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The Analogical Construction of Stigma as a Moral Dualism: The Case of the Fossil Fuel Divestment Movement

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ABSTRACT

We explore the global fossil fuel divestment movement to show how climate activists worked to stigmatize the fossil fuel industry using analogy. In doing so, we develop a model that illustrates how constructing a “moral dualism” is central to stigmatizing an organizational category. This involves concurrently establishing “stigmatizers” (ingroup) as morally superior and amplifying the deviancy of the fossil fuel industry (outgroup), both in relation to analogical contexts. Stigmatizers strategically employed two types of analogy: “deep” and “surface.” Deep analogies produce emotive power, facilitating the moralization of the ingroup through the transfer of affective meanings from a source context to a target domain. Surface analogies generate causal power to inform wider audiences of the target’s deviance through association with already-stigmatized organizational categories. Analogical power underpinning the morally dualistic nature of stigmatization can therefore empower fringe actors to stigmatize an incumbent as they appropriate meanings from analogical source domains.

Keywords: stigma; organizational category; language; analogy; moral dualism; divestment; fossil fuel industry; climate change

A central theme in organization and management theory is that favorable social evaluations are important for organizational survival (Elsbach, 1994; Pollock, Lashley, Rindova, & Han, 2019; Sutton & Callahan, 1987). It follows that organizations actively seek to avoid unfavorable evaluations (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009). The most extreme negative social evaluation that can affect organizations – or categories of organizations such as an industry (Lashley & Pollock, 2020; Vergne, 2012) – is stigma, a form of social disapproval evoking a “perception that an organization possesses a fundamental, deep-seated flaw that deindividuates and discredits the organization [...]” (Devers, Dewett, Mishina, & Belsito, 2009: 157).

An important area of study concerns the social processes that drive organizational stigma (Helms & Patterson, 2014; Roulet, 2015). Extant work suggests that stigma emerges when an organizational target is linked to discredited others such as organizational categories (Devers et al., 2009; Sutton & Callahan, 1987), or discrediting attributes such as negative labels or stereotypes (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Hampel & Tracey, 2017; Helms, Patterson, & Hudson, 2018).
However, this body of literature lacks “cogent theoretical understanding of the processes that drive the formation of an organizational stigma” (Devers et al., 2009: 155). Therefore, questions of how these links are formed, for instance how meanings transform from “normal” to “stigmatized” given the strategic work of actors, are not well understood.

Addressing this oversight, in this study we follow a discourse analytical approach (Maguire & Hardy, 2013; Phillips & Oswick, 2012), focusing on how actors attempting to stigmatize an organizational category strategically harness the power of analogy (Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Cornelissen, Holt, & Zundel, 2011; Gavetti, Levinthal, & Rivkin, 2005; Oswick, Keenoy, & Grant, 2002). Analogical reasoning functions by making the unfamiliar familiar, creating “ways of seeing things as if they were something else” (Manning, 1979: 661) by comparing source (familiar) and target (unfamiliar) domains (Etzion & Ferraro, 2010; Gentner, Bowdle, Wolff, & Boronat, 2001; Glaser, Fiss, & Kennedy, 2016).

Our empirical case elucidates the role of analogy in stigma construction by exploring how a specific type of actor – climate activists – used meanings generated by analogies, predominantly South African apartheid and tobacco divestment, to stigmatize the fossil fuel industry. These activists form part of the global fossil fuel divestment movement, a collection of grassroots groups operating under the umbrella organization 350.org that encourages stakeholders to rid their financial portfolios of assets related to the fossil fuel industry (McKibben, 2012). Divestment was promoted not necessarily to financially bankrupt the industry, but as a symbolic tool of stigmatization for profiting from products that cause dangerous climate change (SSEE, 2013).

From our analysis, we develop a model illustrating how organizational stigmatization emerges through purposive analogical work. This contributes to literature on organizational stigma by demonstrating the importance of examining the “stigmatizers’ perspective,” and the fundamental
role of analogy in stigmatization, proposing three key points. First, stigmatization is contingent on constructing a *moral dualism* in which two opposing “sides” are distinguished concurrently through analogical work: a moral ingroup (stigmatizer) versus an immoral outgroup (stigmatized). Second, the interplay between “deep” and “surface” analogies is central to constructing this moral dualism as actors harness moral/stigmatized meanings from different types of source domains. Thirdly, stigma can be an empowering resource for “radical” or “fringe” actors (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Schifeling & Hoffman, 2017) – such as climate activists – contesting a powerful, incumbent actor, particularly in the context of providing “solutions” to grand challenges like climate change (Wright & Nyberg, 2017).

**THEORETICAL CONTEXT**

**Organizational Stigma and its Emergence**

The concept of stigma is attributed to Erving Goffman who defined stigmatization as reducing an individual “in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (1963: 3). Organization scholars draw upon this understanding to explore how organizational contexts can also be stigmatized (Devers et al., 2009). Organizations, or in the case of our study organizational categories, are stigmatized not necessarily due to certain intrinsic pejorative traits or attributes (Helms et al., 2018) but given their relationship with socially constructed meanings of deviance or abnormality (Helms & Patterson, 2014; Tracey & Phillips, 2016). A key theoretical perspective explaining stigmatization as such is labeling theory (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). This perspective demonstrates how organizational categories are stigmatized given associations with certain pejorative labels and stereotypes (Durand & Vergne, 2015), describing, for instance, the vilification of “sin industries” (Grougiou, Dedoulis, & Leventis, 2016) such as arms manufacturing (Vergne, 2012), tobacco (Galvin, Ventresca, & Hudson, 2004), or medical cannabis (Lashley & Pollock, 2020). Belonging to stigmatized categories results in stakeholders stereotyping an
organization “such that it is defined in terms of the attributes of this category, rather than as a
unique entity” (Devers et al., 2009: 157). Moreover, a stigmatized organization’s stakeholders,
e.g., suppliers and customers, may also be vilified given their relationship with the stigmatized
entity (Ashforth, Kreiner, Clark, & Fugate, 2007; Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009; Pozner, 2008).

Despite this wealth of knowledge, questions of how organizations become stigmatized remain.
Addressing these questions often involves examining how stigma becomes affixed to
organizational contexts (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1997: 48). This assumes a rather passive audience
and therefore does not explain how stigmatizing meanings are actively generated, or “by whom”
(Hudson, 2008: 262). As Devers et al. (2009: 157; emphasis added) suggest: “a stigmatized
organization is viewed as fundamentally flawed in the sense that it is perceived as emblematic of
the negatively evaluated category to which it is linked […].” Organizational studies thus examine
how categorical stigma emerges and is dealt with (Piazza & Perretti, 2015) before understanding
how it “comes into being as individuals take action” (Scott, 1987: 495).

There have been several calls in the literature to advance “agentic lenses” (Helms & Patterson,
2014: 1418) that explore “types of actions […] that cause or prevent organizational stigmatization”
(Devers et al., 2009: 155). Nascent scholarship examining actors’ agency in the stigmatization
process indicates how an organizational category can move from being demonized—even
criminalized—to its stigma being eradicated or minimized (Adams, 2012; Lashley & Pollock,
2020). However, how stigmatizing actors strategically achieve the reverse – purposive
stigmatization of an organizational context – lacks detailed empirical analysis. Without exploring
the perspective of stigmatizers, little is known about how their work and strategies shift meanings
around organizational categories from “normal” to “fundamentally flawed” (Devers et al., 2009:
157).
Given a need to focus on the strategic shifting of meanings—understood here as symbols, associations, discourses, among other terms (Dandridge, Mitroff, & Joyce, 1980) — we draw on the “discursive turn” in organizational studies to inform our analysis (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Boje, Oswick, & Ford, 2004; Vaara & Tienari, 2008). This literature explores how meanings related to organizational contexts can be changed by actors (Maguire & Hardy, 2009). Several studies explicate the role of language and strategic use of analogies (Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Etzion & Ferraro, 2010), though they do not focus on processes of stigmatization. These studies demonstrate how associations from one organizational context can be strategically transmitted to another, which is particularly relevant to stigma construction given its relational emergence.

Language and the Strategic Use of Analogies

Language is central to the construction of meaning (Cornelissen, Durand, Fiss, Lammers, & Vaara, 2015; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004; Phillips & Oswick, 2012). Language can also be strategically deployed to change meanings in relation to a particular context (Lawrence, Phillips, & Hardy, 1999), and plays an important role in theorizing how actors engage in meaning work related to stigma (Link & Phelan, 2001; Smith, 2007). Goffman’s (1963: 13) work on stigma explicitly notes the role of language, highlighted in his initial explanation: “the term stigma, then, will be used to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting, but it should be seen that a language of relationships, not attributes, is really needed.” A linguistic device that addresses this “language of relationships” is analogy.

Analogy is a process of abstraction “ubiquitous in human cognition” (Gentner, 2005: 106) that can explain how novel (stigmatizing) meanings arise and change through relationality, elucidating an unfamiliar domain by relating it to a familiar one (Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Cornelissen et al., 2011; Gavetti et al., 2005; Gentner & Markman, 1997; Ketokivi, Mantere, & Cornelissen, 2017; Logue, Clegg, & Gray, 2016; Oswick et al., 2002). What is familiar is the “source” and what
is unfamiliar is the “target.” Analogical reasoning, which encompasses a variety of linguistic tropes (e.g., metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, parable, etc.), forms new and sometimes intricate understandings around the “relational similarity” of source and target domains. For example, the analogy “her eyes are as blue as the sea” compares two distinctive domains (human organs, a body of water) to generate inferences beyond color, alluding to the beauty and depth of the former by comparison to the latter. Analogy, by creating new insight and changing meanings of existing contexts, is thereby “often the most effective way for people to learn a new relational abstraction” (Gentner & Smith, 2012: 131).

Analogies can have literal similarity (direct one-to-one correspondence – e.g., the cat is as black as my cat), surface similarity (similarity based on alike but structurally different objects, e.g., the cat is as black as a panther) or structural similarity (similarity between domains based on systemic relations shared by both, e.g., the toddler is as curious as a cat). The most effective analogies adhere to the systematicity principle (Gentner & Toupin, 1986) whereby two domains share a deep structural connection, rather than a simple literal connection. Such structural analogies have greater “inferential power.” That is, actors can make “highly informational” inferences from the source to understand the target (Gentner & Smith, 2012: 132). Indeed, analogies “based on an extended web of counterparts will be more easily understood and are also more likely to be granted with legitimacy” (Cornelissen et al., 2011: 1708). An analogy’s effectiveness also depends on a person’s (or organization’s) orientation toward the analogy (Glaser et al., 2016; Holyoak & Thagard, 1997): a reasoner having some connection to or sympathy with the source domain makes it more effective (Ketokivi et al., 2017). Analogies are particularly effective when transferring complex affective meanings such as those related to stigma (Ashforth, 2018) given the difficulty of conveying emotions literally (Gentner et al., 2001: 5).
Organizational scholars often focus on how analogical reasoning can elucidate complex phenomena, notably “the organization” (e.g., Morgan, 1997) and processes of organizing (Cornelissen et al., 2011; Logue et al., 2016; Oswick et al., 2002). Indeed, Ketokivi et al. (2017: 637) observe that they “are hard pressed to name a prominent organization theory not based on the idea that a complex organization is being thought of as analogous to something comparatively simpler.” The strategic use of analogy (Gavetti et al., 2005; Glaser et al., 2016) is evidenced by studies exploring organizational change, demonstrating how certain analogies are more effective than others (Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Lovallo, Clarke, & Camerer, 2012). Studies also indicate how analogical reasoning is strategically used to create novel categories, schemas, and ideas in the context of: institutionalizing reporting practices (Etzion & Ferraro, 2010); legitimating strategic change endeavors (Gavetti et al., 2005); managing the emergence of new technologies (Burgelman, 2002); and coping with establishing controversial business concepts (Glaser et al., 2016). The role of analogy in the process of stigmatization has yet to be explored, though it may explain how actors use stigma to change meanings of an organizational context from “normal” to “deviant.” As such, we ask: how do actors strategically use analogy to stigmatize an organizational category?

METHODS

Research context

To address our research question, we focus on specific group of stigmatizers: climate activists. These actors form part of the global fossil fuel divestment movement that emerged in 2011, becoming a global phenomenon by 2012 (Go Fossil Free, 2017). Climate activists urge institutions to halt new investment in the fossil fuel industry and rid financial portfolios of fossil fuel assets (McKibben, 2013). Their key message, as stated by their main organization 350.org, is: “If it is wrong to wreck the climate, then it is wrong to profit from that wreckage. We believe that
educational and religious institutions, governments, and other organizations that serve the public good should cut their ties to the fossil fuel industry” (350.org, 2014a). The fossil fuel divestment movement has become the fastest growing divestment campaign in history (SSEE, 2013), with over 1000 institutions representing in excess of $14 trillion in assets committed to divest (Go Fossil Free, 2020).

Examining how climate activists worked to stigmatize the fossil fuel industry is an ideal context for examining both the “stigmatizers’ perspective” and the role of analogy in the stigmatization process. Despite selling a product that causes dangerous climate change (Crutzen, 2002), the fossil fuel industry’s products are likewise responsible for widespread economic development, used on a daily basis in modern societies (IEA, 2016). As such, activists needed to make a conscious effort to stigmatize an industry that could likewise be celebrated. This was primarily done by communicating the need for divestment through various written and spoken media—specifically using analogical reasoning—which we examined using discourse analysis, described next.

**Research approach: discourse analysis**

Our analytical approach is based on a discourse tradition, concerned with language and the construction of meaning (Boje et al., 2004; Maguire & Hardy, 2013; Phillips & Oswick, 2012). Discourses shape social reality, defining “who and what is ‘normal,’ standard and acceptable” (Meriläinen, Tienari, Thomas, & Davies, 2004: 544), or in our case, which organizational categories are considered “good” and which are stigmatized. Discourse analysis often involves exploring the constitutive effects of certain discursive devices or structures (e.g., Cornelissen, 2005). This was useful for the purpose of our study given our aim to understand how actors use analogical reasoning to shift meanings associated with an organizational category from “normal” to stigmatized. Our approach to discourse analysis therefore focused on analogy and analogical
reasoning, concepts based in cognitive linguistics as discussed in the theoretical framework. This emphasis emerged inductively, described in our analytical strategy, whereby a coding process indicated activists’ purposive use of analogy to shape stigmatizing discourses associated with the fossil fuel industry.

Our discourse analysis approach itself was tailored to our emergent research question, involving both a more classical method of homing in on specific texts (Fairclough, 1995), along with considering how analogy was used over time. This longitudinal dimension facilitated exploration of how activists, through the production, dissemination, and mobilization of certain discourses, shaped (stigmatizing) meanings related to the fossil fuel industry’s role in advancing climate change. We detail our process of discourse analysis in the analytical strategy after describing our data corpus.

Data Corpus

We relied on several discourse-related data sources (see Table 1) with interviews conducted as necessary with activists and key actors.

--- TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE ---

**Internal and external documents.** We analyzed a total of 342 texts produced and distributed by climate activists specifically. Climate activists’ texts were either intended for external publication (e.g., press releases, public speeches, news media contributions, etc.) or internal distribution (“how to” guides and communication toolkits; etc.). Most were produced and distributed by 350.org, its founder Bill McKibben, or their flagship project “Go Fossil Free.” We also collected texts from student-based initiatives, typically societies or clubs such as People & Planet in the UK. These texts consisted of letters to university boards asking to divest the schools’ endowments, open letters from pro-divestment faculty supporting the cause, and online messages
via activists’ social media accounts; we considered these texts “strategic resources” (Hardy, Palmer, & Phillips, 2000) used by activists to stigmatize the fossil fuel industry.

To examine how stakeholders responded to climate activists’ analogical work, we analyzed texts of five key actors: news media (see next section for more detail), policy actors, investors and financial institutions, celebrities/opinion leaders, and “divestors,” or those actors who chose to divest their financial portfolios from fossil fuel assets. We collected a total of 47 texts from policy actors, including press releases, speeches, and news media contributions from national governments (Osborne, 2017), supranational bodies such as the United Nations (UNFCCC, 2014), and international development organizations such as the World Trade Organization or the World Bank (2014). These all explicitly addressed fossil fuel divestment, or more generally the relationship between climate change and the fossil fuel industry. We collected a total of 38 texts from the financial industry, mostly investor reports (e.g., HSBC, 2015) and news media contributions. Here, we paid particular attention to prominent financial institutions publicly addressing fossil fuel divestment related to climate change (e.g., Bank of England, 2015). As opinion leaders and celebrities became particularly important for the global fossil fuel divestment movement, we captured their voices primarily through their public endorsement statements and speeches (e.g., DiCaprio, 2016), which totaled 39 texts. We collected 107 texts from divesting organizations, which were produced and disseminated by healthcare institutions, local governments, faith-based organizations, philanthropic organizations, and universities (e.g., BMA, 2014).

**News media.** The news media was an important actor given its well-established role in shaping public debate (Carragee, 1993). Using the online Factiva database, we collected articles directly addressing fossil fuel divestment, or the fossil fuel industry in relation to climate change. Covering
a timespan from June 2012 to December 2017, we gathered 648 media articles. This also allowed
us to “trace” how stigma emerged, tracking how stigma labels and associations gained popularity
in the press over time (Roulet, 2015).

**Interviews.** Thirteen interviews were conducted in order to gain insight into the movement’s
main arguments and activists’ motivations for partaking in the divestment movement. This
consisted of eight interviews with climate activists directly involved with the movement as
grassroots activists (four in the UK, three in the US, and one in Germany); three interviews with
researchers with expertise in energy, climate change, and sustainability at an international think-
tank; and two interviews with individuals working in financial services, one the head of a major
Scottish investment firm, and the second a London-based senior executive specializing in
environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) issues. These interviews guided our
research design and validated emerging conclusions from data analysis. Interview data indicated
the importance of analyzing internal and external documents and media articles to ascertain the
role of analogy in the construction of stigma, as well as further contextualizing and elucidating the
divestment movement as a project of stigmatization.

**Analytical strategy**

Our analytical strategy was largely inductive and consisted of four stages. Curious to explore
the divestment movement and activists’ motivations for stigmatizing the fossil fuel industry, in the
first stage we familiarized ourselves with the various data accounts and plotted a detailed event
timeline as illustrated in Table 2 (van de Ven & Poole, 1995). We identified McKibben’s Rolling
Stone article, published in June 2012, as the point at which climate activists began what we
discovered was a stigmatization effort based on both texts and interviews describing it as such. We
also identified a tipping point at the end of 2016 and early 2017 when the fossil fuel industry’s
stigma arguably became increasingly institutionalized. Governments began proposing laws
banning the use of public funds for new investments into fossil fuels (e.g., Darby, 2017), and fossil fuel companies such as Peabody Energy (Wilson & Crooks, 2016) filed for bankruptcy, both citing the fossil fuel divestment movement as an impetus.

--- TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE ---

In the second stage of analysis, we examined documents produced and distributed by climate activists, including interview transcripts, to understand how stigmatization was enacted. We used qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) to independently engage in open coding and inductively identify initial descriptive codes. We aimed to understand climate activists’ main arguments, focusing on their descriptions of the relationship between the fossil fuel industry and climate change. This process resulted in approximately 90 codes; we stopped upon reaching theory saturation – i.e., when no new codes were emerging (Goulding, 2002). At this point, all three authors compared results and began rearranging these codes based on overlaps, producing several first-order categories – e.g., “death;” “disease;” and “deception.” Concurrently, other seemingly conflicting first-order categories were apparent – e.g., “morality;” “political struggle;” and “justice” – which were directed not toward the fossil fuel industry, but the activists themselves. To make sense of these categories we turned to seminal works on stigma and deviance (e.g., Becker, 1963; Erikson, 1962; Goffman, 1963), working iteratively between theory and data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Here we realized the importance of considering the perspective of stigmatizers, which, from our reading of the organizational stigma literature, was not explicitly considered. This led us to “climb the ladder of abstraction” (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van De Ven, 2013: 8) to see whether we could draw any further connections between the first-order categories described above, and other codes.
At this point, it became strikingly apparent that activists were drawing from several historical contexts to justify divestment, mostly related to past instances where organizations or countries were penalized—through divestment or boycotts—for morally inappropriate behavior. These included most notably: tobacco, weapons and arms, South African apartheid, US slavery and Civil Rights, and boycotts of Israel, Darfur, and Sudan. Given familiarity with discourse and language studies, two of the authors noted how these contexts were being used analogically. We therefore refocused our coding strategy on a discourse analysis approach, described above, and concentrating on the strategic use of analogy.

This third stage of analysis entailed identifying instances where analogies were mentioned, including relevant analogical figures of speech (e.g., metaphors, metonymy, etc.). We quickly realized that activists overwhelming drew from two analogical contexts in particular—apartheid and tobacco—and that each was used almost exclusively either in relation to the activists (apartheid), or the fossil fuel industry (tobacco). Returning to literature on analogy in both management studies and cognitive linguistics (Cornelissen et al., 2011; Gentner et al., 2001), we identified that these analogies took different forms for different purposes: deep (e.g., South African apartheid to generate emotive power related to morality of activists) and surface (e.g., tobacco to generate causal power related to the deviance of the industry).

The fourth stage of analysis involved temporally tracing the two analogical forms to identify their manifestation and strategic use within the context of activists’ stigmatizing analogical work (see Table 3 for overview and quotation examples). Further abstracting from our data, we noticed that climate activists’ analogical work formed a moral dualism between activists (moral) and the target of stigmatization (immoral); an “either, or,” “us or them” division between stigmatizers and stigmatized. To make theoretical sense of this dynamic we turned to organization and management
studies literature, which has extensively explored the notion of dualism (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Orlikowski & Yates, 2002; Poole & van de Ven, 1989). This literature defines dualism as a “clear-cut and decisive contrast” between opposing groups or dynamics with “no middle […] ground” (Farjoun, 2010: 203). It is often studied in relation to organizational conflict, examining for instance how managers handle seemingly opposing organizational dynamics (van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Extending this theorization, our data indicated that stigmatization’s dualistic nature is informed by moralizing processes (Ashforth, 2018). This final stage of analysis therefore involved identifying dynamics associated with moral dualism, such as activists overlooking or underrepresenting nuance – e.g., the fossil fuel industry’s potential to reduce the emissions of their products and services; or cultivating an “antagonistic relationship” (Wiesenfeld, Wurthmann, & Hambrick, 2008: 239), whereby the target was constructed as an antithetical counterpart or “enemy” in relation to the moral superiority of stigmatizers.

--- TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE ---

**FINDINGS**

The findings of our study are depicted by Figure 1, a model that illustrates the analogical construction of stigma as a dualistic process. “Initial framing” encompasses two preliminary discursive practices enacted by stigmatizers: (1) “problem articulation,” demonstrating how the status quo is problematic and assigning blame to specific actors; and (2) “solution proposal,” highlighting stigmatization as the solution.

The bulk of stigmatizers’ analogical work involves the next two co-constitutive strategies. The first substantive strategy, “establishing ingroup morality,” denotes how stigmatizers (the ingroup) emphasize their moral position using the analogical practices of “virtue transfer” (accentuating ingroup morality) and “affective association” (generating emotions to motivate stigmatization). The second substantive strategy, “amplifying outgroup deviance,” demonstrates
how stigmatizers transfer meanings from already-stigmatized source domains to the target (the outgroup), involving two analogical practices. “Instituting commonalities” forms a target category of organizations and accentuates the category’s commonalities with source domains. Stigmatizers then “reinforce negative traits” shared by the sources and target to both encourage the target’s ostracization and highlight its fundamental flaws.

Finally, “uptake and dispersion” demonstrates how stigmatizers’ analogical work disseminates through two practices. “Proximal adoption” illustrates how stakeholders empathic toward either the ingroup or an analogical source domain adopt stigmatizing analogies, while “distanced enactment” shows how “distant” stakeholders harness and contextualize meanings emerging from analogical work to stigmatize the target.

--- FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE ---

Initial framing

The “initial framing” process captures the germination of the stigmatization process. Though two practices, “problem articulation” and “solution proposal,” stigmatizers cultivate reasons for stigmatization and establish corresponding analogical contexts.

**Problem articulation.** The stigmatization process begins with stigmatizers’ constructing a compelling narrative to justify the radical shift in meanings of an organizational category from “normal” to “stigmatized.” This involves highlighting a specific problem with the status quo and assigning blame to a set of actors deemed responsible.

Climate activists were frustrated by the lack of action on climate change, as a University of Glasgow activist (2013) explained an interview:

We’ve tried traditional means of creating change. Through democratic means, through our votes and so on but this has not worked [...]. Since climate change first became a political issue at the Rio conference in 1992, emissions have gone up and continue to rise each day.
A lack of progress in the face of a climate emergency prompted activists to search for an alternative means of creating change. In doing so, activists aimed to “take the fight right to the source of the problem,” identifying the fossil fuel industry as the primary culprit for climate change and central to political inaction (350.org, 2014b). The industry was often accused of hijacking the policymaking process, particularly in the US where it had “just had too much control over Congress” (Welton, 2012). Activists constructed the fossil fuel industry as the “enemy,” exemplified by head of the movement Bill McKibben (2012) who asserted in the most cited text produced by activists:

[...]

A clearly defined target, or “enemy,” toward which “moral outrage” could be directed was vital to diverting attention from other potential causes of the constructed problem. An Edinburgh University student activist (2013) further explained the necessity of assigning blame to the target of stigmatization in an interview:

Nothing is working, and no one is taking the blame. But I’m telling you people need someone to blame, like an enemy. It’s the fossil fuel industry. [...] It’s so important that people don’t think it’s their fault, if they do, they won’t want to put up a fight. They will look at themselves and think they should stop driving, and maybe recycle more. This is [...] total nonsense. The blame lies squarely at the feet, or drilling site should I say, of the fossil fuel industry.

To reinforce the blameworthiness of the fossil fuel industry and justify its stigmatization, activists heavily relied on arguments related to (im)morality. A “deeply flawed [political] system” benefitting a “morally bankrupt” fossil fuel industry was argued to propagate climate change, as student activist Talia Rothstein (2014) described. This discursive construction of moral bankruptcy disseminated widely and was often cited by news media (e.g., Carrington, 2015a; Ormerod, 2014; Oroschakoff, 2016).
**Solution proposal.** Once an intractable problem and its culprit (an organization or organizational category) have been identified and constructed, stigmatization can be proposed as a solution. As a Swarthmore College activist explained in the *New York Times* (in Gillis, 2012a):

“We need to by-pass the traditional political process and go directly to fossil fuel industry. That’s the goal, to stigmatize them directly.” In this process, stigmatizers also clarify how to achieve stigmatization. Climate activists, for instance, described how they mobilized discourses related to past, successful divestment movements and their associated contexts to achieve their goal of stigmatizing the fossil fuel industry. Importantly, divestment had established moral connotations that could be analogically linked to the fossil fuel industry and its role in advancing climate change, provoking an extreme either/or (moral) dilemma that forced stakeholders to “choose a side.” The UK’s leading divestment advocacy organization, Go Fossil Free (2013), explained:

Divestment isn’t primarily an economic strategy, but a moral and political one. Morally, it sends a clear message that if it’s wrong to wreck the planet, it’s also wrong to profit from that wreckage. Politically, divestment builds political power by forcing our nation’s most prominent institutions and individuals [...] to choose which side of the issue they are on.

The most prominently utilized past divestment movements related to South African apartheid and tobacco. Early in the movement, the seminal US-based student group “Swarthmore Mountain Justice” (SMJ) noticed a relational pattern between seeking climate justice and the struggle against the apartheid regime and began to harness associated stigmatizing meanings. An SMJ document suggested (2012; emphasis added):

Swarthmore College ended its complicity in an unjust system by divesting from companies supporting South African apartheid. This nationwide campaign was hugely successful in working toward the end of the South African apartheid. We believe that it is now time for the College to respond to an analogous system of injustice.

SMJ’s cause became an international phenomenon when McKibben linked his environmental NGO, 350.org, to their movement. Like SMJ, McKibben explicitly used the analogy of apartheid,
exemplified throughout his popular *Rolling Stone* article “The Case for Fossil-Fuel Divestment” (2013). News media similarly began referencing apartheid, for instance *The New York Times* (Gillis, 2012b; emphasis added) describing the fossil fuel divestment movement as a “conscious imitation of the successful effort in the 1980s to pressure colleges and other institutions to divest themselves of the stocks of companies doing business in South Africa under apartheid.”

Other divestment contexts, tobacco in particular but also arms manufacturing and the boycotting of Israel, for instance, were similarly employed by both activists and the media (e.g., Urist, 2015). The mobilization of these contexts provided an effective and readily applicable solution to tackling the “problem” described above. Indeed, as a Warwick University activist expressed in an interview:

> …Even if you were not born then [during apartheid], you know racism is immoral. You also don’t need a PhD to know smoking causes cancer. It should therefore not be difficult to make people believe that we should cut our ties with the fossil fuel industry, just as we did with South African government, or tobacco, or Israel [...].

We next discuss the role of analogy, demonstrating how activists enacted two mutually reinforcing strategies of “establishing ingroup morality” and “amplifying outgroup deviance” that were fundamental to the stigmatization process.

**Strategy 1: Establishing ingroup morality**

The strategy “establishing ingroup morality” concerns the construction and mobilization of discourses related to the moral superiority of an ingroup of stigmatizers. These discourses are formed using *deep* analogies that generate emotive power to transfer both emotions and complex, abstracted meanings from sources (analogical contexts) to target (ingroup) domains. Two predominant analogical practices are used in this strategy: *virtue transfer* and *affective association*.

**Virtue transfer.** The analogical practice of “virtue transfer” positions the ingroup as morally superior by transferring certain “virtue concepts”—abstracted meanings recognized by a wide
audience as righteous, honorable and good—from the source domain to the ingroup target. Climate activists used three primary virtue concepts (“political struggle,” “justice” and “morality”) related to analogical contexts concerning freedom from oppression, notably apartheid, to “connect the historical dots” (Welton, 2012). This constructed what a Divest Harvard activist called “our collective outcry” (Rothstein, 2014).

The virtue concept “political struggle” likened activists’ campaign against the fossil fuel industry to political struggles of past divestment movements, particularly apartheid. A Divest Harvard campaigner described during an interview: “the goal is that the fight against the fossil fuel industry becomes the new apartheid struggle of the 21st century.” Mimicking the apartheid campaign analogically enabled activists to adopt language used by apartheid campaigners in order to produce a discourse framing the fossil fuel industry as their “opponent” in a “fight,” “battle,” or even “war” (350.org, 2014a). This further created an amorphous, inclusive “we” of individuals, groups, and organizations working together in the “battle,” described on 350.org’s website (350.org, 2015a; emphasis added) as “an international movement of ordinary people working to end the age of fossil fuels.” The construction of an all-encompassing and ordinary “we” was also reproduced in the media, exemplified by activist and Harvard professor James Engell’s Huffington Post article that repeatedly referenced Abraham Lincoln’s call for a collective struggle against slavery, amongst other contexts related to historical struggles against oppression including apartheid. Commencing his article with a quote from Lincoln highlighting “we,” Engell (2013) also concluded by invoking Lincoln’s words related to the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation: “We — even we here — hold the power, and bear the responsibility” (2013 emphasis original). Correspondingly, McKibben encouraged attendees of his 2012 Do the Math tour to sign a banner stating: “We > fossil fuels” (Appendix 1), “the people” scrawled under “We” as an homage to the
US constitution. This political phrase signifying a righteous struggle against an oppressor was also depicted on another oft-used banner with “Fossil Fuel CEOs” struck through and “We the People” scribbled prominently beneath (Appendix 2).

The virtue concept “justice” similarly united diverse audiences on the basis of morality. A Yale student activist explained during an interview: “Some of us would never call ourselves environmentalists. We are just people who do this because of moral reasons. Divestment is the right thing to do” (2015). Movement co-founder Naomi Klein explicated further during a 350.org (2015b) online workshop:

We’re fighting for the principle that polluters should pay, that how we pay for the transition has to be justice-based. We can bring our movements together and have one conversation instead of these separate conversations. [...] My hope is that the labor movement, the anti-cuts movement, the climate movement will really come together in a coherent demand for a just transition away from fossil fuels.

Klein expanded the ingroup beyond environmentalists to encompass a wide variety of movements linked by the “justice” virtue concept, similar to the apartheid protesters who “provoked the consciences of the nation” (Strauss, 2013a). Discourses related to a (moral) quest for justice were as such evoked to encourage participation. For instance, Tufts Professor Julian Agyeman (in Associated Press, 2014) described faculty members supporting fossil fuel divestment as “veterans” of apartheid divestment campaigns. They used the virtue concept justice to encourage students to join the fossil fuel divestment campaign: “What we’ve tried to do with our students is say ‘this is your anti-apartheid movement, this is your social justice divestment campaign.’” Under a section entitled “We are stronger when we collaborate,” 350.org formally instituted the goal of unification of diverse audiences based on seeking justice (350.org, 2015a; emphasis added):

The climate crisis is not just an environmental issue, or a social justice issue, or an economic issue—it’s all of those things at once. The only way we will be strong enough to put pressure on governments and stand up to the fossil fuel industry is if we all work together. That means bringing people together and building diverse coalitions.
The third virtue concept, “morality,” captures the ingroup’s *esprit de corps*, forming a foundation for the movement and this strategy. As Go Fossil Free (2014a) recognized: “Just like in the struggle for civil rights in America or the fight to end apartheid in South Africa, the more we can make climate change a deeply moral issue, the more we will push society toward action.” To reinforce the moral link between source and target domains, activists aligned themselves with (moral) actors associated with source domains, most notably Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a key figure in the fight against South African apartheid. Early in the campaign McKibben (2012) associated student activists with Tutu:

> […] these are no longer normal companies. They are rogues, breaking not the laws of the nation, but the laws of physics. And there is no gentle way to rein in rogues. […] students know all this—they understand the grave importance of this battle. They know that heroes of the past, like Desmond Tutu, have joined their voices to the call.

McKibben’s discursive work cultivated a sense that the fossil fuel divestment campaign was part of an historically grounded and universal moral struggle with activists likened to virtuous “heroes” such as Tutu. Tutu officially signaled his endorsement of the campaign in a Guardian opinion piece entitled, “We need an apartheid-style boycott to save the planet” (2014a). He explained: “Who can stop it? Well, we can, you and I. And it is not just that we can stop it, we have a moral responsibility to do so. […] People of conscience need to break their ties with corporations financing the injustice of climate change.” Tutu’s moral call to arms invokes the “we” discourse to include those considering themselves to have a conscience, or anyone feeling a moral responsibility to fight “the injustice of climate change.”

**Affective association.** The second analogical practice, “affective association,” transfers emotions linked to source domains to the ingroup target to motivate stigmatizing action. An Edinburgh University divestment activist described: “[…] these past events we all know well, and
they stir emotion in all of us.” Three prevailing affective states loosely aligned with the above virtue concepts: anger (“political struggle”), suffering/empathy (“justice”), and pride (“morality”).

Activists constructed discourses to provoke anger drawing on the virtue concept of “political struggle.” Analogical source domains central to this virtue concept concern historical political movements fraught with intense emotions of anger and indignation, such as US slavery and South African apartheid. Climate activists posited that climate change inaction likewise engendered such emotions. As the activist quoted above remarked of the need to target the fossil fuel industry for stigmatization: “Many of us are pissed off [...]. If you’re looking for the cause, if you want to vent your frustration [about climate change] at something, there it is, right in front of you.” Analogical contexts related to political struggles were thus harnessed to rouse and accentuate such affective states. McKibben (2012) explained that these feelings were critical to motivating action that could generate “a real movement” as they had, for instance, in the analogous context of apartheid:

[...] pure self-interest probably won’t spark a transformative challenge to fossil fuel. But moral outrage just might – and that’s the real meaning of this new math. It could, plausibly, give rise to a real movement. Once, in recent corporate history, anger forced an industry to make basic changes. That was the campaign in the 1980s demanding divestment from companies doing business in South Africa.

Feelings of anger and moral outrage, McKibben argued, triggered historical political struggles and could likewise propel fossil fuel divestment.

Emotions concomitant with suffering and empathy, intrinsic to the virtue concept “justice,” were likewise incited to motivate stigmatization on the basis that the vulnerable would (again) suffer most. As Tutu (2014b) explained:

The most devastating effects are visited on the poor, those with no involvement in creating the problem. A deep injustice. Just as we argued in the 1980s that those who conducted business with apartheid South Africa were aiding and abetting an immoral system, today we say nobody should profit from the rising temperatures, seas and human suffering caused by the burning of fossil fuels.
Activists’ analogical construction implicates the virtue concept of justice and its associated affective states of suffering and empathy to unite fossil fuel divestment with past struggles for justice. This discourse justified and propelled stigmatizing action, clarified by Cornell student activist Jacob Glick (2015) in a newspaper opinion piece:

Few, if any, of the students protesting apartheid had suffered under a racist regime; few, if any, of the students urging the University to divest from fossil fuels have had their homes destroyed by climate change. But they continue to march because of a noble concern for less fortunate others whom they may never meet.

Glick underscores how suffering itself does not necessitate action; rather empathic concern for justice for vulnerable people is needed to drive stigmatization efforts.

Activists elicited the virtue concept “morality” to generate feelings of nostalgia and related pride. These affective associations were exemplified by Vice President of the UK’s National Students Union Piers Telemacque’s *Guardian* opinion article entitled, “Whether it’s apartheid or fossil fuels, divestment is on the right side of history.” In the article, Telemacque elides any differences between the source and target domains to accentuate their union and righteousness on a historical plane, employing emotional language to evoke feelings of nostalgia and pride. Recalling past successes (nostalgia) in what he frames as an *ongoing* moral fight for justice stimulates pride of having acted and continuing to act with moral integrity. In his conclusion he asserts (2015):

I’m proud to be part of a movement that is still on the right side of history in our most crucial fights for global justice, just as we were in the 1970s and 80s. Sometimes you act on principle simply because it’s the right thing to do. Sometimes, you act pragmatically to make a real impact. Divestment does both these things at the same time, and it’s as effective now as it was during apartheid.

Qualified by the engendered sense of pride, Telemacque utilizes morality, “the right thing to do,” to unify a collective “we” (ingroup), encouraging (divestment) action, “act pragmatically.”
affect therefore underscores necessary and principled action that unites analogous contexts as part of a grander moral cause.

**Strategy 2: Amplifying outgroup deviance**

While the strategy of establishing ingroup morality constructs a morally superior and emotionally charged ingroup using deep analogies, amplifying outgroup deviance focuses on the outgroup, or target of stigmatization. This strategy harnesses “surface” analogies to generate direct comparisons between ostensibly similar sources and targets, therefore digestible by a wide audience. Surface analogical work produces *causal power* to explain cause-and-effect dynamics, such as how the fossil fuel industry’s business activity (cause) advances dangerous climate change (effect). This involves two analogical practices: “instituting commonalities” and “reinforcing negative traits.”

**Instituting commonalities.** In this practice, surface similarities common to both source and target domains are established and accentuated to intuitively transfer stigmatized meanings from an already stigmatized source to the target. An activist from Warwick University (2014) described the relative ease of engaging in surface analogical work that typically involved source domains of the tobacco and arms industries during an interview:

> It’s easier in many ways [compared to apartheid]. Tobacco companies and fossil fuel companies are both companies, and they both sell highly dangerous products. In a way, the campaigns that stigmatized smoking, especially in the US and increasing in Europe, have done the work for us. We all know smoking is a disgusting habit, so why not burning fossil fuels. It’s a no-brainer.

Although emphasizing that tobacco divestment campaigners had “done the work for us,” activists engaged the practice of instituting commonalities to ensure analogical comparison was effortless, a “no brainer.” They did so by both grouping fossil fuel companies into the organizational category and elucidating important commonalities between source and target domains that were not immediately apparent or historically instituted.
Grouping fossil fuel companies into an identifiable organizational category of “the fossil fuel industry” facilitated comparisons with stigmatized organizational categories such as the “tobacco industry” or “arms industry.” This encouraged deindividuation that obscured the idiosyncrasies of a single organization to transfer stigma across a category of organizations. A student activist from the University of Edinburgh (2013) described in an interview:

We don’t want to give the message that particular companies such as BP or Exxon need to be targeted, or specific industries such as only oil. Always keeping them together and referring to them as the fossil fuel industry works better and is more focused. It [...] isolates them as a separate group, sort of the bad boys in the school yard.

To demarcate organizations belonging to this outgroup, activists utilized material artifacts such as The Carbon Underground 200 Index, created by a former Standard & Poor’s managing director after attending a speech by McKibben on his “Do the Math” tour. According to 350.org’s Blair Palese (350.org, 2014c) this index acted as a “hit list” for stigmatization: “the companies at the top of the list have been warned – we’re coming after you [...].”

Further to deindividuation, activists accentuated surface links between sources and target that were less obvious. Karthik Ganapathy, 350.org spokesperson, explicated in the Huffington Post (O’Connor, 2015):

The idea was basically to shift cultural attitude [...] Americans see cigarette companies in this certain way that’s really negative. If you ask an average American for their opinion of Philip Morris, it’s that they’re sort of merchants of death [...]. We want folks to see fossil fuels the same way, because the business model isn’t fundamentally all that different.

Activists sought to elucidate this fundamental similarity between source domains and the target to facilitate surface analogical work. By referencing the epithet “merchants of death” that relates to the arms industry profiting from human casualty during war, Ganapathy situates the fossil fuel industry amongst already stigmatized organizational categories on the basis of causing disease and death. To establish the fossil fuel industry as another “merchant of death,” activists emphasized
the deleterious effects of climate change, frequently citing the World Health Organization’s research finding that “climate change caused some 150,000 deaths worldwide each year” (Divest Harvard, 2014). They in turn generated cause-and-effect links between the fossil fuel industry’s business model and climate-related disease/death. For example, Naomi Klein’s (2013) *Guardian* article critiquing the contradiction between the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s fossil fuel investments and their action against malaria emphasized the industry’s propagation of the disease:

[...] a top priority of the Gates Foundation has been malaria research, a disease intimately linked to climate. Mosquitoes and malaria parasites both thrive in warmer weather. Does it really make sense to fight malaria while fuelling one of the reasons it may be spreading more ferociously in some areas?

These types of arguments buttressed commonalities, or surface links, between the tobacco/arms and fossil fuel industries on the basis that all of their products contribute to disease and death. To further institute commonalities and thereby strengthen surface analogical work, any differences between sources and target – e.g., anti-divestment proponents’ assertions that fossil fuels are considered necessary for powering economic activity whereas smoking may be regarded as needless indulgence (e.g., Bryce, 2012) – were also elided. Imagery replacing representations of smoking with the use of fossil fuels vividly illustrated this elision, e.g., substituting a factory smokestack which represents the burning of fossil fuels with a cigarette (see Appendix 3), or using the iconic image of Joe Camel from the Camel cigarette brand advertisements to represent a fossil fuel company CEO (see Appendix 4).

**Reinforcing negative traits.** In the practice “reinforcing negative traits,” stigmatizers work to analogically establish the outgroup’s deviance. For climate activists, this involved ostracizing the fossil fuel industry and exposing its business model as existentially flawed, emphasizing two key common negative traits between sources and target: disease/death (a trait instituted by activists’ discursive work) and deception (a trait historically established). This practice generates *causal*
power to propel stigmatization by analogically establishing the cause of the problem and showing
the harmful effects engendered.

By reinforcing negative cause-and-effect traits related to both “disease” and “death,” activists
encouraged the ostracization of the fossil fuel industry. A Divest Harvard activist explained: “[we]
want to treat fossil-fuel companies like tobacco companies, ostracizing them because they
capitalize on businesses that have bad health effects” (Mufson, 2013). To emphasize this strategic
outcome, activists frequently referenced diseases common to products sold by the tobacco and
fossil fuel industries. A letter by Fossil Free Warwick University suggested (Fossil Free Warwick
University, 2013):

No UK university in their right mind would accept funding from or invest their funds in
tobacco companies these days - it’s inconsistent with their research on cancer. The same
holds true for fossil fuel companies causing climate change and yet most universities still
do not recognise this. That’s about to change!

This analogical work established causal power by suggesting the fossil fuel industry’s business
model is as deathly as that of the tobacco industry, necessitating similar stigmatization.

Several media outlets also associated fossil fuels with diseases linked to smoking, such as
addiction. A Guardian article (Corner, 2013) entitled “Coming off fossil fuels is akin to quitting
smoking – only harder” suggested: “Our reliance on fossil fuels is like an addiction, and to confront
it we can learn from how other addictive behaviours are tackled [...]. Although the analogy is not
complete, the parallels are clear enough.” Interestingly, while acknowledging analogical
incompleteness given obvious differences between the analogical contexts, as we described,
instituting commonalities ensured that “the parallels are clear enough.” On the basis of its role in
contributing to death and disease, amputation metaphors were elicited to explain that the fossil fuel
industry must be “cast out” of society in order for it to remain “healthy”: “They [the fossil fuel
industry] are the rotting part of our system. Actually, they are the ones causing the rot! We need
to get rid of them quickly before the infection becomes irreversible” (Edinburgh University climate
activist, interview, 2013).

A second reoccurring negative trait was “deception.” Activists analogically explained that the
fossil fuel industry, like the tobacco industry, knew about the dangerous nature of their product
and misled the public in order to maintain profits. As McKibben (in SMJ, 2015) suggested: “[this]
is no different than the tobacco industry—for years, they lied about the dangers of their industry.”
The surface similarity of the deceitful behavior of both industries had a historical precedence.
Activists based analogical comparisons on a campaign by the Union of Concerns Scientists (2007)
that implicated US oil giant Exxon Mobil in funding climate denialism. The UCS’ report, resulting
in a legal dispute, was fittingly entitled, “Smoke, Mirrors & Hot Air: How ExxonMobil Uses Big
Tobacco’s Tactics to ‘Manufacture Uncertainty’ on Climate Change.” A similar comparison was
later made by Harvard historians Oreskes and Conway (2011) in a popular book entitled Merchants
of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to
Global Warming, which elicited analogical links to “merchants of death,” as previously mentioned.

This historical connection was harnessed by activists to reinforce the common negative trait
of deception. As an MIT activist asserted in a Guardian opinion piece: “Climate science denial is
as clear as the science itself. The Merchants of Doubt [...] exposes the fossil fuel lobby’s self-
described ‘win ugly or lose pretty’ tactics, drawn straight from Big Tobacco’s playbook” (Supran,
2012). Reinforcing the negative trait of deception, as suggested above, also discredited the fossil
fuel industry’s influence over climate change policy. Activists focused on the industry’s ability to
use its financial power to lobby and manipulate politicians, as the tobacco industry had in the past.
One activist described this dynamic analogically in a newspaper opinion piece entitled: “Big Oil,
Big Tobacco, Big Lies: Why the fossil-fuel industry has no place in climate policymaking”
(Louaillier & McKibben, 2015). Situating the fossil fuel industry as a “political player” was also central to framing the need for its stigmatization in the first place, discussed in the initial framing section. As one activist explained: “We think that will have a powerful effect on their ability to manipulate our political system. Stigmatization is key. This is the tobacco industry of our day” (Butterfield, 2013).

Both negative traits (death/disease and deception) were used analogically to reinforce the project of stigmatization; namely, emphasizing the fossil fuel industry as fundamentally flawed. Rather than focusing on its operations such as extracting and selling fossil fuels, activists highlighted its core being as beyond repair, emphasizing the industry’s “destructive business model” (Mulkey in 350.org, 2013a) posing a “fundamental” (Lappen & Jiang, 2014) or “existential threat” (Seiger, 2014). A Warwick University student activist (2014) emphasized the impossibility of industry change or improvement:

This is not about technical fixes, or making the fossil fuel industry more efficient [...]. These are red herrings, smoke screens, distracting from the issue. You can’t make a weapons company a little more moral, [or] you can’t make tobacco a little more healthy! So do you think a fossil fuel company can be a bit cleaner? That’s just plain stupid.

Situating the fossil fuel industry alongside arms and tobacco suggested that all three are inherently flawed, accentuated by dismissing any prospect of the fossil fuel industry transitioning to a more sustainable, or “cleaner,” path. That a person must be “plain stupid” not to understand this logic emphasized the intuitiveness of the surface analogical work, therefore generating causal power to encourage stigmatization.

**Stigma uptake and dispersion**

The effects of the above strategies, establishing ingroup morality and amplifying outgroup deviance, were evidenced by the uptake of the activists’ analogical stigmatization work, comprising two stakeholder practices: *proximal adoption* and *distant enactment*. Proximal
adoption involves empathic stakeholders harnessing analogical inferential power cultivated by activists to support and propagate stigmatization. In contrast, distant enactment demonstrates how stakeholders without overt empathic ties contextualized certain aspects of activists’ analogical work (e.g., morality) to fit their own reasons for stigmatizing the target.

**Proximal adoption.** Stakeholders with either empathic ties to the ingroup and motivations driving stigmatization or with particular source domains mobilized by stigmatizers proximally adopt stigmatizers’ analogical work without substantively changing the analogies. Proximal adoption was initially evidenced in relation to stakeholders that climate activists referred to as “allies” (350.org, 2014d). Often, activists intentionally worked to involve allies such as opinion leaders, celebrities, and media outlets, among others. A senior member of Edinburgh University’s divestment campaign explained: “We [...] tap into our own network to target specific individuals [...] Nine times out of ten they are very receptive even though the whole idea of stigmatizing the [fossil fuel] industry thing can seem extreme.” Allies’ receptiveness often stemmed from their existing identification with climate activism. The activist continued: “Many of these people know about our struggle before the divestment campaign started, so it’s easy to get them aboard. They are vital for our case because everyone listens when they talk.” A key example of an ally opinion leader is academic Noam Chomsky. Chomsky (in SMJ, 2016) proximally adopted activists’ line of analogical reasoning by amplifying the fossil fuel industry’s deviance related to the tobacco source domain (referencing “addiction”) before implementing the apartheid source domain in explaining his support for the movement:

None of us can wait for someone else to end the addiction to fossil fuels that is causing the climate chaos that is just beginning. Ending apartheid required the force of many different streams in the movement. But Nelson Mandela and Bishop Desmond Tutu have stated that one key stream was the delegitimizing of apartheid that resulted from the divestment campaign.
Several allies more directly adopted activists’ analogical work in lending their support to the campaign. For instance, in 2015 *The Guardian* newspaper launched its own divestment campaign called “Keep it in the Ground” (Guardian, 2015) and used proximal adoption extensively. After divesting its fossil fuel holdings, then editor-in-chief Alan Rusbridger justified the move in an editorial piece outlining the moral imperatives for divestment. He recited activists’ analogical arguments with a hyperlink to Tutu’s seminal article on divestment (Tutu, 2014a). In a short video accompanying the piece, Rusbridger employed the apartheid analogy to cite the moral impetus behind his editorial decision to support divestment, explaining:

> A generation ago when the biggest moral issue in the world was apartheid in South Africa, Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu suggested this tactic, that it was time for the great institutions of the West to cut their ties with companies that propped up the apartheid regime. [...] Divestment is very useful for shaming companies, for bringing the issue out into the open more.

Stakeholders not necessarily considered “allies” or associated with grassroots climate activism often engaged with proximal adoption given an identification with the analogical source domains. For example, Irish ex-president Mary Robinson (2014) reminisced about her involvement with the anti-apartheid campaign in justifying her support:

> It’s, to me, a little bit like the energy that was behind the anti-apartheid movement when I was a student. We were all involved because we saw the injustice of it. There’s an injustice in continuing to invest in fossil fuel companies that are part of the problem.

Given her personal history, Robinson interpreted the divestment movement with a similar moral imperative through the virtue concept of justice. In other instances, stakeholders resonated with activists’ amplification of the fossil fuel industry’s deviance. For example, healthcare institutions strongly identified with activists’ analogical work around the source domain of tobacco. Notable examples of healthcare institutions who proximately adopted activists’ analogical reasoning in supporting divestment include the British Medical Association (BMA), World Medical...
Association, the Royal College of Physicians, and American Public Health Association. A BMA spokesperson (BMA, 2014) explained:

Doctors have long recognised that it is wrong to treat smoking-related diseases whilst investing in the tobacco industry. This vote makes a similar statement in relation to fossil fuel investments and the immediate and grave threats to human health posed by climate change. It is to be hoped that all organisations and individuals will follow their lead, and will similarly act with principle.

Exemplified by this quote, healthcare institutions often echoed activists’ analogical work by emphasizing negative health effects propagated by climate change that are caused by the fossil fuel industry’s business model, while also citing a moral (“act with principle”) imperative for action.

Faith-based organizations’ (FBOs) history with divestment on ethical grounds often engaged in proximal adoption, and comprise the most significant proportion of total assets divested (Go Fossil Free, 2020). FBOs have a strict asset-screening process to avoid “sin stocks” related to gambling, arms, tobacco, and pornography, among others. Activists’ analogical work prompted fossil fuel stocks’ inclusion on this list. The United Methodist Church, for instance, revised its investment guidelines based on the virtue concept of “justice:” “[We have] a history of divestment to enforce its social justice agenda. The church divested $77 million from companies doing business with apartheid South Africa in the 1980s” (Audi, 2015). This move was arguably furthered by religious figures such as Pope Francis, a Guardian headline reading: “Catholic orders take their lead from the pope and divest from fossil fuels” (Slezak, 2016). As Reverend Margaret Bullitt-Jonas (in Wangsness, 2013) of Grace Episcopal Church explained:

Just as I wouldn't want to be making money off tobacco or military operations, I don't want to be making money off fossil fuel. [...] It is one of the only businesses I can think of that, if successful in carrying out their business plan, they are going to essentially be killing life as it has evolved on this planet.
Bullitt-Jonas situates the fossil fuel industry among both the tobacco and arms, proximally adopting and accentuating the deviant trait of “death.” As such, activists’ analogical work raised awareness of the fossil fuel industry’s deathly, destructive actions that are contrary to FBOs’ religious values.

Interestingly, some stakeholders proximally adopted activists’ analogical work after initial hesitation. For instance, although firstly avoiding engagement with stigmatization efforts despite mounting pressure (350.org, 2014e), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) became increasingly radical in its tone regarding the fossil fuel industry’s role in advancing climate change. By March 2015, the UNFCCC chose to support divestment, proximally adopting activists’ analogical work by tweeting: “#Divestment worked to free SA of #apartheid. Now it can help free us of #fossilfuels.” This tweet was linked to 350.org’s Twitter account and contained a picture of Tutu with an accompanying quote that stated: “We can no longer continue feeding our addiction to fossil fuels as if there is no tomorrow. For there will be no tomorrow” (Carrington, 2015b).

**Distanced enactment.** By engaging in distanced enactment, stakeholders not associated with the ingroup or analogical source domains employed and contextualized activists’ analogically generated meanings without directly referencing the analogies themselves. For instance, The Rockefeller Family Foundation (in Rupert, 2016) drew on moral arguments emerging from the deceptiveness of the fossil fuel industry and specifically ExxonMobil to justify their decision to divest in March 2016, explaining:

We would be remiss if we failed to focus on what we believe to be the morally reprehensible conduct on the part of ExxonMobil. Evidence appears to suggest that the company worked since the 1980s to confuse the public about climate change’s march, while simultaneously spending millions to fortify its own infrastructure against climate change’s destructive consequences and track new exploration opportunities as the Arctic’s ice receded.
Morality was central to its decision to divest, significant given the family’s notorious history with the oil industry. This significance was not lost on activists, a DC Divest member observing (in Kurzius, 2016): “We’ve gone from being a fringe thing to seeing the Rockefellers divest.”

Cities choosing to divest similarly harnessed analogically created meanings around “morality.” For instance, Washington D.C. Council Member Charles Allen (in Hirji, 2016) declared of the city’s decision to divest: “This is a decision that is morally and ethically the right thing.” Distanced enactment was also evidenced by his allusion to the success of past divestment movements without mentioning analogical contexts: “I applaud the D.C. Retirement Board for doing right by all Washingtonians. In the past, divestment has proven to be an incredibly powerful tool for effecting positive change” (Richardson, 2016).

Other stakeholders drew on meanings generated by activists’ analogical work around death/disease. For instance, in 2018 Georgetown University (Cassou, 2018) described its decision to divest from tar sands as well as coal by alluding to death and disease:

Tar sands extraction, like coal mining, is an activity that has an extremely deleterious effect on the environment […] Tar sands extraction is also inconsistent with the University’s principle of ‘protection of human life and dignity’. It negatively affects public health in communities living near extraction sites, disproportionately harming indigenous people from First Nations communities.

Contextualized in relation to the university’s principle to protect life, the university cited not only environmental harm, but also public health effects in neighboring communities. Activists accentuated links to their analogical work in reaction to the news, one stating (Cassou, 2018; emphasis added): “Eliminating tar sands, a particularly dirty fossil fuel with disastrous health effects, from our university’s financial underpinnings is a huge step in the right direction.”

Analogical outcomes related to fossil fuels’ “devastating impact” were often incited through distanced enactment by stakeholders using this reasoning to substantiate a transition to “cleaner” energy sources. For instance, Jim Yong Kim (World Bank, 2014), president of the World Bank,
noted at the World Economic Forum: “We called for a phase-out of harmful fossil fuel subsidies. Act now. [So that these] can be redirected to support investment in clean growth.” This draws on analogical meanings of the harm (disease/death) engendered by the fossil fuel industry as an opportunity to develop new forms of investment. This line of reasoning was exemplified by Oslo finance commissioner Eirik Lae Solberg who explained of the city’s 2015 divestment: “We are pulling ourselves out of coal companies, because power generation based on coal is one of the most environmentally harmful in the energy sector. We want to use our investments to promote more environmentally-friendly energy and a more environmentally-friendly society” (Carrington, 2015c). Distanced enactment therefore facilitated stakeholders not traditionally associated with climate activism or the analogical contexts to employ meanings generated by analogical reasoning in divesting or transitioning from fossil fuels.

**DISCUSSION**

This paper began by asking how actors strategically use a specific discursive device – *analogy* – to stigmatize a category of organizations. We answer this question by reflecting on our key contribution, that the process of stigmatization is contingent on constructing a *moral dualism* in which two opposing sides are emphasized: good, moral stigmatizers and an evil target. Constructing this moral dualism is based on analogical work cultivating emotive and causal inferential power to create and disperse stigmatizing associations to a variety of stakeholder audiences. We discuss how analogical stigmatization work can therefore empower radical fringe actors, such as climate activists, enabling them to change meanings associated with an incumbent actor. We conclude by outlining the transferability of these findings, along with limitations and opportunities for future research.
Stigmatization as a moral dualism

The key contribution of our study is to demonstrate how the construction of a moral dualism between stigmatizers (moral) and stigmatized (immoral) is intrinsic to the process of stigmatization. Because organizational research on stigma typically focuses on those entities being stigmatized rather than those doing the stigmatizing (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009; Sutton & Callahan, 1987; Tracey & Phillips, 2016), the dualistic nature of stigmatizers’ work has largely been overlooked.

As evidenced by our study, stigmatization is cultivated by establishing a stark dualistic moral contrast. The target of stigmatization is painted as completely evil, while those doing the stigmatizing as entirely moral in their quest for justice, both in relation to morally dualistic analogical contexts. Somewhat counterintuitive to extant literature, stigmatizers’ analogical work was to a great degree focused on constructing their own moral superiority, seeking to be perceived as the ordinary, just, and good “normals” in relation to a deviant, immoral target of stigmatization (Goffman 1963). This amplifies Ashforth’s (2018: 23) observation of the “contagious” nature of morality underpinning stigma, whereby fostering a strong moral conviction is pivotal to the project of stigmatization.

Climate activists instigated a moral quest against the fossil fuel industry reminiscent of Howard Becker’s (1963) conceptualization of moral entrepreneur: “The existing rules do not satisfy him [sic] because there is some evil which profoundly disturbs him [...]. He operates with an absolute ethic; what he sees is truly and totally evil.” Like Hampel and Tracey (2017) who described the moral entrepreneurship of institutional intermediaries such as the press stoking moral panic to stigmatize mass travel during Victorian Britain, our case highlights how climate activists sparked a “moral outrage” (McKibben, 2012), attributing climate inaction to the “evil” of the fossil fuel industry. Our conceptualization, however, emphasizes how activists’ moral entrepreneurship
involved not only a crusade against evil, but also extensively highlighting their “good” position in comparison.

Analogical contexts in which opposition between “good” and “evil” is established or obvious is vital to clarifying and constructing the moral dualism of stigmatization. For instance, contexts related to freedom from oppression bolstered the moral position of climate activists by relating them to “heroes” who fought against stigmatized racist systems such as slavery, segregation, and apartheid, certainly and historically considered evil. Likewise, the negative health effects of tobacco now seem obvious, and the morally reprehensible position of the tobacco industry unquestionable; those stigmatizers who exposed these “truths” are considered moral, good and ultimately “right.” Analogical work thereby facilitates a moral dualism; the power of these analogical contexts to convey this moral dualism and prompt stigmatizing action is discussed next.

**Analogical forms and stigmatizing power**

Analogical reasoning employed to perpetuate the moral dualism of stigmatization is underpinned by two complementary, reinforcing analogical forms: “deep” and “surface” (Gentner, 2005). This demonstrates the centrality of language in stigma’s formational processes (Devers et al., 2009) and emphasizes the emotive and causal power of the analogical forms (Cornelissen et al., 2011; Gavetti et al., 2005; Gentner et al., 2001; Glaser et al., 2016).

Deep analogies highlight the role that emotions and affect play in cultivating stigmatizing action (Thagard & Shelley, 2006) and largely focus on mobilizing a moral “we.” While emotion is central to stigma (e.g., Schwarzer & Weiner, 1991), it is typically discussed in conceptual work (Devers et al., 2009; Pollock et al., 2019), only implicit to some empirical studies (e.g., Helms & Patterson, 2014). Emotion, however, may be as central to stigma as morality. In comparing social evaluations including reputation, status, and celebrity, Pollock et al (2019) characterize stigma as primarily determined by moral and emotional dimensions. Moreover, Ashworth (2018: 2) argues
that in the stigmatization process, “a sense of moral superiority can fuel righteous anger.”
Evidenced by our study, emotions are not necessarily a triggered response to being stigmatized, as commonly theorized (e.g., Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009), but propel stigmatizing action (see the practice of affective association). Emotive analogical power is particularly salient for actors resonating with source domains (Thagard & Shelley, 2006), demonstrated by the affective analogy of apartheid. Those who, for emotional and/or moral reasons, identified with struggles surrounding apartheid, likewise felt compelled to stigmatize the fossil fuel industry.

Surface analogies, conversely, provide explanatory, logical, cause-and-effect imperatives for stigmatizing the target, namely highlighting its deviance. Surface analogical work focusing on the target of stigmatization generates casual power to explain cause-and-effect dynamics of an organizational category’s practices in relation to apparently similar, already-stigmatized organizational categories. This clarifies why the target organizational category requires stigmatization, illuminating the need for its ostracization, as well as the existential flaws it shares with already stigmatized organizational categories. Source and target domains are apparently similar, their features and characteristics intuitively alike. Therefore, analogical reasoning is easily understood by a wide variety of audiences; one need not have experience of or expert knowledge about the source domain in order to make inferences and take stigmatizing action. This is evidenced by activists referring to the comparison between the fossil fuel and tobacco industry as a “no brainer,” with inferences drawn by a multiplicity of stakeholders, e.g., both faith-based and healthcare organizations.

The power of analogy thereby emerges from an effectual combination of deep and surface analogies that are intuitive, lucid and compelling and therefore provide an emotional and logical imperative to drive stigmatizing action. This finding contributes to organization and management
studies on analogy in two ways. First, inferences drawn from analogical work (e.g., virtue concepts, affective associations, and negative traits) are demonstrated not merely as cognitive abstractions, but as strategically produced and reproduced (Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Cornelissen et al., 2011; Ketokivi et al., 2017). This enhances previous research that conceptualises analogical inferences as a product of the analogy itself, rather than attributing such inferences to the work of actors who actively produce them as our findings demonstrate (Etzion & Ferraro, 2010). Second, with the exception of Glaser et al (2016), extant studies do not distinguish different types of analogies and their inferential power. We extend Glaser et al’s (2016) work by highlighting how deep and surface analogies can work interdependently, increasing the inferential power of analogy. We next discuss this efficacy by illustrating how the moral dualism produced by analogical work enabled radical fringe actors to gain power and bring marginalized practices, such as stigmatizing an incumbent, into public discourse.

**Stigmatization as empowering**

A focus on the stigmatizers’ perspective elicited a third rather surprising insight not often addressed in wider literature on stigma that typically frames stigma as a means for incumbents or elite actors to denigrate already marginalized groups (e.g., the poor [Hampel & Tracey, 2017]). Through this lens, stigmatization is largely understood as a process of profound disempowerment (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). We find instead that stigma can be empowering for those actors *doing* stigmatization work. This argument should not be confused with theories of stigma empowerment focused on how the stigmatized can embrace their stigma; e.g., becoming a happier, stronger person after dealing with the stigma of a physical disability (Shih, 2004). This perspective considers recipients of stigma, not its producers – i.e., stigmatizers – as we do here. This significant finding has both theoretical and practical ramifications.
Theoretically, our findings highlight how fringe actors can strategically utilize the power of analogy to affect a field-level issue such as climate change (Schüßler, Rüling, & Wittneben, 2014), thereby loosening the grip of an incumbent actor through stigmatization. By engaging in analogical work, fringe actors acquire the discursive and symbolic resources (Hardy et al., 2000; Oliver, 1991)—including analogical source domains and their associated meanings (see also Glaser et al., 2016)—to stigmatize the incumbent. This complements existing work in institutional theory that discusses how institutional entrepreneurs (Lawrence et al., 1999) strategically draw on discursive mechanisms to create, maintain, and disrupt field-level debates (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996). Likewise, social movement literature explains how fringe actors gain influence over incumbent actors by mobilizing support from other radical and moderate actors (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007), institutional entrepreneurs (Maguire, Hardy, & Lawrence, 2004), and wider publics (Maguire & Hardy, 2009).

Our study instead demonstrates that fringe actors do not need to advance their own agenda or views to undermine the legitimacy of field incumbents (e.g., Lounsbury, Ventresca, & Hirsch, 2003); rather, by harnessing analogy, fringe actors can “borrow” (stigmatizing) meanings. As our findings highlight, rather than “start from scratch,” climate activists appropriated meanings related to already-stigmatized source domains to inform stakeholder audiences that the fossil fuel industry possessed similar deviant traits. The analogical work had, as one activist mentioned, “already been done;” e.g., historical campaigns likening the tobacco industry’s suppression of cancer research to the fossil fuel industry’s deception regarding climate science (Oreskes & Conway, 2010).

The significance of stigmatization’s empowering potential is also practical: the stigmatization process, propelled by the power of analogy, can be used to address grand challenges such as climate change (Wright & Nyberg, 2017). As management and organization scholars have
elucidated, a key reason why grand challenges endure is that actors lack the means, voice, and organization to affect meaningful, scalable change (Claus & Tracey, 2020; George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi, & Tihanyi, 2016; Porter, Tuertscher, & Huysman, 2020). Climate change is a particularly salient example based on scientific evidence of its urgency and destructive potential (IPCC, 2014). However, as climate activists also observe, meaningful action by policymakers and businesses is sparse and largely ineffectual (Slawinski, Pinkse, Busch, & Banerjee, 2017). As illustrated by this case, collective action geared toward stigmatizing an incumbent actor directly implicated with advancing a grand challenge may be an effective tool for “casting out” or disempowering an incumbent actor, such as the fossil fuel industry (Ferns & Amaeshi, 2019; Ferns, Amaeshi, & Lambert, 2019).

**Transferability, limitations, and future research**

While many insights from our study are transferable to contexts extending beyond our specific case, there are also certain limitations that require reflection. Together, these points elucidate potential avenues for future research that we outline here.

Our conceptualization of the moral dualism of stigmatization is widely transferable. For instance, actors attempting to stigmatize industries yet to be severely devalued and ostracized could ascertain from our model that a moralized ingroup and a vilified outgroup must be clearly delineated. This extends beyond organizational categories with high carbon footprints such as the beef or shipping industries that are also susceptible to stigmatization by climate activists to include industries that exacerbate other grand challenges, for instance related to inequality (Amis, Mair, & Munir, 2020). A striking example is the financial sector, which has, to varying degrees, evaded widespread stigmatization (Roulet, 2015). Understanding stigmatization as a moral dualism could shed light on the relative failure of movements such as Occupy Wall Street to stigmatize the financial industry (Reinecke & Ansari, 2020) as we observe that (fringe) actors must also do
(analogical) work to establish their morality to stigmatize effectively. That said, applying a moral dualism lens to organizational categories understood to be deeply moral may be more complex. For example, attempting to stigmatize an organizational category such as the church (Gutierrez, Howard-Grenville, & Scully, 2010) may require tools beyond the scope of our model, therefore necessitating future research. Going beyond stigmatization, the concept of constructing a moral dualism may be transferable to other social evaluations, and therefore also warrants future research. For instance, it is conceivable that actors’ delegitimating work (Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Vaara & Tienari, 2008) operates dualistically suggesting they must work on their own legitimacy, to, in turn, delegitimate a particular target (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006: 217).

There are three further avenues for future research generated by our study related to stigmatized/stigmatizer dynamics and forms of analogy. Firstly, given that our primary focus was on the stigmatizers rather than the stigmatized, the fossil fuel industry’s reaction to stigmatization was not extensively addressed. The industry attempted to undermine activists’ stigmatization efforts by publicly questioning their use of scientific evidence and financial analysis (e.g., BP, 2014; Exxon, 2014; Shell, 2014). The industry also challenged activists’ analogical work, particularly by attacking activists’ moral positioning (American Energy Alliance, 2015; World Coal Association, 2015) and generating their own analogies – e.g., comparing society’s reliance on fossil fuels to romantic love (Environmental Policy Alliance, 2015). As such, a fruitful research opportunity may be to examine how incumbent actors defend themselves against stigmatization by challenging fringe actor’s construction of morality using analogical reasoning. Secondly, in this study we took a broad perspective on “analogy” to develop an understanding of its use in stigmatization. Future research could analyze its specific forms, such as metaphor, synecdoche, or irony, to discover how these are implemented, and why, throughout a stigmatization effort (Kwon,
Clarke, Vaara, Mackay, & Wodak, 2020; Riad & Vaara, 2011). Moreover, examining the forms of analogy that the target of stigmatization deploys defensively – and how stigmatizers could in turn appropriate these defensively-generated meanings – may offer greater insight into the role of language in the dynamic of stigmatization. A third area of future research relates to multimodality (Höllerer et al., 2019) and use of analogy in stigmatization. Although where appropriate we incorporated visual imagery that demonstrated analogical formation (see appendices), this was not our focus. Future research could pay closer attention to the use of videos and images in analogical reasoning (e.g., the fossil fuel industry’s use of a video clip in constructing the romantic love analogy mentioned above), particularly on social media where these modalities proliferate.

Conclusion

This research was motivated by the absence of studies that specifically examine the perspectives of stigmatizers. We drew from the discursive turn in organizational and management studies, focusing on the power of language and analogy to change meanings associated with an organizational category. We argued that, to do so, actors must analogically construct a moral dualism, establishing oppositionality between ingroup morality and outgroup deviance. We hope that these findings afford fringe actors the empowering means by which to stigmatize those continuing to profit from the perpetuation of grand challenges.

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mayor-orders-city-divest-fossil-fuels/.


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Maguire, S., & Hardy, C. 2013. Organizing processes and the construction of risk: A discursive


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University of Glasgow. 2014, October 8. *Glasgow becomes first UK university to divest from
fossil fuel industry. Glasgow. 
TABLE 1 Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor category</th>
<th>Document Type</th>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Notable examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Climate activists</strong></td>
<td>Press releases and conferences</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>350.org press conference during the Paris climate conference (350.org, 2015c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Press release commenting on UN climate talks in Warsaw (350.org, 2013b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public speeches and lectures</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Student activist Sarah Magee speech (Hamilton College, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News media contributions* and quotes</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>Bill McKibben’s (2012) Rolling Stone article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Official “how to” guides and brochures</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Document on “How to respond to these common complaints about divestment” (350.org, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letters to university endowment boards</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>An open letter to President of MIT Reif and the Executive Committee on divesting from fossil fuel companies (MIT Faculty Divest, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Celebrities/opinion leaders</strong></td>
<td>Press releases and conferences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mark Ruffalo statement at Divest-Invest press conference in New York (Democracy Now!, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public speeches and lectures</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Al Gore speech on climate change at Harvard (Harvard Univeristy, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Divestors</strong></td>
<td>Press releases and conferences</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>University statement from Johns Hopkins (2017a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News media contributions and quotes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Statements in the media from FBOs regarding divestment (Readfearn, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>News media</strong></td>
<td>News reporting on fossil fuel divestment or the fossil fuel industry’s role advancing climate change</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>Article in Financial Times “Fossil fuel divestment gathers momentum” (Flood, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opinion pieces and editorials about fossil fuel divestment</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Wall Street Journal opinion editorial “The Feel-Good Folly of Fossil-Fuel Divestment” (Fischel, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy actors</strong></td>
<td>Press releases and conferences</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>UNFCCC (2014) statement on divestment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public speeches and lectures</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Obama (2013) speech on climate change and divestment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News media contributions and quotes</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Statement by Norwegian policy actors about divestment in Financial Times (Milne, 2015a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investors and financial institutions</strong></td>
<td>Press releases and conferences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>HSBC stranded assets report (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News media contributions and quotes</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>“World Bank, ING, &amp; AXA announce fossil fuel divestment worth billions” (Joshua, 2017)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*all ‘news media’ include social media messages (e.g., on Facebook and Twitter)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Carbon Tracker (2011) releases “Unburnable Carbon—Are the world’s financial markets carrying a carbon bubble?” Swarthmore College calls to divest school endowments</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Bill McKibben (2012) publishes Rolling Stone article; 350.org launches divestment roadshow Hampshire College (Gillis, 2012a), Unity college (350.org, 2012), and city of Seattle divests (Henn, 2012); Harvard University rejects divestment (Gunther, 2012)</td>
<td>Global divestment campaign kicks off</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2015
HSBC publish stranded assets report directly implicating the fossil fuel industry (HSBC, 2015)
Citygroup (Shubber, 2015) stops lending for new fossil fuel projects
Major insurers Allianz (2015) and AXA (2015) divest
Leonardo DiCaprio joins the movement (Carrington & Howard, 2015)
Norway’s government initiates fossil fuel divestment process (Milne, 2015b)
Industry responses by World Coal Association (2015); IPAA (IPAA, 2015);
American Energy Alliance (2015); BP (2015)
Shell (Carrington, 2015) and BP (Macalister, 2015) pass shareholder resolutions regarding climate risk
Guardian launches “Keep it in the Ground” campaign (Guardian, 2015)
CALPERS, City of Oslo, Oxford University, Warwick University, announce to divest
COP 21 (Paris): Paris agreement
518 institutions, $3.4 trillion divested (Henn, 2015)

2016
Peabody Energy seeks Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection (Wilson & Crooks, 2016), citing divestment campaign one of the reasons for declaring bankruptcy
BlackRock (2016) issue climate change warning for investors
G20-Financial Stability Board urges companies to disclose climate-related risks
Exxon climate fraud investigation commences in New York (Barrett & Philips, 2016)
Cities of Oslo, Copenhagen, Paris, Stockholm, Berlin, and Sydney divest
689 institutions, $5 trillion divested (Arabella Advisors, 2018)

2017
Irish Government starts divestment process (Osborne, 2017), followed by France (Guardian, 2017), Sweden (Harvey, 2017), and Norway (Vaughan, 2017)
World Bank Group (2017) pledges to stop investing in oil and gas exploration
### TABLE 3  Climate activists’ use of analogies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Analogue Practice</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Illustrative quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problematizing</strong></td>
<td>Problem recognition</td>
<td>Frustration with lack of change</td>
<td>“We were feeling, like the rest of the climate movement, pretty frustrated with the political situation in the US. We felt that fossil fuel corporations just had too much control over Congress, and it was really hard to see how we could overcome that barrier.” (Welton, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Climate emergency as impetus for change</td>
<td>“We are running out of time. While our public policy makers equivocate and avoid the topic of climate change, the window of opportunity for salvaging a livable planet for our children and grandchildren is rapidly closing.” (Mulkey, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Specifying a wrongdoer</td>
<td>“We need to be very clear about who is to blame. We want everyone to have an image in their minds of who the real culprits are. At the same time, we also don’t want people to focus on the wrong targets. It’s fossil fuel companies, that’s it, and not other industries like, I don’t know, agriculture or transport or whatever.” Glasgow University divestment campaign leader, interview 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analogy selection</strong></td>
<td>Divestment as a tool for stigmatization</td>
<td>“By declaring the current activities of fossil fuel companies morally unacceptable, we create the political climate in which the policy changes needed to address climate change are possible. Historically, this approach has proven success. A study from the University of Oxford recently concluded that this ‘stigmatisation’ process is the most important outcome of a successful divestment campaign.” (Go Fossil Free, 2014a)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Divestment as “choosing a side”</td>
<td>“There’s a choice on what side of history you want to stand. We’re standing on the side that is right, in a moral sense. If you divest from fossil fuels, you stand on the moral side. You stand with us. If you don’t divest you clearly stand on the side of [the fossil fuel] industry. That’s the choice Harvard has made. It’s an immoral choice I believe.” – Warwick University activist commenting on Harvard’s decision not to divest in an interview 2014.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transferring stigmatizing meanings</td>
<td>“[We] know that they are not the same. I mean it’s going to be tough convincing people an oil company is racist. But they are both unjust and lacking any morals. We just need to help people get that. When people think ‘oil company’ or, say, ‘Exxon’ they must think ‘Apartheid’”– Interview with an American student activist 2015.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Establishing ingroup morality</strong></td>
<td>Virtue transfer</td>
<td>Building a ‘moral’ collective</td>
<td>“Corporations understood the logic of money even when they weren’t swayed by the dictates of morality. […] Once again we can join together as a world and put pressure where it counts.” – Desmond Tutu (in Gonzalez &amp; Goodman, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Linking to political struggles</td>
<td>“As we have seen in the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-apartheid struggle, and numerous indigenous peoples’ struggles, disruption of everyday affairs in the name of a just cause is an essential component of creating the just, equitable, and sustainable future we know is possible.” (Lakotosarah, 2015)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Justice-based reasoning</td>
<td>“The challenge facing today’s divestment supporters is much like that of their anti-apartheid predecessors. When that movement began in the 1970’s, few Americans understood the repressive tactics of South Africa’s”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
regime. As students and other activists disclosed the suffering and injustices underlying apartheid, they provoked the consciences of the nation” (Strauss, 2013b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective association</th>
<th>Establishing morality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger linked to morality</td>
<td>“The issue then was whether divestment, potentially costly, would have much real effect on companies doing business in South Africa. Even today, historians differ on whether it did. But the campaign required [...] people to grapple with the morality of Apartheid, altering the politics of the issue.” (Davenport, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy/suffering linked to seeking justice</td>
<td>“Students at Hamilton waged an <em>impassioned</em> campaign for divestment from South African companies on ethical grounds. They constructed shanties and lived in them as a sign of <em>solidarity</em> with those <em>abused</em> by apartheid, a <em>radical and empathetic act of protest...</em>” - (Livingston &amp; Parker-Magyar, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nostalgic pride linked morality to attract stakeholders</td>
<td>“Facts and figures aren’t the only way to make your case. If you can track down the contact info for different board members, send them personal letters urging them to divest. And do your research: if they donate to environmental causes, bring it up, or if they voted to divest from apartheid, urge them to make the right decision again.” (Go Fossil Free, 2014b)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Amplifying outgroup deviance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reinforcing surface links</th>
<th>Linking to a stigmatized entity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singling out the fossil fuel industry</td>
<td>“By divesting we seek to undermine the legitimacy of the fossil fuel industry, analogous to what was achieved [...] by tobacco divestment. Fossil fuel divestment doesn’t aim to cripple fossil fuel companies financially, but to stigmatise these companies to the point where doing business with them is as distasteful to the public as doing business with big tobacco” (Forbes, Vincent, Hildebrandt, &amp; Campbell, 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcing links around health and harm</td>
<td>“Fossil fuel divestment takes the fossil fuel industry to task for its culpability in the climate crisis. By naming this industry’s singularly destructive influence — and by highlighting the moral dimensions of climate change — we hope that the fossil fuel divestment movement can help break the hold that the fossil fuel industry has on our economy and our governments.” (Fossil Free UK, 2014)</td>
</tr>
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<th>Coupling negative traits</th>
<th>Disease/death</th>
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<td>Death and deception</td>
<td>“To me it’s all hands on deck. [...] It’s one of the many tactics that we can use to attach a social stigma to the fossil fuel industry — to say, this is an immoral industry that is betraying our collective future. I think of the fossil fuel industry as a merchant of death, just like I think of the nuclear weapons industry that way, or the chemical weapons industry, or the tobacco industry — these are merchants of death that need to be stigmatized, quarantined, and hopefully driven out of existence through regulation.” (Glickman, 2017)</td>
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| Deception | “One can say that the question of what to do about climate change is a political issue. Fair enough. Then
investing in companies that deny climate science and contribute to accelerating climate change certainly is an action every bit as much as not investing in them is. Even big tobacco companies have stopped making claims that smoking is not addictive and doesn’t cause health problems. Remember the time when their highly paid executives stood before Congress and swore to lies, and made campaign contributions?” – Professor James Engell, Huffington Post 2014

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<th>Stakeholder uptake and dispersion</th>
<th>Proximal adaptation</th>
<th>Ally stakeholder harnessing meanings around morality and deviance</th>
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<td>Stakeholders sympatheic to analogical contexts</td>
<td>“We simply cannot afford to allow the corporate greed of the coal, oil and gas industries to determine the future of humanity. Those entities with a financial interest in preserving this destructive system have denied, and even covered up the evidence of our changing climate. Enough is enough, you know better, the world knows better, history will place the blame for this devastation squarely at their feet.” (DiCaprio, 2016)</td>
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| Distanced enactment | Stakeholder drawing on meanings around morality | “The UK health profession led the way in the tobacco divestment movement two decades ago, putting the issue firmly on the political agenda and paving the way for stronger anti-tobacco legislation. This report shows why, in 2015, fossil fuels can no longer be considered an ethical investment.” (McKee, 2015) |

| Distanced enactment | Stakeholder drawing on meanings related to death/disease | “Public funds should not be invested in a company that has repeatedly misled the American people on climate change, the most important issue of our time. Divesting is not only the moral action to take, it is the only action left that can potentially provide an immediate catalyst for change at ExxonMobil.” (Lieu, 2016) |

| Distanced enactment | Stakeholder drawing on meanings related to death/disease | “In taking this rare step, the trustees determined that thermal coal poses a unique threat to public health and to the environment […] and underscored that the university shares responsibility for promoting environmental sustainability in the long run.” (Johns Hopkins University, 2017b) |

| Distanced enactment | Stakeholder drawing on meanings related to death/disease | “The university recognises the devastating impact that climate change may have on our planet and the need for the world to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels.” (University of Glasgow, 2014) |
Figure 1: Model of analogical stigmatization as a dualistic process
APPENDIX

Appendix 1 – We > fossil fuels

Appendix 3 – Smokestack cigarette

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Appendix 2 – We the people

Appendix 4 – Joe Camel