foregrounded most often, and those topics given the most prominence.

The New York Times:
Foregrounding Data

The most prominent *subtopics* in *The Times*, prior to foregrounding being applied, were *economic development and potential, jobs, and celebrity activism*, followed by *political responsibility/role* in decision-making about fracking, and finally, *regulation to address environmental concerns*. The least prominent subtopics prior to foregrounding were *wastewater recycling, good emissions, and infrastructure improvements* tied to fracking. The issue *most impacted by foregrounding* in the national corpus was the *economy*, with 74 separate instances of foregrounding within its topics and subtopics. Political/policy topics concerning fracking were next with 48 foregrounding points (see Table 2), followed by regulatory topics, with 46 foregrounding points. Foregrounding doubled the impact of topics and subtopics in some cases, such as the section titled, “*who’s in charge*” of regulation, as well as the subtopic, *economic development and potential, fracking as entertainment, preservation of land* category, and *farmer vs. fracking*.

The “*who’s in charge*” subtopic was found in 10 texts and was centered on the

Table 3.**Simplified Weighted Topics/Subtopics/Topical Arguments: *The Times***

<u>Main Topics</u>	<u>Weighted Totals</u>	<u>% out of 91</u>
1. Economy	144	158%
2. Political/Policy	78	86%
3. Rules/Regulation	77	85%
4. Environmental Activism/Protest	77	85%
5. Water	57	60%
6. Safety	57	59%
7. Land	50	55%
8. Air	44	47%
9. Citizens	40	44%
10. Health	35	38%
11. Cultural Diffusion	31	34%
12. Infrastructure	29	32%
13. Other Energies/Comparisons	24	27%
14. Structural Aspects	24	27%

<u>Subtopics</u>	<u>Weighted Totals</u>	<u>% out of 91</u>
1. Development/Potential	58	64%
2. Entertainment Activism	42	47%
3. Responsibility/Role (political/govt.)	37	41%
4. Us vs. Them (regulation)	35	37%
5. Contamination (water)	34	35%
6. Cultural Diffusion	31	34%
7. Jobs	28	30%
8. Strain on Infrastructure/Community	27	30%
9. Comparison with Other Energies	26	29%
10. Preservation of Land/Spec. Real Estate	24	27%
11. Competition (economic)	25	27%
12. To Address Health/Environ. Concerns	25	27%
13. "Who's in Charge"/Farmer vs. Fracking	26	29%
14. Bad Air	22	24%
15. Citizen (health)	20	21%
16. Longevity/Viability	18	20%
17. Leaders (political)	18	20%
18. Economic Loss/ Losses From Regulation	17	19%
19. Citizen (safety)	17	19%
20. Health vs. Business	15	16%
21. Misconduct (political)	14	15%
22. Citizen Concerns against/for	12	13%
23. Citizen vs. Corporate Interests	12	13%
24. Research	12	13%
25. Citizen vs. Government	11	12%
26. Regulation for Air	11	12%
27. Earthquake/Vibrations	11	12%
28. Updating Regulations	8	9%
29. Commonsense "responsible" drilling	10	11%
30. Strain on Water Resources	10	11%
31. Wastewater	10	11%

Table 3. Continued

<u>Subtopics</u>	<u>Weighted Totals</u>	<u>% out of 91</u>
32. Other Activism	9	10%
33. Supporters (political)	9	10%
34. National Security	8	9%
35. Well Integrity	7	8%
36. As Environmental Solution (air)	7	8%
37. Scientific/Responsibility Role	7	8%
38. American Indian Interests	6	7%
39. Accidents	6	7%
40. How To's of Fracking	5	5%
41. Citizen vs. Law	5	5%
42. Worker Safety	4	4%
43. Recycling (water)	3	3%
44. Good Emissions (air)	2	2%
45. Worker (health)	2	2%
46. Improvements (Infrastructure)	0	0%
 <u>Emergent Topical Arguments</u>		
Fracking as Controversy		
Abundance/Transformation		
Energy Security (Independence)		

question of who has the authority to regulate fracking. Some articles suggested that state government or federal regulatory bodies such as the EPA should have the authority, which signaled a power struggle. The textual impact of this “who’s in charge” subtopic more than doubled, due to the 26 foregroundings within *The Times*.

The most foregrounded *subtopics* in *The Times* were *economic potential and development* with 58 points, *entertainment as activism* with 42 points, *responsibility and role of political/government* with 37, “*who’s in charge*” of regulation with 35, *water contamination* with 34 points, *cultural diffusion* with 31 points, and a tie between *jobs and strain on infrastructure*, with 30 separate instances of foregrounding (see Table 2).

The New York Times: Topical Argument: Controversy

Several major topical arguments emerged from *The Times* readings, including the “controversy of fracking,” the “transformative” and “abundant” power of fracking, and the national security concerns related to the global economy. These topical arguments became increasingly prevalent as one progressed through the literature. For example, out of 91 articles, 63 explicitly described fracking as controversial or contentious, or represented fracking as a war or controversy by detailing contentious debates between competing “sides” in opposition or support of the process. Seven topical categories emerged from the analysis *based* on this sense of controversy built into them, such as *citizen vs. corporate interests*, “*who’s in charge?*,” and *farmers vs. fracking*, etc.

Depiction of controversy typically took place within the first few lines of the article—as if to suggest that an early reference to the “controversy of fracking” was a necessary or common way for setting things up before moving on to other issues. It did not appear to

matter whether the article demonstrated a profracking or antifracking tone as to whether the issue was described as controversial, and in fact, many articles described fracking as *both* a controversy and a “miracle.” The bolded articles in Figure 1 demonstrate this overlap (see Figure 1).

The “controversy” arguments that operated within *The Times* were typically linked with environmental concerns, such as health, safety, and land preservation related to fracking. Yet although these environmental and health concerns received some prominent mention in conjunction with these depictions of controversy, they represent a “lipservice” mention, as the description of “fracking as controversy” was typically a short segue into the most important topic—the economic potential and development of fracking. For example, in an article titled, “In tiny bean, India’s dirt-poor farmers strike gas-drilling gold,” from July 17, 2012, the author, Gardiner Harris, stated that, “The fracking boom in the United States has led to a surge in natural gas production, a decline in oil imports and a gradual transition away from coal-fired power plants. Fracking may also have spoiled some rural water supplies and caused environmental damage in parts of the United States, but it is hard to find anyone in Rajasthan [India] who sees fracking as anything but a blessing” (Gardiner, 2012). This argument suggests that because of potential national economic benefits, “environmental damage” in the U.S. is unfortunate, but can be glossed over. Another article titled, “With controls Britain allows hydraulic fracturing to explore for gas,” from December 14, 2012, also gives a “lipservice” mention of environmental concerns, followed up by economic focus. For instance the author states that, “Because of the environmental concerns about the controversial technique, which include the risk of water pollution, the government called for stringent controls on

Examples of Controversy

Article 3 “controversial process”
 Article 8 “controversial technique”
 Article 9 “a controversial natural gas extraction process”
 Article 10 “controversial drilling process”
 Article 11 “much debated drilling technology”
Article 12 “controversial drilling technique”
 Article 13 “differences over drilling technique”
 Article 14 “contentious drilling technique”
 Article 16 “fiercely contested forefront of anti-fracking”
Article 17 “alarming documentary” vs. “miracle of the 21st Century”
 Article 19 “controversial drilling method”
 Article 20 “controversial natural gas drilling process”
 Article 25 “most polarizing issue”
 Article 26 “controversial gas drilling process”
 Article 27 “controversial extraction technique”
 Article 28 “controversial technique known as hydraulic fracturing or fracking”
 Article 29 “fracking wars”
 Article 30 “contended...alarming”
 Article 31 “debate over promise and perils”
 Article 32 “contentious method of drilling”
 Article 34 (both) “conflicts of interest”
 Article 35 “anti-fracking efforts...against fracking”
Article 36 “the technique is controversial”
 Article 37 “complaints from citizens and environmentalists”
 Article 38 “New Yorkers...deeply divided over the technology”
 Article 39 “ad war”
 Article 40 “potential conflict with powerful environmental interests”
 Article 41 “questioning points of debate”
 Article 42 “a controversial drilling method”
 Article 43 “anxiety about”
 Article 44 “controversial drilling technique”
 Article 45 “fracking kills...” “forces against hydraulic fracturing”
 Article 47 “controversial natural gas drilling process”
Article 49 “battles in Washington over regulation”
 Article 50 “horizontal drilling on public lands” Failed attempt to address citizen concerns due to “industry objections”
 Article 56 Other energies “eclipsed by fracking...reduced sway”
 Article 59 “alluring, but unsettling” (drill bits in museum)
 Article 60 “race for water pitting farmers against drillers,” “struggle over who drinks and who does not in the arid west.”
 Article 62 “widespread and **environmentally contentious** mining practice” (just after 20 lines)
 Article 64 “**amid the controversies**”
 Article 65 “anti-fracking film” “predictable”
 Article 66 “composer’s activism suggest something to fight for again.”
 Article 67 “singing sermon on evils of global warming” “nary a hand raised to support fracking”
 Article 68 “took issue with the findings” “findings...link earthquakes to underground disposal of wastewater”
Article 71 “fracking presents difficult environmental issues”
 Article 73 “hydraulic fracturing, known as fracking presents difficulties”
 Article 74 “Obama acts as a screen for Americans to project fantasies and fears upon”
Article 75 “Anxieties about crime growth and future of vulnerabilities to boom and bust”

Figure 1. Controversy in *The Times*

Article 76 “**the controversial method,**” “conflicting dictates of stewardship, hardship economics and fraying community values.”

Article 77 “producing abundance of natural gas...raising concerns...possible environmental and health risks.

Article 78 “Activists Against Fracking”

Article 80 Describes economic vs. environmental conflict, France needs “shock” to make it more competitive.

Article 81 “cultural persuasive debate over land vs. energy”

Article 83 “capitalize while we can” “hydraulic fracturing, another major point of division.”

Article 84 “potent voices against” vs. abundant supplies of natural gas” Am. Indian “increases the pressure” “money could never buy their cooperation”

Article 86 “**the controversial natural gas drilling process**”

Article 87 Political power and division in France over fracking “ideological division on energy policy”

Article 90 “save our yogurt, ban fracking”

Article 91 Anti-fracking sentiment in literary reference

Article 93 Describes political division on energy

Article 97 “the math screams at you to do gas” “coal is in a corner” “competition for nation’s energy market.”

Article 99 “The farmer vs. the oil company”

*Bolding denotes overlap. Red = Use of the descriptors contentious and controversial.

Figure 1. Continued

fracking. But the decision nonetheless potentially opens the door for a shale gas industry to begin developing in Western Europe" (Reed, 2012). In this article, environmental safeguards are mentioned, but are mentioned as segue into the imminent shale gas development and potential. In *The New York Times*, economic topics were given *double* the focus and impact of environmental topics.

***The New York Times: Topical Argument:
Celebrity and Activism***

The second most prominent topic found in the national paper after the economy was environmental activism and protest, which garnered 85% of the focus in the articles and included the subtopics of: *celebrity*, *other activism*, and *entertainment as activism*. Of these groups, entertainment as activism received the greatest focus with 47%, followed closely by celebrity activism, which received 29% focus in the national articles.

***The New York Times: Topical Argument:
Abundance and Transformation***

The topical arguments of abundance and transformation also rose to the surface after multiple passes with the national literature. These arguments were often linked together. Out of 91 articles, 25 specifically described fracking as a "revolution," a "miracle," an "abundant resource," or a "transformative" energy (see Figure 2). There was some overlap within these categories, yet there was very little mention of environmentalism that *was not* celebrity or entertainment focused, as seen in the category of *other activism*, which received only two mentions and 7 foregrounding points for a total of 10% focus. It was rare to find a focus on environment that did not have this focus.

Examples of Abundance and Transformation

Article 5 “transformed energy picture” “Shale gas revolution” “huge amounts of gas” “commercially exploitable.”

Article 17 “miracle of the 21st Century”

Article 21 “Guar prices transform,” “crucial link in the energy production of the U.S.”

Article 23 “liberate natural gas” “outlook of other energies dimmed by fracking”

Article 34 “revolutionary” “boundless future”

Article 36 “potentially prolific”

Article 40 “could represent the future of California’s Oil Industry” “tapping crude” “active wells”

Article 48 “oil boom that is rapidly reshaping the area”

Article 49 “domestic energy revolution”

Article 53 “irresistible market forces”

Article 54 “Shale oil and gas revolution” “fracking, a technique pioneered in U.S.” “astounding and terrifying.”

Article 56 Other energies ‘eclipsed by fracking’ (scale)

Article 57 “natural gas buried in shale is rapidly revving” the boom.

Article 69 “oil and gas extraction transformed the global balance of power”

Article 71 “cleaner alternative to coal” “clean energy” vs. other energies

Article 75 “reshaping staid communities” “economic boom”

Article 77 “an abundance of natural gas” “became commonplace as the extraction process grew.”

Article 82 “capitalize on an American oil and gas boom” “so much potential for the U.S.” (quote)

Article 84 “abundant supplies” and “opposing...potent voices against” “courts and regulators have found hard to ignore.”

Article 88 “technology driving the natural gas boom”

Article 96 “cleaner, cheaper natural gas” “competition for nation’s energy market” “surge in the production of natural gas.”

Article 97 “the math screams at you to do gas,” “coal is in a corner,” “competition for nation’s energy market.”

Bolded = Overlap of “controversy” articles, along with “abundance” and “transformation.”

Figure 2. Topical Argument: Abundance and Transformation in *The New York Times*

RQ2: Stakeholder Voices: *The New York Times*

The second part of the research question asks who were the most prominent voices in *The Times* articles and *The Standard* and *Express* articles. This result was determined by taking the first three voices mentioned in each article and listing them in their order of appearance in the article. Additionally, voices that were mentioned with an active quote, rather than just being referred to abstractly as “the industry” or “residents” within the first 20 lines, were considered to be foregrounded and given an additional foregrounding point. The groups were then considered together to get a sense of whose

voices were given spatial prominence by being listed first, and most actively. Again, early textual placement of a direct quote within the opening paragraphs in a news article is considered to be foregrounded information because it represents a choice to give extra emphasis and importance to some groups over others (Ashley & Olson, 1998; Marshall, 1998; Kress & Mills, 1988; van Leeuwen, 1985). The voices identified in this process fit into 16 categories. The top five most prominent stakeholder voices in *The New York Times* were federal government, oil and gas industry, state government, celebrities, and citizens (see Table 4). Voices that were less prominent, with 10 or fewer mentions were those of politicians, local governing bodies, entertainment, and journalists. Voices that were most actively represented in the national paper were celebrity activists, the oil and gas industry, and citizen resident's voices. These were followed most closely by state government, scientist/expert, and environmental voice. Voices that were less active in *The Times* were federal government, journalists, local government, and related businesses. Politicians, farmers and ranchers, American Indians, governments of other countries, and oil and gas workers received few mentions, and outdoor recreation received no active quotes.

**RQ1a: *The Standard and Express*:
Local Conversation: Positioning**

In order to identify the most prominent topics and subtopics in the local conversation and identify what the local articles communicated about fracking, it was important to look at how and where the *Standard* and *Express* discussed fracking. Six local articles out of 63 had fracking in the headline. Fifteen articles directly referenced “fracking” or “hydraulic fracturing” or “directional drilling” (see Appendix B), in the

Table 4.
Stakeholder Voices: *The Times*

Stakeholder Voices in <i>The New York Times</i> *		Most Quoted/Active*	
1. Federal Government	31	1. Celebrity Activist	21
2. Oil and Gas Industry	29	2. Oil and gas Industry	20
3. State government	27	3. Citizen/Resident	20
4. Celebrity	22	4. State Government	17
5. Citizen	22	5. Scientist/Expert	16
6. Environmental/opponent	16	6. Environmental Voice	15
7. Related Businesses	15	7. Federal government	9
8. Community	14	8. Journalist	9
9. Scientist/expert/researcher	14	9. Local government	8
10. Government/ Other Countries	13	10. Related Businesses	7
11. Farmers/Ranchers	12	11. Politician	6
12. Local Government	9	12. Farmers/Ranchers	6
13. Politicians	8	13. American Indians	3
14. Entertainment	7	14. Gov. /Other Countries	3
15. Journalist	4	15. Oil/Gas workers	3
16. Outdoor recreation	0	16. Outdoor recreation	0

*Compiled from tabulation of first three voices listed in each article and first three quoted in each article

body of the article. Only one article, titled “Blending politics and health,” discussed fracking/drilling as part of the community culture—an article about a local prodrilling business (Tracy, 2013).

Local papers did *not* mention fracking in the same variety of genres as the national articles did, and so the issue did not appear to have the same *obvious* textual level of cultural diffusion as *The Times*. However, fracking may be understood as an inclusive part of the local drilling conversation. The term was not readily visible from its placement within the papers, and so may be what Huckin (2010) defined as an implicit silence, where “a writer omits relevant information on the assumption that it is already known by the reader” (pp. 425–428).

**RQ1a: Local Conversation:
Topics and Subtopics**

The top-five issues in the local papers on fracking during one year were the *economy, rules/regulations* about fracking, *political/policy, air quality, and safety*. These were followed in descending order by *health, land, water, conservationist/critics, infrastructure, and citizens*. Economic issues had 52 topical mentions and 62 foregroundings locally, for a weighted total of 133. This result suggests that economy was the most important topic related to fracking during this 1-year period from April 1, 2012, to April 1, 2013 (see Table 5). Economic subtopics included *economic development and potential, jobs, and losses from regulation*. Issues of *longevity and viability of oil and gas* and *competition with fracking* were not mentioned nearly as often. The category of *American Indian Interests* was found in nine articles that mentioned business development focused on the Ute Tribe and was also foregrounded in six articles, for a total of 15 and a Tribal economic focus of 24% of local articles.

Regulation of fracking was the next topic of prominence in the local articles, with 52 mentions and 25 foregroundings, for a weighted total of 77 over this year. In the regulation category the subtopics addressed most often were “who’s in charge,” a category centered on the question of who has the authority to regulate fracking/drilling—the local government or the federal government.

The four topics that received the *least* amount of mention and foregrounding with 3% or less topical impact in the articles were *other energies, cultural diffusion, and structural aspects* of fracking. Some topics that were part of the national template, but *not* addressed in the local articles, are highlighted in Table 5, with 0% totals and include *good emissions* (a category in the national paper touting the “cleaner” aspects of natural

Table 5.

Topics/Subtopics and Foregrounding: *Standard* and *Express*

	<u>Mentions</u>	<u>Foregrounding</u>	<u>Weighted Total</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Main Topic: Economy</u>	52	62	114	180%
<u>Subtopic:</u>				
Development/Potential	23	47	70	111%
Longevity/Viability	4	2	6	10%
Competition	0	0	0	0%
Losses from Regulation	10	5	15	24%
Jobs	15	8	23	37%
*American Indian Interests	9	6	15	24%
<u>Main Topic: Rules/Regulation</u>	52	25	77	122%
<u>Subtopics:</u>				
Us vs. Them/Local vs. Federal	20	6	26	41%
Updating Regulations	11	7	18	29%
To Address Conservation Concerns	12	10	22	35%
Commonsense approach	9	1	10	16%
*Redundant/Burdensome	5	20	25	40%
<u>Main Topic: Political/Policy</u>	29	41	70	111%
<u>Subtopics:</u>				
Leaders (celebrity supporters)	9	10	19	30%
Responsibility/Role	14	23	37	59%
Supporters	4	6	10	16%
Misconduct	2	2	4	6%
<u>Main Topic: Air Quality</u>	18	47	65	103%
<u>Subtopics:</u>				
Good Emissions	0	0	0	0%
Bad Emissions	9	31	40	63%
Regulation For	2	6	8	13%
Scientific/Expert Focus	7	11	18	29%
<u>Main Topic: Safety</u>	29	33	62	9%
<u>Subtopics:</u>				
Citizen	9	9	18	29%
Worker	6	3	9	14%
Research	8	4	12	19%
Accidents	6	17	23	37%
National Security	0	0	0	0%
<u>Main Topic: Land</u>	16	18	34	56%
<u>Subtopics:</u>				
Preservation/Specific Real Estate	3	7	10	16%
Land Control/Use (Local vs. Fed. Govt)	13	11	24	38%
<u>Main Topic: Health</u>	21	14	35	56%
<u>Subtopics</u>				
Citizen	16	13	29	46%
Worker	5	1	6	10%
Health vs. Business	0	0	0	0%

Table 5. Continued

Main Topic: Water	15	13	28	44%
Subtopics:				
Strain on Resources	1	2	3	4%
Contamination (Health overlap)	8	8	16	26%
Wastewater	6	3	9	14%
Recycling				
Main Topic: Conservationists/Critics	13	10	23	37%
Subtopics				
Conservation Efforts	13	10	23	37%
Celebrity Activism	0	0	0	0%
Entertainment as Activism	0	0	0	0%
*Collaboration	11	6	17	27%
Main Topic: Infrastructure	9	12	22	35%
Subtopics				
Strain on	5	4	10	14%
Improvements from Industry	4	8	12	19%
Main Topic: Citizens	10	10	29	32%
Subtopics:				
Citizen vs. Government	0	0	0	0%
Concerns (against/for)	8	3	11	17%
Citizen vs. Corporate Interests	2	7	9	14%
Citizen vs. Law	0	0	0	0%
*American Indian Interests	0	0	0	0%
Main Topic: Other Energies	1	1	2	3%
Subtopic				
Comparison with Other Energies	1	1	2	3%
Main Topic: Cultural Diffusion	1	0	1	2%
Subtopics				
Cultural Diffusions	1	0	1	2%
*Basin Pride	6	11	17	27%
*Basin Under-appreciation	3	3	6	10%
Main Topic: Structural Aspects	1	0	1	2%
Subtopics				
Well Integrity	1	0	1	2%
Earthquakes	0	0	0	0%
“How To’s” of Fracking	0	0	0	0%
Emergent Topical Arguments				
Controversy				
Abundant Resources				
Energy Independence				

*Red = Not included in results

Green = Represented differently

Blue = Not represented

gas), *economic competition*, *citizen vs. government*, *citizen versus law*, *celebrity activism*, and *entertainment as activism*.

Several topics that were discussed in the local papers, but were *not* discussed in the same way in the national papers are highlighted in Table 5. One issue, *land control/use*, which was discussed in terms of state negotiation of federal regulation in the national news, was represented as a local government versus federal land control issue in the local papers.

Other topics that were more present in the local papers, but not found in the national paper were the *redundant/burdensome regulation of fracking*; *American Indian economic interests* related to fracking; *collaboration* between industry, government, and conservationists; *Basin [community] pride* connected to the industry; and the “outsider” *Basin [community] underappreciation* of energy extraction efforts. These topics were not included in the totals as it was necessary to keep the categories aligned for comparison. These local-only topics are nonetheless important to identify as part of the *local* conversation and results. A quick comparison of these topics is found in Table 6.

Local Conversation: Foregrounding Data

The most foregrounded *subtopics* in *The Standard* and *Vernal Express* over this year were *economic development/potential* with 47 points, *bad air* with 31, and *political responsibility/role* with 23, and *redundant/burdensome regulation* with 20 foregroundings points. The topics that received the *least* amount of mention and foregroundings with 3% or less topical impact in the articles were *other energies*, *cultural diffusion*, and *structural aspects* of fracking. Some topics that were part of the national

Table 6.

Quick Comparison: *The Standard, Express, and The Times*

<i>Standard and Express (63 articles)</i>		<i>New York Times (91 articles)</i>	
<u>Main Topics</u>	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Main Topics</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Economy	114	Economy	144
Rules/Regulation	77	Rules/Regulation	77
Political/Policy	70	Political/Policy	78
Air	65	Air	44
Safety	62	Safety	57
Health	35	Health	35
Land	34	Land	50
Citizens	29	Citizens	40
Water	28	Water	57
Conservationists/Critics	23	Envir. Activism/Protest	77
Infrastructure	22	Infrastructure	29
Other Energies/Comparisons	2	Other Energies/Comparisons	24
Cultural Diffusion	1	Cultural Diffusion	31
Structural Aspects	1	Structural Aspects	24
<u>Subtopics</u>	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Subtopics</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Development/Potential	47	Development/Potential	58
Responsibility/Role	37	Responsibility/Role	37
Bad Air	31	Bad Air	22
Us vs. Them (regulation)	26	Us vs. Them (regulation)	35
“Who’s in Charge?” (Land)	24	Who’s in Charge? (Farmer)	23
Other Activism/Conservation	23	Other Activism	9
Jobs	23	Jobs	28
Accidents	23	Accidents	6
Regulation/Address Concerns	22	Regulations/Address Concerns	25
Leaders (political)	19	Leaders (political)	18
Citizen Safety	18	Citizen Safety	17
Updating Regulations	18	Updating Regulations	8
Scientific Role (Air)	18	Scientific Role (air)	7
Contamination (water)	16	Contamination (water)	34
American Indian Interests	15	American Indian Interests	2
Economic Loss/ From Reg.	15	Economic Loss/ From Reg.	17
Research	12	Research	12
Citizen Concerns against/for	11	Citizen Concerns against/for	12
Preservation of Land	10	Preservation of Land	24
Strain on Infrastructure	10	Strain on Infrastructure	27
Commonsense drilling	10	Commonsense drilling	10
Supporters (political)	10	Supporters (political)	9
Worker Safety	9	Worker Safety	4

Table 6. Continued

<u>Subtopics</u>	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Subtopics</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Wastewater	9	Wastewater	10
Citizen vs. Corp. Interests	9	Citizen vs. Corp. Interests	12
Regulation for Air	8	Regulation for Air	11
Citizen Health	6	Citizen Health	20
Longevity/Viability	6	Longevity/Viability	18
Worker Health	6	Worker Health	2
Misconduct (political)	4	Misconduct (political)	14
Strain on Water/Scarcity	3	Strain on Water/Scarcity	10
Comparison/Other Energies	2	Comparison/Other Energies	26
Cultural Diffusion	1	Cultural Diffusion	31
Competition (economic)	0	Competition (economic)	25
Good Emissions	0	Good Emissions	2
Recycling (water)	0	Recycling (water)	3
Citizen vs. Government	0	Citizen vs. Government	11
Earthquake/Vibrations	0	Earthquake/Vibrations	11
How to's of Fracking	0	How To's of Fracking	5
National Security	0	National Security	0
American Indian Citizens	0	American Indian Citizens	2
<u>Local Only</u>			
Redundant/Burdensome Reg.	30		
Collaboration	17		
Basin Pride	17		
Basin Underappreciation	6		
<u>Topical Arguments</u>			
Fracking as Controversy			
Abundance/Boom			
Energy Independence			

template, but *not* addressed in the local articles are highlighted in Table 6 with 0% totals, and include *good emissions* (a category found in the national articles touting the “cleaner” aspects of natural gas), *economic competition*, *citizen vs. government*, *citizen vs. law*, *celebrity activism*, and *entertainment as activism*.

Local Conversation: Topical Argument: Controversy

A topical argument of controversy was also found in the *Standard* and *Express* in nearly half of the articles. Unlike *The Times*, the local papers presented controversy in discussion of the overreach of regulation and also related controversy to a topical argument about the redundant and burdensome nature of drilling regulation. Controversy was part of the description of fracking in *The Times* articles and was mentioned in conjunction with health and environmental concerns, but was talked about quite differently in the local papers.

Additional topics and arguments that emerged in the local corpus include *collaboration*, *energy independence*, and *Basin [community] pride with Basin [community] underappreciation*. These topics and arguments are discussed in more detail in the comparison and discussion sections, with an in-depth discussion of gaps and silences found between the two corpuses.

Local Conversation: Topical Argument: Abundance and Boom

The local conversation described fracking as “abundance.” This topical argument was found in more than a third of the articles (see Figure 3). Ideas related to the economic boom were often mentioned in conjunction with the ideas of community pride and

Abundance and “Boom”

- Article 1. “Blessing and curses of Basin’s low unemployment”...“drilling boom.”
- Article 1b. “Basin’s low jobless rate blessing, challenge”...drilling boom, “720 jobs” unfilled.
- Article 2. “new series of articles about topics of growth,” two-story expansion,” “growing artificial lift demand,” “business increased 10-fold,” “don’t see any slowing down at all.”
- Article 4. “3,675 new wells”...“boost to the Uintah Basin and Utah economies.”
- Article 5. “largely credited with the technological expansion of energy production over the past deca[c]de (sic).”
- Article 5a. Same as above.
- Article 6. “3,500 natural gas wells...over the next ten years,” “promises 1,700 jobs directly and 4,300 on construction jobs.”
- Article 8. “6,000 active wells,” “over-regulation has stymied affordable and abundant energy production,” “billions of dollars of mineral lease monies are paid by industry in the form of bonuses, rental fees, and royalties into the Treasury’s coffers for energy production on federal land.”
- Article 10. “will drill up to 1,300 new natural gas wells over 15 years” “offering nearly 200 jobs to develop nearly three trillion cubic feet of gas over the next several decades.” “supporting Utah’s economy and reducing our dependence on foreign oil.” 1,298 wells drilled on 3,600 acres.”
- Article 11. “Declaring energy independence for a brighter future.” “If the state had control of public lands, or even better private property owners, Utah would see a boom.” “Today, energy independence is a realistic goal, one founded on American innovation technology and hard work.” “For the first time in decades, the U.S. has the resources for energy independence.” “Energy independence is within reach, and its benefits extend beyond enhanced national security.”
- Article 13. In the focus on oil and gas section...“the economic industry can be an economic boon for the tribe.” “It’s our casino—oil and gas is our casino” (Cuch, Tribal leader) “we do want a piece of the industry pie.”
- Article 14. “we are faced with the largest backlog of APD’s (application to permit drilling) in the Bureau. “1,200 APD’s have been received.” “Every one of those backlogs are wells that could be drilled to generate revenue.” “Every APD (application to permit drilling) has implications for federal, state, and local coffers.”
- Article 24. “Gov. Gary Herbert said he is an advocate for responsible energy resource development, particularly when it comes to the Basin’s vast reserves, “we’re just scratching the surface.” “There are more than 10,000 oil and gas wells in Utah, more than half are located in the Basin, and 65 percent of all the natural gas produced is developed in Uintah County.” “Utah’s energy industry provides over 22,000 jobs producing about \$230 million of in-state revenues for a thriving private energy sector.”
- Article 27. “largest oil discovery on American soil in the last 40 years. 3,000 barrels to 60,000 plus per day in just six years, oil workers are flooding the state for jobs and finding no-where to live,” “The modern day ‘gold rush’ has left oil companies scrambling for suitable housing and North Dakota farmers grumbling about the influx of strangers.” “Local experts are predicting at least a 30-year window of drilling success in the Bakken.” “Officials already say North Dakota is second only to Texas for domestic oil production.” “The explosive growth has oil companies and investors salivating over the profit potential. Not to mention the big picture goal of getting the U.S. to depend more on national resources and less on foreign oil.”
- Article 31. Crescent Point Energy .acquired Ute Energy...total purchase price of approximately \$861 million.” “expansion would increase the company’s total production by 7 to 10 percent.” “initial acquisition in Utah.” “The purchase of Ute Energy follows an aggressive growth plan demonstrated by Crescent Point during 2012” “continue the development initiated by Ute Energy” “The company had been working on an Initial Public Offering on the New York Stock Exchange to trade under the symbol UTE.”
- Article 35. “Study aims to resolve fracking’s impact on water.” “the boom in natural gas production nationally has been expanded by hydraulic fracturing technology, which critics claim hastens damage to air and water.” “findings remain muddled” “USGS unable to replicate the results found by the EPA” “However, drinking water wells in the Pavillion area did produce high levels of methane, which is a byproduct of natural gas drilling.”
- Article 40 “vast reserves.”
- Article 42. “Ken Salazar to step down,” “new energy frontier,” “ushering in a conservation agenda for the 21st century,” “custodians of America’s natural and cultural resources.”
- Article 62. “The basin is experiencing growing pains. Since the great recession of 2008, the Basin not only survived, but thrived.” “The Basin is leading much of America’s rural areas in growth.” “Fifth fastest growing micropolitan area in the U.S.”

Figure 3. Examples of Abundance/Boom: *The Standard and Express*

underappreciation. Topics that were only present in the local papers include *redundant/burdensome regulation of fracking* with 40% focus in the articles, *collaboration* between industry/ government/conservationists with 27%, *American Indian Business* related to fracking in 24% of the articles, *Basin [community] pride* with 27% focus, and *Basin [community] underappreciation* of fracking with 10% focus.

RQ2: Stakeholder Voices: *Standard and Express*

Oil and gas stakeholders in the Basin include citizens, workers, industry, tribal members, state government, federal regulators, and state politicians. This part of the research was concerned with the question, which stakeholder voices are more prominently spoken in the local paper? This study attempted to simply identify the main stakeholder “voices” in the local conversation on fracking. This was done by listing the main voices in each article, in chronological order as they appeared within the body of an article (see Table 7). Stakeholders were considered to have more prominence and textual importance in the articles if they were placed early within the first 20 lines of the article, in keeping with ideas about foregrounding through topical placement from Brown and Yule (1983) and Grimes (1975). Active voice was determined by listing the first three stakeholders who were quoted in the texts.

The top-five stakeholders mentioned on fracking in the local papers were those of *industry, federal government, and citizen/resident*. Less prominent voices, with 10 or fewer mentions, included community stakeholders, oil and gas industry groups and supporters, conservationists, American Indians, celebrities, government/other states, journalists, outdoor enthusiasts, and lastly, farmers and ranchers. The voices that

Table 7.

Stakeholder Voices: *Standard and Express**Standard and Express* Articles (63)

Stakeholder	Mentions*	Stakeholder	Active/Quotes*
1. Oil and gas industry	27	1. Local government	33
2. Federal government	27	2. Oil and gas industry	27
3. Citizen/Resident	21	3. Federal government	22 (13 BLM)
4. State government	12	4. Conservationist/Protest	12
5. Scientist/Expert	11	5. State government	12
6. Workers	10	6. Journalist	9
7. Community	9	7. Politicians	6
8. Industry/Support/Lobby	9	8. Scientist/Expert	5
9. Conservationists/Protest	8	9. Citizens/Residents	4
10. American Indian Business	5	10. Outdoor Recreation	3
11. Politicians	5	11. Industry Support/Lobby	2
12. Government/Other states	5	12. American Indian Business	2
13. Journalist	4	13. Farmers/Ranchers	0
14. Outdoor Recreation	2	14. Workers	0
15. Farmers/Ranchers	1	15. Community	0

*Tabulation of first three voices mentioned and first active quotes in each article.

were *most quoted* early on in the local articles were those of local government, including city government and the county commissioners (see Table 7). Oil and gas industry representatives were the second most quoted with 27 active quotes, and third was the federal government, with the most quotes from the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of the Interior. It is important to note that the BLM maintains a local office in Vernal, Utah, which is generally staffed with local people, making it difficult to classify this group as completely “outside” of government. Notable omissions were the voices of farmers and ranchers, oil and gas workers, and citizens. Citizen voices were actively quoted in only one local article (Tracy, 2012).

**RQ1b: Comparison of Gaps/Silences:
Local and National Newspapers**

An inventory of topics and subtopics was created for the local newspapers using *The New York Times* inventory as a template (see Table 8), after holistic reading and analysis of what the local conversation on fracking involved and identification of main topics, which were then integrated with foregrounding points. Weighted totals were compared with the national template that contained the same categories of topics, subtopics, and foregrounding, which illuminated where a topic was similarly represented, where it differed, and where issues related to fracking were *not* present.

**RQ1c: Comparison of News Topics:
Local and National Newspapers**

The comparison in Table 8 allows for an ease in comparing and identifying both the topics and gaps in the news discourse. More obvious topical gaps are highlighted in red, while topics and subtopics that appear in less than 10% of the local and national corpus are considered to be a “bare mention,” or relative silence in the papers and are highlighted in blue (see Table 8). Topics in green are those that were represented differently or do not compare directly, and so may be considered a gap in the conversation. A summary section details the results found in Table 8 and highlights how the local and national newspaper conversation on fracking compares and contrasts, moving from the most discussed topics in *The Standard* and *The Vernal Express* to the least discussed.

Table 8.

Weighted Topics/Subtopics: *The Standard, Express, and The Times.*

<i>Standard/Express (63 articles)</i>	<u>Weighted Totals/%</u>		<i>Times (91 articles)</i>	<u>Weighted totals/%</u>	
<u>Main Topic: Economy</u>	114	180%	<u>Main Topic: Economy</u>	144	158%
Development/Potential	70	111%	Development/Potential	58	64%
Jobs	23	37%	Jobs	28	30%
Losses from Regulation	15	24%	Losses from Regulation	17	19%
Longevity/Viability	6	10%	Longevity/Viability	18	20%
Competition	2	3%	Competition	25	27%
American Indian Interests	15	24%	American Indian Interests	1	1%
<u>Main Topic: Regulation</u>	77	122%	<u>Main Topic: Regulation</u>	77	85%
Us vs. Them (Local, Fed)	26	41%	Us vs. Them (Fed, Industry)	34	37%
To Address Concerns	22	35%	To Address Concerns	25	27%
Updating Regulation	18	29%	Updating Regulation	10	11%
Commonsense Approach	10	16%	Commonsense Approach	8	9%
*Redundant/Burdensome	25	40%			
<u>Main Topic: Political</u>	70	111%	<u>Main Topic: Political</u>	78	86%
Responsibility/Role	37	59%	Responsibility/Role	37	41%
Leaders	19	30%	Leaders	18	20%
Supporters	10	16%	Supporters	9	10%
Misconduct	4	6%	Misconduct	14	15%
<u>Main Topic: Safety</u>	62	99%	<u>Main Topic: Safety</u>	50	55%
Accidents	23	37%	Accidents	6	7%
Citizen	18	29%	Citizen	17	19%
Research	12	19%	Research	12	13%
Worker	9	14%	Worker	4	4%
National Security	0	0%	National Security	8	9%
<u>Main Topic: Air</u>	65	103%	<u>Main Topic: Air</u>	44	47%
Bad Air	40	63%	Bad Air	22	24%
Regulation For Air	8	13%	Regulation For	11	12%
As Environmental Solution	0	0%	As Envir. Solution	7	9%
Good Emissions	0	0%	Good Emissions	2	2%
<u>Main Topic: Land</u>	34	56%	<u>Main Topic: Land</u>	53	55%
Preservation/Spec. Real Estate	10	16%	Preservation/Spec. Real Est.	24	27%
Use/Control/Who's in Charge?	24	38%	Use/Control-Farmer v. Frack	26	29%
<u>Main Topic: Health</u>	35	56%	<u>Main Topic: Health</u>	35	38%
Citizen Concerns	29	46%	Citizen Concerns	20	21%
Health vs. Business	0	0%	Health vs. Business	14	15%
Worker Concerns	6	10%	Worker Concerns	2	2%

Table 8. Continued

<u>Main Topic: Water</u>	28	44%	<u>Main Topic: Water</u>	57	60%
Contamination	16	26%	Contamination	34	35%
Strain on/Scarcity	10	14%	Strain on/Scarcity	10	11%
WasteWater	9	14%	WasteWater	10	11%
Recycling	0	0%	Recycling	3	3%
<u>Main Topic: Conservation</u>	23	37%	<u>Main Topic: Activism</u>	77	85%
Other Activism (Protest)	23	37%	Other Activism	9	10%
Entertainment as Activism	0	0%	Entertainment Activism	42	47%
Celebrity Activism	0	0%	Celebrity Activism	26	29%
American Indian Protest	0%	0%	American Indian Protest	2	2%
*Collaboration	17	27%	Collaboration	0	0%
<u>Main Topic: Citizens</u>	29	32%	<u>Main Topic: Citizens</u>	40	44%
Concerns (against/for)	11	17%	Concerns (against/for)	12	13%
Citizen vs. Corporate Interests	9	14%	Citizen vs. Corp. Interests	12	13%
Citizen vs. Government	0	0%	Citizen vs. Government	11	12%
Citizen vs. Law	0	0%	Citizen vs. Law	5	5%
<u>Main Topic: Infrastructure</u>	22	35%	<u>Main Topic: Infrastructure</u>	29	32%
Improvements (roads)	12	19%	Improvements	0	0%
Strain on	10	14%	Strain on	27	30%
<u>Main Topic: Cultural Diffusion</u>	1	2%	<u>Main Topic: Cult. Diffusion</u>	31	34%
Cultural Diffusion	1	2%	Cultural Diffusion	31	34%
*Basin Pride/Industry	17	27%			
*Basin Underappreciation	6	10%			
<u>Main Topic: Structural Aspects</u>	1	2%	<u>Main Topic: Structural</u>	24	27%
Well Integrity	1	2%	Well Integrity	7	8%
Earthquakes	0	0%	Earthquake/Vibrations	11	12%
How To's of Fracking	0	0%	How To's of Fracking	5	5%
<u>Local Only</u>			<u>Topical Arguments</u>		
*Redundant/Burdensome Reg.	30	40%	Controversy		
*Collaboration	18	26%	Abundant Resources/Boom		
*Basin Pride/Industry	14	24%	Energy Independence		
*Basin Underappreciation	6	9%			

*Extra Topics

Red = Absence = weighted totals of 0%

Green = Represented Differently

Blue=Relative Silence=weighted totals less than 10%

Main Topic: The Economy

The *economy* was the most mentioned and foregrounded topic in both sets of newspapers, yet it garnered more prominence in the *Standard and Express* with 180% of the focus in the local conversation, compared to 158% in *The New York Times*. The most prominent subtopic was *development and potential* of fracking, with 111% of the focus, which was more than half as much as in the national paper with 64% focus.

The second most emphasized subtopic was *jobs* with 37% of the local focus on employment, whereas *The Times* addressed this topic with 29% of focus in the national articles. The longevity and viability of fracking was considered half as often in the local papers. The national conversation had this focus in 18% of the articles. A category of economic *competition* had little traction locally with only 3% focus, yet the national papers mentioned economic market competition related to fracking in a total of 26% of the articles. *Losses from regulation* were described in 24% of the local conversation and had a similar result for the national papers with 20% focus. A subtopic related to the Ute Tribe's economic opportunities from oil and gas, titled *American Indian Interests*, was visible in the local papers with 23%, but had little focus in national news with only 2% focus. Only two national articles mentioned American Indians, one that focused on environmental antifracking activism and another article about economic prospects. A related idea of abundance linked to the boom of oil and gas extraction was prevalent in more than half of the local papers. This topical argument was similarly represented in *The Times* with a 61% focus.

Main Topic: Regulation

Regulation was important in both conversations, but the local papers had *decidedly* more focus on regulation, with 122% focus compared with 85% focus on regulation in *The Times*. Both conversations talked similarly about a *commonsense approach* to regulation, found in 14% of the local news and 12% of the national. The local papers addressed *updating regulations* twice as often as *The Times* with 9%, and 14%, respectively. All of the papers similarly addressed *regulation to address concerns*, with 27% in the local papers and 35% in the national paper. One idea that emerged from this category in the local papers, but was *not* found in the national news, is the topical argument of redundant and burdensome regulation, which was found in 40% of the local articles. This idea was not about *losses from regulation*; although it touched on similar ideas of economic consequence from regulation, rather this topic centered on controversy related to the redundancy and burdensome nature of federal rules, depicting local government and industry operators pitted against the overreach of federal regulatory control. Although the *Times* also discussed regulation, the topic of redundancy and overreach was not as apparent.

Main Topic: Political/Policy

Political/policy issues concerning fracking were a *noticeably* larger part of the local conversation with 111% focus of the local conversation. These issues were also quite prominent in the national paper, with 86%. In this category, *The Standard* and *Express* were more focused on the issues of *responsibility and role of political leaders* and mentioned specific *political leaders* supportive of fracking more often. The national

articles highlighted political misconduct *double* that of local papers, with a 15% focus on illegal and unethical political activities related to fracking, compared to only 6% focus on these ethical issues locally.

Main Topic: Air

Air was more heavily discussed in the local papers than in the national articles, with 103% of the local conversation with this focus, compared to 47% in *The Times*. The local papers primary focus was on *bad air* emissions with 63% and did not address the idea of *good emissions*, or fracking *as an environmental solution* for air. *The Times* was concerned about bad air connected to fracking in 24% of the articles. A small percentage of the articles in both papers addressed *regulation for air*, with 12% in *The Times* and 13% locally.

Main Topic: Safety

Safety issues were *considerably* more prominent and foregrounded more often in the local papers, with a focus of 99% of the articles compared to 55% in *The Times*. The subtopic of *citizen safety* was mentioned and foregrounded in 26% of the local articles, while in *The Times*, citizen safety garnered only 19% of the conversation. The largest subtopic related to safety in the local papers was regarding *accidents*, found in 33% of the local news, while this topic only had 7% focus in the national paper. *National security*, which is considered more of a national topic, did not come up in the local papers, though it was addressed in 8% of the national articles. *Research* about fracking safety was very similarly addressed in 14% of the local articles and 12% of the national.

Main Topic: Health

Health topics related to fracking were detailed in the local papers more often than in the national paper, with 56% of the local conversation focused on health, compared to 37% in the national conversation. The local focus for health was primarily on citizen-related concerns with 46% focus and only 10% on worker health, whereas the national paper split the focus between citizen health and a category of health versus business. This specific *health vs. business* subtopic was *not* found within the first 20 lines of text within the local papers. Local news had a slightly larger focus on worker health during this year than did *The Times*, but was still considered a relative silence with only 9% of the focus. Worker health was addressed in only 2% of the national conversation on the issue.

Main Topic: Land

Land was discussed a similar amount in the local and national newspapers, with 54% of the conversation, compared to 55% focus in *The Times*, yet local papers heavily concentrated on the *use and control of land* by local versus federal bodies with 38% of the conversation, and local papers were less concerned about the *preservation* of land, with only 16% of the conversation. Conversely, *The Times* focused much more on preservation of specific real estate *from* extraction practices, with 27% in this area, and devoted 29% focus to the *use and control of land*—found in a section titled *farmer vs. fracking*. Even with a similar *topic* of control and use of land, this section was discussed quite differently, with national articles using this topic to relate concerns about preserving land for farming and other land uses other than fracking while the local paper *did not* make mention of farming in relation to fracking. Articles in this “use/control” section in

the local papers addressed a topical argument of controversy regarding local use and control of land as a contest between local government/industry versus federal regulators. This topical argument of controversy was used in relation to land use and control was found in 40% of the local conversation.

Main Topic: Water

Water was discussed more often in the national paper, with 60% of the discourse focused on water, compared with the local discourse at 44%, a 16% difference. The local focus on water had little mention of resource scarcity, only 4%, while resource scarcity was addressed in 11% of the national articles. The greater focus for both papers related to water was with contamination, which had 26% of the local focus, and 35% of the national. Wastewater was a part of the local conversation on water and was addressed in 14% of the local papers and slightly less in *The Times* with 11% focus. Water recycling was not addressed prominently in either paper and was *completely* absent in the first 20 lines of the local articles. This topic was a small part of the national topic, with 3% focus.

Main Topic: Conservationism/Environmental Activism

The focus on *environmental activism* in *The New York Times* was double that found in the local papers, with 85% of the discourse focused on this topic nationally. As described in the methods section, this category was different because environmental topics were described as *conservation* efforts in the local papers, and not as environmental activism or antifracking rhetoric. This category is one of the largest disparities found in this comparison, as *conservation and protest* were addressed and

foregrounded in only 37% of the local articles, compared to 85% in *The Times*. Local papers did not approach conservation topics from a *celebrity activism* perspective, with no mention of personal celebrity connected to antifracking activities. This result is seen in the subtopics of *celebrity activism*, which had 0%, and *entertainment as activism*, also with 0%. *The Times* addressed *other activism* in 10% of the articles, while *other activism/conservation efforts* received the entirety of this category locally, with 37% of the focus. The topic of collaboration was found *only* in the local papers with 27% of the articles focused on land negotiation efforts between industry, local government, and conservation efforts.

Main Topic: Infrastructure

The impact of fracking on community infrastructure was described more often in the local papers, but only by a small margin, with 28% compared to 32%. Here, the focus was different because the local papers were almost equally focused on improvements and strain on community infrastructure, with 14% focused on the strain of fracking growth on infrastructure, and 19% on improvements to the community from the oil and gas industry. *The Times* did not discuss specific community improvements from fracking, but did regularly detail the strain from the extraction industry in 30% of the articles that year.

Main Topic: Citizens

The Times was slightly more centered on citizens than was the local conversation, which garnered 30% of the focus, compared to 44% focus in *The Times*. Citizen concerns were addressed in 17% of the local papers, and a similar amount, 13%, were addressed in

the national conversation. Several categories focused on a debate or contest regarding citizens including *citizen vs. corporate interests*, with 14% locally and 13% in the national paper. A category of *citizen vs. government* was not addressed in the local papers, but had 12% focus in the national news. The category of *citizen vs. law* was *not* found in the local articles, but was part of the national conversation with 8%. American Indian citizens were not a focus of the local articles, but rather the local papers used tribal leadership to address economic concerns. *The Times* addressed American Indian citizens in 7% of the articles, but described this group in relation to economic interests *and* as part of an antifracking coalition interested in preservation of sacred lands, a small but important distinction.

Main Topic: Other Energies

Other energies, such as ethanol, wind, coal, etc., were compared with fracking considerably more often in *The New York Times* than in the local papers, with 27% of the national articles discussing fracking compared to other renewable and nonrenewable energy options, but with only 3% of local conversation mentioning energy comparisons or alternatives to oil and gas extraction.

Main Topic: Cultural Diffusion

Cultural diffusion, a topic related to the cultural pervasiveness of the issue of fracking into the wider culture was much more pronounced in *The Times*, with 34% of the national articles in this category, whereas the local papers demonstrated this cultural diffusion in only 2% of the conversation. The *Standard* and *Express* contained two local

topics related to cultural acceptance or *cultural diffusion* of fracking, which did not appear in the national papers, including *Basin [community] pride* and *Basin [community] underappreciation* related to oil and gas fracking. *Basin pride* was found in 27% of the articles. *Basin underappreciation* had a 10% focus in the articles.

Main Topic: Structural Aspects

The final category addressed the *structural aspects* of fracking, which include particulars about the processes of fracking. It was less prominent in the local papers with only 2% than in *The Times*, where *structural* information occupied 24% of the public discourse over the year. The topic of *earthquakes/vibrations* associated with fracking activities was not addressed in any of the local papers, but was mentioned in 12% of the national articles. *Well integrity* was mentioned in only 2% of the local articles, yet was the topic in 8% of the national articles.

RQ1b: Topical Gaps and Silences

Topics represented differently in the local papers were identified and listed in order of the greatest disparity, including *entertainment as activism*, *celebrity activism*, *cultural diffusion*, *structural aspects*, *economic competition*, *health vs. business*, *farmer vs. fracking*, *environmental concerns*, *comparison of other energies*, *citizen interests/concerns*, *earthquakes*, *political misconduct*, *longevity/viability of fracking*, *national security*, *fracking as an environmental solution*, *American Indian citizens*, *strain on/scarcity of water*, *citizens vs. law*, and finally, the *how to's of fracking* (see Table 9).

Table 9.

Silences and Disparities

Topic	<u>New York Times</u> (Weighted Total)	<u>Standard/Express</u> (Weighted Total)	<u>Difference</u>
Entertainment as Activism	42	0	42
Celebrity as Activism	26	0	26
Cultural Diffusion	31	1	30
Other Energies (comparison)	24	2	22
Structural Aspects	24	1	23
Economic Competition	25	0	25
Health vs. Business	14	0	14
Water	57	28	29
Citizen	40	20	20
Earthquakes	7	0	7
Political Misconduct	14	4	10
Longevity/Viability (economic)	18	10	8
National Security	8	0	8
As Environmental Solution	7	0	7
American Indian Citizens	6	0	6
Strain /Scarcity (Water)	10	3	7
Citizen vs. Law	5	0	5
How To's of Fracking	5	0	5
<u>Local Only Topics/Themes</u>			
Redundant/Burdensome	0	30	30
Collaboration	0	17	17
American Indian Business	1	15	14
Basin Pride	0	17	17
Basin Underappreciation	0	6	6

Relative Silences

Topics and subtopics that were addressed in 10% or less of the local Basin conversation demonstrated a “relative silence” and include economic *longevity and viability* of fracking, *competition* related to fracking, *political misconduct* related to fracking, *worker health* concerns, *strain on and scarcity* of water, *citizens vs. the law*, *other energies* compared with fracking, *cultural diffusion* of the topic, and *structural aspects*, such as *well integrity* issues. These last two issues identify a gap in the specifics

of oil and gas fracking information from industry sources. Whether these gaps are deliberate omissions is unclear *without* a better understanding of newsgathering and sourcing. The collaboration of fracking stakeholders—industry, government, and conservationists—was an additional topical category that emerged in the local papers in discussions of stakeholder negotiation, but was *not* present in *The Times*.

Complete Absences

Topics that were identified in *The Times*, but were *not found* in the local papers, include *celebrity activism*, *entertainment as activism*, and *farmer vs. fracking*. *National security* was more of a national theme related to the international market, and it was not found locally. Local papers also did not describe *good emissions* related to fracking or represent fracking *as an environmental solution* for air, unlike the national news where the process was presented in 7% of the articles as making a *positive* contribution to cleaner air. A *health vs. business* dichotomy was absent from the local conversation as well, as was a specific category for *American Indian citizens*. Mention of seismic instability and *earthquakes* related to fracking or wastewater disposal was not found in the local conversation, but was present in *The Times*. A discussion of the specific “*how to’s*” of fracking was absent from the local conversation. A subtopic of *citizen vs. law* and *citizen vs. government* were not found in the local papers.

“Extra” Topics in the *Standard* and *Express*

Topics that emerged in the *Standard* and *Express*, but were *not* present in *The Times* over this 1-year period, include infrastructure *improvements* from fracking and a

topical argument of the *redundant/burdensome* nature of regulation. Topics related to *Basin* [community] *pride* related to the oil and gas industry, and the issue of *Basin* [community] *underappreciation* were distinctly local issues and were omissions in the national news. These local topics aid in understanding the conversations on extraction.

Gaps in Coverage: Topical Manipulation

This comparison process illuminated some important gaps in the local and national conversation. In many cases, similar topics were represented, perhaps even with similar weighted totals, yet aspects of those topics were addressed quite differently. These more subtle gaps and silences are what Huckin (2010) described as instances where silence is “used for deception, to hide information from the reader” (p. 420). For example, an *us vs. them* representation involving federal versus state government authority in regulation was found in both corpuses, but *The Times* used this theme to depict government versus industry, whereas the local papers depicted a contest between local government and local industry *versus* federal regulators. This is a subtle but important difference because it demonstrates a political community alignment supportive of oil and gas work. The final analysis of gaps and silences to be considered in this research involve silences which Brummett (2005) and Huckin (2002) refer to as strategic, manipulative, or “hidden” topical silences. The obvious gaps in the conversation become visible in Table 8, as do relative silences—those topics that are not mentioned very much. Yet, one silence that is even less apparent is a final category where silences occur within topics, and an issue is unevenly represented and thus may draw less textual focus (see Table 9). Silence can occur through omission, as well as through the amplification of

some topics over others. Manipulations with silence occur within each of these three categories, including outright silences, relative silences, and differentially focused silences. Manipulations within these categories will be addressed in more detail, along with themes and arguments that were found in the local conversation. Ideas of collaboration, economic hardship, community pride tied to energy, and underappreciation of the Basin's economic contribution to the state became apparent as important topical arguments and vital silences in the local conversation through the comparison process.

RQ2. Comparison of Stakeholder Voices

Prominent stakeholder voice was determined based on early mention in each article, and tabulated using the top-three stakeholders mentioned in the papers (see Table 10). Results demonstrate that the oil and gas industry stakeholders were the most prominent stakeholders mentioned in the local papers with an early mention in 39% of the local articles. Federal government was close behind with 30%. Citizen/resident stakeholders were the next, most mentioned voice in the local papers, with focus in 30% of the local articles, compared with 24% in *The Times*.

It is important to note that citizen and resident voices were actively mentioned in direct quotes in only two local articles, and were referred to most often as "Basin residents" or "concerned citizens" with no names attached (Tracy, 2012). Citizen voices appear just slightly more prominently than politician voices, which was primarily from Utah's governor and state representatives, who were mentioned in 27% of local papers, compared to only 8% for this voice in the national papers. Local government received 24% of the focus, and state government was mentioned in 17% of the articles. State

Table 10.**Comparison of Stakeholder Voices, *The Standard, Express, and The Times***

<i>Standard and Express (62)</i>			<i>New York Times (94)</i>		
Stakeholder	Mentions	%	Stakeholder	Mentions	%
1. Oil and gas industry	27	39%	1. Federal government	31	30%
2. Federal government	27	39%	2. Oil and gas industry	30	30%
3. Citizen/Resident	21	30%	3. State government	27	26%
4. Politicians	19	27%	4. Celebrity	24	24%
5. Local government	17	24%	5. Citizen/Resident	24	24%
6. State government	12	17%	6. Environmental opponent	20	20%
7. Scientist/Expert	11	16%	7. Scientist/Expert/Researcher	17	17%
8. Workers	10	14%	8. Related businesses	15	15%
9. Community	9	13%	9. Community	14	14%
10. Industry groups/Support	9	13%	10. Government/Countries	13	13%
11. Conservationists	8	11%	11. Industry groups/Support	13	13%
12. American Indian Business	5	5%	12. Farmers/Ranchers	12	12%
13. Government/Other States	5	7%	13. Politicians	9	8%
14. Journalist	4	6%	14. Local government	9	8%
15. Outdoor Enthous./Hunters	2	2%	15. Entertainment	7	7%
16. Farmers/Ranchers	1	1%	16. Journalist	4	4%

*Compiled from tabulation of first three mentions in each article.

regulators received a greater percentage of focus in *The Times*, with 27%, but only received 17% in the local articles, representing a disparity in state voice.

Conservationist voice had 11% of the early mentions in the local paper, while a comparatively similar group of environmental opponents received nearly double this result in *The Times*.

Stakeholder voices that were missing or less prominent in the local papers compared to national articles, include celebrities, entertainers, outdoor enthusiasts, farmers and ranchers, American Indian Business, and scientist/expert. These results represent only the earliest three stakeholders mentioned in the articles and describe some difference in a mention and an active quote. The discussion section will describe some of

these differences. For instance, active citizen voices were rarely quoted in the local papers as seen in the local topics and subtopics results, yet the chart would suggest that citizen voice *was* a prominent voice. For a better understanding of who received an active voice early in the article, the first three quotes in the first 20 lines of text for both local and national articles were noted and compared. This process bolstered the idea of a less prominent citizen voice, with active quotes from local residents found in only one local article (Tracy, 2012). Future research should continue to parcel out the importance of this distinction between a generic mention, such as “local residents,” compared with the direct and active quote of a resident. This information about stakeholder voices adds to a deeper understanding of how the pre-processes of textual construction, such as sourcing, may influence the local news articles, adding another important layer to this analysis. This process of comparing news texts, coupled with journalist interviews, revealed some additional gaps and silences with energy discourse in the Basin.

RQ3: Journalist Interview Results

The final question of the study was interested in a better understanding of silences in sourcing and preproduction processes of news, and addressed the following research questions: What do local journalists identify as areas of silence? How do local journalists research, source, and construct stories about fracking? What strategies do journalists use to negotiate a personal and professional relationship with silence?

In addition to the identification of silences through textual analysis and comparison, silences in local energy discourse were revealed through interviews with local journalists, who personally reflected on gaps they identified in their readership and

their process of information gathering and sourcing for fracking stories. These interviews were undertaken to address the critique that previous discourse scholarship falls short of a complex analysis because it investigates only “available” language and leaves silences and early processes of discourse as a sidebar (Blommaert, 2005). Journalists offered examples of the stakeholder voices they considered silent and missing in local energy discourse on fracking. This section summarizes the missing topics and stakeholder voices identified through specific accounts of how a story is generally assigned and how newsgathering and sourcing takes place. A more detailed look at each specific interview is found in the discussion section, along with the personal strategies journalists employ to negotiate these silences in local news discourse.

Journalist Interviews: Missing Topics: Stakeholder Voices

Local journalists identified missing readership and stakeholder voices in the local discourse. The *stakeholder voices* they identified as missing include American Indian tribe members, an “open dialogue with the State Division of Air Quality on air issues,” a growing Hispanic population, male oil field workers, the Navajo Nation, the local oil and gas industry, and the state Division of Air Quality. Additionally, two journalists described personal silences involving an environmental source, called the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA). In addition to silences with readership and stakeholders, journalists identified *topical gaps* about fracking, including air emissions, health impacts related to fracking, specific information on fracking practices from the oil and gas industry, well-rounded and thoughtful stories from the “outside” media, more direct stories about oil and gas technological advances without having to use a human-interest

angle, exploration of worker health issues, and greater appreciation for the Basin's economic contribution to the state.

Journalist Interviews: Story Assignments

Journalists either assigned a story or were assigned a story in a variety of ways. One journalist described that, "I don't have a beat. If a story comes up, I just do that," while another journalist had to be very choosy about what type of drilling stories to write due to a readily expressed and personal "conflict of interest" (Interview B, Line 25; Interview A, Lines 48–110). Several journalists were senior enough that they were the ones who assigned the stories. As one said, "I'm the one that does that [assigns stories]. So it's pretty easy for me." A more senior journalist described a process of choosing who would report the story based on particular skill sets, saying "we don't have beats, but we have some that cover those [oil and gas stories] better than others, so we'll make the assignment on the story and go from there" (Interview D, Lines 44–45). The process suggests that the newspaper management considers some journalists to be "better" at representing oil and gas stories than others. The process of negotiating the focus of an assignment was further described from a more subordinate journalist on one hand as, "I don't have a problem. I have the support of the editor and the publisher," but then this support was contradicted somewhat where the journalist said

Well mostly, I mean I got into a yelling match the other day about that closed door meeting, do you know about that? Well, we did have to go around about that. Here they [county commissioners] have a closed session. And they lied about it. They absolutely lied. I got into an argument with my publisher because of the restricted access. He didn't think I should run it. But in the end, I went ahead and wrote what I wanted. And they, I mean he was upset, but when things cooled down I think we understood that it was important to write what we did (Interview B, Lines 52–59).

This utterance speaks to the internal workings of the organization and concerns that had to be overcome in order to support a story that was critical of both industry actions and the activities of the local county commission. It is clear that careful negotiation is needed when writing a story about local government misconduct related to energy.

The assignment of a story was described in these interviews as involving aspects of power—some power gained through length of service in some cases, and some power that was negotiated based on performance related to “who writes *well*” on oil and gas topics. The misconduct of local political bodies was described as difficult and in one case required negotiation and lobbying for the chance to write about it. These accounts suggest that a local power structure is in place in the Basin, and local media play an active role in this structure—in some cases as power dependent, and in other respects as a powerful decision maker about what makes the news.

Interview A described not knowing from day to day what a news assignment would be and so had a “mobile news office” in the trunk of the car so stories could easily be done on the road. This journalist described the broad pressures related to modern journalism saying, “and that’s kind of it. If you can’t do everything you’re at a disadvantage, um, I think as a reporter for continuing in media. *The Tribune* [Salt Lake City newspaper] just laid off 20 people out of their newsroom yesterday...you have to be across everything [social media, TV, radio, print], and that’s just what makes it so taxing. It’s not going to be the death of newspapers that kills off journalism; it’s going to be the fact that at some point we all just get burned out” (Interview A, Lines 448–462). This response suggests that once a rural journalist is assigned a story, a great deal is expected, as journalists must understand processes related to gathering news, must interpret the

news, and in some cases, are called on to disseminate the news as well.

Journalist Interviews: Newsgathering

Journalists described a variety of methods for newsgathering and sourcing about fracking articles. Two journalists described having a ready list of sources, one saying, “I have a list of people that I call, so I just go to the phone and start talking to people.”

Another journalist described an ease in finding sources, saying, “I’m well enough connected that I can actually call on people the way a salesperson would” unlike some earlier, “days of chasing ambulances” (Interview C, Lines 27–28, Lines 173–175).

Interview A described having local residents make contact about a story, wanting to be a source, sometimes before a story had even been assigned. Another strategy for gathering the news was expressed by Interview B as to, “you know mostly it’s about knowing who to call and just taking notes, recording what *they* say. Getting good quotes is key,” and “figuring out how to organize that” (Lines 62–64). Several interviewees described trust as a necessary element for successful newsgathering, and one said that getting good stories “is very much about good relationships...it is convenient to sit at your desk and wait for someone to email you. But it’s very sloppy and takes the heart out of what we do” (Interview C, Lines 182–183).

All of the newsgathering methods described by the journalists during the interviews suggested a certain power dynamic. As Blommaert (2005) wrote earlier in the literature, the “generating” part of an article’s construction involves a negotiation of power. In these accounts, power was negotiated based on the “trickiness” of the topic and was also related to trust between parties. Power became evident in professional

relationships between writers and news sources that was either nurtured over time, was uneasy, or in some cases was simply not present.

Journalist Interviews: Story Sourcing

Journalists described an ease with certain sources and discomfort with others. Sourcing was described as a way to bolster credibility; for instance, Journalist A described taking a defensive position with an irate citizen who questioned a story's credibility by responding, "And I'm like hey, I'm pretty well sourced on this" (Interview A, Line 535). This journalist felt an ease in getting citizen sources, but when a conflict of interest arose with a particular story, it was necessary to send it on to someone else because "everyone that comes and talks to me and says I can be a source, I'm passing it on to another reporter..." (Interview A, Line 78). This journalist also detailed the importance of getting more than one source because "what I understand, and not just from the companies. You always have to balance between, okay, the company is telling you this, but what do the people on the ground know?" (Lines 113–115). This journalist depicted a local reader as a "judge" because the reader is "going to judge the credibility of the sources that I've used." In this example, the journalist also described using a State agency to establish specific details about structural concerns and proper casing, rather than relying on what "Farmer Joe" had said about what was happening with his well. "I would go to like a State agency and ask them is this well properly cased? Have you inspected the well, ya know, what do you know and talk to them." A strong reliance on state sources for information about inspection and regulation was expressed here, rather than reliance on information from the affected farmer, who was deemed less credible.

In terms of sourcing strategy, Interview B described aligning with sources, suggesting that, “if you just let them think that you’re on their side, whether you are or not” (Lines 63–64). This journalist described having, “a list of people that I call. So I just go to the phone and start talking to people. It’s really about people at the end of the day.” When asked if there was ever a story that was “uncomfortable” to cover, this journalist described “sometimes just talking about what is working, with leases. Covering problems, or accidents in the field can be tricky.” One such experience occurred while “covering an exploratory drilling story in Grand County. That was a hot issue. It involved Anadarko, and the issue was with them, something about staying local, but they had issues with the federal level and there was a delay with the decision. You know they’re the biggest employer, so you have to be respectful of that. It’s hard to interpret, but I try to get more information, as *much* as possible. You still have to ask” (Interview B, Lines 40–48). “Ozone stories” were described as “pretty hard” (Interview B, Lines 45–49). Interview C described a sourcing process that involves running oil and gas stories past the local county commission for verification, stating, “Primarily, when I get tips on that stuff, I’ll visit with the Uintah County Commission” (Line 225).

For another journalist, the state offices were on “speed dial,” suggesting an ease in contacting this source. State agencies were described as difficult to deal with for some journalists. One said, “It’s different depending on the story...with the air quality issues or surface spills. I probably would talk to [state employee]. It’s a little territorial. It’s different. Like for surface spills I’d probably talk to the EPA. We have a good working relationship” (Interview B, Lines 67–74).

Interview B described a silence in fracking sources as “an open dialogue with the

state,” suggesting that this source was not always easy to work with, but described a good working relationship with other agencies, including The State Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA), the local Bureau of Land Management (BLM) field office, and the Utah State University Air Simulator. This journalist described great difficulty in getting some government sources to talk when there were problems with fracking, suggesting that “It’s handled by government...they’re handling information so quickly to minimize negative impact” (Lines 90–93).

Two journalists described environmental sources as difficult, and one journalist suggested that “if I was to call the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA), and ask them for their opinion on something, they probably wouldn’t give it to me” (Lines 340–342). Another journalist described *already knowing* what SUWA’s response would be and “flip-flopped” on whether to call them or not, saying, “I’m not one of those people that’s like I’m not calling them, because, (pause) well, I don’t know, sometimes I do that” (Lines 172–173). This journalist described trying “not to assume anything” by asking obvious questions of sources, describing a hypothetical interaction as, “Are you still opposed to fracking? Yes, and then, because then I get that great answer where they go off on why their drilling pollutes the water, it’s bad for the environment, we pump all these chemicals down, and we don’t know what we’re putting in the ground, and the companies won’t tell us, blah blah blah....” (Interview A, Lines 180–183). The result of this “obvious questioning” strategy was “you can more fully flesh out their position.” Interview C described a need to get “a lot of sourcing from different places too, not always from the obvious place” (Lines 183–184).

There were some clear contradictions voiced regarding oil and gas industry

sources, such as when Interview C described that industry sources would be “happy to tell you everything you’d ever want to know,” but that they “get a little gunshy sometimes and they get a little guarded” because they’ve been “painted as horrible people that are poisoning water everywhere, and pretty soon if that’s going to be the narrative every time you poke your head up, you’re not going to want to poke your head up” (Lines 383–385, 403–405). Interview B described the oil and gas industry as “the biggest employer, so you have to be respectful of that,” yet also suggested that when it comes to fracking, “we need more information. With drilling they were going through layers, deep you know, but with fracking they’re drilling across one layer. There’s just not enough information” (Lines 77–85). Interview B described this information gap as an inability to get state sources to talk about fracking’s impacts on health, intimating that the state has more responsibility to address these health concerns than other sources.

Interview D described the newspapers themselves as a source, saying that, “we have two separate staff, common publisher and common editor. So there’s some things we share back and forth and some things that are unique to the certain paper” (Lines 13–14). When stories are done on oil and gas this journalist “spend(s) a lot of time trying to understand the entire process, okay, whether it’s oil and shale, shale and oil in Duchesne County, or whether it’s natural gas in Uintah County. We’ve done enough stories about their impact on the economy, on the environment, on family life, on social life” (Lines 52–53). This comment highlights a geographical distinction about which oil and gas processes take place in which part of the county. Interview D said, “When we do stories, we are able to talk about the entire package, rather than just one isolated thing” (Lines 52–58). This journalist was adamant that industry operators are misrepresented and said,

“Nobody prints that side of the story; *we do*. But nobody else puts that other side in there. You know with technology, there’s been some great strides with environmental concerns. You talk about silences. The businesses out here are probably tired of trying to explain that to a reporter or to a company that doesn’t want to know. And so yeah, they’re silent on the issue” (Lines 77–80). This journalist was upset on behalf of the local operators—that the rules keep changing for oil and gas extraction, saying,

They make the improvements that the environmentalists want, and then the environmentalists change the rules and come back in and say we don’t want 20%, we want 40%. And so now there’s a new set of rules. Government BLM falls into that too. They keep changing the rules, and it becomes very very frustrating to do business out here, and then you get something else thrown in like, the sage grouse. So you abide by the rules, and you get ready to drill, and then all of a sudden you’ve got a habitat problem that you’ve got to deal with, and now you can’t do business the way you thought you would, and so pretty soon they just decide they’ll pull out, and no one is listening to us anyway, we’ll just pull out, and we’ll do business somewhere out. A lot of them have done that. A lot of people from here are in North Dakota right now. (Interview D, Lines 84–90)

This example describes frustration in working with the changing demands of environmentalists and describes an alignment with the industry, seen in the use of “we” and “you” in this response. It also describes a prominent fear about industry leaving and what this will mean for the community, offering a hint at the discomfort involved in considering the long-term viability of fracking. Interview D described going to the source if the story warranted it, and “if it impacts hunters, then we will contact them, if it’s an oil and gas story, but if it’s on land where hunters are going, and they’d like to see some restrictions for the land there, there we try to present their side with it also. If it’s an oil and gas, but it impacts grazing rights, winter or summer, then we try to present that also. We try to do a lot of stories on what are people doing to improve the problems, okay? And nobody else is doing that” (Lines 113–117).

Another journalist described taking pride in reporting about improvements, stating a need to “work together to find solutions so that good things can happen for everybody.” A concern was expressed that “when you start involving people from outside the area, that don’t live here, members of SUWA or other organizations like that, they only have one, one thing on their minds and that’s to shut them down.” This journalist suggested that “outsiders” were not considered an accurate or credible source of information on local fracking (Interview C, Lines 133–136).

This section described a variety of considerations that were detailed while sourcing information for a story on fracking, which involved some alignment with industry objectives, a gap with environmental sources, an insider versus outsider dichotomy, the verification of oil and gas stories through the local county governments, and some difficulty reporting on potential energy industry improvements. There were also some contradictions present, seen in the availability of industry, environmental, and state sources. Some of these sources were described as very available, yet others were described as difficult to access, something that might shape the resulting article.

Journalist Interviews: Generating the News

The interview results are integral to understanding the “generating portions” of news discourse production processes. They offer an additional layer of understanding found in “contexts where discourse generates from” (Blommaert, 2005). As stated earlier, the genesis of symbolic and representative selection of words and a less-explored selection process for silence becomes evident in the processes and contexts that influence, produce, and create that discourse (Blommaert, 2005; de Vreese, 2005). The

way news is gathered and sourced in the Uinta Basin impacts the resulting story.

Descriptive data in the discussion section will further address interests relating to stance and power in newsgathering and sourcing.

CHAPTER 5

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS/DISCUSSION

The results of this research demonstrate that silence exists in the Uinta Basin over a variety of topics and subtopics primarily focused on fracking related to land value, land use, industry information, and involving citizen, worker, and state stakeholder voices. While there is silence in the Basin about environmental and health concerns, some issues, like air quality were well covered with 76% of the local articles focused on emissions. Yet other topics like health, water, citizen involvement, environmental activism, community infrastructure and impacts, and specific links and information about fracking processes were less covered or absent when compared with *The New York Times* coverage. Even some topics that *appeared* to be well covered because they occupied a large part of the public conversation, contained some distinct disparities and silences. The next step in this research involves a critical and rhetorical analysis of these textual silences, speculating on how they might influence the intended reader (Huckin, 2010). This step in the process is described by Huckin (2010) as “analogous to what Barton (2002) calls identifying “rich features,” except that “it involves those features that are not physically present” (p. 420). A discussion of these silences and how journalists operate with and negotiate silence is the final aspect of this research and requires a careful look at the types of silences found in this discourse to address *how* silence operates in the Uinta

Basin and also involves a process of articulating the broader social impacts of silence. How is silence operating in the texts themselves? What particular silence manipulations are present? This last step involves looking at the individual interviews and identifying the specific strategies employed by journalists to acknowledge potential biases and address alignments with the energy industry. With the knowledge that silence exists in this discourse, how do local reporters negotiate around and through these silences? The strategies discovered and articulated in these news texts and interviews suggest an awareness of silence on the topic of energy extraction and offer important ideas toward improvements and recommendations to more complexly report and address environmental and health impacts and concerns. There is a great deal to learn from talking to those who are “on the ground.”

Taxonomy of Local Silences

Huckin’s (2010) taxonomy of silences was used to analyze gaps in the local news discourse and was vital in identifying power structures and relationships to land. Manipulative topical silences are broadly described as those instances where “a writer elides relevant information in a way that surreptitiously disadvantages the listener or reader” (Huckin, 2010, p. 421). Huckin (2010) identified at least six specific categories for silence, including topical silence, conventional silence, discreet silence, lexical silence, implicational, and presuppositional, or implicit silences (p. 421). Manipulative *topical* silences occur when important information is left out of the text that impacts “the coherence” of the text or topic (Huckin, 2010, p. 421). *Conventional* silences “exploit genre features” such as technical writing conventions or content as a way to manipulate

an audience through “a lack of transparency” and by “leaving out information” that is not favorable to those in power positions (Huckin, 2010, p. 422). *Discreet* or *genre-based* silences are found when a “writer refrains from mentioning sensitive information” to meet personal objectives, but does so under the guise of social sensitivity. *Lexical silences* are those that exploit certain word choices, such that “the choice of a term over a competing term can have manipulative effects” (Huckin, 2010, pp. 423–424). An example of a lexical silence from the local newspapers is found in the choice to define a local drilling operation as “collaboration” rather than as a “negotiation” or “transaction” of sensitive public lands. The choice to present the oil and gas effort as “collaboration” implies input by all parties and is a strategic and premature word choice considering that in this case, all interested stakeholders had *not* yet weighed in on the “collaboration,” as a “30-day public comment period” had reportedly only just begun (Bernard, 2012). Residents’ input was not part of this “collaboration,” yet the word choice intimates that this drilling project is a foregone conclusion. This word choice suggests a strategy of manipulation, because the reporter was aware of this omission. The next type, *implicational silences*, are those that imply or “insinuate something rather than flatly stating it,” allowing for plausible deniability by a writer if questioned. The final type of manipulative silence offered by Huckin (2010) is a presuppositional or implicit silence, where “a writer omits relevant information on the assumption that it is already known by the reader” (pp. 425–428). Huckin (2010) stressed that each type of silence can be used unintentionally and often *is* used as a relatively “uninteresting aspect of daily life.” Yet, he described that manipulative silences may also be “deceptive or misleading, in that, by concealing certain information relevant to the topic at hand, they give added prominence

to certain other information, thus creating a slanted view of the topic” (Huckin, 2002, p. 354). Purposeful manipulation is found when there is a choice made for silence on a topic over another salient option—a choice which stands to benefit the writer or a broader power structure (Huckin, 2010, p. 420). The process of identifying gaps and silences in the local conversation addresses a concern that “textual silences are rhetorically powerful elements of written discourse that are too often neglected in critical analyses” (Huckin, 2010, p. 429). This view of silence supports a critical claim of this study, that silence is often unexamined, yet is a powerful and *strategic* aspect of communication, which like language can influence topics related to the environment and resource use.

Unsaid, Underreported, and Differentially Focused...

Van Dijk (1986) stated that “the ideological nature of discourse in general and of news discourse in particular, is often *defined* by the unsaid” (1986, p. 178, emphasis added). He suggested that what is left unsaid in public energy discourse may be just as important as what *is* said. What is *not* being said about resource extraction in the Uinta Basin is the primary focus for this research. Following silence scholarship from Huckin (2010), van Dijk (1986), and Brummett (1980), textual silence in local news discourse was identified and analyzed in the Uinta Basin and compared to *The New York Times*. This study identified “the unsaid” in local newspaper articles and delineated three main types of silences operating locally. The first type of silence is found in the more obvious and outright gaps in the local energy conversation. These silences were fairly simple to identify with this research because they were completely absent from the conversation. The second type of silence identified was a more subtle, “relative silence” (i.e., topics and

subtopics addressed in less than 10% of the articles). The final type of silence identified is what might be considered the most manipulative, whereby silence occurs through an overemphasis on some part of a topic, such as a textual concentration on land control, *over* another related aspect, such as land preservation. With these silences, it may be possible for a journalist to claim that a topic *was* covered and perhaps offer an appearance of “objective reporting,” yet this comparative research makes it possible to identify topics that were covered at the *expense* of other important aspects, which may demonstrate a more subtle bias.

Manipulative silences were identified within each category (see Table 9). Silences are manipulative, according to Huckin (2010), when they are covert, when they offer an advantage, and when they depend on not being noticed by the reader for their success (p. 420). This identification offers key insight into *how* the local newspapers depict and omit topics of importance related to energy extraction. This research answers the question, what does the local energy conversation on fracking entail and what does it leave out? As Linde (2001) suggested, some silences are more salient than others, and because some silences require a description of what *is* being said in order to understand what has been left out, the silences found in this research will not necessarily appear in a particular order, nor flow from greatest disparity to least disparity. Silences are discussed in a more organic fashion, for instance, in order to explore a silence about resource scarcity and highlight related gaps found in the local conversation about the “bust” aspects of fracking. It is necessary to first understand how the local paper overshadows this topic with a more pronounced focus on economic “boom” opportunities from fracking.

Economic Boom, No Bust

Current public newspaper coverage from April 1, 2012–April 1, 2013, in both the national and local papers overwhelmingly represented fracking as an economic story. *The Standard* and *Express* were more focused than *The Times* on the main topics of economy, regulation, and safety, though these issues were *also* very prominently mentioned and foregrounded in *The Times*. Silences were found in this economic category, in the areas of competition, longevity, and viability of fracking and comparison with other energies. These areas provide evidence that fracking is more often discussed in the local articles in terms of its “vast” and abundant “potential” than as a competitive industry with constraints and finite boundaries and limits. Only two local articles mentioned competing or alternate energies (Ashby, 2013; Puro, 2013). This reveals a significant gap in the local conversation about other energies, which *was* described in *The New York Times* with a 27% focus of the articles. Why are alternate and competing energies not mentioned or compared publicly in the Basin? Who benefits from this topical silence? Might this absence suggest that oil and gas is the *only* economic option for the Basin? This lack of information can be viewed as manipulative, as it provides advantage for special interests particularly supportive of oil and gas extraction (Huckin, 2010).

The pronounced focus on economics in the papers was not an unexpected result considering that the U.S. was emerging from economic recession during the time frame studied. What *was* unexpected *was* that economic topics so *far* outweighed environmental topics, which were addressed in only a third of the local articles, while *economic* topics had 180% of the focus in the local conversation. Half of *The Times* articles were focused on the environment, with a considerable economic focus in the national paper as well,

with 159% focus. The potential strain on the community infrastructure from fracking was *less* of a focus locally and was almost evenly split between growing pains and community improvements, such as new roads paid for by lease monies. *The Times*, however, kept a primary focus on community strains in this category, evidenced in 30% of the articles. Local papers were considerably more focused on jobs with 37% of articles detailing employment opportunities. Local articles reflected a theme of economic abundance, rebirth, and transformation from energy extraction. This overly prominent focus on economic benefits also reflected a theme of “economic hardship,” suggesting that this rural community had weathered hard times (thus the heavy focus on jobs), but also reflected the idea that those hard times had passed due to the bright prospects of energy extraction. This prominence of “jobs talk” can present a textual dichotomy of employment versus impacts to land, what scholars such as Schwarze (2006) describe as a “jobs versus the environment” situation (p. 252). Schwarze (2006) suggests that a focus on jobs “dissipates concerns about ecological degradation by encouraging audiences to divide their allegiance...encouraging us to perceive political choices as necessary and inevitable tradeoffs between monetary wealth and a healthy planet, even though such tradeoffs often perpetuate damage both to economic systems and the ecological systems on which the former depend” (p. 252). This major topical argument of abundance was found in both the local and national articles to bolster a depiction of fracking as the embodiment of economic potential and development. This abundance argument was found in more than half of the local articles. *The Times* had a similar amount of emphasis on “vast resources” and abundant energy in the national articles. These representations of fracking imbued it with almost mythical transformative properties to bring back lost

economic advantage, regain market superiority, and reshape struggling communities. In the local papers, this theme reflected the “boom” aspects of energy extraction, much more so than any suggestion of competition or viability and longevity. It left out discussion of a somewhat inevitable “bust.” This represents a significant textual gap in the discussion of fracking locally, what Huckin (2010) defined as “the omission of some piece of information that is pertinent to the topic at hand” (p. 420). Environmental concerns and economic hardships were overshadowed by these depictions of economic opportunities. For instance, in a local article titled, “Blessings and Curses of the Uintah Basin’s Low Unemployment,” and a reprint titled, “Basin’s low jobless rate blessing, challenges,” the articles might have been more appropriately titled “Blessings and Blessings,” as these articles largely focused on the positive aspects of energy growth, such as having “more work than workers” (Hughes, 2012). This topic of growth provided an opportunity to discuss the limits of extraction, the strain on resources, ways to prevent sharp decline during leaner times, or a need for caution to preserve land during this boom; yet instead, the articles bolstered geographic importance by publicly detailing increased employment and economic prosperity. The prominence of economic hardship arguments, juxtaposed with topics depicting endless jobs and vast resources are important to an understanding of *how* fracking is depicted locally and what silence might *mean* relative to fracking in the Basin. These larger-than-life, mythic perceptions of energy abundance do not operate in a bubble, but spill over into the way things are done, creating a particular reality.

Ellul (1967) described that textual myths operate as manipulations because a sharp focus on abundance can spark focus in one direction, such as market growth and

speculation, which may not be based on wholly realistic representations of the limits and the finite nature of nonrenewable resources—what Schwarze (2006) described as “tradeoffs” that can “perpetuate damage” to the environment (p. 252). Overprojections detract focus from other energy innovation and exploration that might better serve a long-term perspective of energy. These prosperity topics are not without some particle of truth, as fracking has brought economic opportunity to the Basin and to Utah, yet as Ellul (1967) suggested, effective propaganda must reference political or economic reality in order to be credible.

The environmental concern with this prominent focus on abundance and vast resources is that it does not acknowledge the resource strain and “bust” aspects. This discourse has a specific *kairos* or timeliness, taking place when the Basin, and the country, is emerging from economic hardship and thus may create an environment that is ripe for abuse and misuse of environmental resources. According to Homer-Dixon (1999) in his text *Environment, Scarcity and Violence*, when an economic downturn takes place, “rural resource scarcities and population growth have combined with an inadequate supply of rural jobs” (Intro. p. 19). Such circumstances exacerbate local tensions as competition for any remaining resources accelerates, and without the proper social controls in place, these tensions can threaten and overwhelm a small community (Homer-Dixon, 1999, Intro. p. 20). His research emphasizes the unique issues of rural life, of living and working directly in the land, and suggests that when resources are abundant, there is less concern about violence to people or places and further suggests that “environmental scarcity sometimes helps to drive societies into a self-reinforcing spiral of violence, institutional dysfunction and social fragmentation” (Intro. p. 5). Homer-

Dixon (1999) cautioned that the negative effects of severe environmental scarcity will often outweigh the positive. Concern for infrastructure and resource scarcity *was* depicted in *The New York Times*, but this concern was not prominent in the local articles during this 1-year period. This result is of concern, as rural communities are perhaps more at risk economically, as they often do not have an economic buffer in place to weather severe economic droughts; therefore, *while* a boom exists, careful planning is needed to forestall community consequences related to a somewhat inevitable “bust.”

Proud, But Underappreciated

A related local theme of community “underappreciation” was visible in the local articles in detailed accounts of energy summits and conferences held in Salt Lake City and in the Basin, where the Basin community was described as an emerging power player and depicted as “important to Utah” and as “providing significant economic benefit” to the state (Ashby, 2013; Bernard, 2012; Hughes, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; Unsigned, 2012a; 2012b; see Appendix B, Articles 11, 17, 20, 22, 25, 26, 40). This focus on power was presented in contradiction to other sentiments expressed, including a powerlessness and community underappreciation found in interview accounts describing “disconnection” with outsiders to the Basin. A linguistic marking of “insider vs. outsider” was found in the articles based on geography, separating those who understand energy (insiders) and those who do not (outsiders) (Ashby, 2013a, 2013b). This geographical divide depicted those who struggle and work hard to produce energy on one side and those who do not appreciate it and seek to benefit from protesting against it on the other (i.e., “litigation opportunists” who *also* benefit from energy).

Passive Protest Allowed, But Environmentalists Not Welcome

A silence related to the lack of focus on the negative impacts on land from fracking was found in the way protest was depicted locally. A much less passionate depiction of protest was found in the local papers than was found in *The Times*. Abstractions and passive voice were found that seemed to silence controversy and dampen public outcry in the local papers. For example, one article described “conservation groups” making “formal protests” and reported protest activities in terms of “a number of western counties and conservation groups [that] have filed letters.” It then stated that the groups have “filed a formal protest” and are “oddly aligned in protesting” (Bernard, 2012). This coalition is described in such dispassionate terms as “are protesting” and “formal protests filed,” and the textual impact of such depictions is to represent these activities as benign rather than in active or emotive terms. These protest groups were “oddly aligned” yet the article describes that they came together in their “joint critique of federal designation of wilderness lands.” This argument of government overreach overtook the more placid depictions of protest. This depiction of protest provides evidence of abstraction, whereby emotional topics were represented dispassionately as “formal protests” from unnamed and unquoted “concerned citizens.”

This abstraction of protest can be considered a strategy as it is also seen in an article titled, “Water source protection ordinance discussed,” from October 31, 2012, where the county commissioner’s voice is used to describe the feelings of a crowded public hearing on the matter of water protection. The public reaction is depicted in a dispassionate way, describing only that “there’s a lot of passion on each side of this issue” (Bernard, 2012). The only evidence that there may have been discord is a

description that the commission “has felt the pressure” to “hash out” a decision on the water ordinance. Yet the article does not cite a resident or protester voice directly and neglects any passionate description of public reaction at the meeting. This journalist takes any passion out of the issue from the beginning, with a headline where protest “was discussed” and a heated public issue was depicted with muted expressions of “public concern.” Were there other available descriptors? In this article, the local county commission “speaks” for local citizens—a fairly common occurrence in local papers. One industry operator was directly quoted in the article where he “assured listeners that the decision to mine would be made in collaboration with the community and asked residents to wait until the science is completed.” The article then stated that “Agrium’s proposal to mine phosphate has sparked considerable opposition from residents,” yet this phrase is as “passionate” as the article gets. In fact, the words *spark*, *pressure*, and *passion* would seem to suggest great emotion and friction, but the way the words are used has the opposite effect. What does taking the passion out of a potentially passionate exchange do? Whom might it serve? What does representing some voices in active quotes accomplish, such as the commission’s voice and the industry representatives, and *not* representing other voices as actively, such as omitting direct quotes from impacted farmers or citizens? This abstraction leaves public citizen voices silent and gives precedence to the more active parties. Farmers voices were absent in all of the local articles and received the least number of mentions in the review of stakeholder voices (see Table 10). This omission may be a way of defining who has the ultimate power to influence the hearing and suggests that some voices are *less* important to actively represent. At the end of the article it states that “Agriculture and Industry have sent letters

to the commission office indicating cautious support for the ordinance with the warning that continued production not be restricted,” and so a reader can *imagine* farmers voices in this hearing, combined with a threat from industry that water access not be restricted. Yet the article does not quote farmers directly, and industry and regulatory stakeholders are the voices that are given primacy in this article (Bernard, 2012). This passive depiction of local citizen protest becomes quite glaring when compared to depictions of environmental activism in *The Times*. The national paper used controversy as part of the very *description* of fracking (i.e., defining it as “alarming,” as well as a “dangerous technology” and a “controversial technique,” and repeatedly highlighted high emotion connected to health and environmental concerns from opposing sides in the fracking “debate”; see Figure 1).

A related disparity found in the comparative results is that protest was *not* depicted in relation to entertainment, nor did the local articles use celebrity status to promote environmental and health concerns. This represents a major difference with *The Times*, where 47% of the articles focused on entertainment activism, and 29% of the articles used celebrity activism as a way to introduce environmental and health concerns. These two aspects of activism were not found in the local papers, but rather local conservationism was defined under a subtopic of *other activism/conservation efforts*, in 23% of the local article, an area where *The Times* garnered only 10% focus. It was common for *The Times* to introduce environmental concerns with controversy, celebrity, and entertainment, while these themes were absent in local protest, leading one to question how might active protest be represented locally? Can it be actively represented? Perhaps not, as it was common for the local papers to depict passive protest, rather than

active, antifracking sentiments, and in fact, there was *no* evidence of an antifracking discourse within the local corpus.

The disparity in the way environmental activism was described in the local and national news may impact *how* environmental issues are depicted and whether they *can* be addressed locally. Environmental activism was represented as *conservationism* in the Basin. This primary discrepancy became particularly glaring when compared with national articles, which overwhelmingly defined antifracking protest as *environmentalism* and represented protest in very active and controversial terms, linking fracking with “controversy” *because* of potential environmental and health impacts in an overwhelming amount of the articles. Critics of drilling were *not* actively referred to as “environmentalists” in the local paper, rather the voices of protesters or opponents of fracking were referred to almost exclusively as conservationists and in a few places as critics and protesters. Eight local articles referenced conservationism (Ashby, 2012; Bernard 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Hughes, 2013; Tracy, 2012; Unsigned, 2012a; 2012b; see Appendix B, Articles 4, 6, 13, 15, 26, 36, 37, 59). This decision to define a conservation agenda instead of an “environmental” perspective—the perspective found in the national news—represents what Huckin (2010) defined as a lexical silence. According to Huckin (2010), lexical silences exploit through certain word choice, where “the choice of a term over a competing term can have manipulative effect” (p. 424). This lexical distinction is of interest in light of the definition of conservationism as a wise use ideology. Conservationist ideology is a subset of environmental activism interested in sustainable development that “recognizes that there should be some restraints on humans’ use of natural resources.” But in this view resources are “a storehouse of commodities for humans” whose merit is primarily based on how they can benefit humans (Corbett, 2006, pp. 31–33). The

guiding aim of conservationism is instrumental, viewing land and resources as an “instrument” or tool with an aim toward protecting and regulating resources solely so they can be best utilized by humans. Corbett (2006) insisted that conservation is not a “radical” ideology because it “requires no drastic reformulating of institutions within the existing social system—economic, political, social or cultural—or even in individual lifestyles” (p. 32). Most important for this research is the understanding that conservationism does not disturb the status quo, and so local government and the local extraction industry are able to continue current extraction practices relatively unhindered under a “conservationist” agenda. Corbett described conservation, saying,

“good conservation” means that people will have rivers for boating or swimming, and clean water to drink. A conservationist ideology is not concerned about conserving water for fish—unless humans want to use those fish themselves. Thus the focus of this ideology is still very much on humans and their needs and desires, not the environment for the environment’s sake, and conservationists are most concerned with using natural resources “wisely.” (2006, p. 32)

A local example of conservation ideology is found in the article titled, “Conservation groups restoring Sowers Canyon,” from March 14, 2013, where several hunting groups (Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife and Mule Deer Foundation) have reportedly “worked steadily over the past few years to make the habitat of the canyon attractive to wildlife” (Hughes, 2013). The first sentence in the article states, “if you build it, they will come,” suggesting that this reforestation has a purpose beyond simple environmental aims. The article continues, saying that the group has “built a pond, drilled a water well, reseeded land and planted vegetation” and that “it’s all going to making habitat and food for elk.” It describes that these improvements are motivated by the passion to hunt elk locally and *not* primarily to preserve and protect land. This article provides an example of what local “conservationist ideology,” the

prominent form of protest available looks like in the Basin (Hughes, 2013).

As mentioned previously, protest activities were reported less often in the local papers than in *The Times*. References to conservation activities were highlighted in only 37% of the local articles, compared to environmental activism, which had an 85% focus or thrust in the national articles. This is a gap in local discourse between both *how* environmental activism was discussed and also *how much* it was discussed. This difference may influence how active and prominent protest *can be* and how environmentalist activities can be depicted and interpreted in the Uinta Basin. Corbett (2006) suggested that although the distinctions between a conservationist and other more “radical” environmental ideologies may seem minor at first, these “ideological differences are tremendous and call for very different ways of relating to and communicating about the natural world” (p. 29). Habitat in a more “radical” *environmentalist* viewpoint would not be satisfied with reforesting an area for sport, as in the elk habitat restoration project, but would be undertaken out of a concern for the diversity, reforestation, and preservation of the desert lands themselves (Hughes, 2013).

Controversy: Regulation and Environment

Controversy was apparent in both the local and national papers, yet each locale had a very different *focus* for controversy. Controversy was locally represented as a critique of federal regulation of land and fracking operations, whereas *The Times* used controversy to touch on environmental concerns and introduce economic stories and as a way to quite literally describe fracking. Local papers depicted controversy related to the perceived “overreach” of federal regulation (see Appendix D). Appendix D offers a quick

glance of this topical argument in the local articles, a focus on redundant/burdensome regulation, which occupied 40% focus in the local conversation. This same argument was not actively represented in *The New York Times* and highlights a major gap and disparity between how the local and national articles discussed land use and control. An example of this overregulation argument is found in an article titled, “County officials testify to House on energy policy,” which described that overregulation has “stymied affordable and abundant energy production,” that it “adds a redundant, burdensome and costly layer of federal approval which threatens to usurp state and local authority of regulators,” and that it is “pushing investment off public lands and onto private lands” (Bernard, 2012). This depiction differed from the national focus on controversy, which was primarily a way to foreground economic interests by first mentioning celebrity, health, and environmental concerns. Local debate over regulatory authority for land was found in three categories that emerged from the local texts: the “*who’s in charge*” subtopic, an *energy independence* topical argument, and an “*us vs. them*” subtopic. All of these local topics depicted local government, citizens, and the extraction industry as standing against federal regulating bodies—an aggressor who was threatening to control and restrict economic gains and successes. This same question of authority in regulating land, related to oil and gas activities, was present in both discourses, and yet local articles were *more* focused on local government, with little state regulatory voice. Local articles depicted an “insider versus outsider” dichotomy between local stakeholders and the federal government. Many local articles detailed perceived incompetence and the inability of federal regulators to understand energy development on the local level (Ashby, 2012; Bernard, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2012e, 2012f, 2012g, 2013; Hughes, 2012a,

2012b, 2012c; see Appendix B, Articles 8, 11, 14, 15, 16, 20, 22, 24, 30, 37, 38, 40, 48).

This topical argument was fostered by local government and high-ranking political voices, such as the governor and the state representatives, all of whom have a sizable economic stake in positive energy outcomes.

According to Huckin (2010), this topic of redundant regulation represents a discreet manipulative silence because it appears to be sensitive to the perceived aims and goals of the Basin community related to drilling by addressing regulatory obstacles to continued economic growth. Yet it elides any mention of what reduced regulation will mean for the other side of this issue, land *preservation* initiatives. These initiatives also have great potential to impact local citizens, but were *not* actively addressed. Voices who support the regulation of fracking are absent in these articles, an important omission for citizens, because many current health and environmental policies profoundly *rely* on federal regulators for oversight and enforcement related to industry actions and uses of land. In Huckin's (2010) view, censoring of certain ideas out of a guise of community support may subtly serve political purposes intent on reduced regulation related to local land use and control (p. 424). What is interesting about this communication gap is that it highlights a political issue and suggests a need for further negotiation (i.e., the scope and content of state and federal regulation). This gap demonstrates the power of silence to focus on issues that may require further review and potential revision—a powerful use for silence communication study. Identifying this silence also makes it possible to ask if this “controversy” is legitimate and further explore the merits of such energy rhetoric.

Abstracting the Risk

The strategy of abstraction was apparent in local depictions of protest *and* in regards to health concerns and impacts. The comparative results from this study indicate that health was the seventh most discussed topic locally, yet health issues were sometimes left disconnected from the energy industry as a source of these health concerns, and when such issues *were* raised, they were often broached with vague abstraction—a “fill-in-the-blank” or “put it out there” approach. This approach set health concerns somewhat apart from a direct connection with the oil and gas industry, and though the article may offer an appearance of “objectivity” because it mentions multiple “sides” of an issue, these topics are not active and tied together and so appear to be aligned with community objectives *supportive* of energy extraction. This suggests a troubling bias. This approach is of concern as these “health” articles may not garner needed attention or traction for health issues related to fracking. Who might this silence benefit? It has the potential to benefit those who are allowed to remain silent in this environmental discussion—the oil and gas extraction industry. There is strategic power in silence.

Health topics were largely discussed in the background of other issues, well outside of the first 20 lines of text (Bernard, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2012e, 2012f; Leisik, 2012; Unsigned; 2012; see Appendix B, Articles 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15). Articles that addressed air pollution, a *prominent* topic in the Basin, were more heavily focused on the science of air pollution than were national articles and generally left in-depth discussion of citizen health or industry culpability or connection out of the article altogether or placed such information after the first 20 lines of text—somewhere that

Huckin (2002) suggested an average reader may not reach. In the comparative results, it seems that air was a topic of great concern because it was in the headlines and in the first 20 lines of text of many local articles. Yet before declaring this a prominent topic, it is important to look at *how* this topic was addressed and locate any gaps in how air was described. For example, an article about air quality used a vague description of “public health concern” early in the article and for the majority of the text did not directly or overtly link that health concern to probable causes or industry activities *until* after the first 20 lines of text. In an article titled “Ozone study results released,” the “sources of winter ozone,” are not discussed until the second page (Lyman, 2013). There is a vague reference to “unhealthy levels” of ozone and a short history of winter ozone levels. The article states that “air quality improves in a dry winter and worsens in a wet winter,” and it refers to the ozone standards for healthy air set by the EPA, National Ambient Air Quality Standards to 75 parts per billion. Yet it is not until near the end that the article talks about the agent causing “unhealthy levels” of ozone and making a link to the energy industry, saying,

last year’s work identified that *much of the VOCs are chemically tied to oil and gas* rather than upwind sources...The report inventory cites the Bonanza Power Plant, compressor stations, drilling rigs and communities as highest in NO_x emissions. Some pollutants from outside the Basin may be blown in, but the *available data suggest that transport is not likely*, according to the study. (Lyman, 2013; Bernard, 2013, emphasis added)

This last portion where volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are linked to industry activities is a bold statement, given the strong connection that many local readers have to the industry, yet this information becomes a side note because it occurs well *outside* of the first 20 lines of text. At the end of this long article, the journalist contrasted air quality data with other similar oil and gas producing regions particularly in the Upper Green

River Basin. This information directly relates to citizen and worker health, yet this information is only available to those who will persevere to the end of the article—something Huckin (2002) described as unlikely for an average reader to reach.

Interestingly, the final article in this series on air described that industry is working with state researchers to curtail unhealthy ozone production (Bernard, 2013). This article was bold enough to link industry activities directly to ozone, but again this strong link is undermined due to its placement at the end of the article. On this page a “Sidebar Box” offers some prescriptive ideas for mitigation of ozone caused by energy extraction, including such ideas as to “reduce or temporarily cease drilling activity during inversion times...update field equipment with new technology for emission control, phase out older equipment and use solar power pumps to replace VOCs emitting pneumatic pumps.” *All* of these suggestions intimate that the energy extraction industry is a contributor to poor air quality and suggest that industry can be part of air solutions, yet because this information is located at the end of the article and is not foregrounded, it has lesser impact (Bernard, 2013). This represents what Huckin (2010) defined as an implicational silence, whereby a connection is “insinuated” by the inclusion, but not “flatly stated,” thereby allowing for plausible deniability by a writer if questioned (p. 425). Health impacts and industry culpability are hard to find in the early portions of the article, but are often discussed only at the end of the article. One cannot say health is not mentioned in the Basin, but one might say that health and environmental impacts linked with industry involvement are not *prominently* mentioned or well-connected and are sometimes elided altogether.

A complete silence in this category is visible in a section titled, *health vs.*

business, which in the national articles offered a way to voice concern about the link between citizen health and industry activities in 15% of the articles. This dichotomy was not found in the local papers. What impact might there be with a *lack* of discussion of compromises and “tradeoffs” relative to health and working and living near the energy industry? (Schwarze, 2006). Who might these omissions benefit? The backgrounding of health topics in these articles suggests that as long as the information is “in there somewhere,” readers will “fill-in-the-blanks” and may connect vague descriptions with background information to get a full picture—quite a large assumption to make. An example of this “fill-in-the-blank” strategy related to health was found in an article titled, “As fire burns, eye on the air,” from February, 2013 (Hughes, 2013a, 2013b). Health impacts are discussed in conjunction with an oil well fire that is more than 13 days old. The fact that it had been burning more than 2 weeks and the fire was still uncontained is something that would likely headline elsewhere, to draw interest and focus to environmental or health impacts, yet the headline does not mention the time frame. Though the exact date the fire began *is* mentioned in the first few lines of the article, it is left up to the reader to “do the math” about how long it has been burning. Some concern for air is expressed in the final article with depictions of “black plumes of smoke left to billow” and in the headline, which describes “eyes on the air.” Yet, the emphasis of these articles is not so much on the lack of timeline for extinguishing the fire, but more about how and by whom the accident is being “watched,” handled, and controlled. Even when this rig fire ignited and was left to “burn out” for 13 days, neighbors and residents who were “displaced from their homes” were not quoted or given active voice in the paper. These voices were described as abstractions and only “speak” in the local news through

passive, second-hand voices—in effect, these citizen stakeholder voices have a voice only through the voice of others.

Missing Voices

The voice that *is* prominent in these articles is the industry operator and law enforcement who speak *about* worker and citizen safety, and about “controlling” the uncontrollable rig fire (Hughes, 2013a, 2013b; Puro, 2013; see Appendix B, Articles 44, 49, 50). The final article related to this “rig fire” mentions some concern with air quality about 13 lines into the final story, where the article states that the Division of Air Quality (DAQ) has not “picked up any spikes of hazardous hydrogen sulfide or zone” (Hughes, 2013a; 2013b; see Appendix B, Articles 49, 50). In this section, yet outside the first 20 lines of text, the director of the DAQ, Brock LeBaron, is quoted as saying, “The fire may have helped reduce the harmful emissions being emitted, versus if they were just blowing into the air without being burned off” (Hughes, 2013a, 2013b). A state voice is heard here, as well as the Tri-County health department, both of which are rare voices in the drilling articles over the year studied. While the inclusion of these sources would seem to mark this article as a “health concern story” instead, the primary focus is on allaying potential public concerns, using quotes from industry like “we want to be good neighbors” and language such as “site-secured” and “well controlled” and “working diligently to extinguish the fire” (Hughes, 2013a, 2013b; Puro, 2013a, 2013b; see Appendix B, Articles 44, 46, 49, 50). Despite such language, the public health threat remains active and “uncontained.” In the final article in this “rig fire” series, both state and local voices are discussed as “watching” the air quality situation, even in the

headline, suggesting that there is nothing to worry about because experts have everything under control. What is *absent* from these articles is any visible public reaction to a continuing public health concern. Also absent are any injured or affected workers' voices, leading to the question, can these stakeholders speak publicly when something goes wrong? And if not, who or what might prevent it? This omission represents a discreet or sensitive silence, where journalists may omit resident and worker names from the paper, perhaps out of sensitivity to protect or promote personal interests with oil and gas. Again, discreet or genre-based manipulative silences are found when a "writer refrains from mentioning sensitive information" to meet personal objectives, but does so under the guise of social sensitivity (Huckin, 2010, p. 423). The difficulty with this silence is that resident and worker stakeholder voices are needed, *independent* of industry voice, in order to more complexly understand the personal health risks and health impacts of fracking on local citizens and workers.

Abstracting is a recurring strategy found throughout the corpus where groups are mentioned, but not given an actual voice to speak to the issue, but only "spoken for." Some voices may appear to be powerfully foregrounded because they appear early on in the text, but it is important to note that some of these voices were mentioned only as an abstraction in many instances, as "citizens" or as "workers," and were not directly quoted or given any *significant* voice (see Table 7). Citizen voice is often "heard" in the papers, yet it is most often heard through the voices of others, particularly local government (county commissioners) and the news media. Industry operators are always given a direct voice through active quotes, yet citizen voice was represented as an abstraction such as "citizen concerns" or "rural residents." Why are these voices abstracted? It is interesting

to ask what might be at stake if a citizen were quoted and named directly, given that 80% of the local population is said to work for oil and gas extraction. Oil and gas worker voices were not actively mentioned in the local articles. This silence suggests that the voice of those who work directly with oil and gas, who may have the most reason for health and safety concerns as they are directly at risk, are not given prominence in the local news discussion of fracking (see Table 10).

Surprising Repetitions and Omissions

One surprising discovery related to the topic of health in the local articles was that articles with fracking or hydraulic fracking in the headline had the term *liberally* sprinkled throughout the piece, with what felt like an obvious pattern of repetition or “hammering” of the term. An example is found in the article, “Frack fluid focus of rule,” where the terms fracking or hydraulic fracturing are used 10 times in the first 13 lines (Bernard, 2012). This repetition is found in a number of the fracking articles including several articles on protest, an article on job loss, and also in some articles on air quality. These articles are included in Appendix F and indicate that this “peppering” is typically found in topics that require a certain cultural sensitivity in considering the local connection to oil and gas (see Appendix F). What might this repetition mean? A certain amount of topical repetition is expected in an article, yet heavy repetition might also be a tactic, a strategic learning function, or a “hammering” or “peppering” of information for attention and effect. Johnstone (2008) states that “repetition can serve as a form of backchanneling in conversation, indicating the interlocutors are listening, understanding or agreeing...one might say that repetition simply calls attention to the need for

implicature—the need to figure out what the extra meaning is—and that its potential functions are thus almost limitless” (Johnstone, 2008, as cited in Merritt, 1994). This repetition is also found in a series of air quality articles where the terms VOCs (volatile organic compounds) and NO_xs (nitrous oxides) are referred to multiple times in the article, seeming to serve an attention-getting and teaching function and offering a chance to talk about what “appropriate” air quality levels look like (Bernard, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; see Appendix B, Articles 9, 15, 16). This possible strategy of repetition suggests the existence of some concern with the link between health and environment, suggesting that a subtle caution and strategy may be at work when presenting these concerns. The underlying concern with such a “careful” strategy is that it may proceed with too much temerity because of industry alignments and because of assumptions about readers’ prior knowledge of industry practices, vital concepts and issues may be left unsaid or be disconnected from important detail. This approach, if it is a strategy, may be too subtle to garner attention.

Ironically, given the peppering and repetition of certain terms in a handful of the local articles, an additional silence was found in the *cultural diffusion* section, largely because the local paper had only 15 outright references to fracking or hydraulic fracturing and only six *headlines* contained the term “fracking.” Fracking in the local papers was not discussed as often or as widely as it was in *The Times*. The topic became more visible only with the realization that fracking is an implicit or accepted aspect of *the majority of* drilling in the Basin. This represents what Huckin (2010) defined as a presuppositional or implicit silence where “a writer omits relevant information on the assumption that it is already known by the reader” (p. 428). The difficulty in accessing fracking as a news

topic is manipulative because it may mislead a reader to think that fracking is either not an important topic locally or that it is not a topic of *concern* locally or that it is not happening *much* locally. It may also suggest that everyone is an expert on the topic—all of which are broad assumptions to make.

What might be the reason or benefit of keeping fracking out of the local headlines? Perhaps because fracking is represented as a “controversial process” elsewhere, such as in *The Times*, this omission may serve as a way to silence or dampen local protest. This emphasis could suggest a number of things, but according to Johnstone (2008), it could very likely be indexing “a need to show which set of social alignments is relevant at the moment,” such as a social and economic alignment with the oil and gas industry (p. 133). Huckin (2010) suggested that intentional manipulation is found when there is a choice made for silence on a topic, over another salient option—which stands to benefit the writer or broader power structure. This view of silence supports a critical claim of this study, that silence is powerful and can be used strategically, like language, to influence topics—and perhaps influence *even the access* to particular topics. Silence is operating in the Uinta Basin in regards to fracking. The topic of cultural diffusion reflects this silence. This gap became apparent because the issue of fracking was found in only 1% of the local articles, compared with 34% in the national articles. The papers represented fracking quite differently, and while *The Times* was explicit and represented fracking in a variety of diverse genres, from the front page, to the business section, to the entertainment section, the local news discussion of fracking was more covert and hidden and provided evidence of a presuppositional silence, suggesting that those in the Basin “know” the details of energy extraction or that there is no concern about fracking.

Environmental Celebrity Versus Political Celebrity

While local papers did not prominently mention fracking, they did describe political celebrity support of fracking and energy extraction in general. Yet there is a pronounced disparity in how “celebrity” was represented in the national and local papers because while *The Times* gave an abundance of textual space to celebrities who are supportive of *antifracking* measures, the closest approximation to such “celebrity” in the local papers was the textual space given to the Utah governor and other “politicos” who visited the Basin for regular summits and spoke out in heavy *support of* fracking and oil and gas extraction (Hughes, 2012).¹⁶ This result can be seen in the stakeholder comparison where politicians were found in 27% of the stories on fracking (see Table 10).

One local celebrity, George Burnett, owns a local juice bar and is known for his “I heart drilling” products and antics. Burnett was highlighted in *support of* drilling, yet it was his quirky conservative political views and hyper support of drilling that were foregrounded in the piece, more so than any direct interrogation of health topics implied in the headline, “Blending politics and health” (Tracy, 2013). The local articles did not use celebrity as a way to highlight status or “pet projects” opposed to fracking, as did the national articles, but instead, local celebrity was most often used when discussing political celebrities support. Utah’s Governor Gary Herbert and other politicians, such as Representative Mike Lee, State Senator Orrin Hatch, and local Representative Rob Bishop, were “headlined” when visiting in the Basin to speak for energy, much in the same way antifracking celebrities like Yoko Ono were depicted in *The Times* (Hakim, 2013). In *The Times*, “political celebrities” were given extra textual space to talk about

¹⁶ Hughes, D., “Republican politicos Visit” (*Vernal Express*, 02/15/12).

their pet projects—and each was heavily quoted. Local articles offered similar quoting and a large amount of text space to prominent politicians or “local celebrities” (Ashby, 2013; Bernard, 2012; Hughes, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; see Appendix B, Articles 11, 20, 22, 24, 40). In one such article, Governor Herbert stated that regulation of fracking “is like a solution in search of a problem” (Bernard, 2012). In another article titled, “U.S. Rep Rob Bishop tells Chamber land control vital to economic success of Basin,” from June 20, 2012, State Representative Rob Bishop is quoted as saying regulation in the East should not be held to the same standard in the West because “if you talk to someone in the east about public lands, they’ve only seen national parks. They think of a pretty tree by a pretty lake. We think of sagebrush. An oil pump would improve the scenery” (Hughes, 2012). These depictions support the idea that desert lands in the Basin are good for one purpose, extraction—a narrow viewpoint that does not acknowledge the broad depth of the local landscape. This is a troubling depiction, as Representative Bishop is *the* state representative designated to look out for the interests of the Basin.

The state governor was similarly quoted in the paper where it said, “In his own words, Utah Gov. Gary Herbert said he is an ‘advocate for responsible energy resource development,’ particularly when it comes to the Basin’s vast reserves.” The governor further described his job in the Basin as an effort to “keep government off your backs and out of your wallets” and described that “hydraulic fracture-related drilling has been around for 60 years without a problem” (Bernard, 2012). Prominent state politicians were quoted saying that the state is better equipped to protect local operators than federal government regulators, reinforcing an “us vs. them” conflict in regard to regulation. These quotes equate shunning federal regulation with ideas of liberation from “control,”

and they act to solidify the role of the state government as keeping the bad guys [federal regulators] “off your back” (Bernard, 2012). These articles intimate that state government needs the Basin’s industry, but it is unclear from this discourse whether state government is as actively concerned about Basin citizens’ health and safety or Basin land preservation. The values represented in these articles suggest a financial notion of “vast energy reserves” and “wallets,” but these articles are oddly silent about the potential costs of unfettered or loosened industry activities for the land and the residents for which they *also* advocate. These quotes from political stakeholders lack a discussion of concern for the constituents they represent and instead actively quote local and state politicians speaking a voice loudly supportive of oil and gas extraction.

One “political celebrity” article titled “Energy summit hits on regulations, government” began stating that, “Hundreds of people from several states, including Utah’s U.S. Senators and the state’s governor were in Vernal Wednesday for the annual Energy Summit, an event more about policy and strategy than it was any technical issues concerning drilling” (Hughes, 2012). Another such article titled “Gov. Herbert opens 2012 Uintah Basin Energy Summit,” from September 12, 2012, reported that “the Uinta Basin ‘is a great place for energy—we’re just scratching the surface,’ said Gov. Herbert” (Bernard, 2012). Key voices were absent in these articles—a voice of opposition to oil and gas was not presented, nor was the voice of citizen opponents or politicians who do *not* support fracking. Opposition to fracking may exist in Utah, but the omission of such voices and the *overemphasis* on political voices in support of fracking in the local discourse may suggest that opposition to extraction simply *does not* exist. These articles feature politicians who bolster themes of economic development and promote a view of

the Basin as a power player due to energy extraction (Ashby, 2013; Bernard, 2012; Hughes, 2012a; 2012b; Unsigned, 2012; see Appendix B, Articles 17, 20, 22, 24, 40). While “celebrity” was represented in both the local and national news, with 29% of the focus in *The Times*, there is textual evidence that the local focus for celebrity was used much differently to depict prominent political figures as “celebrity supporters” of fracking. What might be the impact of such prominent political support of the energy industry? Interestingly, while political support of fracking *was* highlighted locally, political misconduct *was not* highlighted, with only 6% of local articles discussing political misconduct—this topic was addressed more than double in *The Times*. The hint of political misconduct related to drilling and fracking *was* brought up twice in the interview process in reference to a recent “closed door” meeting between local and state government and others, and is discussed further in the interview section. Political misconduct represents a *relative silence* in local articles on fracking. Politicians are depicted locally as having all good things to say about extraction, without a prominent counterbalance of political skepticism or critique.

Strategies for Land Use and Control

Strategic silence and manipulation is also found in the related areas of regulation of land, land control, and use of land. A power struggle over land, characterized by depiction of land as an economic commodity, involves many stakeholders—some who remain quiet and allow others to speak their objectives, such as the oil and gas industry and state government, and some who are implicated and interested parties, such as “celebrity politicians” and the media. The local media become implicated in silence

through sourcing and presentation of resources as a commodity and by neglecting other energies, by omitting other uses of land, and by *not* highlighting a need for land preservation. Brummett's (1980) work on strategic silence supports the idea that silence can be used as a political strategy. Brummett (1980) suggests that stakeholders and decision makers may use silence strategically by remaining quiet while compelling others to speak their goals and motives. In this way, silence may be used to manipulate and control. In order to identify the strategic and political use of silence, Brummett (1980) suggested that "a critic should note to whom the silence is directed and should examine the relationship between the silent person and the target, looking at how the silence affects the relationship" (p. 295). What is interesting about the comparison of land use and control in the local and national papers is that overall weighted totals might suggest that the papers are almost *equally* concerned about land. They have a similar total in this category, yet a closer look reveals that local papers were more heavily concentrated on the *use and control of land* by local versus federal bodies, with 38% of the conversation, than they were concerned about the protection or *preservation* of land, with only 16%. Conversely, *The Times* focused much more on preservation of specific real estate *from* extraction practices than the local papers, with 27% focus in this area and 29% focus on *use and control of land*. This category, *farmer vs. fracking*, offered a sense of the tradeoffs involved with land use for extraction. This is a fairly subtle difference, yet it reveals a gap in the way land is characterized in the Basin. Though farming interests overlap with oil and gas interests locally in regards to land use and water access, there is *no mention* or foregrounding of farming interests or conflicts over land between industry and farming in the local articles over this year. The voice of farmer stakeholders was *not*

heard prominently in the local news; in fact, it had the *least* amount of mentions in the local articles. The category titled *who's in charge* in the local papers, focused on the local government and industry conflicting with federal regulators over restrictions of land use, but contained no mention of farming or ranching and had little discussion directly from the extraction industry. There was little mention of state government regulators, who influence and restrict fracking on public lands, while most of the focus was on the federal regulators, the BLM, who have local offices but represent federal oversight. In *The Times*, a subcategory of *farmer vs. fracking* was devoted to the conflict of farmers versus the extraction industry and described an avid debate over land use by fracking proponents, and the need for a protection of land, which was discussed in 29% of the national articles. Without local attentiveness to farming, the impacts of fracking on farm land cannot be fully considered—a silence that impacts the overall coherence of this topic. This silence fits with Huckin's (2010) definition of topical silences—silences that manipulate by leaving out important information and impact the coherence of the text or topic (p. 420). This omission also fits with Brummett's (1980) ideas of strategy related to silence. In this case, the voices of local industry operators and state regulators, such as the Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining (DOGGM)¹⁷ allow media and others—such as the local county commission—to speak in support of loosening land control, while they remain silent. Stakeholders who were most prominent and powerful in this debate—the industry operators themselves and the state regulators who physically control the permitting for drilling and fracking in local lands, DOGGM—remained silent and outside of the fray in this debate over land control. The suggestion that local and national articles *address* land control is both correct, and also misleading and manipulative because the local and

¹⁷ Division of Oil Gas and Mining Website. Retrieved from <http://oilgas.ogm.utha.gov>

national papers described this issue, but with a subtle, important, and *different* perspective.

The perspective found in the local papers reflects a differential valuing of land primarily characterizing it as valuable as a commodity, and remaining quiet about alternative values for land, such as land preservation, and alternative activities in land, such as hunting, recreation. “Commodification of place” is a concept put forward by Relph (1976), which is defined as a standardization of places that changes unique and geographically distinct places into generic landscapes and *distances* people from a complex and unique connection to land (p. 221, emphasis added). Relph (1976) cautioned that while places and landscapes are always changing and “becoming,” there is a danger in too great a focus on land as a commodity. This focus can cause a disconnection and distance from land and may result in less responsible *use* of land. Current environmental communication work by Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) suggests that a sense of the uniqueness of place is so powerful that it can serve as a rhetorical argument, whereby the connection to a place becomes a means and a focus for promoting greater protection and preservation of land. Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) argue that places are “imbued with meaning and consequences” and that particular geographies are most often “defined by (and constructed in terms of) the lived experiences of people” (p. 264). The danger in seeing land for only one purpose, in this case, as useful primarily for energy extraction, ignores other uses for land and does a disservice to the power of the Basin as a unique and complicated geography for a variety of activities. This scholarship suggests that *how* these specific and unique places are valued can have real consequence for how these lands are treated and for the actions allowed to take place in these lands. The depiction of

oil production as most ideal out in the desert denies the reality that people and nature coexist “out there” and marginalizes, because it makes *reasonable* the overuse or even abuse of these remote lands for consumptive practices. Drilling in the Basin is far removed from heavily populated areas and is taking place in desert lands viewed as less “ideal” places—even described by the Basin’s political representative as scenery that is *improved* by an oil pump. Such depictions and such focus on land control for profit reflect particular attitudes about desert lands. To view this area in a purely economic light denies the pristine and stark beauty of the desert widely celebrated by literary novelists and western land advocates such as Wallace Stegner, Edward Abbey, and Terry Tempest Williams. A focus on desert land as primarily “good for energy” ignores the alternate utility and appreciation of desert landscapes. More recent scholars suggest a need to focus not on the beauty of land as a means of protecting it, but instead to focus on the toxic sites and visuals that depict what overconsumptive practices in land look like (Peeples, 2011). “Bust” perspectives of land were silenced and neglected in these local articles.

In her work, titled *Toxic sublime: Imaging contaminated landscapes*, Peeples (2011) explores the Burkean focus on the sublime in land, and suggests that attention to lands that “exhibit vastness, privation, difficulty, infinity, magnitude, and magnificence” can be equated with toxic landscapes as well (as cited in Burke, p. 379). Peeples (2011) suggests that her conception of a “toxic sublime” is related to Nye’s articulation of the “technological sublime,” which is an awed reaction to industrial prowess such as the “advent of the railroad or space travel” (as cited in Nye, 1994, p. 379). Peeples (2011) suggests that this idea of toxic sublime is a necessary element in environmental discourse, because

It shares with the technological sublime a marvel at human accomplishments. Instead of staring up as a rocket soars into the sky, the viewer stares down into an open-pit mine—both constructed by humans, both amazing feats of technology capable of conjuring feelings of insignificance and awe, but the toxic sublime acts to counter that marvel with alarm for the immensity of destruction one witnesses. (p. 380)

Peebles (2011) describes that it is in this awed state that one can also begin to comprehend the tension and *consequences* of monumental actions in land. She states that “some of these tensions reflect our own complicity with pollutants. They are by-products of the things we need and desire and yet we are repelled by the toxins created in their construction and destruction” (p. 381). An understanding of the material consequence of extraction activities in land, in this view, balances some of the pride in consumptive practices. A community pride related to energy *was* identified in the Basin articles, but was lacking in discussion of the consequences of these actions. This toxic view can give a more realistic representation of both actions *and consequences* in land. Relph (1976) described the commodification of land as a process that contributes to a shallow understanding of places and involves a valuing of lands based on human needs and consumption and suggested that this shallow understanding can contribute to negative actions in land (p. 109). Relph (1976) referenced work by Yi-fu Tuan, a scholar who critiqued the “new urban landscapes of China and a certain sameness about them because they were all built in haste and are all responses to an industrial revolution” and describes that much of Europe and North America could have been included in this description (as cited in Tuan, 1969, p. 109). Relph (1976) further observed that “steel mills, oil refineries, light engineering works, quarries, waste disposal sites, all have an appearance that is quite independent of location,” and cautioned that “the sheer scale of modern mining, manufacturing, and business enterprises tends to obliterate places, whether

through flooding by dam construction, digging them up for minerals, burying them beneath slag heaps, or simply building over them” (as cited in Tuan, 1976, p. 109). Desert lands, and oil well placement on the land, reflect this changing architectural landscape that Relph (1976) cautioned against and makes more urgent the threat of geographical irreverence that he saw happening between citizens and places. Relph (1976) voiced a prescient concern about the valuing of land for *only* what it can produce economically—a trend he saw in the commodification and “consumerizing” of land (p. 221). The Basin is a desert environment full of rich diversity, which reflects and supports a variety of activities, practices, and life. In order to be valued diversely, these aspects must be visible and valued in public discourse and featured in the debate of the uses and control of these lands. Yet these aspects, such as depictions of the consequences of deregulation and discussion of the impacts of over-industrialization, are absent from the local news discourse on fracking. These absences “speak” about how land is viewed and valued locally and consequently may influence particular actions in the land.

Comparison of local and national papers revealed a silence in relation to land in the local articles. These articles were focused on government regulation that would *disrupt* drilling, with categories of *local vs. federal* land control, and an *us vs. them* category about regulation. There was also a strong focus locally on improvements to roads and the community infrastructure, but less discussion of the strains on the community. Conversely, *The Times* focused on ideas of preservation of particular lands that would be *disrupted by* oil and gas fracking. This textual silence is more subtle and difficult to identify and is what Huckin (2002) described as “manipulative,” because this strategic myth of “land control” and “land independence” depends on *not* being easily

noticed as a myth for its success (p. 351).

Regulatory authority emerged as a strong topic in eastern Utah papers, with land as the “bone of contention” between local energy promotion and federal land regulation and control. This question of authority was mentioned so often that it was identified as a local topical argument related to perceptions about the redundant and burdensome nature of regulation. This argument was not as prominent in the national articles, but was part of the *local* conversation, with 20 mentions and six foregroundings for a total of 41% of the local articles focused on “federal overreach” and asking the question of who is in charge of the regulation of land, local or federal bodies? Perhaps more importantly, the local articles asked, who controls the negotiation and sale of public lands? A view of land use and control that acknowledges the varied connections of residents to land—both the visual awe and the toxic sublime—is described as necessary for “understanding the need for alternative resource and waste protocols and decision-making” (Peeples, 2011, p. 388). Peeples (2011) focused on the need for visual representation of both of these ways of viewing land—the negative and positive aspects of human activities. The results of this silence research similarly suggest a need for tension in the *textual* depiction of land use and control in local energy extraction. There is a need for a commensurate focus on preservation of land and the consequences of the overuse of land and not merely a focus on the discussion of local versus federal control for the benefit of energy industry purposes. While this debate over land continues locally, the energy industry remains quiet, allowing others such as the local media and local politicians to speak its objectives—a strategic industry silence (Brummett, 1980).

Independence and Patriotism

A related myth introduced in both sets of data was that of “oil and gas independence” and freedom from the bondage of reliance on outside oil and gas (Hughes, 2012). This idea is a presuppositional silence or myth that suggests that oil and gas “independence” exists as a plausible option—that it is possible for the U.S. to be independent of foreign oil and gas. This presupposition is manipulative because it relies on agreement from the reader that oil independence is an attainable and worthwhile objective (Huckin, 2010). With a common reliance on oil and gas production for large-scale systems of transportation and heat, as well as reliance on a range of smaller oil and gas-based products for everyday items, from duct tape to chewing gum, it is unlikely that increased oil and gas production from fracking will adequately quench an American addiction to oil. The DOGM website has an entire section dedicated to oil and gas facts. It was recently updated to include this list of oil and gas products:

Products which are made from or use derivatives of petroleum include: Gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, propane, heating oil, asphalt, ink, crayons, bubble gum, dishwashing liquids, deodorant, eyeglasses, tires, ammonia, clothing, skis, roofing materials, denture adhesive, shampoo, life jackets, toilet seats, linoleum, hand lotion, toothbrushes, upholstery, water pipes, guitar strings, nylon rope, DVD's, nail polish, antiseptics, fertilizers, aspirin, sun glasses, insecticides, perfumes, soap, refrigerant, paint, hair coloring, lipstick, surf boards, tents, movie film, drinking cups, soft contact lenses, heart valves, and much more. *Natural gas is an essential raw material for many products, such as:* Paints, fertilizer, plastics, antifreeze, dyes, photographic film, medicines, and explosives.¹⁸

This list suggests the unlikeliness that increased production of oil and gas, as abundant as it may now appear, can offer lasting solutions or promote substantive weaning of this nation from oil dependence, when so many of the products that are a regular and “common” part of everyday life, from heart valves to contact lenses, are made from these

¹⁸ Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining Website. Retrieved from <http://oilgas.ogm.utah.gov/Facts/Facts.htm>.

products. It might be more reasonable to suggest that fracking offers the U.S. a chance to *supplement* the national flow of such energies and that this energy influx will favorably impact the U.S. energy market, for a time. A conversation about the limits of oil and gas independence was not found in the local papers, but rather a topical argument in support of patriotism and independence *through* oil and gas extraction was promoted instead.

The mythic depictions of independence from federal regulation became a topical argument of “controversy” in the local papers. Again, as described earlier in relation to land, “regulatory independence” is questionable as a plausible option and represents a presuppositional silence because it requires the reader to fill in the gaps, and agree with claims of the discourse, that freedom from regulation is important for the Basin community (Huckin, 2010). Just as it seems unlikely that Americans will cease dependence on oil and gas through fracking, it is unlikely that the absence of federal regulation can truly offer long-term solutions for energy growth and production. What is at stake if federal regulation is removed or broadly loosened? A great deal is at stake for many stakeholders, including the oil and gas industry, in having fracking nationally regulated and safely monitored for a broad, national populace. Serious realities about health, safety, and environmental protections *rely* on federal regulation to be realized. And although substantial kickback was found *against* federal regulation in the local papers, with suggestions that it “stifles economic returns,” still, the papers used these “burdensome” federal regulations to point to the industry’s legitimacy and to highlight industry “safety.” An example is found in the article titled “The air we breathe: Air pollution mitigation no easy task” from March 12, 2013, where a local industry representative is quoted in a discussion of harmful ozone levels, saying, “this is not an

energy vs. air problem.” It continues saying that, “with current EPA regulations 98% of VOC emissions will be controlled from the oil and gas industry” (Bernard, 2013). Here the same federal regulation that is defined as unnecessary in the local papers is *invoked* to defend the “within bounds” and “safety” of industry emissions. Industry operators may dislike these federal standards, yet they also *rely* heavily on them. While state and local government agencies can and should help facilitate the federal regulation of lands within state boundaries, it does not necessarily serve broad national interests, which include both citizen health *and* economic growth, to have more than 50 differing standards for oil and gas regulation. It is likely and in some sense preferable that federal regulation will persist with regulation of fracking, despite mythical depictions and local protestations of regulatory overreach. The gap in this discourse is any reference to what loosened regulation might mean for local citizens and the local environment and an overemphasis on the economic “opportunities” of deregulation.

The role of government involves a divided mandate to protect citizen interests and safeguard the state’s environmental and economic interests (Corbett, 2006). Some local regulations protect citizens (Hughes, 2012). Some local regulations protect the industry (Garrett, 2013). This mandate requires balancing one group’s welfare with another, yet an additional mandate involves a duty to preserve and protect Utah’s environment. The website for the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (DOG M), the regulatory body responsible for overseeing the oil and gas permitting process, describes that part of its purpose is to “Maintain sound, regulatory oversight to ensure environmentally acceptable activities.”^{vi} A lack of direct public voice and an absence of discussion on environmental impacts from this source, as evidenced in the stakeholder comparisons in Table 10, can

threaten the delicate balancing of responsible development and environmental regulation—a profound consequence of silence. State government is not often heard from related to fracking (number eight out of 16 on the list of local stakeholder voices), and instead of creating and participating in an open dialogue on energy, this body allows the local county commissions and local zoning commissions to “speak” the motives of industry and debate the merits of regulation, while the primary stakeholders and decision-makers remain quiet (Brummett, 1980).

Descriptive Data: Values and Stance

Silences were found in the area of water scarcity and water recycling in the local papers. Water recycling was not addressed locally, though this option was mentioned in *The New York Times*. Though water scarcity was a *relative silence* in the local papers, found in only 4% focus of the articles, this topic was more visible in the national paper. This result reveals a gap in the way water resources and water scarcities related to fracking are depicted locally. Local and national papers were similarly more focused on water pollution, with 26% locally, and 35% in *The Times*. A sense of how water was depicted in the local articles is found in an article titled, “Oil spill quickly remediated by Newfield,” where a 40-gallon oil leak reached local water, the nearby Midview Reservoir, an irrigation source for the Ute Tribe (Tracy, 2012). The *only* quotes in this article are from the company public information officer (PIO) directly. The overall message of the article is that the appropriate people have been contacted and all is “under control,” and even the headline suggests that remediation is no problem, describing clean-up as a “relatively simple task.” The article quotes the operator, who said that “very

minor amounts reaching the shoreline and water, but it has all been completely removed/remediated,' said Schmidt [operator]." Not only does this article contradict an earlier statement from the county commission that there has never been "a valid violation or concern" from fracking (Bernard, 2012), it also dampens public concern. Descriptions of the incident are relatively *devoid* of concern, with words like "A leak...has been remediated by a cadre of workers"... "Newfield immediately contacted all appropriate agencies"... "remediate work *virtually completed* by the end of the day" (emphasis added). The use of words like "minor amounts" and "virtually completed" communicate a broader notion of company responsibility and safety, even in the face of events that might suggest otherwise. Although the article states that "Both Newfield and Enviro Care [Hazmat experts] continue to communicate with all appropriate tribal agencies," the voice of the Ute Tribe is absent in this article, a glaring absence as it is the stakeholder most adversely affected by the spill. The Ute Tribe owns this water, and it is the tribe's main irrigation source. This pattern of taking the active voice and "passion" out of an incident was found in many other local articles and represents water pollution issues as if they are no concern at all, demonstrating a subtle alignment with the industry and making media somewhat complicit as an ally in downplaying citizen concerns about fracking (Bernard, 2012; Hughes, 2012a, 2013; Puro, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c; Unsigned, 2012; see Appendix B, Articles 30, 33, 36, 43, 44, 49, 50).

Water is a complex issue locally. Particular values and stance about water show up in the language used and not used, such as "insufficient protection," suggested by one journalist in reference to the *absence* of a water protection policy related to fracking. In another article this journalist describes the "nominal cost to industry" in reference to

recycling “produced” fracking wastewater (Bernard, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; see Appendix B, Articles 5, 5a, 16). This reference to water recycling was made well outside the first page, and so it is background information, and yet this evaluative word choice was not a quote from an expert or official, and so it may offer a hint as to how the author of the article perceives the issue of fracking and water. The word choice suggests a stance supportive of the idea that recycling would not be costly. The other article suggests a stance that supports water policy, which should be addressed because it is currently “insufficient” (Bernard, 2012). As Machin and Mayr (2012) suggest, there are characteristics in language selection and choice that enable readers in assessing an author’s commitment to “truth” (p. 205). These selections offer hints of concern about an absence of water sourcing and recycling practices in the Basin, yet these pivotal issues about water policy and water recycling are depicted in a way that does not adequately highlight such concerns. Concerns related to water scarcity and water recycling were more prominently featured in *The Times*. They represent *relative silences* in the local papers about fracking water use. It is by looking specifically at the evaluative language used that these gaps and silences become obvious. If a stance supportive of water policy and regulation was important, it would be more actively and forcefully depicted in the local news, or it may appear that water is *not* an issue at all.

A major claim for this research is that citizen voice is abstracted in the local articles on issues of health and environment. The only notable exception for this claim is found in two articles about water, which are helpful for demonstrating the difference between passive voice and active voice used to depict protest. In one article titled “Treatment pond has neighbors complaining” from September 4, 2012, the journalist uses

direct citizen quotes to start the article, such as “‘Nauseating,’ ‘foul,’ ‘Sulfuric,’ ‘Like a really bad outhouse,’ those are some of the descriptions of the odor neighbors claim is coming from the Integrated Water Management facility and land farm located about 7 miles north of Duchesne” (Tracy, 2012). This entire piece is focused on direct resident complaints, and it directly links resident health impacts to waste-water storage from fracking activities, with one resident quoted saying, “my wife has headaches every day, all day when that smell comes up” (Tracy, 2012). Another article, titled “Commission issues ultimatum on ponds” from September 11, 2012, offers detailed descriptions of the “very heated three-hour meeting” to address these citizen concerns, depicting an “overflowing” and impassioned crowd, which at times threatened to erupt. Yet it is not until the end of the article that resident voices are directly quoted, and it is mentioned that, “the gathering threatened to turn unruly when two people shouted out, including one woman who yelled, ‘You’re killing me.’” The journalist described that the industry representative asked the commission to invoke “Robert’s Rule of Order,” a legal convention where the crowd was “admonished to quiet down and wait their turn.” This article even quotes two residents who testified that the smell *did not* bother them—one of them stating, “I associate the smell with employment.” Near the end of the article, the journalist quotes one resident, saying “I wish we had a stink-o-meter... which brought comments from some in the audience, calling out that they were all ‘stink-o-meters’” (Tracy, 2012). This depiction of the public hearing was quite different from the vague representation of public voices in a water hearing discussed earlier, though similar issues of water pollution and impacts on “neighbors” were addressed at both hearings, and both took place in front of the local county commission (referencing Bernard, 2012; see

Appendix B, Article 30). Like other local articles, citizens were not quoted within the first 20 lines of the article, but were more abstractly defined in generic terms as the “impassioned crowd” early on in the article. A key difference with these articles is that citizen voice is actively represented throughout one article, while it is present, yet backgrounded in the other. Another difference is that the articles were written by different journalists—one who writes the majority of articles on fracking and wrote the more passive article, and the other written by a journalist who directly quoted residents in several articles early in 2012, and no longer writes for the paper. These “active citizen” articles on water were anomalies, yet they did garner action and attention to the issue and resulted in a field trip by the commission to “smell” the evaporation ponds for themselves. They also may have served as an impetus for the implementation of new wastewater reforms. Although the wastewater storage permit was eventually renewed, it was renewed under strict supervision and new safety measures. The voice of citizen protest was not depicted *this* passionately or actively for the rest of the year. Is it possible that the more common, passive representation of water concerns in the local papers is a deliberate choice? Might this depiction represent a means for avoiding, inciting, or depicting active public controversy? If so, it may suggest a manipulative silence, found when a salient aspect is elided, for the benefit of the writer or broader power structure (Huckin, 2010). Citizen voices are needed for a full understanding and linking of health and environmental issues to industry actions, yet these voices are abstracted, backgrounded, or left out of local discourse entirely. This research revealed some important gaps in water policy—gaps in *how* and *by whom*, water concerns are voiced in local news discourse—offering evidence of specific writer stance related to water.

Experts were used in local articles to speak health concerns, such as Dr. Brian Moench of Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment (UPHE), who stated that, “Smog is a serious public health threat.” Despite the early mention of “public health” in this article, the journalist neglects to link industry as part of this smog until the last part of the article, beyond the first 20 lines, where Dr. Moench is quoted as saying that, “with the health of children and communities at stake, it’s shameful that the EPA is turning a blind eye to this program” (Bernard, 2012). Also towards the end of this article, it states that, “In a prepared statement provided by the group (WildEarth Guardians’ Climate and Energy Program), the Basin’s poor air quality is cited as the result of ‘unchecked oil and gas drilling and coal-fired power plants in the region.’” An expert is used to “place the blame” in this article and make the disquieting link between energy industry actions and impacts, but does so at the end of the article. In this case, local journalists use “authorities” to make uncomfortable links about health concerns, in a more covert fashion, taking place outside of where a typical reader will venture. In this local article titled “EPA sued over Basin air quality” Robin Coolley of Earth Justice, an attorney representing those suing the EPA for *not* enforcing sanctions, is quoted early in the article as saying, “The Basin is home to some of the worst ground-level ozone pollution in the nation.” Here the expert quote makes the connection between the local industry and its community impacts (Bernard, 2012), but again this takes place near the end of the article, and does not include any citizen or industry voice or reaction to such concerns. This is an example of what Brummett (1980) described as a strategic silence, where experts are used to speak sensitive objectives while interested stakeholders remain silent. Again, there is a concern that by leaving some of these connections “up to the experts” and in

background portions of the text important aspects of community health may remain unaddressed or may be perceived as less credible, particularly when a local and geographical delineation is made in the Basin about area “insiders” and “outsiders.”

Earthquakes?: Specifics and Potential Risks

Manipulative silences are visible in the lack of local discussion of seismic instability and earthquakes related to fracking and wastewater disposal. The possibility of structural instability due to fracking was addressed in the national newspaper in 12% of the articles, but this topic was absent from local papers. The national paper focused on earthquakes caused by wastewater disposal wells, such as in the article “Study links 2011 quake to technique at oil wells,” from March 29, 2013 (Fountain, 2013). Yet a discussion of seismic instability, even in relation to wastewater wells, is missing from the local papers. The act of suggesting earthquakes as a potential concern related to extraction activities, without a local incident or accident directly related to earthquakes, may portray industry operations “in a bad light.” Is this issue considered off-limits because it is controversial or viewed as scientifically uncertain? This omission represents what Huckin (2010) referred to as a conventional or genre silence, which exploits genre features, such as technical writing conventions or content as a way to manipulate an audience. Though the “science” related to seismic instability from fracking activities is ongoing and preliminary and results are somewhat uncertain, the choice to leave the topic *completely* unaddressed in local discourse may be viewed as manipulative because it represents a choice to leave out information, even uncertain or preliminary information about “potentialities,” which are “not favorable to those in power positions” (Huckin, 2010, p.

422). This omission favors stakeholders supportive of energy extraction by keeping silent on a topic that might shine an unfavorable light on potential environmental issues. The absence of local discussion about earthquake concerns related to fracking is especially glaring considering that Utah has anticipated a large earthquake for many years, long forecasted from a fault that runs parallel to the most populated areas of the state—the Wasatch Front. Seismic activity in Utah is a fairly regular occurrence.^{vii} The issue here is not that earthquakes related to fracking do not exist because these concerns *are* detailed in the national newspaper, the concern is that they may *appear* to be nonexistent locally because they are absent from local energy discourse. Local media are implicated here because this omission represents a choice to leave out parts of the topic that are not favorable to local industry and community extraction processes. The absence of seismic discussion represents a manipulative topical silence (Huckin, 2010). Wastewater disposal wells have become the *answer* to the problems of pesky and smelly evaporation pond storage, such as in the local wastewater article where land was rezoned to allow for fracking fluid disposal by injection (Tracy, 2012). This issue of wastewater storage may become less obvious with this “solution,” but is no less vital to consider and understand.

The subtopic *how to*'s of fracking represents an absence in local extraction industry information on the specifics of fracking. This silence suggests an assumption that fracking specifics are known to the community, yet the absence of this specific information may *preclude* a public discussion of the potential impacts and health risks *related* to the practice. Withholding information on fracking may serve the interests of those who wish for the environmental and health impacts related to fracking to remain uncertain, or unaddressed. This omission represents a manipulative presuppositional

silence (Huckin, 2010, p. 429). There may be some plausible deniability about this silence for local journalists because if this risk remains unproven, then “silence” on the issue appears warranted by scientific standards. By the same token, if wastewater wells in the area trigger seismic activity or if serious health concerns emerge related to *specific* fracking practices, this lack of attention from local media to a possible community threat would not hold up. If rural citizens do “orient towards local newspapers as a vital source of information” and consider local news as a “primary means of getting the news in rural communities,” as the earlier literature suggested, then the local media have a responsibility to represent the full range of potentialities surrounding extraction practices (Chyi & Yang, 2009; Hollander, 2010; Poindexter, Heider, & McCombs, 2006). If local residents do not get fracking information from this primary source, where can they access it? Hollander (2010) suggested that if rural residents do not get the information through the local paper, they may not turn to other sources for this information. With such a strong reliance on local news to set the stage for what is important to know in the community, a lack of information about the “how to’s” of fracking, including the potential risks of the practice, can have serious consequence.

Descriptive Data: Exploring Journalistic Stance: Power/Community

Johnstone (2008) suggests that by thinking about power and community, we develop a broad, macro view of how discourse operates. Stance and use of modality are linked. Machin and Mayr (2012) describe a modal as one way that people reveal their commitment to what they say, through linguistic modality, which they define as a way for people to “firmly align to an idea or thing but at the same time limit how much this is

represented in terms of a firm promise or command” (p. 187). Modals give hints as to how we and others feel about the information presented and can be a way to reveal power connections. Sometimes the stance of a journalist can be revealed through the quotes they select to “tell the story.” The use of a “should” is a modality, which is a way to compel and influence people and events by suggesting that things “must” or “should” be a certain way (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 187). Dynamic modality is used to suggest the ability to complete an action or the likelihood that it will happen (Johnstone, 2008). Use of a modal can be a form of subtle manipulation, such as in the sentence “The world today *should* stand back, and just simply say, wow” (Unsigned, 2012, emphasis added). This sentence, even though it is a quote from Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, and not from the journalist per se, represents a *decision* about how to present the information, suggesting there is only one way to interpret the information provided—as *positive*. Another example of a modality is found in the sentence where “Salazar credited the sincere effort of all people involved as creating a template for future collaboration in energy development on public lands.” This sentence describes collaboration on energy development as an ongoing action with great likelihood of continuing into the future. Use of modals can reveal hints as to a reporter’s identification with a topic and his/her ideology and can provide evidence of “how much power they have over others and over knowledge” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 190). The construction and creation of a certain “community reality” can be found in a text through attention to the dynamic modality of language and the silences used by an author or speaker. The first part of this article expresses a glowing perspective of drilling development and collaboration (Unsigned, 2012). The reporter’s use of modals, even in decisions about the quotes used, which

express modality, establishes a kind of authority and power. Through a subtle shift in the modality of language, the reporter presents a viewpoint that this can become the “community viewpoint,” and not merely a personal ideology. This subtle linguistic manipulation can be a very real way of shaping public perceptions about the way energy and energy production is negotiated while appearing to conform with journalistic conventions of fairness and balance. Several sides of the story are introduced within the body of this text, but all sides and stakeholders were not represented in a balanced way, as all of the opposition to this “shining” collaboration was left as background information and can be found only at the end of the article (Unsigned, 2016). In a related article, the true scope and meaning of “collaboration” in the Basin is described. In this article resident stakeholders have not yet weighed in on this “collaboration.” The article states that “the 30-day comment period” had just begun, and it was reported as a foregone conclusion that drilling would go ahead. This calls into question whether it can legitimately be viewed as a successful or truly collaborative negotiation (Bernard, 2012). Ten local articles mentioned this ideal of collaboration, describing interactions between business, governing bodies, and conservationists. These collaborations were described in some places as a “shining example” and touted as providing a model for “environmentally sensitive ways to provide energy” (Bernard, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; see Appendix B, Articles 4, 6, and 24). This description of industry, government, and environmental advocates in collaboration was not found in *The New York Times*. The nearest approximation was an article titled “Environmental groups say they will fight drilling plan” from June 20, 2012, which detailed a collaboration, but between activists coming together *against* fracking (as cited in Hakim, 2012). This gap between national

and local ideas of collaboration may be due to the tradition and history of fracking in the Basin. Local opponents and proponents of fracking may be more accustomed to compromise on energy and environmental issues and so may more readily accept compromise as part and parcel of what it means to “do” energy locally. This gap might also suggest a “national skepticism” in *The New York Times* about the veracity of such collaborations. It is likely that collaborations exist nationally, but may not be deemed significant enough to make the national news. Many of the local articles with this topic were described as “successful collaborations,” yet they were characterized as successful because drilling was allowed to progress with minimal obstacles or small concessions to conservationists and critics. Such collaborations “limited the number of wells along the White River” and allowed for “restricted drilling in Desolation Canyon,” yet drilling was allowed to continue even in sensitive areas within certain negotiated perimeters (Bernard, 2012a; 2012b; see Appendix B, Articles 4, 10). In one of these articles, citizen voice had not yet been heard on the matter, and in the other, a less ideal picture of collaboration could be found on the second part or page of the story, outside the lead and first 20 lines of text. If one read only the first portion of the article, it did seem to be the “shining example” of collaboration it described, but the final portions of the article offered lingering and unresolved environmental concerns associated with drilling projects.

As Machin and Mayr (2012) suggest, there are characteristics in language selection and choice that enable readers in assessing an author’s commitment to what he/she reports (p. 205). It is through analyzing these obscuring shifts in modality that we can “consider the kinds of identities, values and sequences that are [actually] being communicated” (p. 206). Language and silences matter because they influence and direct

ideas toward concrete actions and realities in land. Public newspaper discourse can reveal the tangible and powerful effects of language and silence. It is through a look at this language and the silences in a text that power positions related to land are created, reinforced, and ultimately identified.

Interviews: Silences and Strategies: Alignment/Negotiation

Accounts offered by local journalists give important insight into organizational and personal negotiation of silence in fracking discourse (Tompkins & Cheney, 1983). Earlier literature suggested that “external and internal influences” impact the way an article is sourced and produced (Huckin, 2002; van Dijk, 1986). Tompkins and Cheney (1983) suggested that there is a great deal to learn from “how someone narrows information, how alternatives appear, and how choices are finally arrived at” (as cited in Burke, 1996, p.127). The interview process allowed for a deeper level of understanding about how fracking stories come into being—*how* information and silences about fracking are decided. Each journalist identified gaps and silences encountered in the discourse of fracking and described strategies they have adopted to negotiate these silences. Their candor and willingness to discuss silences and strategies around difficult topics is truly a rich feature of this research and can only contribute to important discussions about energy and land.

Some alignment with the energy industry was found in local interviews, but not in all. While some journalists were staunch advocates for industry, others voiced more of a holistic concern that included economic factors and health factors. Interview A admitted upfront to a close industry connection, yet described specific strategies that

acknowledged such bias and even took a “pass” on certain stories:

Obviously, you’ve got coal in Emery and oil in Emery and Carbon and then the oilfields here. *So a pretty heavy oil component on the work that I do. And that can be a challenge given my connection.* [How do you work with that?] One, is it’s a declared conflict of interest with my boss. We have a conflict of interest form that we have to sign, and as conflicts pop up along the way we have to go in and amend that...so I mean, ya know, reporters are married and have lives outside of the newsroom that can cause problems. So one of the things is, if I know that I’m doing a story on a company that [has a conflict] I’ll typically say to my bosses, ya hey look, ya know if I know that a story is coming up, or they call me up and say we need you to cover this so try, I’ll say I can’t. (Lines 45–55, emphasis added)

Some oil and gas stories might mean reprisals for a journalist, from readers and from those connected to the industry, and one journalist detailed, “getting hammered all the time by people in the community, why aren’t you doing anything on [this issue]? Every bit of information I got on it, everyone that comes and talks to me and says ‘I can be a source.’” This journalist articulated a strategy for how to professionally deal with this personal bias, by “passing it on to another reporter...who doesn’t have a personal connection to that issue, and can do it” (Lines 76–79). This discussion of personal and professional bias was addressed up front and also touched on *how* silences are negotiated:

My thing is that I’m not impartial, and I’m willing to admit it up front. I’m not...there’s no impartiality, there’s no objectivity there for me, and I know that. I understand that fully, so I’ve flat out refused to do that story. So am I being, we’re talking about silence, am I being silent on an issue of importance to my community? Yes, But it’s because I have a dog in the fight. And I know that I have a dog in the fight and I know that I can’t be fair about it (Interview A, Lines 89–92, emphasis added).

Later, Interview A described not feeling particularly partial in regard to fracking and *not* being conflicted about how decisions are made about the sources to use, voicing both a contradiction to an earlier response and offering a negotiating strategy, saying,

And I don’t give up on stories because I don’t feel like I can win. It’s not about winning, but if I can’t be fair when I sit down. I’m not going to do it (emphatic), I feel like I can fairly...*I feel like I can fairly analyze the EPA evidence, anything*

from the DOGM, anything from a scientific organization that says fracking has contributed to water pollution here, or there's no link between fracking fluid and contamination, and I'm intelligent to go down through the lists, okay but here are the supporters of fracking and we've been doing it for sixty years and we've you know, and technology has advanced to the level that we're not just drilling a raw hole in the ground to get oil out, we're drilling a hole in the ground, putting a metal casing down inside there, casing that in cement, blowing out the fissures below bedrock. I travelled to Pavillion, Wyoming, to do a story...and what I've been told over there in Pavillion, and what I understand, and not just from the companies. You always have to balance between okay the company is telling you this, but what do the people on the ground know? (Lines 101–115, emphasis added)

Though this journalist claims an unbiased viewpoint on fracking, the specifics in this discussion of well casings, above, speak more of an “industry” perspective on fracking, protesting claims of water pollution due to a process of stringent casing procedures. This response does not address possible water pollution as “a concern” or as “uncertain” or “undetermined,” though uncertainties and concerns exist. This discussion offers little attention to alternate viewpoints or potentialities about water and so calls into question a professed “lack of bias” in regard to possible water contamination from energy extraction activities.

The role of a journalist and professional negotiation of different sides of fracking was described as a matter of weighing sources and as part of a “put it out there” strategy, for example,

My thing is not to convince to try to convince a reader one way or another. I'm not writing an editorial. I've written editorials for this paper before, and I've, you know, and I've stated our opinion about what should happen with fracking rules or with other things. *My job is to put the information out there and either spark the conversation* between a reader and their husband, their wife, their kids, a professor, whoever, get them to dig into it a little bit further, *try to provide them with enough information that they have a basic understanding of what, whether it's a regulatory issue, or shareholder, stock, or homeowner or whatever, their connection. I'm not there to try to, I've never been there to try to convince them that I'm right.* I think that one thing that people have the hardest time understanding with reporters is *we don't necessarily believe every story that we*

write. I don't believe everything that I put in the paper, but that's somebody's opinion or the facts that are available at the moment. (Interview A, Lines 122–133, emphasis added)

Some important shifts take place in this section, where the interviewee demonstrates a sense of professional and organizational rulemaking about how to present stories and “spark the conversation” and also articulates some personal negotiation involved in writing stories that this journalist does not “necessarily believe” (Interview A, Line 132). This last part suggests a need to maintain distance from some of the article content in order to write an acceptable article.

In discussing industry silence, “outsiders” were referenced in three of the four interviews, reinforcing an “us vs. them” depiction of those are in the basin, versus those outside the Basin who do not understand the area, nor represent it appropriately.

Interview C aligned very closely with industry in describing “outside media” and also identified a troubling energy industry silence, stating that,

We can talk fracking...I could give you the names of some good people to make appointments with, and say, explain fracking to me. They would be happy to sit down and diagram it and pretty much tell you about anything you wanted to know. Ya know they would be happy to do it. *But when you get into the public arena, where by and large the media is opposed to fracking, the media is opposed to oil and gas development. These people get a little gunshy sometimes, and they get a little guarded.* Because there's a whole host of people out there calling them everything under the sun and saying they're raping the planet and causing the seas to blow away. But if you sit down and say tell me about it, they are very forthcoming (extra emphasis). I mean my education in oil and gas has been talking to the people that do oil and gas. And they're happy to tell you everything you'd ever want to know (slow and emphatic)...*They have no problems whatsoever doing that, which is a problem that I think they need to overcome...Because if they continue with this okay, everyone hates us, or the media's against us, or the people that are opposed to this can yell louder than we can, then folks kind of perceive that as a poor mentality.* (Lines 375–385, emphasis added)

This journalist identified an energy industry silence here and detailed trying to “fix” it:

And I've been vocal on this you know, you guys, people in the industry need (emphasis) to engage the public And I don't think that they, you know, they're trying to hide anything (pause). They're just so used to hostile receptions that they'd prefer not to be out there. [Yeah, you said gunshy] Yeah. Perfect example, there's a company, um, and they're way south of, way (big emphasis) way south of town. And an environmentalist group came out for them because they're going to poison the groundwater. Well it turns out that section of the world there's very little water if any to poison, but nevertheless they've been painted as horrible people that are poisoning water everywhere. And pretty soon, if that's going to be the narrative every time you poke your head up, you're not going to want to poke your head up. (Interview C, Lines 398–405, emphasis added)

Here the journalist mentions the issue of water scarcity in the area as a way to point out “unnecessary concerns” about water. This journalist’s orientation toward *energy industry promotion* here demonstrates an awareness of the scarcity of water in the locale described, yet also demonstrates a lack of *concern* for this scarcity. Instead it is suggested that water scarcity in this area makes protest and protection unnecessary and extreme. The conflicting themes of division and solidarity with the industry are evidenced in the quote through words like “us,” “we,” and “them,” and through talk about “outsiders” versus “how we do things here,” which marks a clear boundary between “insiders” versus “outsiders.” This idea continues,

Here everyone understands these things. Most people here understand the principles of oil shale and fracking and all that stuff. This is and it's tough because there are some people here who are on spec violently opposed to the notion, and they will probably never change that, but I would love for the people of the Wasatch Front to understand, or the people that ya know are in New York City, or San Diego, Californians to actually understand the realities that really go into this [fracking]. And it is discouraging because we are not a population center, and we do not have a philharmonic, or a museum of art. Ah, everyone out here has 14 wives and drags their knuckles on the ground when they walk (laughs). And that's not the case here. (Lines 448–454, emphasis added)

There is evidence here of a presuppositional silence, one that Huckin describes as taking place when a writer “omits relevant information on the assumption that it is already known to the reader,” such as the suggestion that “here, everyone understands these

things” (p. 428). This response also reveals a perceived stereotype of Basin residents and highlights a theme of “underappreciation” of those who possess a working knowledge of the industry. More evidence of alignment with the oil and gas industry against outsiders is found where this journalist justifies silence on the part of industry, as part of a fear of being “hammered” if they “poke their heads up” (Lines 76–79). Industry silence is viewed as intentional and somewhat necessary as a strategic response to environmentalists’ unwanted “needling.”

Interview C suggested an ideological alignment with industry, explaining that “ya know if that much gas, or product, were being blown back, that is...was jeopardizing the environment, it would make it a very bad business practice to continue to do it (laughing). If the profit was disappearing into the ground, or wherever it is going” (Lines 406–411). When asked if there is any voice that is silent or silenced in the Basin, Interview C identified that certain “outside” sources would not likely want to talk based on a personal and professional stance on oil and gas and stated, “To a certain degree ya know, if I was to call the Utah Southern [Utah] Wilderness Alliance and ask them for their opinion on something they probably wouldn’t give it to me...I don’t think they would” (Lines 340–343). A gap in environmental sourcing was exposed here, one that might make it difficult to engage with a particular stakeholder on fracking issues. A similar gap was described by another journalist, who said,

I’m not one of those people that’s like I’m not calling them. Because I mean I don’t know, *sometimes* I do that (laughs). Sometimes I’ll be like *I already know what they’re going to say*. Ya know, but you’ve still got to call. But ya know, typically when I call I say hey, this is (name). I’m doing a story on this. I know that you’ve said this about it in the past. I know you’ve had this position in the past, has that changed at all? Or is that still your position? And this gives them a chance to tell me because for all I know, ya know, Steven Bloch at the Southern Wilderness Alliance got hit on the head with a brick this morning on his way to

work, and all of a sudden thinks fracking is the greatest thing in the world, and we should do it everywhere. (Interview A, Lines 172–179)

This quote reveals important gaps that may effectively “close the door” to certain discussions and may make particular conversations with environmental activist groups “off limits.” Though there are protestations against bias, there is evidence of disdain for activist groups, which may impact how fracking stories are sourced and whether activist goals and ideas will be included in the paper. It is clear that at least one local journalist feels uncomfortable about this bias, yet bias is important to identify as part of addressing what a silence might mean. This is precisely what Johnstone (2008) and Brummett (1980) described as investigating the relationships of power that surround a silence because if a journalist neglects a news source, a particular angle of the story may be omitted. Another journalist discussed the troublesome assumption that local readers do not require industry clarifications about fracking, saying, “Here, everyone understands these things. Most people here understand the principles of oil shale and fracking and all that stuff (Interview C, Lines 448–449). This presuppositional silence suggests that there is no need to “tell” Basin residents about the processes of oil and gas because “everyone understands these things” (Huckin, 2010). This is a large assumption to make as at least 20% of the population does not work for the dominant industry, and some workers may be quite specialized working with one aspect of the process. In the same response, this journalist suggests that those “outside” the Basin do not understand the process and probably never will, saying “there are some people who are on spec violently opposed to the notion, and they will probably never change that” (Lines 50–51). These articulations, taken together, align industry objectives and media sourcing patterns by characterizing the industry and Basin residents as “misunderstood.” These comments reinforce and align

Basin residents and industry as the “insiders” pitted against the less intuitive and unresponsive “outsiders.” What is the impact of this “us vs. them” dichotomy between Basin insiders and outside groups? Does it allow for a discussions critical of fracking? Might local journalists’ choices about who to quote in the paper feed into this division or help create it? It is important to make these gaps and silences plain, so that the varied and diverse aspects of energy extraction may be more complexly addressed. Some implicit silences may proliferate precisely due to such ideological alignments.

Interviews ABCD: Getting to the Source: Journalists and Readers

Interviews conducted with local journalists in the Uintah Basin offered a unique chance to look for evaluative speaking and the opinion of these journalists, by reviewing the interview transcripts and looking for specific word choice, narrative style, and markers of affiliation that might point to “evaluation” as described by Hunston and Thompson (2002). This is precisely the kind of analysis used in transcribing interviews with journalists/writers who literally have what Johnstone (2008) might refer to as “involvement in the discourse” of this rural Eastern Utah community. What does involvement mean? Even though particular people write for the local paper and would seem to be the obvious site for locating a particular stance, the writer alone does not shape the discourse. Johnstone (2008) found that “other participants are also always involved in shaping discourse, through their reactions to it, through the ways in which it is designed with them in mind, and through the ways in which their roles make authors’ roles possible” (p. 129). This interaction is where power enters into the discourse. Johnstone (2008) describes the importance of exploring “the ways in which” discourse is

designed with certain stakeholders “in mind,” and suggests an importance in looking at a writer’s relationship with outside sources, who apply pressure to shape and influence the discourse as well. Discursive power is negotiable, and this power is constantly being negotiated in the Basin, where “institutionally conferred power and situationally negotiated power are often both in play” (Johnstone, 2008, p. 130). Who might be the power brokers in this type of discourse? Journalists are powerful because they construct and wield the word, yet they are constrained by what the paper’s management feels is reasonable to print and are further constrained by the affiliation and alignments with sources, advertisers, local community values and ideas, and local industries.

It is important to recognize the dynamic process of discourse written for public consumption, from the vantage point of preproduction of the text, such as source gathering and prewriting, to the actual writing and journalistic standpoint, and finally from the viewpoint of a reader, to fully understand what a text “means” (de Vreese, 2005). This part of the research query was involved with questioning local writers about their readership, attempting to probe their assumptions about who they pictured as “their” readers. Interview questions were designed to probe what these journalists’ connections are to the Basin and to the oil and gas industry, and perhaps more importantly they were designed to get at how they negotiate their personal and professional orientations, stances and roles, within a complex power structure. This power structure for local news includes rural Utah as a geography—the Basin as a community that depends on oil and gas economically, and the paper itself, which serves a specific role in this community. Specific responses from these journalists reveal some important alignments and information and sourcing gaps and offer strategies for negotiating silences around

fracking. The question that informs this part of the research centers on *how* silence is operating locally and how these silences might “speak” about the valuing of land and environment in the Uinta Basin. A more detailed discussion of silence, interview by interview, reveals particular ideologies and biases related to oil and gas extraction that have implications for the construction of local news articles on the topic of fracking.

Interview A: Silences and Stance

Interview A suggested a gap with local tribe members as the biggest local silence and expressed a desire for tribal residents to “get in touch with me, about stories and issues...all Caucasians don’t believe the same thing, all Hispanics don’t believe the same thing (pause), similar case with Native Americans. But for some reason there’s this belief that because they’re all part of the Ute tribe, they all believe what the Ute Tribe [leadership] says” (Lines 562–579). This journalist suggested a need to approach individual Tribal citizens, rather than rely on tribal power brokers as a way to address this silence. Interview A identified another significant gap with male residents and workers, saying women were “more involved” and would talk for and represent “90% of the comments for their husbands,” described as “oil field workers” (Lines 586–589). The gap here is one primarily with male oil field workers and those who “talk” for them. A troubling silence was described with citizens who try to avoid the media and “have this idea, that if they just don’t call us back or they stay quiet, that we won’t do the story.” Interview A also described wanting to “shut down public comments” at times and described having to “sift through what is just rumor and what’s reality” from local citizens. This journalist was “criticized lately by people that he/she doesn’t live here,

he/she doesn't have to deal with this, and blah, blah, blah. And other people are like don't you know that he/she lives right there, and yes he/she does live here." This response suggests that living locally and being perceived as an "insider" offers a certain local credibility, yet also suggests that working with local residents can create pressure and frustration to determine "rumor from reality" (Lines 329–333). An additional gap was mentioned about fracking as an "environmental solution" locally:

From my experience from working out here, the industry is one of the biggest movers in trying to figure out a better way, um, to get the resource out on the ground. A way that doesn't involve tearing up hundreds of surface areas of um, I mean, *directional drilling, is one of those big things that everybody talks about.* Well when you can drill 15 wells from one well pad, instead of having to put 15 well pads out, across ya know like 40 acre spacing or 20 acre spacing, yes, it makes so much sense. (Lines 665–660, emphasis added)

This remark describes a gap in ability to depict industry environmental *improvements*.

This journalist described the energy industry as "misunderstood" and suggested that "even people as near as Heber and Park City don't understand what the energy industry means out here. They don't want the resource to get out. They don't want the resource to get to the refinery" (Lines 636, 651). This statement reflects a strong insider/outsider perspective. This journalist described being able to separate personal and professional aims and "balance" what is written about fracking (Lines 80–81), describing the Basin as a place of diverse opinions, where even those who disagree with fracking have a voice:

I thought oil and gas all the way, everyone loves oil and gas, nobody's going to speak ill of it. I've seen packed meetings when people from Washington come out that were yanking leases, angry crowd, ya know people pretty upset, uh ya know there's somebody that drives around here with a sticker on the back of their vehicle that says "Obama, one big gas mistake, America." There is diversity here, it's just that I think the minority is cognizant of the fact that they are (emphasis) the minority, and if they stick their heads up they're going to get... a deluge of negative comments that's going to be there. But I think I think we do a disservice to the community if we think that everybody thinks alike. (Lines 295–310)

Although a suggestion of diversity of opinion about oil and gas is made here, including those who would “speak ill of it,” this section describes a significant power differential between an unnamed majority, and a minority who “is cognizant of the fact that they are the minority” and understands what will happen if they “stick their heads up.” This offers a subtle contradiction and suggests that the “minority” knows that it should *remain* silent.

This journalist expressed frustration about not being able to take a direct approach with industry articles without being accused of making “a commercial for the company.” And instead, this journalist described that “the only way to get people to sit down and care is if you quote a sympathetic face or a, a, you know a, a kid or something who’s struggling with some problem and this is what big industry is doing to try to fix that. Here’s mom making her plea that we all stop idling our cars and stop doing this so we save the environment” (Interview A, Lines, 203–207). Additional frustration was expressed because “I can’t just do a story that says hey look here’s this great facility, I go find a little girl that’s got asthma” (Lines 200–211). This response suggests a need to negotiate around making “a commercial for the company” and appearing too closely aligned with industry objectives by using a “human angle” strategy for stories. Another strategy expressed for negotiating conflicting ideologies was described here as,

If I think that everybody believes the same thing I do, or everybody, or I do personally, or if everyone believes the same thing that the spokesman for Devon Energy or El Paso or any of the other companies believes, um or Rob Bishop. You know. I mean like I can’t, again, it goes back to assumptions. I can’t make that assumption. I don’t. I try not to tailor stories to an audience. I try to just say this is what this side, (pause) this side, here’s the story. And then you know, you just kind of sit back and let them fight over who’s right, who’s wrong, and you know this government study says this and that government study says that, and this person is wrong. (Interview A, Lines 316–323)

The strategy expressed here was to avoid bias by presenting “sides” and then letting

others fight it out. This interviewee offered important perspective about potential gaps in the local resident stakeholders and suggested that all citizen voices are not equally heard from on this topic. Though this journalist described an upfront awareness of potential bias related to the energy industry and voiced some strategies to avoid such bias, many of the actual responses indicated an ideology strongly supportive of energy extraction. This journalist also revealed a troubling silence with sources *opposed* to fracking, which could potentially influence the construction of an oil and gas story.

Interview B: Silences and Stance

Interview B identified an “open dialogue with the state on air quality issues” as the biggest silence in local fracking discourse. This journalist also described not having enough information on health impacts from fracking, but more pointedly identified this silence as a gap with state regulators. This journalist described some difficulties in having “to do some drilling accident reports, or air quality, and that impacts the family. I don’t think they [Industry] talk about that [health impacts from fracking] enough.” Later, this journalist said “we have a partnership with USU [Utah State University], they have a degree program. They offer education in petroleum. They’re helping with the air quality studies. That’s a *big deal here*” (Line 30). It was suggested in this interview that something catastrophic might have to happen in order to be able to cover substantive health concerns with the process of fracking. This journalist described trying to “get people talking” about an accident with fracking, but had not been successful because “it didn’t even make it out,” suggesting that local accidents typically stay “local” and do not make it out to the urban newspapers (Lines 83–85). Although Interview B described not

getting enough information from the industry on fracking, other interviews contradicted this assessment, saying it was “easy” to get industry to talk, as long as it was not to “outside” media, to whom they were “gunshy” (Interviews A, C, D). Another silence identified by Interview B involved oilfield workers and a concern that the industry “grinds them up.” This journalist suggested a need to be careful about how a story that expressed health concerns was framed and spent considerable time determining how best to approach health stories, particularly about air. Another contradiction expressed here was that this journalist suggested some difficulty in getting state government officials to talk, while other local journalists described having good state communication, one even suggesting the state was “on speed dial” (Interview B, Interview A, Interview C). Interview B suggested a personal understanding of the community and voiced the idea that “oil and gas is the focus area of the community and “80% owe their incomes to extraction...it’s a good living wage. The median income is \$60,000.” This journalist also suggested that “if I didn’t like it [the Basin], I’d be in the wrong place” (Lines 14–15). An understanding of community values and objectives was described, as well as a respect for the dominant industry, yet this respect was tempered somewhat in the interview by an expressed concern about the lack of information on fracking impacts and the identification of a silence with state regulators about how the practice might impact the health and well-being of community members.

Interview C: Silences and Stance

The greatest silence described by Interview C was the voice of the oil and gas industry saying it was a “problem that I think they need to overcome” (Line 387).

Industry silence was presented as a voice that was *understandably* absent, due to media misinformation and what was described as being “gunshy,” and “getting hammered every time they poke their heads up” (Lines 66–79). Though this journalist had never visited an oil rig, an alignment with the oil and gas industry was depicted, with statements such as, “I mean my education in oil and gas has been talking to the people that do oil and gas,” and, “I don’t think that they, ya know, that they’re trying to hide anything (pause) they’re just so used to hostile receptions that they’d prefer not to be out there” (Lines 397–398). This journalist also aligned with unemployed oil workers, detailing the impacts of economic disadvantage due to industry cutbacks and recent regulation, describing that, “the human toll was phenomenal,” with “savings accounts drained” and “people that were so despondent. They attempted suicide” (Lines 124–127). This journalist described oil and gas workers, a stakeholder voice that was otherwise absent in the news articles and interviews, by detailing a large oil worker turnout to a cookie fundraiser for a local boy’s heart transplant:

All the rig hands and roughnecks all lined up to buy cookies. Well, that’s just one of the myths. That these guys. A lot of them are kids in their late teens and early twenties, and a lot of them will act like kids in their early twenties will with a lot of money, it’s not on the best behavior...but a lot of them are families, men and women, and they really do have good hearts. Yeah, there’s a stereotype of them out there as big lumbering apes destroying everything in their paths. And on that day I saw that that’s simply not true. (Lines 104–117)

Interview C described “a fix” for clearing up industry stereotypes and misinformation would be to “put names and faces to this industry. And recognize that if maybe you’re protesting and filing a lawsuit, what you don’t understand is that because of that someone might not be able to feed their family” (Lines 139–141). This journalist described story sourcing as being “very much about relationships” and said it required a certain level of

trust because “it is someone that they are going to see in the hometown, they’re going to see me at the grocery store and give me an earful” (Lines 70–71). This response equates being “local” with being easily exposed to critique. Getting article information meant that “sometimes you go to see someone and find out if they have news and they’ll say well, I don’t have this, but if you go talk to this person in this office they can tell you about this,” suggesting a very “word of mouth” strategy used in information gathering.

Interview C had a senior position and did not have to work as hard for stories anymore, or “chase ambulances” (Lines 174–175). The trickiest aspect of sourcing stories was described as an effort not to “horriblize” the news, and an account was given of a time that this news strategy was rewarded: “I knew I had done something right to earn their trust to that degree. Because they knew that I wouldn’t do something awful with this [story]” (Lines 207–208). In terms of readership, this journalist did not “spend a lot of time worrying about” the audience, but did spend more time “worrying about the product.” This journalist said, “It’s not like I don’t know that they’re there, or I don’t care, but there are people in this business that are obsessed with who is their target audience, how many people you get. I just hope that I can do a good job for them. And can provide a quality product, and serve the public, really” (Lines 327–330).

Interview C closely and unapologetically aligned with industry objectives, yet also described extraction industry silence as a problem that needed attention. This journalist articulated concerns about stereotypes and misinformation about residents and workers, and advocated for personal newsgathering methods that corrected stereotypes and acknowledged local diversity. An ideal depiction of the role of journalist was described as creating a good news product and “serving the public,” and yet this

journalist also voiced more concern for economic objectives and community stereotypes related to the industry, than concerns about environmental or health concerns, speaking more about citizen economics than potential safety risks or health impacts.

Interview D: Silences and Stance

Interview D felt that the biggest silence on fracking in the Basin is from “energy,” stating matter-of-factly that “energy doesn’t use their voice.” This journalist described a close-knit relationship with oil and gas as a source, saying,

...they know who I am, and I know who most of them are, and I’ve been on site with a lot of them. And uh, they’re the ones that give permission for me to do stories, so there’s a trust level there. When, ya know, there’s bad news we still have to print that, and they’re aware of it, and there’s respect that I have a job and they have a job to do. On the other hand we will give them a fair shake you know, when there’s good news for their company, then we’re willing to publicize that also. (Lines 206–210)

The suggestion here is that industry are “the ones that give permission for me to do stories” and so wield a certain amount of power in the media relationship. Another silence described by Interview D was with government officials, and the “process of government, you know is all closed door (whispers). It’s all behind the door, and they don’t want somebody else to know the process of them coming to a decision on what they’re going to do.” The relationship with government was described as a trust relationship as well, such that, “we can’t be involved in the process if they don’t trust us. Because, because we can’t be breaking things before it’s time. A lot of it is timing” (Line 218). This idea of timing also suggests a strong correlation between media and other stakeholders about *when* a story is broken. Interview D described that “it has taken me a long time to build up a good relationship with government and with like, I say we do

represent hunting and fishing and oil and gas, and not always are we on the same plain, but let us be part of the process and then we understand the situation that much better, and the story is that much better” (Lines 223–226). Interview D then described an experience driving the bus for a tour of the proposed wilderness area, which was run by the county commissioners and the tourism board:

The last tour took us all the way down to where the proposed wilderness area is. And there are oil and gas wells in there. There are roads going through it, there are and I mean, this, this is all proposed wilderness, and it’s already established as industry and everything else. So we toured that area, and ya know and it’s interesting. There’s a buried pipeline that goes right through the middle of it and nobody even knew that it was there. Ya know. Uh, and so sometimes if we can get people to go down there and look at that and see that maybe it doesn’t impact the environment quite as much as we saw that picture of this on the horizon or something, you know, you really can’t see those things. (Lines 244–251)

This journalist described the issue of a pipeline as “out of sight, out of mind,” suggesting that because it was not visible meant it should not be a concern. Interview D claimed that the local news depicts environmental concerns as well as industry ideas, yet revealed bias when describing that environmental voices are “not silent” and saying, “we publish some pretty extreme environmental views. We try to do that too just to show ‘em what’s out there. Because they’re [environmentalists] not silent. And I know the grandstanding, and I know that I just fed into their whatever.” This journalist described a sense of being in the middle of industry and environment while covering a protest, but suggests aligning with one side saying “they had a story to tell, and so we went down there and covered it. And am I being used? Yeah, a whole lot more than what the industry is using me. But we a yeah. But I’ll tell you they’re the first ones to call and give us problems because they know that we have to print their side. And it makes me so mad” (Lines 267–272).

In these responses, Interview D described a deep connection to the oil and gas

industry and was upfront about a relationship supportive of extraction, yet this close connection did not prevent identification of an industry silence in local news and expressed discomfort with the “closed door” policies of local and state government. This journalist expressed anger at outside depictions of the Basin and felt that “radical” environmental concerns and protests took important focus away from industry innovation. Interview D felt *compelled* to represent both sides—the industry and environmentalists because both “used” the local media, yet this journalist particularly expressed anger at “having” to represent environmental sources.

The interviews with journalists revealed significant gaps in the conversation on oil and gas. Each of four local journalists highlighted specific areas of silences and discussed strategies they utilize to negotiate personal and professional ideological differences, such as declaring a “conflict of interest” and shifting a story to someone else. In most cases, journalists directly spoke the industry voice and expressed alignment and solidarity with industry activities and goals by using “we” rather than “they” and suggesting a delineation of “us vs. them” with insiders supportive of extraction and outsiders who were not. In most cases, personal ideology was readily acknowledged, and in several cases some specific steps were outlined as strategies used to counteract bias and maintain a sense of journalistic credibility. Alignment with the prominent local industry was not surprising, nor was it the primary focus for this research, but rather the focus was on silence and the *negotiation* of silence.

Partiality, Bias, and Neutrality

Scholars such as Fairclough (2010) and Sillars (1991) found that language is not neutral, but rather is value-laden and inextricably linked to power and ideology. Fairclough (2010) stated that “the value commitments made in the text are part of the constitution of an authorial identity” (p. 272). He identified that some value commitments are explicit through direct evaluations, but “for the most part values are implicit—they are value assumptions” (p. 272). He described that the danger in evaluative declarations is that when value assumptions are stated as shared values, or as the values of the community, they can *become* the values of the *community* and may leave little room for other evaluative choices (Fairclough, 2010). Value and power are evident in the news discourse in the Basin. In an article from the *Vernal Express* titled “Major drilling planned for Basin,” the writer gave hints and evidences of a particular stance on energy extraction, through word choice, with the use of particular quotes from certain groups, and through a subtle use of linguistic modals (Untitled, 2012). Use of words like “significant,” “sincere,” “environmentally-responsible,” and “shining example” convey more than just simple information about the glowing potential of drilling projects. These word choices provide hints as to how the author views the information provided and leave little opportunity to view extraction in any other light. A writer may align with information that supports a particular ideology, through language, but also through silence. Value and power are evident in silence. The choice for the *absence* of certain voices, values, and ideas can similarly suggest shared values or community values, and if a reader accepts these omissions, he/she can become complicit in such attitudes. In the above example, the lack of critique for the broad drilling proposal, as well as the absence

of resident stakeholder voices as part of the “collaborative effort” supporting it, suggest particular assumptions about what and who is important to represent, in this case government and industry leaders and what and who can be omitted. In another instance, the absence of worker voices on issues of health and safety in the local news may invite assumptions about safety concerns and potentially color the way this community views safety related to oil extraction. This omission may suggest that there are no safety concerns to be discussed or that the writer believes such risks are already known and accepted by workers—a presuppositional silence. It may also suggest that employment opportunity is more vital a focus than less certain risks to human health and safety. It suggests powerlessness on the part of workers because only company CIOs (company information officers) are allowed to speak when there has been a mishap, even when citizens and workers are significantly affected. Silence here means something related to power. It is also a position of power to frame the news for a reader. What responsibility does a journalist have to readership to represent a story in a full and complex manner? The tenets of fairness, reliability, believability, and lack of bias are espoused by many news organizations, but does impartiality exist? Can impartiality be considered a plausible expectation of news? Scholars warn that “true” impartiality does not exist—that news may no longer be a source of impartiality, if it ever was, and so exploring and revealing areas where power, language, and silence connect is more necessary than ever (Turner, 1996).

The goal of this critical scholarship is not to provide declarations of truth, nor to expose bias, though some community solidarity *was* found as part of textual silences. The primary aim is to broaden understanding and illuminate areas for consideration about

how silence connects to relationships of power and how silence speaks concerning land. Silence is not neutral. This study does not assume that impartiality is the current objective for news, but it does highlight how silence study can reveal troubling partialities and point toward topics that are addressed in less detail and with less focus. *If* a broad and complex representation of a topic is desired, for instance if the readership, a sponsor, or news organization demands greater complexity in news, this type of study can illuminate omissions, gaps, and areas of concern.

The outright, relative, and *differentially* focused silences located through this research were identified through careful comparison of local and national news articles, yet they represent a fragment and a snapshot of a conversation about oil and gas fracking over a 1-year period. These “fragments” point to potential uses for silence on energy topics for a variety of stakeholders and offer a means of identifying and investigating the ways that silence reflects power operating in public discourse. Yet this research is only one piece of this ongoing conversation about land and land use. It offers a means for locating the unsaid and unexplored about land use in a particular community and offers a new and integrated approach to research in environmental topics. Interviews conducted with local journalists illuminate how silence is negotiated in this rural geography and invite study of how silence may be operating elsewhere. Future work should compare this fragment with news discourse in other energy rich locales to determine if the results in other contexts are similar. The local silences and specific strategies expressed in this locale offer important support for the combination of silence study and environmental scholarship elsewhere.

Strategies: Silence Negotiation

The results from local interviews demonstrate that journalists are aware of the silences operating around energy extraction in the Basin, as evidenced in the strategies articulated for regularly negotiating *around* these silences. Local journalists readily acknowledged strategies for dealing with a personal and professional connection to the oil and gas industry. These included such things as passing some stories to a less invested journalist to write or being upfront about biases by filling out “conflict paperwork.” Interview B expressed a “put it out there strategy” to avoid blame and described taking extra care when linking certain aspects of oil and gas extraction, particularly health concerns, because the news organization wouldn’t allow it—expressed as “I can’t do that here” (Line 40). This response highlights the organizational pressures from “within” that can shape a story. This analysis acknowledges the complexity of discourse production as a dynamic, multistep process that is influenced by both internal (organizational) and external (community, industry, political) pressures.

The strategies expressed in the interviews highlight that news writing is a dynamic process involving article production, sourcing, and information use *and omission*. The story construction process involves *decisions and choices* that influence what the public will read about fracking. This process exposed some biases about what energy topics are communicated and how complexly they are represented. It also became clear that local journalists walk a fine line when suggesting direct links between industry actions and health concerns. Interview A described a strategy used in weighing the credibility of lay and “expert” sources, saying,

You’re [the reader] going to judge the credibility of the sources that I’ve used. If I’ve talked to Farmer Joe, who’s a farmer and doesn’t know anything about oil

and gas, and he says, well they're polluting ya know, all my water. Well he's a farmer and he knows about water, and he knows if there's a smell to his water, or if there's something, but does he understand the geology below the land that he holds? Does he understand the techno, or what was used to drill the well or how it was drilled? That's something where I would go to like a state agency and ask them, is this well properly cased? Have you inspected the well, ya know, what do you know? And talk to them. So readers are going to have to make up their own [mind]. That's kind of where I'm at. (Interview A, Lines 148–155)

Certain sources are viewed as more knowledgeable and powerful, and the reader is very much at the forefront of this journalist's mind when deciding which source should be used. The strategy expressed here involves endorsing some sources and holding back with other sources, all with the *expressed* intention to allow readers to make the connections and "make up their own mind." This journalist stated, "I've never been there to try to convince them that I'm right. I think that one thing that people have the hardest time understanding with reporters is we don't necessarily believe every story that we write (Interview A, Lines 122–132). Here the journalist expresses some frustration with local news readers because they do not fully understand the pressures and conventions of newswriting, yet the reader has great power because he/she will ultimately judge the credibility of oil and gas sources and stories.

Understanding both language *and* silence as part of the production process of news can aid in identifying power sources and social influences and make plain areas that need greater textual attention (de Vreese, 2005). For instance, a different view of local antifracking protest emerged through the interview process. In person, journalists characterized environmental activists as "radical" and "extreme." They described them as "freaking nuts" and "screaming rabid environmentalists" who "duct tape themselves to the equipment" and "do not want to understand energy" practices. "Environmentalists" were not found in the local news articles over this year, but rather a more placid depiction

of protesters and “conservationism” was articulated. In person, journalists did not use the term “conservationist” or “protesters” to describe antifracking protesters, but instead directly referred to them as environmentalists, activists, extremists, and “nuts.” Huckin (2010) suggested that if a different depiction of protest were available to the writer, and there was a reasonable opportunity to represent this view but it was *not* used, it may represent a manipulative silence. What power does this particular term “environmentalist” have in this local community? Why is this term avoided in the local news? What is the credible and acceptable term to describe these stakeholders in local news discourse? Why is it different in print than in person? The combined analysis of both the news articles and interviews with journalists allowed for the identification and exploration of what the specific terminology used, and not used, might mean.

Silence study can open a line of questioning about the broader power structure, and in this case, it can point to the power brokers. Who might benefit from a dampened depiction of protest over more active and extreme views? Are descriptions of controversy avoided by Basin journalists as part of an organizational rule or as part of a community mandate towards “solidarity” with the oil and gas industry? Perhaps the omission of “extreme” and active protest in local papers and the substitution of environmental interests as calm conservationism is the “acceptable” way to highlight health concerns and land preservation in the Basin. This omission may represent a subtle strategy for introducing environmental and health concerns in a place where 80% rely on the oil and gas industry for their livelihood. This depiction offers a very subtle critique of the primary local industry. Representing a “wise-use” ideology may be a nod to a more conservative readership. If spoken by environmentalists, would health and safety

concerns about oil and natural gas be disregarded as the radical ideas of “crazy” outside extremists? An “implicated readership,” with a deep investment in the extraction industry may require a more placid version of protest in order to consider certain topics as legitimate concerns. Avoiding environmentalist voices, ideas, and terminology may be part of credibility or a legitimizing process of news making in the Basin. Perhaps depictions of conservationism over the more passionate and “extreme” activism seen elsewhere are considered a justifiable strategy and alternative for this community? What is the harm? These local depictions of conservationism do not allow for a deeper conceptualization of environmental activism—activism that seeks to *disturb the status quo* and mandates for broader environmental protections. This small example demonstrates that silence can communicate important values and reveal particular ideologies and choices.

Silence can reveal deeply held community orientation about energy extraction. The issue here is not so much that bias exists or even that silence can reveal these biases, which it *can* do, but most important for this research is the realization that silence can empower and disempower. Study of silence brings needed focus to underrepresented areas and invites needed complexity and change. Objectivity in news is not the point of this scholarship. News objectivity is lately viewed as a myth (Schwarze, 2006; Turner, 1996). Schwarze (2006) describes it as a false balance of objectives and suggests a need to disrupt and “displace the ideological privileging of balance, revealing how presumably even-handed and rational discourses of regulation can diminish citizen voices and consistently fail to enhance the quality of life on the planet” (p. 252). For example, in many of the local articles it is possible to say that opposing sides of the concerns about

air pollution were represented, yet on closer reflection, one viewpoint is often subtly privileged early in the article, while active citizen voices are neglected, and the opposing “side” or more controversial connection is relegated to the later, less-read portions of the article. In this view “balanced news” as it now exists is not viewed as credible, and it may leave out important voices—citizen voices. This silence research suggests something similar to what Schwarze (2006) identified, that objective news is a myth and that silence can help to draw subtle biases out. Yet the intent is not to offer some “truth” of objectivity, but rather to offer a disruption of common public news discourse as a way to inspire broader, more inclusive discourses and invite change.

Articles and Interviews: Strategies in Silence

As Brummett (1980) suggested, there is a strategy for silence in allowing others to speak political and economic objectives. Huckin (2010) claimed that silence study can be a productive means for addressing civic concerns and described that a motivating force for his work is “a desire to interrogate power and promote political consciousness and constructive civic action” (p. 429). This research demonstrates that language and silence can offer this kind of constructive action by revealing silences about the uses and value of land and revealing silent and silenced voices in public news discourse about resource extraction and land use. In some cases, the oil and gas industry remained silent while allowing others, including the government and even local journalist advocates, to publicly speak its objectives. State regulators were absent or quiet in local news discourse, and a “state silence” was identified and bolstered in interviews with local journalists. The local county commission emerged in the local articles as a “go to” for

addressing citizen and industry concerns. Although the commission was given an active voice in many articles with direct quotes and early mentions, the same was not true for citizen voices—though it was suggested that the commission “spoke for” citizen concerns. In the interviews, the commission was described as important for local news journalists for the purpose of verifying information about oil and gas extraction, yet some concern was expressed about local government’s decision-making behind “closed doors,” suggesting misconduct. Journalists were loath to elaborate on the specifics of potential misconduct, in fact, though it was brought up in two interviews, political misconduct by the county commission was not found in the local news articles under the specific “drilling” search parameters, though several articles were later located under a more direct search. The addition of local journalist interviews offered a chance to understand these gaps and silences in more detail, and in context where “generating portions” of news production take place. It is through a better understanding of these generating portions” that a good sense of *how* these silences come about—through sourcing, newsgathering, organizational and community pressures, and in some cases, as a reflection of personal and professional biases.

Like the commission, oil and gas representatives were given active voices in many of the local articles, yet a silence with the energy industry was identified and highlighted in nearly all of the local interviews. Silence on the part of a major stakeholder was an obstacle for reporting on certain topics, such as health and environmental impacts related to fracking. Journalists described a frustration with the lack of available, public information on specifics related to fracking, such as structural concerns and related resource scarcity—a gap that was evident in the article comparisons as well.

Citizen concerns were silenced and were not typically addressed in active or direct terms in the local articles. A strategy of abstraction was used to present citizen concerns, and local health and safety concerns related to fracking. A similar tactic was described in the local interview process, with the suggestion of a “put it out there strategy,” used as a way to subtly address sensitive topics and “avoid placing blame.” In local articles, one surprising strategy was found in the repetition of certain words, like “fracking” and “protest” in the course of an article, as well as the repetition of the meanings of air quality standards. Such repetition points to a subtle attention-getting or “teaching” strategy that may be *supportive* of more complex discourse on these topics.

This research brought up some important questions about local valuing and commodification of land. It highlighted voices that are omitted in this discussion and some who are empowered. It offered a means for identifying silences surrounding how protest is represented. It explored what collaboration means locally and who may be left out of such negotiations. The comparison of local articles with the national articles was not done to suggest that local papers need more controversy or that rural papers need celebrity activism in order to address environmental concerns, but rather the comparison allowed one to question, if these topics and tactics found in the national paper are *not* being used to introduce environmental topics locally, *can* sensitive health concerns and active environmental protest be represented? And if so, how are these ideas articulated? Can antifracking sentiments, resource scarcity concerns, and competing energy alternatives be addressed in the Uinta Basin? If not, why not? If so, then by whom?

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS

This thesis borrowed and built on Huckin's (2002) method. It involved the study of how fracking is discussed in the broad public conversation and a comparison with the local, rural conversation as a way to make plain where topical gaps and silences are found on the topic of energy extraction. The critical intention of this work was to add to scholarship about the power of silence through identification of *how* silence may be operating in the Uinta Basin in regard to oil and gas fracking. Critical Discourse Analysis was used to analyze news discourse and combined scholarship from de Vreese (2005), Hall (1997), Huckin (2010, 2002), Johnstone (2008), and van Dijk (1986). Initial analysis compared topics and subtopics related to fracking to see where they overlapped and to identify gaps in the conversation. An additional aspect of the research involved analysis and integration of interview transcripts from local journalists. Excerpts from interviews were included to aid in better understanding the textual gaps and silences found. This critical analysis of local and urban media texts, coupled with interviews from local journalists, provided a complicated and integrated approach to examining the negotiation of silence in public discourse.

Identification of silence was not the only aim for this study, but rather this research explored how silence can have the power to shape and influence public news

discourse on issues related to the environment. Silence study makes it possible to identify and then address distinct aspects of public discourse. As McGee (1980) stated, “present-day writers, however, are primarily concerned with problems of constraint, investigating why, how, and with what result, culture silences people.” In contrast, rhetoricians have usually been concerned with *empowerment*, seeking to discover how and with what consequence doxa, understood by McGee (1980) to be “the taken for granted rules of society,” can be used to “authorize a redress of human grievances” (p. 281). Silence study offers a means and method to make this conceptual leap. In local discourse “community values” and “taken for granted rules of society” can be identified through attention to silence. This identification provides a powerful and useful platform from which to address silences and perhaps make some recommendations toward greater “empowerment” that McGee (1980) and Cox (2007) so aptly advocated for.

Discourse is the result of a dynamic process that both shapes culture and *is* shaped by culture. Carey (1989) suggested that the very structure of communication can be distinctly shaped by the specific geography, community, and context in which a text resides. Johnstone (2008) illustrated that there are particular linguistic means available to analyze discourse and reveal its dynamic processes. In her view, it is *impossible* to see the way discourse is shaped without interrogating the relationships and roles of those involved in the production and consumption of that discourse (2008, pp. 128–129). This thesis has attempted to explore this complex interplay between discourse, silence, and culture in the Uinta Basin by interrogating the relationships between internal and professional stance and the external environment and community connections of those who “make” the local news.

This type of analysis offers a chance to look at signals, such as expressions of certainty or uncertainty, affect or tone, positioning, value-laden language, subjectivity markers, speaker perspective, negation, passive versus active voice—all specific micro level evidences that point toward a larger macro viewpoint (Johnstone, 2008, pp. 128–134). As mentioned earlier in the research, these textual features signal what the author of a news text “knows” about the subject, their comfort with the subject matter they are discussing, and the attitudes present in his or her discourse that might demonstrate how they feel about the topic they address. The macro and micro level analysis works together to provide both evidence and explanation of links between culture and communication through language and is helpful in revealing silences as well. Critical discourse analysis involves taking a microscopic view of the language in all its “cultural situatedness.” It also involves taking an important step back to look broadly at community and power on the macro level. This type of research is an attempt to identify how power operates between participants, be it author and reader, or writer and source, etc., because it is clear as Tannen (1994) suggested that “Power and solidarity are both always at play in every relationship,” and it is the work of the analyst to determine more concretely how (as cited in Johnston, 2008, p. 53).

This research combines several ways of knowing into a complex investigation of manipulative silences relating to the environment and energy discourse. This is precisely the type of novel approach Cox (2007) and Carbaugh (2007) called for in regard to environmental studies because it offers a concrete way to explore silence and a means of avoiding “linguistic lag” in relation to topics that directly influence language and actions in the land (p. 72). This new approach to identifying the intersections between specific

geographic contexts and language does not critique from afar, but rather strives to provide an “outside” viewpoint while seeking the greater complexity of “insider” accounts. This study offers insights for a variety of stakeholders regarding the characterization of fracking in the media. It offers oil and gas proponents a glimpse at the strategies at play in national and rural news about fracking. It offers environmentalists a chance to understand how geographical context and characterization may impact their message. It offers political stakeholders an idea of how they might be perceived locally and nationally and what their role is in regard to balancing citizen and corporate interests. It offers citizens a chance to understand what might be missing in the local and national news, such as an active citizen voice on the issue, that may warrant greater attention. How can citizens gain a greater voice in this discourse? It offers journalists a chance to see gaps and silences in sourcing and story construction that they might not be aware of, and it highlights the importance of organizational power and the power in generating news. Language and silence influence perceptions about the extraction practice, both in a positive and less positive way. Lack of avid public discussion about the practice of fracking locally, and a close interrogation of such silences, can reveal gaps and power differentials between a variety of stakeholders, including citizens, media, industry, government agencies, and environmental groups. Yet, the imperfect theme of collaboration in local public discourse suggests the existence of an imperfect framework whereby impacts and concerns about fracking may be negotiated and where a broader scope of interested stakeholders might yet be invited to contribute. It may be possible for Utah to provide the “shining example” of how collaboration on fracking can take place, yet local politicians, industry operators and environmental advocates, and local

journalists might also benefit from further research and exploration of silences surrounding fracking—exploring both its benefits and its impacts.

Discourse Analysis Matters to Land

This type of critical discourse analysis approaches discourse as a process, and it matters because of what and who might be left out of public news discourse *due* to a particular stance. Biases and alignments were identified through an interrogation of silence—as a means of exploring power relationships that once revealed, may then be addressed in more depth. This research revealed that the Basin’s discourse community talks about fracking differently than *The Times*. Gaps were found in resource policies, and silences were located in environmental sources, local citizen and worker voices, and available specifics on fracking. One gap in fracking discourse became clear, just from the initial search of the local papers for articles containing the term, though fracking is a “common” and regular local occurrence. Particular cultural context and geography can shape discourse on an energy topic. The utility of locating silence in this locale is that it demonstrates how cultural alignment and power can silence information and ideas from those who may be most directly in harm’s way from potential fracking impacts and effects on health and environment. Silence on a topic may mean that those who rely on local news to understand the local community may be less able to readily access public information about potential risks and may be implicated and even complicit in the very social processes that marginalize them (Peterson, 1991). Particular themes and arguments were identified, centered on controversy, land control, and regulation. A pervasive theme in this work was found in the equating oil and gas work with “patriotism” and

“independence” and suggesting that government rules and regulations stand in the way of prosperity. This ideal of independence has the power to potentially influence and advocate for a “lessening” of federal regulations and a relaxing of rules related to land use. Empowerment in this context suggests freedom in local control of land for profit. On one hand this discourse described oil work in land as an embodied communication with the land, defined as an authentic “knowing” of specific geographies (Peterson, 1991; White, 1996). Yet because of this work in land, rural communities may come to value land *differently* than urban populations, and perhaps come to view land primarily as a commodity (Cronan, 1995; DeLuca, 2005; Farforth, 2006). Earlier in the literature, Farforth (2006) described a historical trend in “seeing landscapes as essentially ideological mystifications” such as lands to conquer or places to civilize (p. 13). Farforth suggested that these mythical depictions are used to legitimate property and power relations and may function to disguise a deeper relationship with nature—presenting it as a wilderness, or in this case, a desert, existing merely as an object for human use (p. 13). These desert lands have a utility and value that is broader than energy extraction. The complicated mythology between people and place—this *embodied* knowing and connection to the land that comes from working in it, can overshadow other aspects of a relationship with land (Peterson, 1991; White, 1996). This myth is found in the local papers, where oil and gas work is equated with patriotism and seen as work that is “making history” and literally helping America “go.” Local articles described those opposed to oil and gas extraction as “litigation opportunists” (Ashby, 2013). Local journalists bolstered this idea of extreme protest, suggesting that environmental protest of fracking is unfounded and radical. Local articles suggest a need to “take back control” of

land and “keep federal regulators off your backs and out of your pockets” (Hughes, 2012). These articles project a certain “mythology” onto oil and gas industry work and offer a very specific and narrow definition of “independence” and “patriotism,” equating these values with energy extraction and land ownership. Is oil and gas work truly a “matter of liberty?” Is local land control for oil and gas extraction the only avenue for economic success in the Basin? Land use for profit may come to be viewed as the *only* consideration for rural land, and although it *is* a primary reason and its importance should not be discounted, this pronounced focus on one aspect leaves out other important considerations and uses of land. White’s (1996) essay titled “Are you an environmentalist, or do you work for a living?” explored the links of individuals and communities to the environment where they live and work and cautioned about creating a dualism between work and play, which could result in land being “reified into property and property rights” (p. 174). White (1996) also cautioned against confusing work and play in issues around land use. Environmental protections that ignore this relationship and focus on play or leisure in nature as the “reason” for protective actions, at the expense of work in nature, will not hold up, because, as White (1996) said, “we try to make play matter as if it were work, as if our lives depended on it, but are unsuccessful and for good reason” (p. 174). Recreation or “play in nature” does not seem adequate justification for environmental protection of land, when work in land is seen as something that lives depend upon. Interestingly, recreation did not factor into the local fracking conversation over this year in discussion of drilling. These issues are not readily linked. Yet the economics of recreation in the area also went unreported, a topic that might hold more sway in an economic discussion—an omission that is particularly telling in an area

that has traditionally been a recreation destination.

If play in nature does not merit discussion in local news discourse, then what about a discussion of human health? What if oil work actions in land have consequence for the very lives of those who depend upon it? Scholars suggest that there are serious consequences for people and for the environment if rural lands are viewed as *only* a commodity for profit and if deregulation and loosening of regulation is equated with “freedom.” In her study of rural citizens, Peterson (1991) found that because of a “work relationship,” rural farmers may play an active part in a mythology that marginalizes them—in marginalizing the land they live in through their activities in it. She describes that because rural residents “possess understanding beyond that of city dwellers, they are endowed with heroic qualities, becoming the central character in a ‘working myth’” (Peterson, 1991, p. 295; as cited in McGuire, 1977, p. 13). In this myth, the oil rig worker is elevated, although the very work he/she does—for instance the elevated air emissions associated with oil rig work—may directly impact his/her ability to continue to healthily live and work in this locale. Peterson (1991) also explored how working in the land can translate into direct and specific actions with the land. She said “people develop patterns of experience in response to the environment as they have interpreted it. Each person converts his/her pattern of experience ‘into a symbolic equivalent which becomes a guiding principle” (p. 291; as cited in Burke, 1968). According to Peterson (1991) those who work in the land, such as farmers or oil workers, may represent a mythical character in the West, heroically doing work that is difficult, dirty, and dangerous. Rural residents are asked to become part of this oil-worker mythology related to land control and land use, which may have direct implications for how they view and value land and whether

they are concerned about the health and environmental impacts of such work. The way that natural resources are discussed—the mythology and the language used to talk about land, can have material consequences for how land is used and valued (Peeples, 2011; Relph, 1976; White, 1996). *Silence* about natural resources has material consequence for how land is used and valued as well. For instance, if “job talk” is more prominent than discussions about potential health and safety risks, public participation, and specific policy related to land use may reflect that imbalance. Mythical themes about oil work and land use and control were found throughout the local articles (Ashby, 2013a; 2013b; Bernard, 2012; 2013; Hughes, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; see Appendix B, Articles 8, 11, 20, 25, 37, 40, and 41). How land is described—the language used and *not* used to describe it, has implications for the relationship of local citizens to land.

Audience Perceptions and Future Work

This thesis touched on the context for rural communities and urban communities and the way that language differently shapes and reflects characterizations about the value of rural lands. To better understand how land is valued in the Basin, future work should identify the local readership perspective on fracking. What do local residents know or believe about the practice? *Who* the audience is and local audience perceptions about fracking represent a logical next step in understanding silence on this issue. This study did not directly interrogate a *readership perspective*, yet it would benefit from such an orientation in future work.

Another aspect for further research is exploration into the way land is characterized and the specific depictions of land that are spoken and silenced. Defining

land as a commodity is a kind of “geographic irreverence” that relates primarily to *financial* values with land (Relph, 1976, p. 219). The local topic of redundant and burdensome regulation may provide an emerging definition for “violence to land” through a disrespect and “consumerism” of land. Although no current absolute definition for “violence to land” exists, equating “energy independence” and patriotism with less oversight and increased “land control” may begin to suggest one. Resource scarcity and environmental overuse described by Peeples (2011) and Homer-Dixon (1999) also offer a definition of what Schwarze (2006) described as “environmental damage”—defining and depicting violence to land. The stakes for oil and natural gas extraction are high, and so too are the stakes high for those who live in, work in, and rely on these desert lands.

Silence study can empower *all* energy stakeholders, as it did by illuminating the absence of citizen, worker, and farmer/rancher voices in this research. It offers important ideas for negotiating an urgent and important energy topic, for instance silence study may promote a discussion about a lack of specific information about fracking processes and potential health risks and inspire greater transparency. Critical communication scholarship has primarily focused on the persuasion and influence of language, neglecting study of how an *absence* of language, or silence, can convey profound meaning and potentially shape public discourse and action as well (Acheson, 2008; Blommaert, 2005; Huckin, 2002).

As Carbaugh (2007) and Blommaert (2005) suggested, there is a need to look at the conditions under which discourses are produced in order to avoid “hyper focus on some verbal part,” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 35) and guard against a “linguistic lag factor” in environmental studies (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 72). Both language and silence influence actions in land. The consequences of disaffection and silence in regard to the

environment are important to consider, and a cross-disciplinary effort between environmental communication and linguistic silence study offers a chance to attend to the “ethical duty” that Cox (2007) described. Silence study offers a chance to “recommend alternatives to enable policy decision-makers, communities, businesses, educators, and citizen groups,” all of the “interested” stakeholders speaking, and not speaking on energy (Cox, 2007, p. 18). Future work should explore silence in other locales and more directly interrogate the language used about land to reveal silences. Future work should consider the diverse context for language and silence. In the Basin, oil and gas is more than a commodity; it is a way of life. Without a firm understanding of the diversity of this rural community and what the primary industry *means* to the function of this community, public energy discourse is far less comprehensible. Yet the Basin is not just “a place for energy.” It is a place for people, and farming, for working, and living. Natural resources in the Uinta Basin are finite, but the rich diversity of the lands and people who call it home are not. Silence study is integral to understanding and preserving this rich diversity.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about yourself and your relationship to the Basin. How long have you lived in the area?
2. What would you consider the highlights of living in this area? Are there some downsides to living in the Basin? How would you describe the Basin to someone who's never been here?
3. How did you come to work for the paper? How do you identify with the newspaper? Could you describe your role?
4. How are you assigned a story? Do you have a particular beat? Could you describe the genesis of your typical story?
5. What happens to a story after it is written? What is the review/editing process? Do you get to give additional input with this process?
6. Have you ever been tasked with writing a story that you were uncomfortable covering? How did you handle it? Was there ever a time when you had to stand up for your work?
7. Has there ever been a topic that was considered off limits for you to write about?
8. Have you ever had someone get upset with a story? How did you handle that?
9. When you are *researching* for a story, what is your general process? Walk me through it?
10. Decision-making is key to how an organization functions. Would you walk me through how decisions are made here? If there were an organizational map, who would you consider yourself accountable to? Where do you fit in this decision-making map? (Simon, 1976, p. 1)
11. What is the process for receiving feedback on your work? Do people contact you directly? By email or on the webpage? What type of feedback do you normally receive?
12. Do you have a personal connection to the oil and gas industry? How do you navigate the personal/professional boundaries of that connection?
13. I noticed there are a large number of articles in the paper about drilling. Is your writing process any different for a drilling story?
14. How familiar are you with the oil and gas process of fracking?
15. How did you become aware of fracking?
16. When you refer to fracking, how do you refer to it? Do you call it fracking, fracing, hydraulic fracturing, hydro-fracking? How do you decide to use a certain term?
17. Who would you talk to if you had to do a story about fracking? To find out information? To talk about regulation? To talk about concerns or impacts?
18. There is sometimes a negative slant to stories about fracking. How do you feel about the process? Have you been able to witness the process first-hand?
19. Some say that journalists have their finger on the pulse of the community, if you were to wager a guess, how would characterize the Basin's view of drilling and fracking? How might this influence a journalist's story? How might it affect yours?

APPENDIX B

STANDARD AND EXPRESS ARTICLES

Local Articles: Uintah Basin Standard/Vernal Express

Combined article database accessed online at www.ubstandard.com

Initial Search: “Fracking” 7 articles, and “Hydraulic Fracturing” 10 articles, 12 total with both
Search Results: “Drilling” yield 152

Time Frame: April 1, 2012-April 1, 2013

Local Articles Reduced for Analysis: 70 total articles (from 152)

“Hydraulic Fracturing” Search

<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Paper</u>
Frack fluid focus on rule*	05/09/12	Mary Bernard	VE
Proposed rule could require fracking fluid disclosure*	05/08/12	Mary Bernard	VE
Final fracking rules delayed*	12/24/12	Mary Bernard	VE
Study to flesh out fracking’s impact on drinking water	11/15/12	Mary Bernard	VE
Study aims to resolve fracking’s impact on water	11/20/12	Mary Bernard	VE
Fracking defended by federal researchers	10/24/12	Mary Bernard	VE
County officials testify to House on energy policy	06/13/12	Mary Bernard	VE
Governor Herbert opens 2012 Uintah Basin Energy Summit*	09/12/12	Mary Bernard	VE
Western Energy moves some jobs to OKC*	11/13/12	Dustin Hughes	VE
Ute Tribe planning energy summit*	04/17/12	Unsigned	VE

Narrowed “Drilling” Search (Chronological Order)

<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Paper</u>
1. +Blessings, curses of Uintah Basin’s low unemployment	04/10/12	Dustin Hughes	UBS
1a. +Basin’s low jobless rate blessing, challenges	04/20/12	Dustin Hughes	VE
2. Growth in the Basin	04/17/12	R. Bangerter	UBS
3. Here we go again (Letter to the Editor) Phosphate Mining	04/19/12	Wayne Stevens	VE
4. Collaborations on Anadarko drilling project praised	04/20/12	Mary Bernard	VE
5. +Frack fluid focus on rule	05/09/12	Mary Bernard	VE
5a. +Proposed rule could require fracking fluid disclosure	05/08/12	Mary Bernard	VE
6. Major drilling planned for Basin	05/09/12	Unsigned	VE
7. Work crews unearth treasure in Nine Mile Canyon	05/23/12	G. Liesik News	VE
7a. US Oil poised to mine tar sands in Book Cliffs	05/30/12	Mary Bernard	VE

8. County officials testify to House on energy policy	06/13/12	Mary Bernard	VE
9. +Results in for Uintah Basin air quality study	06/13/12	Mary Bernard	VE
10. Gasco project OK'd for 1,300 new natural gas wells	06/19/12	Mary Bernard	VE
11. U.S. Rep. Rob Bishop tells Chamber land control vital...	06/20/12	Dustin Hughes	VE
12. (17) Declaring energy independence for a brighter future	07/09/12	Unsigned	UBS
13. +Northern Ute Tribe pursues economic development	07/11/12	Unsigned	VE
13a. +Utes ramp up economic development	07/10/12	D. Tracy	UBS
14. + Permitting process reviewed	07/24/12	Mary Bernard	UBS
14a + BLM seeks to streamline permitting	07/25/12	Mary Bernard	VE
15a. +Group sues EPA over Uintah Basin air quality	07/31/12	Mary Bernard	VE
15b. +EPA sued over Basin air quality	08/01/12	Mary Bernard	VE
16. Produced water ponds' permit tabled	08/08/12	Mary Bernard	VE
17. Energy summit set	08/29/12	Unsigned	VE
18. Treatment pond has neighbors complaining	09/04/12	D. Tracy	UBS
19. Guest Editorial: Utah's great outdoors: Oil Shale development, or recreation?	09/04/12	Thomas	UtahNews
20. Energy summit hits on regulations, government	09/11/12	D. Hughes	UBS
21. Commission issues ultimatum on ponds	09/11/12	D. Tracy	UBS
22. Energy Summit draws hundreds to Vernal	09/12/12	D. Hughes	VE
23. API to meet Wednesday	09/12/12	Unsigned	VE
24. Gov. Herbert opens 2012 Uintah Basin Energy Summit	09/12/12	Mary Bernard	VE
25. Uintah Basin – a power player	09/12/12	Dustin Hughes	VE
26. America's Lost its Mojo? Think Again	09/19/12	Anon.	NewsUSA
26a. Prayers offered on behalf of Ashley Creek water	09/25/12	Kevin Ashby	VE
27. Bakken Oil Boom Creates Huge Housing Demand	10/10/12	Unsigned	USA
28. Oil spill quickly remediated by Newfield	10/23/12	D. Tracy	UBS
29. Fracking defended by federal researchers	10/24/12	Mary Bernard	VE
30. Water source protection ordinance discussed	10/31/12	Mary Bernard	VE
31. Ute Energy sells to Crescent Point Energy for \$861 mill.	11/06/12	Steve Puro	UBS
32. Phase Three of the Nine Mile Road gets final inspection	11/06/12	Steve Puro	UBS
33. Western Petroleum moves some jobs to OKC	11/13/12	Dustin Hughes	VE
34. Study to flesh out fracking's impact on drinking water	11/15/12	Mary Bernard	VE
35. Study aims to resolve fracking's impact on water	11/20/12	Mary Bernard	VE
36. Explosion, Injuries in Nine Mile Canyon	11/20/12	Unsigned	VE
37. Formal protests filed over oil shale leasing plan	12/12/12	Mary Bernard	VE
38. Final fracking rules delayed*	12/24/12	Mary Bernard	VE
39. Opinion: Wish we could clear the air	01/06/13	Dustin Hughes	VE
40. Utah's Energy Summit covers all aspects of energy	01/15/13	Kevin Ashby	UBS
41. Opinion: The power that's behind Utah's energy	01/17/13	Kevin Ashby	VE
42. Ken Salazar to step down	01/22/13	Unsigned	UBS
43. Gas fire erupts on Frontier Drilling rig near Roosevelt	01/22/13	Steve Puro	VE
43a. Gas fire erupts on Frontier Drilling rig near Roosevelt	01/22/13	Steve Puro	UBS
44. Devon crews work on containing rig fire	01/23/13	Steve Puro	UBS
45. Blending politics and health	01/23/13	D. Tracy	VE
46. Rig fire forces evacuations	01/29/13	Steve Puro	UBS
47. Groups urge 'best science' in sage grouse issue	01/30/13	Mary Bernard	VE
48. Lease appeal denied	01/30/13	Mary Bernard	VE
49. As fire burns, eye on the air	02/05/13	Dustin Hughes	UBS
50. Well fire continues to burn	02/06/13	Dustin Hughes	VE
51. Doctors differ on risks from Basin air (#1 in 3-part series)	02/25/13	Mary Bernard	UBS
52. Land, mineral rights on planning commission agenda	02/28/13	Dustin Hughes	UBS

53. Ozone study results released (#2)	03/04/13	Seth Lyman	UBS
54. Basin ripe for ozone in air	03/06/13	Mary Bernard	VE
55. Oil, gas drilling proposed for Ouray Wildlife Refuge	03/06/13	Unsigned	UBS
56. +Drilling setback ordinance OK'd by commission (#58)	03/06/13	Dustin Hughes	UBS
57. +The air we breathe: Air pollution mitigation no easy task	03/12/13	M. Bernard	UBS/VE
58. +Planning commission Oks drilling setback	03/12/13	Unsigned	UBS
59. Conservation groups restoring Sowers Canyon	03/14/13	Dustin Hughes	VE
60 +Wild horse management spurs debate	03/27/13	Mary Bernard	VE
60a +Free-roaming horses pose rangeland threat	03/26/13	Mary Bernard	VE
61. Preserving our planet: Celebrate Earth Day every day	03/26/13	Unsigned	UBS
62. Growing pains stretch Duchesne County in 2013	04/1/2013	Steve Puro	UBS

+ = Repeated articles with separate headlines Red = Eliminated articles

APPENDIX C

LANGUAGE ABOUT LAND: *STANDARD AND EXPRESS*

Local Characterization of Land

- Article 8. “Chemical fingerprint” “Basis for the local economy.”
- Article 10. “disturbance of 3,600 acres over 15 years.”
- Article 20. “abundant resources, waiting to be used.” “we have natural resources...we’re a player.”
- Article 26. “conquered mountains and deserts”... “new life with fracking.”
- Article 29. “Encana didn’t put the hydrocarbons there, nature did.”
- Article 30. “water source.”
- Article 32. “flash-flooded-dusty primitive gravel road, vs. modern commercial grade asphalt road.”
- Article 35. “letting it burn itself out.”
- Article 37 “dirty,”... “once used can’t be used for other options”... “sacrificing millions in potential economic revenue.”
- Article 38. “public lands,” “private lands,” “federal lands,” “Indian lands.”
- Article 40. “mountains disappear in the thick grey haze” (39) “manage 65% of Utah lands,” “bridging resources” “unlocked vast fossil resources formerly considered unrecoverable.”
- Article 42. “new energy frontier.”
- Article 43. “gas fire erupts.”
- Article 44. “uncontrolled release of oil and gas”... “site secured.”
- Article 47. “decline in habitat”... “restore the quality of the habitat.”
- Article 48. “lock up public lands.”
- Article 49/50. “fire helped reduce the harmful emissions”... “well caught fire”... “well was uncontrolled,” “plumes of smoke,” “fire helped reduce the harmful emissions.”
- Article 52. “clear day, can’t see forever” “Sunlight, snow, stagnant air.” Obscured Uintah Mountains,” “healthy air measure,” “landfill,” “ponds classified as waste.”
- Article 53/53. “No snow, no elevated ozone.”
- Article 55. “Refuge for breeding and migrating fowl.”
- Article 56. “what’s under the ground” surface property owners, split estate.”
- Article 57. “strike a balance,” “clean air standards, topography,” “sound science,” “economic development does not mean sacrificing a healthy environment,” “This is not an energy vs. air quality problem.”
- Article 59. “making habitat and food for elk,” “Make habitat in the canyon attractive to wildlife”
- Article 60. “gases naturally present in the atmosphere, global warming, sun’s harmful uv rays,” “preserving our planet, celebrate earth day every day, water vapor, ozone.”
- Article 61. “endless water and rangeland,” “wild herds on public lands.”
- Article 62. “You have to have education, transportation and water. Without all three of those things in place, expansion and growth will fail.”

APPENDIX D

LOCAL ARTICLES: EXAMPLES OF CONTROVERSY

Controversy: Redundant/Regulation Themes and Arguments

Article 8. “over-regulation has **stymied** affordable and abundant energy production”...“adds a **redundant, burdensome** and **costly** layer of federal approval which **threatens to usurp** state and local authority of regulators”...“**pushing investment off** public lands and onto private lands.”

Article 11. “**land control vital** to economic success in Basin.”...“if Utah wants economic success, it must **reclaim control** of federal lands”...“it was **a matter of liberty**.” “Founding fathers...believed that it was **wrong** for one individual to control most of the property.” “The **federal government controls a third of all land in America**.” “The federal government claimed more land, **leaving less for the states**.” “If the **state had control** of public lands, or even better private property owners, **Utah would see a boom**.”...“**counties and state have to fight with the Bureau of Land Management** for how much oil shale it can extract”...“an oil pump would improve the scenery” (Rep. Rob Bishop).

Article 14. “Operators of the oil and gas industry of the Uinta Basin depend on permitted access to drill on federal lands.” “**Heavily-regulated process associated with lengthy delays**”...“Every APD [application to permit drilling] has implications for federal, state, and local coffers.” “Streamline the process by pulling out **redundant** steps, hiring more reviewers, standardizing procedures, or doing things in a more collaborative fashion.”

*Article 15. “EPA sued over Basin air quality,” “to apply the 2008 national standards for ozone...would place the Uintah Basin air quality in **nonattainment**.” “Under the clean air act, areas in **violation of federal health standards** are designated as nonattainment areas, **triggering mandatory air pollution cleanup and compliance**.” “The Uintah Basin is home to some of the **worst ground-level pollution in the nation**.” (Robin Cooley, EarthJustice staff attorney). “...nonattainment which **may drive the county into strict federal regulatory control**” “Earthjustice on behalf of WildEarth Guardians, Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance **challenged the EPA’s failure to declare that the Uintah Basin is violating federal health standards that limit concentrations of ground-level ozone in the air**.” “Brock LeBaron, project manager of the Uintah Basin Winter Ozone Study and director of the Utah Division of Air Quality was contacted for comment about the **challenge**. Le Baron expressed **concern about moving directly into nonattainment before the research is complete**. “Right now, we’re in a **non-regulatory atmosphere that has allowed us to be very creative in how we do the (research)** and direct our efforts in exactly solving the problem rather than **wasting a lot of time on bureaucratic red tape and not getting to the issue of improving air quality**.” he said. [Time-consuming and ineffective federal oversight]

Article 16. Industry “**permit tabled**” by county commission. “County officials say the effect of emissions from evaporation ponds on air quality is the basis of their decision”...“It’s precisely **because we support the oil and gas industry that we need to take a step back and look at what we’re doing**.” (Mike McKee, county commissioner). “...**tabled indefinitely**, or until **countywide guidelines** for water treatment are developed”...“time for mitigation measures”... “It falls to the county to develop these guidelines as **no agency**;

the Utah Division of Air Quality, the Air Quality Board, or the Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining, has rules for the oil and gas industry specifically related to air quality.” [Policy gap]

Article 20. “...summit hits on regulations, government”...“Most of those who spoke against the government were members of the government themselves. Politicians, including Gov. Gary Herbert, Rep. Rob Bishop and Sens. Mike Lee and Orrin Hatch railed against what they said were cumbersome federal government, unfair federal land policy and unnecessary environmental regulation.” [Unnecessary regulation]

Article 22. “...more about policy and strategy than it was any technical issues concerning drilling”

Article 24. “Herbert said his job is to ‘keep government off your backs and out of your wallets’...“hydraulic fracture-related drilling has been around for 60 years without a problem, said Herbert, but now the federal government seeks to step up regulation.” “It’s like a solution in search of a problem that doesn’t exist,” he said, saying the state is better equipped to protect local operators.” “Government regulation of hydraulic fracturing is one example of Washington overreach, said the governor.” [Regulation overreach]

Article 30. “special meeting...hash out a draft water source protection plan for the county”...“public opinion...has rushed the need for such an ordinance”...“officials have felt the pressure”...“problem is, the valley has several existing water source protection plans.” [Duplicate regulation]

Article 37. “Formal protest filed over oil shale leasing plan.” “A number of western counties and conservation groups filed formal letters of protest over the BLM’s oil shale and tar sands proposed plan”...“the groups find themselves oddly aligned in protesting”...“it is the latest salvo in the long-running dispute between western counties and the federal government on public lands management. The BLM fails to conform with the Energy Policy Act by removing from lease availability the most geologically suitable land, cites the document.” “The counties say the agency’s decision ‘unlawfully manages public lands with alleged wilderness character as de facto wilderness.” “Lastly, local officials claim the decision forecloses on the counties’ right to access lands of multiple use under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act,” “...the protest states that BLM’s decision to reduce the amount of land open for oil shale and tar sands leasing was non-scientific and arbitrary.” [Military term ‘salvo’ means returning fire¹][Six mentions of protest in six sentences, including headline]

Article 38. “Final Fracking Rules Delayed” “...will not finalize rules this year that were intended to impose new controls over hydraulic fracturing on public lands,” (Interior spokesperson, Blake Androff). “170,000 comments.” “Drillers on private lands will not be required to offer disclosure,” “...broader use as new technology has allowed drillers to access plays with diagonal and horizontal drilling, which has also raised concern about possible pollution.”

Article 40. “presenters from all sides and all interests were given time to present “there were moments when all in attendance were ‘uncomfortable’ with what was being presented,” “challenges and opportunities, “oil shale and oil sands development in Utah and the West have been a polarizing issue,” “the panel discussed the real economic, community, and environmental impacts of industrial-scale oil shale and oil sands development in Utah as well as the remaining challenges that stand in the way of large-scale development of these resources.”

Article 48. “no do-over” on the decision to uphold the withdrawal of oil and gas leases by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, according to the U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals.” Dismissed a suit filed by Carbon, Duchesne and Uintah counties along with a group of energy companies challenging Salazar as filed too late”...”Long-running challenge”...“time-barred under the Mineral Leasing Act.” “As Secretary Salazar recognized, the prior administration was in a ‘headlong rush’ to issue oil and gas leases.” “Robin Cooley, EarthJustice attorney for the conservation groups who intervened in the case, defended the decision.” “Uintah County has been in the forefront pressing the DOI for the return of the leases.” “County officials have long held that the current administration has worked unlawfully to lock up public land from oil and gas production,” (C.C. Mike McKee). “He warned that time lines could be arbitrarily variously fixed without outside input, compromising the public comment period.”

APPENDIX E

REPETITION STRATEGY: *STANDARD AND EXPRESS*

Repetition of Key Terms

("fracking" "jobs" "protest" "ozone" "drilling" "APD's" "VOC's" "Energy")

Article 1. "jobs/low unemployment" 9 uses in 13 lines.

Article 5. 13 uses of "fracking" in 13 sentences including headline.

Article 8. 6 mentions of "fracking" in 12 sentences but not in title, "fracked responsibly," six uses of "regulation, increased regulation, over-regulation, redundant, burdensome and costly layer, over-regulation,"

Article 9. "VOCs" repeats 3 times, and "NOxs," 7 uses of "ozone," including "Wintertime ozone, Ozone Study, how ozone is formed, wintertime ozone, Ozone values, lower ozone levels, elevated ozone levels."

Article 10. Repeats 5 "drill or drilling," 7 references to "balanced environmentally appropriate development of resources, minimize environmental impacts, extensive environmental protections, no drilling will be developed in or near Desolation Canyon, responsibly address public concerns regarding resource and land use issues, substantial improvements to protect land and water resources, safeguarding iconic areas such as Desolation and Nine Mile Canyon, no more than 575 well pads disturbing 3,600 acres. "Successful collaboration."

Article 11. In first 10 sentences, used "control" 8 times. Land control, reclaim control, federal control, wrong to control most, controls a third, controlled a third, being controlled by the government, had control of public lands."

Article 14. Applications to Permit Drilling (APD's). In 13 sentences, used "APD's" used 7 times.

Article 15. Repeated "ozone" 9 times in 13 sentences. "standards for ozone, ozone pollution, ozone pollution, ozone in the air, wintertime ozone, ozone pollution, elevated ozone levels, no ozone problem, Ozone Study."

Article 16. Repeated use of "water ponds, evaporation ponds, and disposal ponds." In first 11 sentences, used 5 times.

Article 18. Repeated "odor" or "smell" 10 times in 14 sentences.

Article 24. 10 mentions of "energy" in 14 sentences, "Basin energy, responsible energy resource development, great place for energy, energy production, lower energy costs, environmentally sensitive ways to provide energy, Utah's energy industry, thriving private energy sector, energy development, energy development."

Article 27. 7 mentions of "fracking."

Article 29. "VOCs" repeated. Had 7 versions of "polluted drinking water," contaminated water wells, chemicals consistent with gas production and hydraulic-fracturing fluids in groundwater wells, well MW02 showed contamination,

Article 30. "Water source protection ordinance discussed" "water source protection, water source protection, Ashley Springs water source, protect drinking water, local water, protect the water supply," 6 mentions of water source/water" in headline and first 6 sentences.

Article 33. Story about job loss has "positions" used 9 times in 10 sentences. "Jobs" used 3 times, once in title, "administrative positions, shift administrative positions, 12 positions total, operational

oppositions, existing operational position, seven such positions affected, keep their positions, added 25 operational positions in Utah over the past year, administrative positions.

Article 35. 4 mentions of “study” and 5 mentions of “fracking” in first seven sentences, including headline. Same as above, but titled “Study aims to resolve fracking’s impact on water.” “the boom in natural gas production nationally has been expanded by hydraulic fracturing technology, which critics claim hastens damage to air and water.” “findings remain muddled” “USGS unable to replicate the results found by the EPA” “However, drinking water wells in the Pavillion area did produce high levels of methane, which is a byproduct of natural gas drilling.”

Article 37. “Formal protest filed over oil shale leasing plan,” “formal protests,” “formal letters of protest,” “aligned in protesting,” “formal protest,” “a similar protest,” “the protest.” All appear in first five lines of text, including the headline.

Article 38. “final frack rules delayed” 6 mentions of “fracking” in 6 sentences, including the headline.

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