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Development, Voice, and Vulnerability: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Policy-Making Discourse Regarding the Paris Agreement as an Organizational Response to Climate Change

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POLICY-MAKING DISCOURSE REGARDING THE PARIS AGREEMENT AS AN

ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

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Abstract

On December 12, 2015, the Paris Agreement was officially ratified by 196 sovereign entities. This treaty represents a global call to action to ameliorate the impact of human activities on our environment, and it creates a means of cooperation through financial support and transparent industrial practices with the goal of promoting accountability across the world. This treaty and the discourse surrounding it present fertile ground for the academic understanding of persuasive practices in policy-making. By examining the rhetorical implications of the Paris Agreement as a global policy, scholars can gain new insight about the communities represented in the conversation as well as the power dynamics involved in the process. I argue that the Paris Agreement employs rhetorical frames that give voice to particular communities and results in a repackaging of imperialist, financial frameworks. I propose that the language and discourse used to construct this treaty showcases a series of strategies used to demarcate which communities have voice throughout this policy-making process. I examine this process through the theoretical lens of both voice and Interorganizational Authority (IA). The main themes analyzed in this dissertation are (1) the establishing of economic frames through "development" narratives, (2) the rhetorical construction of "leadership" within collaboration, and (3) the complexities of defining "vulnerability" in the context of a policy problem. I seek to further academic understanding of these dynamics by conducting a rhetorical analysis of the Paris Agreement as a text as well as examining U.S. Congressional and Presidential discourse surrounding the Agreement as an example of how one member party (that has fluctuated between joining and leaving the Agreement) conceptualizes its participation.

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Introduction: Rhetoric and Policy-Making in the Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement is an international treaty with the goal of reducing global warming by limiting the earth's temperature increase to below 2 degrees Celsius "compared to pre-industrial levels" (UNFCC). The Agreement—also referred to as the Paris Accords—was adopted in December of 2015 by 196 sovereign parties. This treaty calls for cooperative action among the parties including financial support and disclosure of practices with the goal of promoting accountability. This document and the discourse surrounding it present fertile ground for furthering academic understanding of rhetorical practices in policy making. By examining the rhetorical implications of the Paris Agreement as a global policy, scholars can gain new insight about the communities represented and the power dynamics involved in the process. I argue that the repercussions of the Paris Agreement are of global magnitude and that studying the rhetorics constructed around it will reveal a great deal of information regarding the power structures that the document upholds, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

In this dissertation, I address the need to examine the Paris Agreement as well as the policy discourse surrounding it as rhetorical texts. My goal is to present the argument that it is not only appropriate and fruitful, but necessary, to study the Paris Agreement and its implications on policy-making. I believe it is imperative that scholars highlight the role of rhetoric within policy-making and pay closer attention to the role of "voice" in decision-making processes. In my analysis, I argue that the Paris Agreement employs rhetorical frames that give voice to particular communities and results in a repackaging of imperialist, financial frameworks. I propose that the language and discourse used to construct this treaty showcases a series of strategies used to demarcate which communities have voice throughout this policy-making

process. I examine this process through the theoretical lens of both voice and Interorganizational Authority (IA).

The Paris Agreement is a major legislative landmark in environmental policy history worldwide, but it also holds a unique place in United States history. Environmental history in the United States can be understood through a breakdown of six major phases which will be covered in the first chapter of this dissertation. These phases outline how legislators have developed an understanding of important environmental terms such as "wilderness" and "navigable waters." Policies have also emerged to outline a body of jurisdictions designed to address environmental topics across the country. As scientific and legislative knowledge has increased many of these policies were revised to fit more contemporary interpretations.

The Paris Agreement rests within an international understanding that climate change is a global problem that requires collaboration from governing bodies all around the world. The US' understanding of this global issue is certainly informed by its legislative history as well as its larger relationship to foreign policy in general. Thus, after considering the historic legislative context from which the US may be approaching the international accords, I outline a methodology of examination beginning with a description of texts available for rhetorical analysis.

This methodology is based on the premise that discourse is at the heart of policy-making. Legislators come together as representatives of their constituents to discuss the multiplicity of policy problems that they have been entrusted to address. These government officials debate a wide range of topics in order to generate policy solutions and draft policies. I posit that policy-making is an inherently rhetorical act as it requires multiple actors to collaborate in order to coauthor official policies. Thus, "the rhetoric of government— what governments say, or

appear to say—is clearly a necessary and proper subject for the policy analyst" (Anderson, 2014, p. 295). Surely there are many factors that influence the outcome of a governmental decision. However, most significant policies pass through the chambers of Congress where policies are debated. These conversations are constitutionally made available to the public and provide a textual landscape for academic examination. Gring-Pemble (2001) has argued, "...congressional hearings and debates over welfare reform merit careful consideration by communication scholars because they provide insight into the policy formation process" (p. 342). I extend this argument to say that, not only welfare reform, but all policy merits further examination by both communication and policy studies scholars.

I turn my focus to two main channels of policy-making rhetoric in the United States, Congress and the President. I will describe the specifics of the texts selected for examination below. I approach this study with a critical awareness that there are existing power dynamics in the way that legislators operate and seek to further examine these relationships. As Robert Asen (2010) has stated, "...policies often enact and enforce symbolic hierarchies that unite and divide people, and synthesize and oppose values" (p. 128). Thus, it is of heuristic value for scholars to consider which symbolic hierarchies lie within the contents of the Paris Agreement.

I propose that a proper way of examining these power structures is through a theoretical lens centered on the importance of voice and interpreted through an understanding of Interorganizational Authority (IA). It is important to note that voice is only a metaphor for the ways in which agents are able to communicate and enact their perspectives in relation to others. Mussack (2022) and other scholars have discussed some of the implications of using voice as an inquisitive metaphor; scholars continue to complicate the nuances of voice in a conversation that

reaches far beyond this dissertation.[1] Thus, for the purposes of this paper I use "voice" to refer to rhetorical voice—the rhetorical concept ascribed to interlocutors in a discursive situation, as opposed to the sonic/communicative element often found in everyday speech. Therefore, I argue that the concept of voice is uniquely constructed to effectively understand how multiple parties communicate throughout decision-making processes. Additionally, I provide an introductory exploration of Interorganizational Authority (IA) as a method of interpretation. IA can allow scholars to approach Congress as an organization and the Paris Agreement as an international collaboration, thereby benefiting this study with the analytic tools of organizational communication theory.

Finally, this dissertation includes a conversation about the benefits of merging rhetorical and policy-making research, as well as provide theoretical considerations for further investigation. One of these important points of inquiry is the academic understanding of collaboration. It is important for academics to recognize that power structures function in complex ways and that it is possible to conceptualize scenarios where collaboration is limited to a performative act. With the reputation of the Paris Agreement as an international point of collaboration, this policy promises to be a deeply interesting document. Therefore, this dissertation presents the foundations necessary to examine the Paris Agreement by situating it within environmental history followed by an outline of the theoretical tools which were used in my analysis informed by rhetorical theory, communication theory, and policy studies.

The analytical chapters are broken down by their dominant frames that build on each other to assign roles and positions within the Agreement and, consequently, to grant and take

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[1] I am aware that the use of "voice" as a metaphor may yield possible ableist implications, including the connotation that "silence" could be an inherently negative predicament. I hope that the academic community continues to develop a better understanding of these concepts in ways that are productive for all thinkers alike. I use the term in alignment with literature on the topic with the acknowledgement that there are many ways to "voice" or express oneself and to have one's voice taken away or silenced.

away certain signatories' voices. The analytical chapters focus on (1) the establishing of economic frames through "development" narratives, (2) the rhetorical construction of "leadership" within collaboration, and (3) the complexities of defining "vulnerability" in the context of a policy problem. I conclude the dissertation by discussing the implications of the Paris Agreements' frames and its circulation in U.S. political discourse, propose future paths for research, and imagine what a more collaborative, non-hierarchical, and environmentally-focused international collaboration might look like.

Chapter 1: Environmental Policy History

Policy efforts to address climate change have grown significantly in the past few decades. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the United States' history of environmental policy. As one of the world's major polluters and a key participant in the Paris Agreement, the United States had a strong influence in the process of creating this Agreement and context for discourse about the Agreement I analyze from U.S. Congressional and Presidential sources. I provide a chronology of U.S. environmental policy followed by a consideration of policy tensions regarding the topic, concluding with a discussion highlighting the importance of this policy history.

Before I examine the history of U.S. environmental policy, I provide a brief description of the United Nations' international attempts to recognize the severity of climate change as a policy topic. The 1968 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was a significant starting point for the United Nations' efforts to address climate change. It set out to work with organizations to "review and make recommendations on climate change, including possible response strategies to delay, limit or mitigate the impact of climate change" (UN Chronicle, 2007).

As the relevance of climate issues grew, the United Nations created the United Framework Convention on Climate Change (UFCCC) at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. At this convention, the United Nations established Agenda 21 which highlighted the "protection of the atmosphere, establishing the link between science, sustainable development, energy development and consumption, transportation, industrial development, stratospheric ozone depletion and transboundary atmospheric pollution" (UN Chronicle, 2007). After Agenda 21 went into effect, the UN held the first Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP) in 1995 where the

Berlin Mandate was adopted. The Berlin mandate reinforced the importance of legislative action in addressing the issues of climate change that resulted in the creation of the Kyoto Protocol, "which opened for signature in March 1998, [then] came into force on 16 February 2005, seven years after it was negotiated by over 160 nations" (UN Chronicle, 2007). The Kyoto Protocol was successful in continuing the global conversation about addressing climate change but was rejected by China and other parties for being too restrictive and legally binding. The inability to include one of the world's major polluters was seen as a failure of the Protocol.

Decades after the IPCC had set out to address climate change globally, the United Nations was still in need of an international agreement that would gain the collaboration and buy-in of most major polluters. Thus, in 2015 the Conference of the Parties forged the Paris Agreement which had the remarkable support of 196 sovereign parties. Having briefly outlined the history of the UN's policy attempts toward environmentalism, I want to acknowledge the marginalization of certain groups through policy discussions in environmental policy.

Few policy problems seem to be as widely encapsulating as those that deal with the environment since every human on the planet is part of the affected group to some degree. And yet, in the same manner as many other policy discussions, environmental policy often perpetuates existing power structures. Conversations surrounding environmental policy often marginalize communities of color, low-income communities, and Indigenous populations. For instance, scholars have noted the constant "historicization" of Indigenous communities that prevents them from being seen as contemporary collaborators and participants:

> These statements center the past presence of Native people in the Bears Ears region, erasing or minimizing the vibrant lives of contemporary Native people. This historicization imposes a temporal boundary that excludes contemporary Native people

from participation in deliberation, instead relegating their role in justifying the monument

to the past. (Johnson, 2021, p. 8)

In this dissertation, I am interested in how policy-making may (in)advertently create exclusions

and barriers to participation, especially for already-marginalized groups. One way in which this

happens in environmental policy is by operating within a limited view of who counts as being a

part of the "American public." Thus, Johnson (2021) aptly proposes the question of "who is the

public in 'public land,' 'public participation,' and 'public good'" (p. 4). Issues of environmental

in/justice cannot be properly addressed without an understanding of who is at the center of these

policies, who these policies are designed by and for, and what the implications are of how those

policies are written. As outlined by Endres (2009), "rhetorical exclusion is employed by those in

power to 'foreclose debate without appearing to engage in undemocratic action'" (p. 46).

Oftentimes, gatekeeping cannot be explicitly stated due to it being deemed "undemocratic."

Instead, there are structures of "rhetorical exclusion" that uphold dominant narratives in ways

that make the power structure seem normal and natural.

It would be an understatement to say that land management is crucial to the American

ethos—and environmental policies are very much at the heart of this political power nexus

(Ceccarelli, 2013). Therefore, the formulation and development of environmental policy cannot

be detached from a country's colonial history. In a legislative environment where rhetorical

exclusion occurs, it is possible to consider how the heritage of colonial-settler practices may still

plague contemporary policy-making. Instead of challenging these oppressive systems, Caskey

Russell argues that "vast justification systems have been set up to keep colonizers from feeling

guilty" (cited in Endres, 2009, p.44). It is important to remember that these have been and

continue to be deliberate choices, whether or not policy-makers are aware of their upholding of existing power structures or participation in rhetorical exclusion.

For better or worse, environmental policy deliberations are a constitutive realm where the rhetorics employed by policy-makers are not only a direct representation of the historic structures that founded this country, but also have very real consequences regarding the distributions of power going forward. In what follows, I provide a general chronology of environmental policy-making in the United States and important tensions that have influenced this history. This chapter provides context for how the United States as a political body is participating in the Paris Agreement.

Chronology

From the 1940s to the 2000s, environmental policy has evolved and grown to encompass a wider range of environmental issues within the United States. I define "environmental policy" as any government measure "regarding the effects of human activities on the environment, particularly those measures that are designed to prevent or reduce harmful effects of human activities on ecosystems" (van Bueren, 2019). In speaking of environmental issues, I acknowledge areas regarding water conservation, wilderness preservation, agricultural practices, and the management of natural resources such as energy production as well as pollution and other effects caused by industrial practices on natural ecosystems.

Some analysts have suggested that U.S. policy developments can be best understood through six major chronological phases (Myers, 2013). While the titles of these major phases are disputed, there are overarching themes that can help inform an understanding of environmental policy. These six components roughly break down into the Common Law Era (pre-1945),

Federal Assistance to States (1945-1962), Rise of Modern Environmentalism (1962-1970), Federal Regulation (1979-1980), Updated Regulatory Strategies (1980-1990), and Regulatory Recoil & Reinvention (1991-Present). The overall progression of policies through these decades began with the establishing of federal guidelines, followed by supporting state regulations, and updating previous policies to address more contemporary needs.

Before the 1940s, environmental policies focused on conservation. Key U.S. policies include the Yellowstone Act of 1872 and the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. The Yellowstone Act was titled, "An Act to set apart a certain Tract of Land lying near the head-waters of the Yellowstone River as a public Park" and it officially established the first national park (Cramton, 1932). The Rivers and Harbors Act functioned as a "permit program to protect navigable waters in the development of harbors and other construction and excavation" (NOAA, 2022). In 1901 the Supreme court ruled over Missouri v Illinois and the Sanitary District of Chicago. This case was significant because it addressed the conversation about regulations on discharge of sewage. These were early efforts in environmental policy in the Common Law Era. These steps in policy history centered acts of conservation and set a foundation for future legislative approaches by establishing the importance of environmental preservation. These initial policy declarations inherently set a no-harm approach to land, water, and other areas demarcated as wilderness.

After 1945, the Federal government's efforts continued to expand. The Water Quality Act of 1948 was the "the first major U.S. law to address water pollution" and it sought to acknowledge and monitor pollutants as well as make it unlawful to contaminate navigable waters (EPA). The "First federal legislation involving air pollution" was the Air Pollution Control Act of 1955. It is worth noting that early policies were designed to address pollution which may be one of the more obvious "signs" of environmental degradation.

Arguably, the modernization of environmental policy in the US began in the 1960s. Two major pieces of legislation to start off this new era are the Clean Air Act of 1963 and the Wilderness Act of 1964. The Clean Air Act "authorized research into techniques for monitoring and controlling air pollution" and set up the early structures for future regulatory policies (EPA). The Wilderness Act of 1964 established an understanding of "wilderness" by outlining 9.1 million acres of land and began a deeper conversation about federal policy in action. At this time, policies laid the foundation for important rhetorical conceptualizations of nature. For instance, by defining what counts as wilderness, legislators could set a precedent for future policies. These legislative acts were also rhetorical acts that defined the US' understanding of nature and began to form the government's relationship with the ecosystems within the country's land.

Along with efforts of rhetorical significance, policies also served to determine jurisdictions and ways of operating that could affect future decisions. For instance, The Motor Vehicle Air Pollution Control Act of 1965 was "the first statute which gave the federal government regulatory power over air pollution" (Elliott, 1985). Then, on January 1, 1970, President Nixon signed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, n.d.) which "requires Federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of proposed major Federal actions prior to making decisions." Both NEPA and the Wilderness Act have a deep significance to the history of environmental policy in the United States. NEPA is considered a landmark piece of legislation sometimes referred to as the "'Magna Carta' of Federal environmental laws" (NEPA, n.d.). NEPA began to change the way in which policy decisions were made because it brought environmental impact into decision-making conversations.

One of the major contributions of the National Environmental Policy Act is its concern for environmental impact. Section 101 states that the federal policy ought to,

use all practicable means and measures, including financial and technical assistance, in a

manner calculated to foster and promote the general welfare, to create and maintain

conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the

social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans.

(NEPA, n.d.)

NEPA aims to go beyond a single policy action by establishing a set of guidelines for the federal

government to follow in developing future policy decisions. These are outlined in Section 102

and include understanding "environmental impact," "adverse effects that cannot be avoided,"

"alternatives," short-term and long-term "maintenance," and "irreversible and irretrievable" use

of resources (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)) (NEPA, n.d.). NEPA established a framework for thinking

and talking about policy decisions especially when directly addressing human impact on the

environment at large.

The Wilderness Act is another foundational policy of importance to environmental policy

in the United States. Its author, Howard Zahniser, is considered a legendary leader and an

influential thinker who developed 66 different drafts advocating for this bill but passed away just

months before it was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson (Wilderness Society, n.d.).

His work left a mark on the language used to discuss environmental policy as well as legislative

understanding of "wilderness." The Act's rhetoric speaks of cohabitation instead of domination.

This language is harmonious to Indigenous approaches to environmental policy from many eras

before. Zahniser states, "I believe we have a profound fundamental need for areas of the earth

where we stand without our mechanisms that make us immediate masters over our environment"

(Wilderness Society, n.d.). This rhetoric challenges the notion that all human activity is

inherently productive and worthy in the sense that it acknowledges nature's power to thrive without human intervention.

The 1970s ushered in a new era of environmental policy focused on establishing stronger regulatory infrastructures. The first National Earth Day was set on April 22, 1970, and served to signify the growing importance of the Earth as a rhetorical element for scientists, policy-makers, and citizens. Earth Day grants the planet an official space in the national conversation. How this space and time are used in relation to environmental policy is still up for debate as those with capitalist inclinations have co-opted Earth Day to be one more marketing tagline within their larger greenwashing scheme. Instead of serving as a reminder about the planet's needs in the public sphere, companies have found ways to profit off of it. However, the original passage of Earth Day did provide initial hope and carved out space in the national psyche for the planet as a "home." As Greenbie (1982) points out,

> This was shortly after man had landed on the Moon. We had our first glimpse of our earth as a small orb in infinite space, thus completing a revolution in human consciousness that began with Copernicus and Galileo and has since been eroding the Judeo-Christian hubris which gave man his delusion of dominance over all living things. (p. 5)

But as with many other national symbols and public memory rituals, Earth Day has arguably become more of a ceremonial practice than a policy-window of opportunity. In effect, it serves as an act of performance—a placeholder for truly consequential policy action.

Months after the first Earth Day was established, the EPA was officially formed by centralizing multiple government programs on December 2, 1970. This was followed by more significant policies such as the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, the Toxic Substances Control Act of

1976, and the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 among others.

The period between 1980 to 1990 brought about revisions to previous pieces of legislation as well as an expansion of jurisdiction. The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act was updated in 1984 to include efforts to minimize waste as well as protocols for treatment of hazardous waste (EPA). Other updates include revisions to the CERCLA and the SDWA in 1986, the CWA in 1987, and the CAA 1990. These developments include more serious deadlines as well as repercussions on agencies for failing to comply with regulations (Myers, 2013). 1986 also saw the Emergency Planning and Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) with hopes of generating more transparency and accountability. This was followed by the 1986 Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) which made States more involved in environmental policy as well as highlighted the severity of human health problems created by hazardous waste (EPA, n.d.). At the end of this policy era, Congress passed the US Oil Pollution Act of 1990, which was meant to "provide for coordinated immediate and effective protection, rescue, rehabilitation and minimization of risk of injury to fish and wildlife resources and habitat"(Henkel & Ziccardi, 2018).

This brief overview of past developments in environmental policy leads to the most contemporary phase of U.S. environmental policy-making from 1991 to the present, which is characterized by a lack of funding as well as regulatory recoil to remove powers from bodies such as the EPA (Myers, 2013). This period of time has been plagued by a series of major oil spills. Chang and colleagues (2014) argue that there are four outstanding potential policy and economic responses to oil spills. These are "port closure, brand campaigns, compensation payments, fishing moratoria" (Chang et al., 2014). The oil spills in this period of time showcase

a growing disregard from the private sector regarding harm to the environment. Even in Chang and colleagues' (2014) analysis of the consequences of various oil spills, financial repercussions are centered but not enough attention is given to the integrity of the planet as a consequence of these spills. The 1995 Unfunded Mandates Reform Act also addresses economic factors of policy issues by establishing that environmental policies that cost more than $100 million in a year require a series of documentation outlining a cost-benefit assessment among other factors (EPA, n.d.). Additionally, small businesses had struggled to keep up with growing regulations, so Congress passed the 1996 Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act to provide procedural guidelines for small businesses (OSHA, n.d.). This contemporary era of environmental policy in the US that focuses on economic framings over the environment is an important theme I analyze in the analytical chapters.

Tensions among stakeholders in policy-making have increased as economic interests interfere with environmental goals. Congress relies on their constitutional power to develop various environmental policies through the Commerce Clause in Article 1, Section 8. However, the way policies are made entails the participation of various parties which have increasingly included the participation of lobbyist groups and elite expert groups. As environmental policy originally developed in the United States, there was a rise in the professionalization of policy-making. Meyer (2017) noted, "Lawmakers of both parties believed that subject-matter experts in technical agencies could make better, more consistently up-to-date regulations than professional legislators." This speaks to the growing institutionalization of policy-making in the late 1900s.

Some policy actions attempted to maintain democratic approaches to environmental policy-making by outlining certain procedures. For instance, the Administrative Procedure Act

also mandates that Agencies allow for democratic participation by establishing a "notice and comment" period of time before enacting policies. However, the growing participation of additional parties such as the private sector has shown significant influence in the development of these policies. Additionally, executive agencies have developed techniques for establishing their policy ideas through what is known as the *doctrine of Chevron deference* which refers to "the idea that if a federal agency can come up with a plausible legal case for its regulation, then a court should let it stand—even if the courts don't think it's the best legal case" (Meyer, 2017). These tensions continue to grow throughout the deliberative process of environmental policy-making.

Importance of Environmental Policy History

Environmental history can provide a means of interpretation and a guide for how to navigate future ever-growing policy tensions. As Dovers (2000) states, "environmental history is argued to have potential as an antidote to policy amnesia and *ad hocery*" (p. 2). These scholars bring up the strong and necessary argument that history has an active place in policy-making. Oftentimes, policy-making is approached through a logistical or utilitarian sense which sidelines its historical context. Consider this critique of a recurrent policy-making strategy provided by Pülzl and Treib (2007) in which they wrote that contemporary policy-making approaches largely "neglect the social and historical context in which change occurs. This problem is addressed by discourse analysts, who argue that discourses shape actors' perceptions and may thus influence political elites' interpretation of social events" (p. 96). Another example is provided by Biccum (2005) who demonstrates this in the context of policy-making meant to address poverty. He argues, "Poverty exists with no historical links, no reason is offered as a causal for poverty's

existence, rather it is posited as a 'new' global challenge/threat that seems to exist for the sake of its legitimate eradication by the developed world" (Biccum, 2005, p. 1017). We cannot advocate for an ahistorical approach to policy, but must understand the history of policy as a necessary step in the development of future policy and policy studies scholarship.

As is appropriate for the study of policy-making processes, Dovers (2000) argues that "perception, problem definition, and policy change become targets of environmental history inquiry" (p. 3). Knowledge of this history serves to inform academic analysis of policy-making. Just as policy-making is a dynamic process involving a multifaceted approach which is shaped by a variety of voices throughout the process, the study of policy also requires an awareness of multiple academic perspectives. As Dovers (2000) noted, "environmental history cannot be allowed to be a sub-discipline; it must be an interdisciplinary arena" (p. 3). Similarly, policy analysis also requires an interdisciplinary awareness of historical and rhetorical influences in the policy-making process and as a way to evaluate policy-making's implications and potential consequences.

Chapter 2: Texts and Methodology

In order to understand the rhetorical implications of policy-making deliberations, I analyze the discourse of the Paris Agreement, transcripts of Congressional discourse on the topic, and transcripts of U.S. presidential speeches regarding the Agreement. The transcripts were selected from three specific time windows related to the US' adoption, rejection, and re-adoption of the Paris Agreement through various presidencies. I analyze these discourses with the goal of interpreting the underlying power dynamics at play among the communities involved in global environmental decision-making. These deliberations reflect the power dynamics of various communities that can be seen through tensions among so-called "developed" countries and so-called "developing" countries, which are categories I interrogate in my analysis.

My main goal is to develop a deeper understanding of voice, including where and how it operates within policy decision-making. I thus focus on which communities are active participants in these deliberations, and how policy-making rhetoric attributes legislative agency to particular actors and limits others from participating. I am interested in which communities are directly and indirectly included in these deliberations—directly as discussion participants and indirectly as spoken for or about by others. I am also interested in which communities are excluded from these conversations altogether. In addition to voice within the conversations, I am also interested in how communities are constructed, discussed, and validated as (in)appropriate contributors to environmental policy-making.

In this chapter, I elaborate on why my focus on rhetoric and organizational collaboration in environmental policy-making is important, define the texts to be examined in more detail, and provide an outline of my methodological approach through the theory of voice and Interorganizational Authority.

Justification

       Policy deliberations reflect the complex power dynamics within particular nation-states. The passage of a bill can shed light on whose problems are worth solving. Deliberations that occur when debating policy solutions can demonstrate which particular communities have agency. Although legislation is usually designed to solve a particular problem or set of problems, it can also have ripple effects that impact the citizenry in multiple ways in terms of restricting access, resources, and rights or enabling them, and setting precedents for future policies. An individual's economic stability, healthcare options, transportation access, or their relational status and reproductive rights may all be impacted by legislative decisions. In an ideal world, we would hope that policy-makers are working for the improvement of every citizen's life, but the reality is much messier. Indeed, current events in the US show that some legislative attempts aim to exclude and restrict others, such as bans on gender-affirming health care for trans youth or racially sensitive school materials. For these reasons, it is paramount that members of the public and scholars alike consider the implications of decision-making policy processes.

       While a nation-state's policy decisions primarily affect the members of that nation-state, when two or more nation-states collaborate to form a treaty or international agreement, their conversations have international implications. The Paris Agreement is a quintessential example of international agreements that includes 196 nation-states. The implications of this Agreement are far-reaching not only due to the nature of its subject matter being the disastrous effects of global climate problems, but also because of its large international collaborative scope. The effects of this global policy can and will have an impact on local policies all around the world as well as being symbolic in the world's purported dedication to environmental advocacy. The Paris

Agreement holds historic significance in the progress and preservation of human and more-than-human life as the likelihood of forestalling the worst consequences of climate change goes from implausible to downright abysmal. This policy marks an important checkpoint in legislative attempts to address the problems caused by human activity on the planet.

The Paris Agreement, as an international accord, may fall into the trap of universalism that generalizes climate issues across communities (Rudiak-Gould, 2013). It is important, however, to remember that climate change does not affect everyone equally (Holifield, Chakraborty, & Walker, 2017). Issues of environmental injustice provide a more local and timely perspective regarding the significance of the Paris Agreement. Scholars have pointed out the prevalence of environmental racism that often results from policies that fail to serve minoritized communities. For instance, waste and pollution management, industrial regulatory practices, and preservation efforts have often failed to protect Black, Indigenous, and communities of color in general. Environmental policy-makers have designated certain spaces, namely those occupied by communities of color and Indigenous communities as "sacrifice zones" that are suitable for hazardous waste dumping that affects physical and mental health (Endres, 2012). The generating of policy "solutions" should be questioned when those policies only serve a specific subsection of the citizenry—namely, White, cisgender, male, able-bodied, and middle- and upper-class groups.

Thus, I am interested in asking regarding policy deliberation: whose problems are worth solving and how are these problems being solved? How are problems conceptualized and described and what worldviews do those represent or exclude? Who has the power to define a "problem" and therefore a "solution" to that problem? Who is given the power, agency, and leadership positions to address these problems? Who and what influences the answers to these

questions? This project focuses on the underlying logics that guide the answers to these questions and thus how policy-making restricts and enables voice and collaboration on an international level with the potential to affect populations all around the world and generations to come.

Texts

There is much discourse in and about deliberations around the Paris Agreement. Drawing a boundary around the Agreement's various rhetorics is a choice based on my key research questions and making a feasible project. McGee (1990) argued that the primary role of scholars is the collection of materials due to the "fragmentation" of culture. Scholars cannot consider any text "finished" or "whole," but must instead construct "discourses from scraps and pieces of evidence" that McGee (1990) calls "fragments" (p. 279). In this vein, I am interested not only in the "apparently finished" text of the Paris Agreement, but also the "relationships" between the text and its political context, sources, and influences (McGee, 1990, p. 280).

In addition to analyzing the text of the 27-page Paris Agreement, which was retrieved from the United Nation's website, I also analyze the circulating U.S. discourse around its membership status. Moments of rupture and modification to the Paris Agreement can be useful moments to analyze the negotiation of participants, values, and problems/solutions in one the Paris Agreement's major signatories. Consequently, the scope of this project focuses on the three major moments of the US's changing participation in the agreement. Although the Paris Agreement was originally drafted on December 12, 2015, the US officially ratified the agreement on September 3, 2016 under President Barack Obama. Then in June 2017, President Donald Trump announced that the US would leave the agreement. The agreement required a span of three years after ratification before a country could resign from its commitment, so Trump's

decision did not take effect until November 4, 2020. The US re-joined the treaty on February 19, 2021 under President Biden. These three moments are significant as they provide the most relevant time periods for deliberations regarding the reasons to join or leave the agreement by US presidents.

I used the White House archives found at whitehouse.gov to access presidential speeches specifically addressing the Paris Agreement by using the search engine to select the term "Paris agreement." I am only selecting remarks that center the Paris Agreement as the main topic of discussion. The resulting speeches by President Obama are: his official remarks at the First Session of COP21, an official statement on December 12, 2015, and another official statement on October 5, 2016. President Trump's speeches are: Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord on June 1, 2017. While Trump mentioned climate change and the Paris Agreement in other forums, this was his most direct acknowledgment of the country's involvement in the agreement. President Biden's speeches are: his official remarks at the COP26 Leaders Statement on November 01, 2021, and "Remarks by President Biden Before Signing Executive Actions on Tackling Climate Change, Creating Jobs, and Restoring Scientific Integrity" on January 27, 2021.

In addition to analyzing major speeches about the Paris Agreement by Obama, Trump, and Biden, I also gathered the transcripts of Congressional deliberations by searching the official Congressional records online archive for the term "Paris Agreement," and utilizing the relevancy filter to select the top results. Based on the aforementioned legislative windows of adopting, leaving, and re-adopting, I selected archives from a month leading up to and after US decisions on the agreement: specifically, the timeframes of August 3-October 3, 2016, May 1-July 1, 2017, and January 19-March 19, 2021. During this time, legislators bring to the forefront various

concerns regarding climate change policy in general, but this project will solely focus on arguments specific to the Paris Agreement in order to maintain feasibility.

I analyze these assorted texts through a rhetorical, qualitative methodology interested in the language used to justify, condemn, and modify the US's participation in the Paris Agreement, include and exclude certain groups, and navigate the US's role in global environmental decision-making.

Where Communication Meets Policy-Making

Research on policy-making tends to include a broad scope around the processes that affect problem-seeking, solution-generating, and implementation of policy. Conceptual frameworks such as the "policy cycle" and theories such as "multiple streams" have provided a foundation for many scholars to consider the multiplicity of factors that affect processes of policy-making. Capano and Pritoni (2020) describe the policy as "usually divided into five stages: agenda setting, formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation" (p. 5). However, as policy scholarship has progressed these initial theories have become too simplistic for the nuanced examination of complex policy-making processes.

The reality of decision-making is a fluid construction of discourses that arise across and throughout the cycles in ways that are not rigid enough for the theory to interpret. Howlett and colleagues (2014) noted that "Public policy as a discipline has gained much momentum from two eminent metaphors with strong analytical appeal – 'stages/cycles' and 'multiple' streams–yet both have been criticised [*sic*] for lacking political realism" (p. 419). Wyatt's (2015) argues that studying policy-making through cycles, stages, and streams is hindering because, "the problem with this approach is that this kind of static description does not represent a process at all" (p.

44). As Sabatier argues (2019), "The conclusion seems inescapable: The stages heuristic has outlived its usefulness and needs to be replaced with better theoretical frameworks." (p. 7). While it is important to understand the components before and after policy deliberations, more attention must be given to the deliberative process that generates actual policy. If the policy process is to be thought of as problems put into a solution-generating box which then results in action, then this project seeks to examine the intricacies of the solution-generating box—as a rhetorical process. This begins by acknowledging that, in a discursive society, so-called solutions are generated via deliberative practices. And in order to understand policy-making it is necessary to examine how these deliberations occur, which necessitates a turn to the rhetorical and communicative components of policy-making.

My focus on policy-making through collaboration and communication begins by acknowledging that frameworks in policy research can often be either too simplistic or too dispersed. In frameworks such as the "policy cycle" complexities may be oversimplified for the sake of understanding. The cycle and similar concepts have been critiqued for their inability to account for real-world decision-making. For instance, Fischer and colleagues (2017) note that "policy-making appears to be too straightforward; the whole process is reduced to initiating and continuing programs" (p. 56). On the other hand, theories such as "multiple streams" propose too wide of a scope for significant explanatory depth. These conversations paint a picture of policy-making as accessible from a variety of strategies outlining numerous players, scenarios, motives and other factors resulting in a perspective that is too circumstantial for theoretical exploration.

In response to these concerns, scholars have asked "which role do parties… interest groups, single agencies, or scientific communities play?" (Fischer et al., 2017, p. 58). In an effort

to begin the search for a more cohesive understanding of policy-making, scholars have pointed their attention toward the importance of discourse. For instance, Gring-Pemble (2001) claims that "…congressional hearings and debates over welfare reform merit careful consideration by communication scholars because they provide insight into the policy formation process" (p. 342). The turn to policy debates suggests a promising arena regarding the exploration of policy formulation as problem-solving, communication as collaborative group work, and the persuasive techniques used in group decision-making and those implications.

While policy studies have established an array of quantitative approaches, I believe that qualitative techniques are uniquely equipped for examining discourse. Robert Asen (2010a) argues that "…the rhetorical study of policy demands a qualitative, critical perspective" (p. 2). Discourse analysis is essential for the development of policy scholarship. Thus, "the rhetoric of government—what governments say, or appear to say—is clearly a necessary and proper subject for the policy analyst" (Anderson, 2015, p. 295).

Asen (2010a) points to two main questions regarding rhetoric and policy, "the place of rhetoric in the policy domain, and the rhetorical study of policy" (pp. 1-2). This project is concerned with both the role of rhetoric in policy-making and the rhetoric of policies that are authored in these chambers. First, the role of rhetoric refers to the persuasive techniques apparent in policy deliberations. For instance, the language and narratives used in deliberating policies can set roles, expectations, and priorities. Second, policies themselves are rhetorical constructions that reflect the values, commitments, and histories of the policy-makers. In this project, the first aspect refers to the deliberations surrounding the Paris Agreement and the second aspect refers to the actual Agreement itself.

Even though there are many influencing factors that affect policy outcomes, discursive elements are at the heart of policy formulation, and justification. Especially within democratic governments who seek to represent a wide net of constituents, policy deliberations are not straightforward or predetermined. With a diversification of ideas, it is apparent that consensus is not an easy place to reach, nor is consensus necessarily always desired if certain groups are not able to have their voice in the deliberations. Thus, "Face-to-face deliberation is hard to sustain in larger deliberative systems, so rhetoric may play a much greater role in these larger systems" (Chambers, 2009, p. 350). Although there certainly are many influential factors to how policy solutions are designed, rhetoric is paramount to policy-making. It behooves scholars to further investigate the role of language and its potentially unrecognized implications within democratic legislative processes.

Methodological Approach

The main theoretical framework utilized to examine these texts is a combination of rhetorical theory of voice and Interorganizational Authority (IA) (Rice, 2022). I use this interpretive framework to examine the collected data from an organizational communication perspective informed by the importance of language in creating policy. I observe policy-makers as communicative agents within a legislative organization. Although Congress may not be perceived as a typical organization such as a business, it has the foundational components of a collaborative decision-making space. Congress brings together a variety of representatives whose stakeholders have different goals and priorities. This can produce complicated tensions not only about the organization's goals but also about the processes in which these tensions are addressed.

I believe that organizational theory has the capacity to consider the dynamics of Congressional decision-making.

In order to outline an appropriate approach to policy studies, it is useful to acknowledge the contributions of scholars who have laid the foundation for such a feat. For example, Zarefsky (2007) argued that "to view a question of public policy as a problem of rhetoric, then, is to focus on the creation and exchange of symbols through which issues are perceived, defined, addressed, and resolved" (p. 10). The creation and exchange of symbols can be similarly understood as the expression and acknowledgment of a speaker's perspective. For instance, policy legitimizes a series of protocols, national symbols, and also every-day cultural expectations for its citizens. The ways in which these national policies are formulated is a process of negotiation among representatives from various communities.

Conversations regarding the Paris Agreement present an opportunity for an examination surrounding authority and voice in environmental problem-solving. Within these deliberations, scholars might observe the power dynamics at play regarding both identity and legitimacy. Entry to policy deliberations arguably determines legitimacy. Participants in policy deliberations are also coauthors of their legislative body's identity. Furthermore, which communities get to participate in policy deliberations of global importance bestow legitimacy in a global landscape; how these interactions occur also demonstrates the identities involved. This includes the inward struggle to define the U.S. American identity through inclusion/exclusion of various communities, and the outward struggle to define a U.S. American identity of global leadership.

Voice

As an inquisitive lens I am most interested in the concepts of voice, how policy-making is a process of collaborative decision-making, and the role that critical power dynamics play in how voice is leveraged in policy decisions. My application of voice is guided by Eric King Watts' (2001) definition as "the enunciation and the acknowledgment of the obligations and anxieties of living in community with others" (p. 180). Voice serves as evidence of presence. Additionally, Watts' (2001) definition suggests that voice does not occur in a vacuum or isolated state: "Rather than conceptualize 'voice' as strictly a possession of the subject or an effect of the linguistic, I posit the concept of 'voice' as a relational phenomenon occurring in discourse" (p. 180). Voice demonstrates the existence of a particular body in a particular situation as both enunciated or expressed in some way *and* as acknowledged by others. For instance, if someone is granted presence in a conversation, that does not necessarily mean they have voice is their presence, contribution, and identity is not acknowledged or valued by others. Voice is thus a reflection of agency. A body (e.g., an individual or representative group) is able to express themselves if they have the power to do so—if they have voice.

The first part of Watts' definition is the "enunciation" of obligations and anxieties, which I refer to as an utterance of grievances. There is something significant about uttering grievances as opposed to other types of expressions. Consider how an oppressor might not have any problem with its subjects talking about the joys of living in their current state because those expressions do not necessarily challenge the status quo. However, expressing the grievances of living within an oppressive state can be interpreted as a form of dissent that may at the very least question the status quo. Thus, the expression of grievances is a crucial component of having voice. The second component, and perhaps more crucial part, is the "acknowledgment" of such

"obligations and anxieties" (King Watts, 2001, p. 180). This means that the rhetorical concept of voice is not only the communicative expression of a body's grievances but is also the acknowledgement of those grievances by the participating interlocutors.

Therefore, voice is relational because it requires interactions between individuals and groups; voice is communal in its forging. Rhetorically, voice "is a *sign* of a set of cultural meanings or stands for the body of an interpretive community" (King Watts, 2001, p. 183, original emphasis). This means that there is a cohesive body represented by the voice that speaks. However, not everyone within that body may agree on the set of cultural meanings expressed by the particular voice. For example, the United States has a voice in foreign policy that is largely Western-centric and patriarchal, which is not representative of marginalized and resistive communities within the United States. In other words, although the US' voice in foreign policy is patriarchal, it does not mean that every US citizen has agreed on the principles of patriarchy. But it does mean that when the US enunciates as a political and policy-making body that its voice is patriarchal.

A body's voice is representative of its values, ideas, intricacies, and idiosyncrasies. While we think of a voice as coming from an individual body, we can also conceptualize a "body" as a group of individuals in communion with each other. For instance, individuals who are part of a mainstream or dominant culture have the ability to express their experiences and perspectives in a way that is valid within the conversation. Their grievances and anxieties are heard, acknowledged, and understood within public discourse because they have agency in that social space. However, any individual whose utterance is contrary to that of the dominant culture—or dominant narrative, in the case of U.S. policymaking White, western, cis-hetero, patriarchal, upper class, capitalist—in a conversation may not be considered serious, valid, factual, or

worthy, and thus may be summarily dismissed or denied epistemic justice (Fricker, 2007). This is because voice is a direct reflection of the public's socially constructed understanding of their nation-state (and the world more broadly). In this social construction, the dominant discourse is the correct interpretation, and the rest is marginalized.

This means that "voicelessness" can be both the inability to express oneself as well as the invalidation of one's utterances. For instance, a group with power may have the ability to mute other groups by keeping them from expressing their grievances, or by invalidating those grievances. This disciplining of voice or "silencing" may occur by restraining others from creating utterances altogether or by denouncing any utterance that is contrary to the hegemonic script. In the first case, a particular marginalized group has no channel or manner of expressing their grievances altogether. In the second case, a marginalized group may be shouting into the void because none of their grievances are considered valid within the conversation—therefore they are not acknowledged. Silencing occurs when a group with power, especially an oppressive group, impedes the utterance of another group or invalidates their expressions. Silencing can be systematic and may occur in a variety of ways, but it is often done under the semblance of what is normal, historical, or traditional, or in more overt ways in order to keep marginalized groups from gaining voice. If groups do not have voice in policy-making, they do not have legislative power.

Voice as legislative agency is particularly important in policy-making because of the constructive nature of discourse. The act of legislating in democratic and representative structures is inherently discursive. Goodnight (2010) claims that "public policy argument may be understood as a productive, situated, communication process where advocates engage in justifying and legitimating public interest" (p. 66). This places policy-making as a rhetorical act.

By extension, policy-making can now be examined as the rhetorical process of de/legitimization of a system of values by which multiple communities are bound. Dominant and subordinate community relations are established through this process of policy-making—which can be seen as the struggle to define values. For instance, policy defines "marriage" thereby de/legitimizing heteronormativity as the dominant system of values by which all citizens are bound. Thus, the rhetoric of policy-making outlines a governing body's power structures.

Scholars have previously examined ways in which silencing occurs. Watts (2001) notes two "forces that mute 'voice'" being that of "rationalism and scientism" (p. 183). As previously mentioned, "rhetorical exclusion" (Endres, 2009, p. 46) may occur when perspectives are not allowed to be spoken in a deliberative space but may also occur through the dismissal of narratives that are not considered "valid." This means that by defining what counts as "rational" or "scientific," dominant groups can systematically silence opposing narratives which are marginal to their definitions by demarcating them outside the realm of rational and scientific.

Dominant groups delegitimize oppositional narratives by holding power over definitions of what is "rational," and may thereby relegate alternative perspectives as irrational, misinformed, primitive, or unqualified. The forces of scientism and rationalism serve as disguises for the dominant group's system of values because they are considered objective. These forces function because they are understood to come from "...anonymous no ones who speak from nowhere. Such as a rationalist language system privileges Anglo-American masculinity as a universal construct and disavows the lived accounts of women, people of color, and homosexuals" (King Watts, 2001, p. 183). In a similar sense, policy may be seen as the product of objective anonymous actors whose wise decision-making seeks to preserve a natural sense of

order. This sense of "order," however, is far from natural and is instead the rhetorical product of individuals who seek to validate their own system of values into law.

Consider for a moment the implications of defining objectivity, be it in policy-making or other fields. For instance, Prescod-Weinstein (2020) presents the notion of "white empiricism" as a way of establishing and perpetuating Eurocentric values through science. She states, "white empiricism is the phenomenon through which only white people (particularly white men) are read has having a fundamental capacity for objectivity and Black people (particularly Black women) are produced as an ontological other" (Prescod-Weinstein, 2020, p. 421). By attributing objectivity to whiteness, fields that claim to be based on objectivity are inherently inclined to give voice to those with proximity to whiteness. This is important because it begins to demonstrate how voice and voicelessness occur as a result of rhetorical systems of credibility. Thus, Prescod-Weinstein's (2020) central argument "is that white empiricism limits who is authorized to make claims about physics and that this is damaging to physics and alters its empirical direction" (p. 439). I argue that in a similar manner, policy-making attributes credibility to some communities over others under the guise of "objectivity" or "effective" policy-making, which can amplify the voices of some and restrict the voices of others.

How and where these nexuses of credibility lie requires further exploration, but the path for this inquiry has already begun. Consider Lorraine Code's (1998) discussion on Anglo-American "epistemology makers":

I am framing my discussion with questions about voice and voicelessness to emphasize and "make strange" the disembodied, disconnected—hence un-storied, non-discursive—character of the versions of Anglo-American epistemology I have outlined in other chapters of this volume: theories that are spoken from nowhere and as if

by no one in particular. No one voices the assumptions and problems of these theories; no

one's voice is heard in the exemplary knowledge claims around which they are built; and

no one is answerable for their effects in people's lives. (p. 155)

The "knowledge" of Anglo-American male authors has been removed from their identity to a

certain extent with the pretense that their identity is irrelevant because their findings are

objective—therefore, reliable. However, when a racialized individual observes, studies, writes,

argues, or analyzes, their knowledge is not assumed to be objective or rational. Fricker (2007)

has explored similar dynamics by outlining the concept of "testimonial injustice." She notes that

testimonial injustice happens when "the influence of identity prejudice is a matter of one party or

parties effectively controlling what another party does—preventing them, for instance, from

conveying knowledge—in a way that depends upon collective conceptions of the social identities

in play" (p. 28).

When people are marked as capable of voice, testimony, and rationality, they are

rhetorically empowered and have rhetorical agency. Conversely, those marked as incapable,

marginalized, irrational, and exposed to testimonial injustice are rhetorically excluded or

impaired. Rhetorical impairment is a violent act that is normalized in everyday life—but it is

violence, nonetheless. Rhetorical impairment may occur through seemingly innocuous means. It

may arise from seemingly banal rituals of patriotism (Billig, 2005), or through traditional

aesthetic practices. However, these exact patriotic acts serve to reinforce White supremacist

values and capitalist structures. As Billig (2005) notes,

Whereas ordinary citizens may fail to observe the national symbols on the stamps that

they are affixing to their letters or on the banknotes that they are spending in shops, it is

less forgivable that social theorists should routinely be so unobservant. Social scientists

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have concealed the nationalism of Western nations by labelling it positively as 'patriotism', which they contrast favourably, but unjustifiably, with the 'nationalism' of others. (p. 3)

Banality as an oppressive tool of hegemony takes various forms throughout everyday life. For instance, even the celebration of particular aesthetic moments can function to uphold and perpetuate a gender binary and heteronormative expectations. A patriotic ritual consisting of singing the national anthem can communicate the values of White supremacy when verses of such anthem contain references to slavery and anyone who protests during the song is silenced, rejected, stigmatized.

Scholars should question texts that purport to operate based on what is natural, normal, objective, or rational, especially when these definitions operate to favor only certain groups in particular over others. The establishment and perpetuation of objectivity in this case shows a system of beliefs used to uphold systems of power. Endres (2009) argues how, "current models of public participation also define what counts as legitimate arguments—scientific and technical arguments—and exclude social, political, and emotional arguments" (p. 47). In this way, it is possible to see how the knowledge of marginalized individuals can be dismissed, and how "silencing" can occur through rhetorical systems developed and designed to uphold whiteness among other oppressive forces and restrict appropriate ways of collaboration and participating.

In my analysis, I use notions of voice, voicelessness, demarcation, credibility, and testimonial injustice to analyze how "rhetorical boundaries" emerge in the discourse of the Paris Agreement. Rhetorical boundaries are constructed exclusionary systems that influence the legislative decision-making process by adjudicating what counts as objective, appropriate, and valid.

Interorganizational Authority

Whereas my consideration of voice is representative of a particular body, the body in question within this project is that of global leadership and United States legislators—namely, the United Nations as a legislative body and the U.S. legislative and executive branches. I mainly focus on the Paris Agreement in the context of the United Nations but also dive into U.S. legislative discourse due to the country's significant role in the Agreement. I pair rhetorical theory with organizational communication theory to examine power structures as emergent from organizational discourse. Scholars in organizational communication have the expertise of accounting for deliberative spaces where multiple tensions are constantly at play.

I specifically draw upon Rebecca Rice's concept of Interorganizational Authority (IA) to understand these processes of decision-making. Under the perspective of IA, power flows where communication happens. Conversations become a hub for power-generation, distribution, and negotiation. Rice (2021) elaborates that, "collaboration is *constituted* through talk–communication accomplishes the steps of creating and maintaining collaborations" (p. 12). The United Nations, as well as the U.S. legislative and executive branches function as organizations with values, goals, ways of being, and acting, which are constituted through communication. At the national level, Congress is a collective group, similar to how an organization or business might speak with one voice. This body formally expresses itself in terms of policy. Thus, the policies enacted by a legislative body are its voice and are enacted as policy through organizational collaboration and deliberation.

An internal consideration of how these legislative chambers operate provides an opportunity to examine the process by which voice is established. In order to understand voice in

the Paris Agreement, I am interested in examining the rhetorical traces of collaboration and disagreement through which the United Nations creates a unified voice on environmental issues. In other words, I am interested in both the rhetorical dimensions of boundary-making and the organizational communication dimensions of how legislators deliberate and collaborate throughout policy-making processes. In sum, the United Nations' legislative voice is understood by the policies that its legislative body produces (i.e., the policies enacted by the Conference of the Parties). In this case, the Paris Agreement is a legislative utterance to the rest of the world that represents the UN's values and beliefs on the environment and global leadership.

Rice (2021) argues that "organizations themselves are composed of (and are themselves) authoritative texts, abstractions that stand in for the organization's values, goals, and practices and guide future conversations" (p. 6). This is harmonious with my interpretation of voice as a representation of a body's values and beliefs. Instead of viewing authority only as a coercive force that gives "commands," Rice (2021) conceptualizes authority as "the ability to influence the organization's goals, actions, and identity" (p. 6). Considering that legislative environments are highly sensitive to political climates and change through time, approaching a group of legislators—as well as the policies that they yield—as authoritative texts set a boundary that allows scholars to read these texts within their given context. Because I am also interested in moments of rupture and change in the US' decisions to join and leave the Paris Agreement, my gathered discursive fragments consider the US' arguments in relation to international environmental collaboration. This also invites a consideration of Vangen and Huxham (2003) who examine how "collaborative thuggery" arises when participants seek leadership or influence to advance their own agenda:

Much power and influence can be exercised on the direction of the collaboration through

definition of issues and creation and dissemination of text (Lawrence, Phillips and Hardy,

1999). Inevitably therefore, partnership managers will influence which, and the way in

which, substantive issues become part of the joint efforts. (p.70)

Examining U.S. rhetoric provides an opportunity to observe arguments in favor and against

collaboration in the US's response to the Paris Agreement. Through this lens, both U.S.

deliberations as well as the Paris Agreement itself can be read as authoritative texts with

rhetorical implications.

Within the theoretical lens of IA, it becomes possible to trace the establishment and

perpetuation of power through communicative exchanges. This is an especially befitting tool

considering that policy is power that is legitimized and determined through discursive

deliberations. These discussions happen within the arena of the Conference of the Parties

internationally and legislative and executive branches at the national level. These groupings are

government organizations composed of elected officials that are meant to represent the priorities

of their constituents. Understanding the United Nations as an organization allows scholars to

view it through the lens of organizational communication theory. Thus, "for organizational

communication scholars, organizations are instead a communicative struggle among multiple

voices and perspectives that inform our very identities" (Rice, 2021, p. 18). My main concern

when approaching policy-making rhetoric is how these differing perspectives operate in creating

an organizational voice that is reflected in the passage of policy, and how this might inform a

general understanding of the organization's identity, who is seen as having voice and who is not

validated as a collaborator.

One way to think about who has voice in policy deliberations is to explore who has the authority to express their perspective, lead discussion, and influence policy outcomes. Rebecca Rice (2021) proposes that "authority is created in the accumulation of various sources of authority that can be deployed in member interactions and accepted by others in everyday conversations" (p. 38). There is no one way to claim authority in a collaboration. Indeed, negotiating authority and voice happens in legislative spaces where there are different opinions, goals, and ideological perspectives that contribute to growing tensions, especially in our current polarized political climate. Especially in a democracy, authority is derived from the acknowledgment of other group members. This means that authority is not assumed simply because someone within a group holds a particular title, instead scholars should consider more closely how the other group members might interpret that title and interact with it.

As Rice (2021) argues, "organizational members do not 'have' authority; instead, they are granted authority when their account of the organization is accepted in interaction with others" (p. 6). Granted, this assumes that other group members have the freedom and capacity to speak freely enough to acknowledge this authority. This is most likely the case in a democratic chamber, however it is likely that in an authoritarian state of affairs group members might be more pressured to always acknowledge the authority of whoever has the power to force them into submission. However, even in a dictatorial state, one might observe that group members can reject the authority of a tyrant—though they may have to pay heavy consequences for doing so.

Regardless, within the current context, the UN operates under an assumption of collaboration where members might use persuasive strategies to attain the acknowledgment and compliance of other members. As Kuhn and Pfarrer (2012) note, "Communication has the capacity to constitute and sustain complex organizational forms like XSPs [cross-sector

partnerships] that display value through their collective agency—their ability to have a meaningful impact on the people, organizations, and issues involved in a given problem domain" (Kuhn & Pfarrer, 2012, p. 350). One of the goals of this project is to examine these sources of authority and how they are legitimized through member interactions and collaboration (i.e., policy-making).

The UN is a unified body in and of itself but it is also composed of multiple members who represent various communities and numerous constituents. Policy-makers deliberate the multiple perspectives that they seek to represent while they design policy. Thus, there is no assumption that all decision-makers are inherently unified by the nature of being in the same group. Rather, this is a group whose nature is to consider a multiplicity of perspectives in order to designate power. IA can consider these dynamics within its conceptualization of cumulative authority: "term cumulative authority points our attention to the ways that authority *accumulates* multiple (often simultaneous) authors and agents" (Rice, 2021, p. 9, original emphasis). Considering the multivocal nature of policy-making groups as an organization is useful in understanding scenarios where multiple communities are represented. The next step is to examine exactly how these communities influence the outcome of a policy deliberation.

An additional concept to consider here is that of performative collaboration. Performative collaboration is what occurs when perspectives are given a superficial, perhaps even ceremonial treatment, but do not have a significant influence on the outcome of an organization's decisions. One way to make sense of this is by considering the difference between diversity and equity. An organization may be composed of a very diverse group of individuals, but it can still fail to give all of its members equal power or equal opportunity to influence the organization's goals. To put it simply, a legislative body may be composed of a majority or sizeable number of women

legislators but that does not guarantee that women's reproductive rights will necessarily be defended and protected. In this scenario, while this legislative body may be considered "diverse," it can still uphold patriarchal values that subjugate its own individual members and constituents.

Thus, it is important to interrogate how organizations present themselves and "perform" collaboration but may in fact discipline voice and uphold hegemonic assumptions. In organizational communication literature, there is "the assumption that collaborative relationships 'tend to emphasize equality'" (Rice, 2021, p. 7). However, simply because a collaboration is "successful" (i.e., passes legislation or takes action regarding an international agreement), does not mean that all interested parties and stakeholders had a voice or were able to collaborate equally in decision-making. In performative collaboration, individuals and groups may be included in a conversation in superficial ways but have no actual influence on the outcome. This is significant because it can help scholars reframe what "silencing" looks like theoretically. Academics should not assume that exclusion from a conversation is the primary form of "silencing." Especially in a world where policy spaces are increasingly diverse, it is paramount for academics to highlight that the distribution of power is not always proportionate or equal, which may create rhetorical exclusions even in policy documents that appear to be representative and collaborative.

Conclusion

My blending of rhetorical theory, organizational communication, and public policy studies yields a uniquely befitting methodology for the examination of policy-making within democratic governments. In this chapter, I have presented a number of reasons why scholars must pay more attention to the communicative elements within policy processes. I outlined a

scope for examination and provided texts for analysis, which provide a rich ground for exploration. My guiding lens for examining Congressional deliberations, Presidential remarks, and the Paris Agreement itself is composed of both voice and Interorganizational Authority. The theoretical concept of voice provides a strong interpretive lens regarding community dynamics while IA establishes an effective tool for the practical dissection of rhetorical texts constructed by organizations. I believe that studying voice through the framework of IA allows scholars to home in to both the representational aspects of decision-making as well as the instrumental elements at play in these rhetorical exchanges.

My subsequent analysis chapters are organized based on three significant themes found in the texts: development and economic frames, the language of leadership, and the construction of vulnerability. Analyzing these themes across my collected discursive fragments enables me to attend to the constructed policy priorities within this decision-making process. Within each chapter, I focus on the key ideas of voice (including voice, voicelessness, and agency) and IA (including collaboration, authority, and credibility) and how those construct rhetorical boundaries and exclusions related to global environmental decision-making.

Although the Paris Agreement has become widely known as a unifier of equilateral efforts against climate change, I explore how the document outlines a plan which ascribes roles to different communities within a simple yet hierarchical structure. For example, presumptions of "developed" and "developing" actors serve as an implicit basis for the attribution of power dynamics. Additionally, how decision-makers define "leadership" highlights the ideal attributes sought in collaborators. Further, by defining "vulnerabilities" policy-makers craft their interpretation of policy problems (what parties are "vulnerable" to) as well as construct the abilities of certain participants in relation to these hazards. These and other rhetorical

components operate to reinforce imperialist power structures. These dynamics are legitimized through the legislative power of policy. In other words, when policy is ratified so are the values on which it is based.

At its core, this project is about voice in policy-making. This project aims to examine the rhetorical implications of collaboration within policy deliberations with the acknowledgment that "discourses work to sustain, challenge, and reform structural and power relations in various sociohistorical contexts" (Gring-Pemble, 2003, p. 491). As the world continues to change, and governments shift in their composition, scholars should be compelled to examine how the legitimization of power occurs through the codifying of legislation in ways that may favor particular groups regardless of how diverse their governing bodies might be and the implications that their policy-making language and framing has on marginalized and underrepresented groups.

Chapter 3: Financial Framings of the Paris Agreement

This chapter addresses themes of development and economics in the Paris Agreement, U.S. presidential speeches, and U.S. Congressional hearings. Although a seemingly progressive document that advocates for environmental action, the Paris Agreement simultaneously is beholden to dominant structures of capitalism and global hierarchies, which restricts its ability to function as a document of meaningful international collaboration on the environment. Across U.S. policy statements regarding the Paris Agreement, there was similar emphasis on the economy and a subsequent frame of development. This de-centering of environmentalism in favor of emphasizing economic measures sets the foundation for the rhetorical construction of interorganizational roles that favor historically imperialist economic powers. The reinforcement of financial rhetoric throughout the policy both ascribes and justifies particular parties with authority over others. In this chapter, I explore how development discourse functions in the creation of interorganizational roles and lay the foundation for further exploration regarding the implications of centering economic frameworks when constructing environmental policy in subsequent chapters.

Hegemonic structures, including economic ideologies such as capitalism, are in part powerful because they appear to be "run-of-the-mill" and "matter-of-fact" or a "natural" part of everyday life (Bloomfield, 2019), but they are in fact part of violent hierarchies in that they not only ignore the pleading of those on the margins, but further stigmatize their existence. For example, climate justice literature points out marginalized communities around the world will bear the brunt of climate catastrophe while having least contributed to it (e.g., Holifield, Chakraborty, & Walker, 2017). Appeals to U.S. hegemony over global politics props up existing hierarchies and shifts the burden of mitigating climate change onto other countries. This is in part

fostered through the construction of the categories of "developed" and "developing" countries, which is rampant throughout discourse in and about the Paris Agreement and is a dominant frame that is based on perceived economic strength.

Not only is the burden and blame of climate catastrophe shifted onto so-called "developing" countries, but these countries are also systematically removed from policy-making processes that purport to represent global interests. Rhetorical exclusion is a strategic process by which oppressive powers exert violence upon groups and individuals in order to dominate and exploit them, whether intentionally or unintentionally. This type of epistemic violence occurs in many forms (Fricker, 2007), including everyday life, but it takes on more significance when it becomes validated through the officialization of policies that legitimize a governing state. This is why I turn to the processes of rhetorical exclusion within public policy as the topic of this dissertation. Utilizing the lens of Interorganizational Authority and rhetorical exclusion, I set out to question the seemingly banal collaborative structures operating in policymaking in the US and globally. In the case of the Paris Agreement, its framing through the lens of development and economics functions as a tool of capitalism through which imperialist powers can exert their choice of oppressive muscles—such as the exploitation of citizens—for the sake of profit and maintaining hierarchies of development and progress.

Before delving into the rhetorical foundations of the Paris Agreement, I want to note that "development studies" scholars have previously noted the need to analyze the rhetorical implications of these arguments. Sumner and Tribe (2008) explain that "it would be an understatement to say that the definition of 'development' has been controversial and unstable over time" (p. 10). They instead note that development as a term is "contested, … complex, and ambiguous" (Sumner & Tribe, 2008, p. 10). Academics have contended with the use of this

language for decades providing multiple explanations and points of interest for future inquiry. Cowen and Shenton (1996) argue that "Development comes to be defined in a multiplicity of ways because there are a multiplicity of "developers" who are entrusted with the task of development. And only some of this multiplicity have sufficient power for their interpretation of development to be effectively imposed on others" (cited in Thomas, 2000, p. 774). To add to this conversation, I propose a consideration of voice. Specifically, scholars will find that there is significant rhetorical value in examining—not just the meaning(s) of "development"—but how these meanings are effectively "imposed on others" without their testimony or interpretative input (Fricker, 2007).

In this chapter, I explore the use of "development" framings in the Paris Agreement and its subsequent appearance in U.S. political discourse. First, I note the importance of presenting financial framing as ubiquitous and banal to policy-making; and I contextualize this interpretation within a critical research approach. Then I outline how interorganizational authority is prescribed through "development" labels, followed by a consideration of poverty as an imminent threat. Finally, I discuss how the use of financial framing in policy-making results in a prioritization of economic, capitalist practices that decentralize environmental solutions—thus, giving voice to industrial, corporate powers over marginalized communities, more-than-human others, and human-nature relationships.

The Banality of Capitalism in the Paris Agreement

Although the Paris Agreement is often described as an environmental policy, its composition emphasizes economic factors above all else. Environmental factors acknowledged by this policy are prevalent, but not paramount. Financial growth, however, is treated as a

naturally-occurring process that—while regulated—is ensured. Capital is protected by the nature of being unquestioned and off-limits when it comes to the regulatory factors outlined in this policy. The Paris Agreement does not seek to protect the planet by "all means necessary" if "all" includes financial regulation. Instead, its goal is to ensure capitalist "development" while de-escalating its disastrous impact on the planet by reducing GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions around the world. This difference is significant because it would be one thing to say the planet must be protected and healed even if industry requires reform and another to say that the planet is secondary to economic advancement. The Paris Agreement, as an international collaboration, protects the process of "development" while failing to acknowledge that capitalist actions have contributed to the climate crisis.

The document communicates this narrative through its use of "development" framing in which "development" often goes unquestioned as if it is itself a natural part of society and not something that needs to be questioned as a goal or benefit. Instead, the document invites participants to question "how" to develop—not whether or not development should occur in the first place. By skipping fundamental questions (i.e., Should we "develop" in the first place? What do we mean by "develop"?), signed parties free themselves from the need to provide any justification for financial decisions such as increased industrialization and fossil fuel development that contribute to the degradation of global ecosystems. Consequently, the Paris Agreement authorizes governments to choose "how" they should "develop" as long as they think about the planet, at least somewhat, before depleting it of its natural resources. But slow bleeding is still bleeding, or as Rob Nixon (2011) would say, "slow violence" is still violence. Grounded on principles of interorganizational authority, I focus on how the Agreement establishes different roles for the signatories and how the rhetorical implications of these differentiations grant (and

take away) voice by prioritizing the grievances of some groups over others—primarily how capitalist powers are granted voice over environmental needs and "developing" countries. This is done by using language that characterizes development as unquestionable and only somewhat regulated, instead of ensuring ecological, environmental health at all costs.

Additionally, the way in which "development" is used demonstrates how the banality of this term is rhetorically useful in attributing power to certain parties over others. As Redclift (2005) notes:

> Most important, however, the process through which we enlarge our choices, and reduce those of others, is largely invisible to people in their daily lives, although understanding this process is central to our ability to behave more 'sustainably'. Unless these processes are made more visible, 'sustainable development' discourses beg the question of whether, or how, environmental costs are passed on from one group of people to another, both within societies and between them. (p. 215)

Although the rhetorical constructions of policy terms may be considered "largely invisible" processes, they have real-life implications. Redclift (2005) states, it is important that these practices are "made more visible" by scholars through inquisitive examination. Additionally, interorganizational authority points to the importance of these communication practices. As Rebecca Rice (2021) argues, "What cumulative authority directs us toward is how these prioritization issues are also communication issues, leading to questions like who and what influences priorities in our everyday talk and interactions" (p.5). Therefore, I set out to question the language practices of policy-makers as rhetorical choices that make in/visible and un/heard certain collaborators through certain frameworks that are not neutral or natural.

Contextualizing a Critical Approach to Economic Language

In *New Economies for Sustainability: Limits and Potentials for Possible Futures,* Luise Li Langergaard (2021) explores the evolution of economic perspectives. Relevant to this dissertation is their conversation about the impacts of critical research within economic efforts. Framing critical research as useful for the growth of economic scholars, Langergaard calls upon critical researchers to conceptualize their criticisms in ways that invite new intellectual considerations. Thus, "Critical theory should not delimit itself to describing social reality but must also contribute to realizing society as it should be, for example by criticizing existing social injustice and alienation and by revealing them as false (Sørensen, 2019: 25)." (Langergaard, 2021, p.231)." The academic exploration of critical research is not designed to provide an absolute answer to society's obstacles. Rather, it is useful in drawing attention to the multiple interpretations that are constructed.

> In this context, future research on the methodology and philosophy of science of
> economic transitions is central for development of political economics of ecological
> economics. Philosophy of management can contribute to this philosophy of science
> reflection (Rendtorff, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d). In particular for understanding the
> long-term impact of ecological economics we need to focus on the movement from
> prioritization of quantitative growth to focus on the qualitative aspects of economic
> development. (Rendtorff & Langergaard, 2021, p. 254).

This analysis is one way in which qualitative research can help contextualize the aspects of economic language that are currently used and suggest areas in which it can be reimagined.

Specifically talking about critical research that emphasizes rhetorical power, language is approached as a tricky subject matter that can appear to be direct but may conceal a multiplicity

of meanings. In this regard, part of the role of rhetorical criticism is to excavate the persuasive

messages entrenched deep within narratives and provide possible interpretations for them. In this

dissertation I set out to examine the possible ways in which policy operates persuasively through

language. And I begin with the consideration that language that is seen as mundane can often

carry the most power. When I discuss the banality of persuasive themes—specifically the

banality of economic terms. I am not insinuating a banality of economics (which plays an

important role in understanding global markets), rather suggesting that the *language* of

economics within policy-making has become so prevalent that its meanings are not always

questioned. Yet, it is useful to mention that economics can be seen as a powerful motivation and

persuasive tool in environmental policy-making and should not be disregarded. Additionally,

there is a need to acknowledge the diversity of markets and economic systems in a way that is

more conducive to environmental collaboration. This presents an interesting intersection of

rhetorical studies and economic research that goes beyond the scope of this dissertation, but is

certainly a promising ground for future collaboration as policy-makers create new realities both

in society and through language.

For now, scholars of critical rhetorical backgrounds can and should continue to provide

their criticisms of language. In this dissertation, I approach policy-making in a critical way that

does not assume the centrality of economics as a starting point for environmental issues. One

way to do this is through the exploration of things as they might or should be (Levitas, 2013).

This is reminiscent of what some would call a "utopian" approach to academic research. As

Rendtorff & Langergaard (2021) suggest,

> A perspective for future research could be to engage with utopian visions and real utopias
>
> of a more sustainable organization of economy. Utopia plays the double meaning of

'nowhere' and 'the good place' (Levitas, 2008) in that sense could be seen as referring to the not yet realized good place. But utopian ideas as we know them from literature and political theory also have an important critical function, and work as contrastations of a dystopian present state of affairs. Utopian ideas can range between more fully developed and articulated (but also perhaps unrealistic) dream visions and much less fully articulated wishes, dreams and hopes as a more basic human desire for something better (Levitas, 2013). (p. 256-257).

Scholars have already begun to explore creations such as "The Green New Deal" and how these provide visions of possible futures through language (Miller & Bloomfield, 2022). Part of my examination in questioning the current use of policy terms is to reject the present state of affairs and make room for those "contrastations of a dystopian present" (Rendtorff & Langergaard, 2021) in order to instigate the possibility of new policy futures. While this might engender some new challenges for economic theorists, especially as my argument seeks to de-center economic language in the context of capitalism and imperialism, experts have already begun to address these structural shifts (Levitas, 2013; Nestrova & Robra, 2022; Harris, 2000). Rather than trigger points of discontent, I hope that these criticisms will speak in a way that can provoke thought. My goal is for academics to be inspired by the notion of new critical arenas, and be encouraged in the growth of their own fields to imaginate and create new intellectual legacies.

Defining Interorganizational Roles through the Concept of "Development"

The establishment and prevalence of "development" language throughout the Paris Agreement serves as a financial frame in which capital is an unquestionable mark of agency. I focus on the nuances and implications of using "development" language because it is a rhetorical

term purposefully constructed to attribute power to particular parties through financial means instead of highlighting environmental practices. The Agreement presumes the identification of various entities as having different categorizations within a "development" scale, then the Agreement prescribes roles and duties based on these categorizations. In prescribing different roles to various parties, the Agreement distributes power discriminately based on development categories. Ultimately, developed countries are attributed the role of the hero, and developing countries are framed as being in need of saving, an implication of the development frame that will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent chapter.

The use of development terms is prevalent throughout the Agreement. The introduction to the Agreement reads "*The Parties to this Agreement… Emphasizing* the intrinsic relationship that climate change actions, responses and impacts have with equitable access to sustainable development and eradication of poverty…*Have agreed as follows*" (original emphasis, pp. 1-2). Then again "*...Taking into account* the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities… Have agreed as follows" (original emphasis, p. 2). Throughout the Agreement, "development" is mentioned over 20 times. The Agreement consistently frames policy-solutions in the context of development. For instance, "This Agreement, in enhancing the implementation of the Convention, including its objective, aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty…" (p. 3). Note how the Agreement contextualizes its response to climate change in relation to economic efforts. The policy consistently frames environmental efforts in conjunction with "development" not only as a part of international efforts, but also as an integral component of the policy solution. Thus, "Accelerating, encouraging and enabling innovation is critical for an

effective, long-term global response to climate change and promoting economic growth and sustainable development" (p. 15). The importance and relevance of economic growth is consistent throughout the Agreement treating development as an unquestionable, ubiquitous part of the equation. The policy is able to do this in part due to the prevalence of "development" language in larger contexts.

When talking about international policy, development categories are generally associated with "per capita gross national income (GNI)" where the low and middle-income groups are relegated to developing categories (UN p.144). "Developing" terms have been used to replace the outdated "first world" and "third world" categorizations, but analysts argue that "development" categories are not altogether useful either. This is in part because "development" labels have not always been used consistently and analysts question the objectivity of these groupings. For instance, the UN Development Index generally "draws on various indicators including those related to income, education and health" (World Bank Blog). But the International Monetary Fund admits, "This classification is not based on strict criteria, economic or otherwise, and it has evolved over time" (IMF, p. 157). At times "development" categories have become politicized, especially when fuel production is used to calculate the status of a particular country. It is useful to further question how these labels function in light of the Paris Agreement's proposed goals, responsibilities, and solutions. Understanding the implications of these labels enables scholars to have a deeper understanding of the interorganizational dynamics of this policy.

I traced and identified all the major actors or parties that the document mentions and paid special attention to the tasks granted to these various parties—as a way of exploring communities

included in the policy and their establishment of voice within the document. These are the

actors/parties directly addressed in the document:

Table 1. List of actors/parties present in the Paris Agreement

Signatories	Administrative Powers	Active Supporters and Stakeholders
"The Convention"	"The United Nations"	"All levels of government and various actors"
"Developing country parties"	"Bureau of the Conference"	"Regional economic integration organizations and their member States"
"Least developed countries"	"The secretariat"	"The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage"
"Small island developing States"	"A mechanism [administrative]"	"Observers"
"Parties"	"United Nations specialized organizations and agencies"	"The International Atomic Energy Agency"
"Developed country parties"	"The Financial Mechanism of the Convention"	"State member, not party to the Convention"
	"The Technology Mechanism"	"The Subsidiary Body for Implementation"
	"A mechanism [implementation]"	"Party to the Convention, but not a party to the agreement"
	"Depositary"	

In addition to these participants, the Agreement makes acknowledgments about the public, scientists, and other communities but does not address them directly as signatories or participants.

Rather than providing an exhaustive interpretation of each participant, my analysis is concerned with providing a picture of the dynamics at play among parties. My focus is on the signatories that are most often addressed throughout the Agreement and how the policy grants them various levels of authority. I am mainly interested in how "developed" and "developing" countries are expected to collaborate. Through a lens of interorganizational authority, I examine the decision-making guidelines taking place and how authority roles are prescribed through the expectations set upon these participants.

The parties signing the document are mainly categorized under "developed country parties," "developing country parties," "less developed countries," and "small island developing States." In some cases, these groups are jointly referred to as "The Convention" or "Parties." Despite claims to function in a unifying, collaborative manner, the breakdown into smaller categories based on "development" status offers division, hierarchy, and power dynamics that are rhetorically silencing rather than collaborative. When analyzing "development" language, Sumner and Tribe (2008) explain how a post-modernist use of this term functions by "drawing attention to the ethnocentric and ideologically loaded Western conceptions of 'development' and raising the possibilities of alternative conceptions" (p. 11) Turning my attention to the "development" groups, it is important to question how "development" is defined, understand how imperialism underlies the categorization of each country into these groups, and explore how

these titles are used to bestow and perpetuate power by granting different roles to each group. I am interested in how development narratives are used to give and take away voice to particular groups through an emphasis on financial power rather than the success of a country's environmental efforts.

Economic Discourse: US Texts

U.S. discourse in and about the Paris Agreement emphasizes economic needs as paramount through the prioritization of capital and economic growth while setting guidelines for monitoring environmental impact. As opposed to prioritizing environmental protection and managing economic flow, the discussions around the Paris Agreement consistently emphasize the importance of the economy first and then acknowledge the environmental impacts in relation to the economy. By using economic language, the Agreement frames these environmental efforts through the measures of capitalism. U.S. policy language emphasizes investment, negotiations, consumers, taxpayers, and development in order to ensure that environmental regulation does not come at the cost of industrial abatement.

Presidential rhetoric regarding the Paris Agreement framed the treaty by emphasizing financial gains to the United States. All three Presidents examined mentioned the financial impacts of the Paris Agreement, but President Biden and President Trump's speeches had a more prominent focus on the economic factors related to the Agreement. President Obama's discussion of economic implications was framed as part of the bigger picture. For example, Obama (2015a) stated "And by sending a signal that this is going to be our future – a clean energy future – it opens up the floodgates for businesses, and scientists, and engineers to unleash high-tech, low-carbon investment and innovation at a scale that we've never seen before." In another later

speech, he stated, "And by empowering businesses, scientists, engineers, workers, and the private sector — investors — to work together, this agreement represents the best chance we've had to save the one planet that we've got" (Obama, 2015b). In these quotations, President Obama outlines a list of interested parties which includes businesses, workers, the private sector, investors and inventors, but fails to mention other important players such as agricultural agents, environmental advocates, and specific communities—such as Indigenous people—who oftentimes are at the frontlines of environmental preservation. President Obama (2015a) also includes financial statements such as:

> This is what we seek in these next two weeks. Not simply an agreement to roll back the pollution we put into our skies, but an agreement that helps us lift people from poverty without condemning the next generation to a planet that's beyond its capacity to repair. (p. 4)

These examples showcase how although the Paris Agreement is set up as an environmental policy, US presidential discourse about it highlights economic aspects as essential to the policy. From the initial introduction of the Agreement, businesses, and the private sector, are explicitly given a seat at the table.

Consider that in order for parties to have voice in policy-making, they must have presence within the discourse of policy processes. Presidential speeches offer an opportunity to legitimize the influence of particular parties within a particular policy discussion. By addressing the role of primarily economic players, the President is prioritizing their needs. This grants space for groups to express their grievances in relation to the policy at hand—and therefore bestows them voice within policy deliberations. The emphasis on financial players becomes more evident when looking back at the history of environmental policy. In a previous chapter, I traced the

history of environmental policy that demonstrated a past focus on preservation and prioritization of natural ecosystems. However, more contemporary Presidential discussions about the Paris Agreement do not similarly emphasize the environment as these earlier rhetorics. Instead, they emphasize the need to protect the economy while keeping an eye on the environment.

President Trump had by far the most prominent focus on economic factors related to the Paris Agreement. He outright states, "This agreement is less about the climate and more about other countries gaining a financial advantage over the United States" (Trump, 2017). In a speech given on June 1, 2017, he utilizes language that dichotomizes the US against the rest of the world. His language emphasizes an "us" versus "them," competitive framing. Throughout the speech, Trump makes the argument that the Paris Agreement is an "unfair" policy which asks more from the US than other countries to sacrifice economic progress for limited environmental gains. He particularly calls out China and India as failing to do their part by being able to industrialize without penalty.

Trump (2017) notes that:

under the agreement, China will be able to increase these emissions by a staggering number of years – 13. They can do whatever they want for 13 years. Not us. India makes its participation contingent on receiving billions and billions of dollars in foreign aid from developed countries. There are many other examples. But the bottom line is that the Paris Accord is very unfair, at the highest level, to the United States. … In short, the agreement doesn't eliminate coal jobs, it just transfers those jobs out of America and the United States, and ships them to foreign countries. This agreement is less about the climate and more about other countries gaining a financial advantage over the United States.

These statements present the idea that the Agreement has different standards for each country in a way that is harmful to the United States economy. For Trump, opposing the Paris Agreement is done on economic grounds, just as supporting it is done on the same grounds for Obama.

Despite Trump's perceptions of unfairness, the Agreement allows for each country to set their own standards called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), so there is no prescription for when or how quickly nations need to reduce emissions. Furthermore, money that might be going to India would be categorized under the Agreement's "support" for developing countries in general, not just India. The core of Trump's argument for rejecting the Agreement is based on economic framings. He argues "I cannot in good conscience support a deal that punishes the United States — which is what it does — the world's leader in environmental protection, while imposing no meaningful obligations on the world's leading polluters" (Trump, 2017). Instead, he uses entrepreneurial language to suggest that the US needs to "negotiate" for a better deal: "So we're getting out. But we will start to negotiate, and we will see if we can make a deal that's fair. And if we can, that's great. And if we can't, that's fine. (Applause)" (Trump, 2017). His rhetoric emphasizes the need to "negotiate" a better economic deal instead of collaborating for a more effective environmental policy.

Trump's (2017) language consistently alludes to capitalist notions of negotiation rather than collaboration: "The United States will withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord — (applause) — thank you, thank you — but begin negotiations to reenter either the Paris Accord or a really entirely new transaction on terms that are fair to the United States, its businesses, its workers, its people, its taxpayers." In Trump's construction of the Paris Agreement, the primary participants are those who have financial capital in the United States economy. He emphasizes how much businesses, the military, and taxpayers have to lose through participating in the Paris

Agreement. Thus, "[The] American family will suffer the consequences in the form of lost jobs and a very diminished quality of life" (Trump, 2017). Trump (2017) further claimed, "This agreement is a massive redistribution of United States wealth to other countries," tapping into political anxieties around socialism and weakening the US's economy. Trump's arguments for rejecting the Paris Agreement are about how it impacts the economy. His focus on jobs and financial aspects as the key decision-making feature of whether the US should sign onto the Paris Agreement, thereby ignoring the environmental components. While emphasizing the voice of industry, business, and the economy, including his own persona as a businessman over a politician, Trump's rhetoric works to silence environmental considerations, "developing" countries, and the interorganizational collaboration as a whole.

Congressional discourse is reflective of financial claims as well. In a Congressional resolution from the House of Representatives in favor of the Agreement, the document stated that "...more than a dozen major energy and technology companies sent a letter to President Trump" stating, "'U.S. business interests are best served by a stable and practical framework facilitating an effective and balanced global response" (H.R. 390). Congressional representatives argued that it was in the best interest of the economy—for instance, "energy and technology companies"—that the United States remain within the international Agreement. This language is representative of how policy-makers discussed the importance of either rejecting or rejoining the Agreement.

While advocating rejoining the Paris Agreement, President Biden's arguments also emphasize the U.S. economy. President Biden's (2021) address at the Conference of the Parties (COP26) calls back to his overall economic plan: "My Build Back Better framework will make historic investments in clean energy, the most significant investment." Even while addressing an

international audience, Biden centered the United States' financial gain. Biden includes everyday citizens through their role as participants in the economy. Thus, he notes that these investments will make "it more affordable for consumers to save on their own energy bills with tax credits for things like installing solar panels, weatherizing their homes, lowering energy prices…" (Biden, 2021). Biden's presentation of the Agreement and its participants are contingent on their financial contributions, not their environmental interests. He states, "...governments and the private sector, and multilateral development banks must also do their work to go from millions to billions to trillions to — necessary affect to this transition" (Biden, 2021). President Biden's international address outlines the role of financial actors in the efforts to address climate change, once again giving voice to the financial stakeholders within this policy process.

These rhetorical patterns demonstrate how the role of the United States is heightened in discussion of international policy. Vogler (2000) discussed how "some members of the international community wield disproportionate power," specifically referring to "norms and rules emanating from [the] United States [become] translated to the international level" (cited in Redclift, 2005, p. 221). Despite the outsized effects US policy has on international deliberations, interestingly, US policy-makers do not often emphasize their role as collaborators or contributors to a team effort. Whether they are in favor or opposed to the Paris Agreement, US political voices construct themselves as essential and almost central to the international agreement. I further explore this view of their interorganizational role as leaders in the subsequent chapter.

A consistent thread within the Presidential and Congressional rhetoric addressing the Paris Agreement is the centering of financial priorities over the need to ensure environmental protections at all costs. Instead, costs are very much at the top of policy-makers' minds. Financial costs of environmental actions are prioritized. As a result, the economy is centered

rhetorically within the conversation regarding the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, businesses and other economic players are granted voice within this policy-making process in ensuring that financial grievances are addressed in the Paris Agreement and presented to the U.S. public as the most important components of the international document. Now that I have discussed the ongoing thread of economic priorities in this policy-making process and how they circulated in U.S. political discourse, I will elaborate on some of the rhetorical implications constructed directly from the Agreement's financial focus.

Poverty: The Imminent Threat

One of the most significant takeaways from the Paris Agreement's international discourse is the treatment of poverty as an imminent threat—a problem to be solved and avoided. Poverty is constructed as a threat or problem to be eliminated, but only within certain countries. Nearly every country has some degree of financial stratification, but only "developing" countries are framed as susceptible to the threat of poverty. The roles of developed and developing assigned to signatories grants voice to particular groups over others—specifically empowering imperialist/industrial countries above others. The very creation of "development" categories is framed as a hierarchical system, where developed countries have power and developing countries are viewed as lacking through a deficit model. This narrative marginalizes those rhetorically constructed as being somehow less developed because they are "in need" or "vulnerable," which makes way for financial intervention—which comes with the power of know-how (capacity-building) or capital (the antidote to the imminent threat of poverty); these powers are often constructed under rhetorics of "support" within the Agreement. I now discuss the rhetorical implications of constructing poverty as an imminent threat and paramount

problem. In a subsequent chapter, I dive deeper into the significance of constructing "vulnerable" groups in regard to leadership and capacity-building in policy-making.

"Poverty" is often the basis for the social construction of a "need" or "problem" to be solved through policy within development frameworks. As Biccum (2005) discusses, poverty is nothing new, but it must be treated as a "new" problem in order for capitalist powers to sell a "new" solution. Biccum (2005) argues that poverty is often framed under the language of "need" and lacking therefore establishing the inherent solution for someone to provide for said needs: "Poverty is a trope of development discourse par excellence. The very idea of development hinges on a notion of poverty for which development is the redress" (p. 1009). This idea is fundamentally embedded into the fibers of the Paris Agreement from page 1 which reads "*Emphasizing* the intrinsic relationship that climate change actions, responses and impacts have with equitable access to sustainable development and eradication of poverty" (UN, p. 1, emphasis in original text). It is not a coincidence that the Agreement makes this statement as a precursory framing of the implications that are suggested—that the eradication of poverty is adjacent to development. This framing rings true to the rest of the Agreement which suggests that resistance to "development" will perpetuate poverty, which is to be avoided at all costs (literally and figuratively).

Poverty can be thought of as the narrative "danger," or imminent threat, which ought to be overcome by the parties/characters. Although the Paris Agreement sets out to tackle issues of climate change, its rhetoric does not abandon a capitalist lens when discussing environmental factors. Article 2 states, "This Agreement, in enhancing the implementation of the Convention, including its objective, aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty…" (UN, p. 3). The

language of eradication emerges again, as one might eradicate an infestation of pests or insects. Furthermore, Article 2.1(c) states:

> This Agreement…aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by:... (c) making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development. (UN. p. 3)

This language of financial consistency toward an environmental resilience would ring different if instead it argued for environmental consistency toward a financial resilience. Instead, financial hierarchies are consistently upheld through development labels and roles to the detriment of the environment.

The same messaging is echoed in Presidential rhetoric when the Agreement was ratified. For example, Obama (2015b) noted, "And we have secured a broader commitment to support the most vulnerable countries as they pursue cleaner economic growth." This type of messaging demonstrates the Agreement's paramount goal—to bolster financial frameworks. Additionally, it presents climate change as a trigger that could awaken the imminent threat of poverty. In this way, the Agreement is not solely concerned with climate change for the sake of natural ecosystems, but for the capitalist effects that would occur if/when those natural ecosystems collapse, leaving some countries more "vulnerable" than others.

Furthermore, the naming of "sustainable development" alongside "efforts to eradicate poverty" demonstrates how poverty is used as a justification for development frameworks. As Biccum (2005) notes, "...poverty is constructed as both a 'threat' to 'us' and a moral obligation for 'us' which also just happens to coincide with 'our' economic interest" (p. 1016). In establishing the "need/problem" as "poverty," the Agreement follows its own argument through

the natural progression which leads to the "eradication of poverty" and is inherently and the unquestionable propagation of "development" around the globe. Now having initiated the exploration of poverty as a need to be remedied, or a policy problem to be solved, it is useful to examine how the Agreement establishes roles based on proximity to poverty through the lens of "development" rhetorics.

Hierarchy of Development: Interorganizational Authority

Interorganizational authority in the Paris Agreement is prescribed via the definition of roles based on "development" categories. According to IA theory, "…Organizational members do not 'have' authority; instead, they are granted authority when their account of the organization is accepted in interactions with others" (Rice, 2021, p. 6). "Development" frames validate the account of capitalist, finance-centric policy-makers for who is granted authority and who is not. The Paris Agreement establishes operatives through the discrimination of its signatories based on "development" groups. Although there are various mentions about the roles of different parties, I will focus on the two groups that stand out throughout the entire document— "developing country parties" and "developed country parties" (UN, p. 2). I believe that it is rhetorically significant to examine the power differential that is created between the develop-ed and the develop-ing. Ultimately, the difference in roles constructed by the policy between '-ed countries and '-ing countries is a rhetorical prescription of power—an act of (de)voicing. The rhetorical treatment of '-ing countries as less-than '-ed parties is achieved by the establishment of "those in need" language—keeping in mind that the "need" is extreme poverty, and that poverty is the dangerous threat awakened by climate change (which is the hassle of an imperialist "new" world).

The construction of those "in need" is achieved by two main rhetorical points: the treatment of '-ing roles, and the language of "vulnerability." IA scholarship posits that, "…hierarchical authority can and does develop in collaboration" (Rice, 2021, p. 7). IA claims that hierarchies do not always function in the same manner nor are they always detrimental to collaboration. However, the hierarchical structures within the Paris Agreement result in an unbalanced distribution of power that does not engender collaboration. Instead, this hierarchy perpetuates industrial power dynamics that rest on financial influence. As a result, the policy attributes greater authority to the world's largest economic influences by accepting their account of the organization's goals. Their account is that capitalist economic growth is paramount and environmental protections should not be achieved "at all costs." Instead, financial authority protects economic interests. Environmental protection is to be achieved at whatever costs are deemed acceptable by financial institutions as a secondary focus to economic success (Bloomfield, 2019).

The Agreement's language of "specific needs and special circumstances" (UN, p. 3) is suggestive of certain countries lacking resources, which Biccum (2005) argues is constitutive of poverty narratives. Biccum (2005) notes that "...poverty is perpetually constructed as lack, most notably a lack of access to resources, services and markets…" (p. 1017). Additionally, the term poverty is "a term invoking lack by which un/underdeveloped spaces are defined" (Biccum, 2005, p. 1013). Thus, the Agreement establishes poverty as the need or problem to be solved. This "need" is rhetorically constructed through a financial lens, an intentional choice when considering that this policy is supposed to center an environmental perspective. Additionally, the Agreement labels developing groups who are poverty-stricken as "particularly vulnerable" to the

effects of climate change. These effects might be interpreted as ecological disasters, but the Agreement is talking about economic effects.

For example, Biccum (2005) argued that "...invoking and implying in every utterance its projected 'other' in the form of its apparent opposite, un- or underdeveloped, that is to say *poor* (always and inevitably constructed as degenerate and lacking), or develop*ing*, that interstitial momentum in the process of being 'developed,' of having not quite yet arrived" (p. 1011, emphasis added). There is rhetorical power in the repetitive association between "developing" countries and their proximity to poverty through language that emphasizes what they need and what they lack. By emphasizing "developing" countries as unable to be self-sufficient, the Agreement presents them as dependent. Without the (financial) help of developed countries, they are thus vulnerable to climate change's impacts and further economic instability. Through this rhetorical construction of dependence, "developing" countries lose agency to act on their own judgment based on perceived financial failings. and instead, are instructed by the Paris Agreement to follow the leadership of other countries —which inherently disqualifies them from taking on power over others or stepping into authority positions as leaders in the Paris Agreement. This dynamic will be addressed in more detail in the subsequent chapter.

The Paris Agreement establishes a protocol for dealing with "developing" nations by supporting them financially. The Paris Agreement notes that some of its financial power will be "… used to cover administrative expenses as well as to assist developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change to meet the costs of adaptation" (UN, p. 7). Within contexts of social policy, the Paris Agreement seems to be offering a form of welfare to communities in need. However, it is constructing which communities are receiving this "support" by assuming that their financial resources are the reason for their inability to

properly respond to the planet's climate demands, and not the actions of developed countries. It is important to note that providing support to communities that need it is not inherently problematic when those communities also maintain their agency and are treated as co-authors and collaborators. However, the dynamics established in the Paris Agreement present countries receiving support as inferior, subordinates, and passive recipients of welfare rather than equal partners. This is emphasized through the use of "development" terms and the characteristics attributed to "developing" versus "developed" countries, which is coherent with the arguments previously presented by post-modern development scholars. For example, Sumner and Tribe (2008) note:

> The 'post-modern' position is that 'development' is a 'discourse' (a set of ideas) that actually shapes and frames 'reality' and power relations. It does this because the 'discourse' values certain things over others. For example, those who do not have economic assets are viewed as 'inferior' from a materialistic viewpoint. (p. 10)

These terms and the characteristics attributed to them have policy-making implications because these labels are used to establish inequitable roles within the collaboration. Thus, I now turn my attention to the Agreement's outlined characteristics of "developed" countries.

Framing Developed Countries

When addressing "developed" countries, the Paris Agreement states the following: "Also recognizing that sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production, with developed country Parties taking the lead, play an important role in addressing climate change" (UN, p. 2). Additionally, "Developed country Parties should continue taking the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets" (UN, p. 4). This type of

language is consistent throughout the Agreement: "As part of a global effort, developed country Parties should continue to take the lead in mobilizing climate finance from a wide variety of sources, instruments and channels…" (UN, p. 13). In addition to taking a leadership role, the Agreement instructs "developed" countries to become economic providers. For example, "developed country Parties shall provide financial resources to assist developing country Parties with respect to both mitigation and adaptation in continuation of their existing obligations under the Convention" (UN, p. 13). In contrast to the roles of "developing" country parties, this description paints "developed" countries through a financial lens where they are in a position to help, support, and provide for those that are "underdeveloped." This reinforces the perception that "developing" countries might be unable to fulfill their part of the deal without financial support. In constructing these notions of "developed" countries as more equipped and financially capable, the Agreement presents the perfect economic savior. In a context where extreme poverty has been established as the imminent threat, financial providence has engendered a relevant hero to the "development" narrative— "developed" countries.

This narrative of "development" constructs "developed" countries as realized, fulfilled, images of a hero that "developing" countries may cry out to for help and only wish of becoming one day. This is demonstrated by the Agreement's continued emphasis on "developed" countries as being in a position to provide two major components, financial "support" and "capacity-building." These two concepts have capitalist implications because they suggest that a) throwing money as "support" will alleviate and solve the policy problem, and b) that "capacity" is associated with financial capital—otherwise authors would need to explain how capacity and ingenuity can arise from any country regardless of their market structures or "development" category. This narrative points to "developed" countries as the most ambitious, most generous,

most capable actors meant to help the needy, insufficient "developing" countries. This discourse is reminiscent of the "white man's burden," which assumed that colonial powers had an obligation to intervene in sovereign societies deemed "uncivilized" in order to bring them into modern times and save them. Remnants of this rhetoric are once again codified in international policy to frame developing countries through a deficit lens of lacking financial power, capacity, agency, and thereby having increased vulnerability to climate impacts and poverty.

The Paris Agreement offers an opportunity for capitalist world powers to operate as "saviors" while continuing to deplete the planet of its natural resources because it is founded on language that, while considerate of the Earth's GHG to a certain extent, is mainly preoccupied with protecting development as an unquestioned "right to development" (UN, p. 2). The construction of the savior's burden is not only or even primarily about protecting the Earth from climate change, but also about protecting "vulnerable" parties from the imminent threat—extreme poverty. Biccum (2005) argues, "It's as if the eradication of *extreme* poverty (and, note, not poverty altogether or the conditions that produce it) is the raison d'être of the 'developed' world" (p. 1017, emphasis in original).

Through this framing, the Paris Agreement attempts to perform a politics of "social justice" because it presents the uplifting of marginalized communities as a step toward "development." The document seeks, "...a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs…" (UN, p. 2). In this statement, the idea of justice is predicated on capitalist components. For instance, "Emphasizing the intrinsic relationship that climate change actions, responses and impacts have with equitable access to sustainable development and eradication of poverty" (UN, p. 1). From the beginning of the document, the Agreement establishes that working toward "development" should be an equitable effort suggesting it as a

solution to the eradication of poverty—which distances "development" as part of a capitalist-imperialist process which causes extreme poverty through the depletion of natural resources, commodification of ecosystems, and privatization of nature. However, policymakers wish to exonerate themselves from these implications by suggesting that "development" can be sustainable, where developed countries are able to save developing countries from their lack of financial resources. These "developed" countries are meant to save the world literally and figuratively.

The "Green Economy"

In this discussion of the prominence of economic priorities in the Paris Agreement discourse and the implications of development language, there is one more takeaway I would like to mention as a byproduct of economic policy framing. In both the Agreement and US political discourse, there is a rhetorical construction of environmental efforts as a new capitalist frontier. In other words, "green" technologies and environmental solutions are framed as a new industry. This "green" industry is often talked about as an "investment" which would yield financial rewards as well as environmental success. The environment is emphasized only as so far as it does not compete or hinder economic progress; ideally, they work together. For example, a Congressional statement in favor of the Agreement states that the Agreement will help "...uphold[] our commitment to cut carbon emissions in order to create jobs and boost our economic competitiveness" (H.R.390). The Agreement is not only about financial growth but also presents an altogether new arena for the creation of jobs.

Similarly, President Biden (2021) states, "We have the ability to invest in ourselves and build an equitable clean-energy future and in the process create millions of good-paying jobs and

opportunities around the world — cleaner air for our children, where bountiful oceans, healthier forests and ecosystems for our planet." Even President Trump who opposed the Paris Agreement, did advocate for the green economy. In one speech, he lists the goals of "Energy efficiency and clean energy… extraordinary job creation opportunity…solar and wind energy industries" (Trump, 2017). Clean energy is thus permissible through a green economy that purports to "naturally" shift to create new jobs, innovation, technology, and energy opportunities, meaning that the economy does not need to be sacrificed for environmental benefit (Bloomfield, 2019).

Advocating for a "green economy" in environmental policy is rhetorically useful for policy-makers who seek to ensure financial protections. This "green economy" functions rhetorically because it presents the health of the planet as harmonious to development. In doing so, development is absolved from being the cause of environmental problems. Instead, development becomes a part of building a better future, a "sustainable" future. The Agreement states, "*The Parties to this Agreement…Also recognizing* that sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production, with developed country Parties taking the lead, play an important role in addressing climate change" (UN, p. 2). Hence, policy-makers are able to perpetuate industrial power structures by reframing development as an opportunity and solution in response to an essentially financial problem—a solution which is touted as also benefitting the planet.

However, scholars have continued to warn about the pitfalls of centering economic rhetorical frames. Redclift (2005) recalls:

> The German sociologist Habermas expressed this view forcefully, in asking '. . . Can civilization afford to surrender itself entirely to the . . . driving force of just one of its subsystems – namely, the pull of a dynamic . . . recursively closed, economic system

which can only function and remain stable by taking all relevant information, translating it into, and processing it in, the language of economic value . . .'. (p. 215)

For instance, Redclift (2005) invites academics to question what exactly is being sustained when supporting "sustainable development." With the growing relevance of these narratives, it is crucial for scholars to question the operationalization of policy terms and how they are used toward the formulation of various policy-solutions.

Conclusion

By writing this international policy through the lens of "development," policy-makers are able to insert a number of assumptions that disempower countries in recovery (of colonization and imperialism) by arguing that they are only behind within their process of "development." It also generalizes "development" as the solution that must be spread to the entire world and "developed" countries as the hero meant to crusade the globe with their saving knowledge. Thus, "It is this very old idea of poverty-as-degeneracy that has been utilised [*sic*] within the reconfiguration of development as a security strategy that… I argue suggests that there are very strong lines of continuity between colonial and development discourse and policy" (Biccum, 2005, p. 1006). As a result, "developing" countries are poor because they are not developed, not because they are exploited by imperialist countries for resources and labor. This is echoed by development scholars, Sumner and Tribe (2008), who note:

> In short, the post-modernists would argue that the function of the 'development discourse' is to categorize people in order to control them through the creation of problematic categories (Foucault called this 'governmentality'). The accusation by the

post-modernists is that DS [development studies] has created such problematic categories

in order to justify interventions. (p. 17)

Finally, these commentaries demonstrate how "development" rhetorics serve to establish

discriminate roles and authority in policy-making. Additionally, this brings forth the ways in

which "development" narratives serve as a deflection from interventionist, imperialist, practices

toward a reframing of heroic support. The complexities of these dynamics will be explored in

upcoming chapters.

In this chapter, I have established the prominence of financial rhetoric as a priority in the

Paris Agreement and U.S. political discourse about it. I have discussed the rhetorical

construction of poverty as an imminent threat within capitalism and outlined the implications of

development categories. The Agreement's centering of economic priorities produces a

perpetuation of industrial and imperial authority roles while making a way for the "green

economy." In the upcoming chapters, I elaborate on how the Agreement builds on these financial

rhetorical frames through the establishment of leadership, vulnerability, and saviorism.

Chapter 4: Rhetorical Implications of "Leadership"

This chapter focuses on the implications of constructing leadership through discourse in the Paris Agreement and discussions surrounding it. This rhetoric builds upon the narratives of development and economic discourse to establish power dynamics, leadership roles, and attribute voice in decision-making. This examination demonstrates how the Paris Agreement's notions of "leadership" hinge upon economic factors that perpetuate imperialist hierarchies rather than relevant expertise in environmentalism. Additionally, this analysis explores how the Agreement constructs "knowledge" through language of "capacity-building" which at once perpetuates industrial practices and dismisses dissenting narratives.

In this chapter, I examine how collaborating parties establish an ethos of credibility in order to construct a group's values through definitions of "leadership." First, I discuss the international group's rhetorical construction of leadership, credibility, and knowledge. Then, I explore how these definitions are used to establish dominance through processes of "capacity-building" over collaborating parties. Finally, I discuss the rhetorical implications of these dynamics through an emphasis on voice.

Ethos (Capacity)

Interorganizational authority invites scholars to examine how authority is forged through interactions in decision-making. Rebecca Rice (2021) argues, "By studying authority, we can look not just at individual leaders or even speakers—instead, we can ask how multiple agents, both human and non-human, achieve and sustain authority in interactions" (p. 16). For example, the previous chapter demonstrated how the nonhuman economy is given voice and preference while the environment is viewed as ancillary within an economic frame. An ethos of authority

within collaboration is formed through communicative processes that define parties' credibility to be influential toward a given outcome. In decision-making, parties navigate a negotiation of shared and conflicting values. Defining these values is a rhetorical process where parties socially construct their desired outcome. Thus, "…organizations themselves are composed of (and are themselves) authoritative texts, abstractions that stand in for the organization's values, goals, and practices and guide future conversations" (Rice, 2021, p. 6).

However, the power to socially-construct these structures is not always distributed equally and relies on human attributions of authority. Defining which parties have the power to decide upon these value systems is at the heart of policy-making. This is why Rice (2021) characterizes organizations as products of "a communicative struggle among multiple voices and perspectives that inform our very identities" (p. 17). The Paris Agreement is an excellent example of how multiple parties create a shared system of values by attributing authority and credibility in a group interaction.

The Paris Agreement brings together a group of international collaborators under a common focus but all with different perspectives and goals tailored to their constituents. In order to organize such a diverse group, it is essential to have a shared understanding of participant dynamics. Interorganizational authority (IA) theory explains that, "for collaboration to create solutions, the organizations involved must establish a shared understanding of the purpose, preferred courses of action, and problem they face" (Rice, 2021, p. 5). The Paris Agreement provides an answer to preferred courses of action by outlining roles utilizing the development categories assigned to each participant, as discussed in the preceding chapter. In doing so, the Paris Agreement creates an ethos, or an understanding of credibility, based on development. As a result of anchoring ethos to development, the Agreement attributes more agency to some

participants over others. I examine the assumptions and explicit roles attributed to group

participants by considering the importance of development rhetoric in regards to ethos and

specifically the assigning of leadership roles.

Turning my attention to the "development" groups, it is important to remember how

"development" is based upon primarily economic factors, which undergirds how these titles are

used to bestow and perpetuate power by granting different roles to each group. I posit that these

narratives are used to give and take away voice to particular groups, perpetuating acts of

rhetorical exclusion that keep certain parties out of leadership opportunities and thereby

impacting their capacity for IA. Instead of approaching decision-making through a collaborative

reciprocal exchange, the use of development categories perpetuates a hierarchy that allows

imperialist countries to extract labor from developing countries while maintaining an image of

leadership instead of exploitation. A reliance on development categories also frames developing

countries as incapable of leading. Exploring the interrelated concepts of development, leadership,

and capacity enables me to analyze how ethos and authority are constructed within the Paris

Agreement.

When addressing "developed" countries, the Paris Agreement states the following: "Also

recognizing that sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production,

with developed country Parties *taking the lead*, play an important role in addressing climate

change" (UN, p. 2, emphasis added). Additionally, the Agreement states, "developed country

Parties should continue *taking the lead* by undertaking economic-wide absolute emission

reduction targets" (UN, p. 4, emphasis added). Observe how the policy explicitly establishes that

"developed" countries are to "take the lead" within the structures established in the Paris

Agreement. Examining this as a collaboration, within the framework of interorganizational

authority, it is possible to see how the Agreement has created discriminate categories via "development" and characterized "developed" nations as those to take the lead. This setup also suggests that this policy is not intended to work in an egalitarian way in which all countries take turns exerting their expertise and leadership, but that there will be clear leaders and followers.

At some points, the Paris Agreement addresses "developing country parties" as having a consistent set of lowered expectations regarding the role of these parties within the policy. For instance, the Paris Agreement writes, "Parties aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, recognizing that peaking will take longer for developing country Parties and to undertake rapid reductions thereafter…" (UN, p. 4). Note that while there is a collective goal for everyone in the Agreement, the status of "ing" changes the expectations for each party. The phrase that it is going to "take longer for developing country Parties" to see the peaking of GHG because assumes that "developing" countries are going to be behind or somehow less capable than "developed" countries of curtailing their GHG emissions. Whether or not "developing" countries are assumed to be less capable, it is clear that they are not constructed as leaders within the collaboration.

This language obscures actual progress toward GHG reductions made by some countries, which directly challenge the narrative of 'ing countries being "behind." Instead of a development frame, one of GHG management and environmental progress reveals that so-called 'ing countries are leaders and models for GHG reduction. Consider that there are eight countries which have already reached carbon "net-zero" goals: Bhutan (Asia, Himalayas), Comoros (Africa), Gabon (Africa, Congo Basin), Guyana (South America), Madagascar (Indian Ocean), Niue (S. Pacific Ocean), Panama (Central America), and Suriname (Amazon, South America). Based on these successes, a policy-maker might want to attribute leadership roles to these particular countries as

they have made strides in the very thing that the policy claims to want to achieve. Instead, all of these countries are grouped with other "developing" parties as lagging behind GHG peaking and thus reductions. Furthermore, they are treated as less than capable, and not associated with leadership—since at no point in the Agreement are "developing" countries, or any of the GHG net-zero countries listed here, asked to take the lead. To drive this point home, consider that half of all global GHG emissions come from China, the United States of America, India, the European Union, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, and Brazil (UN website), which are considered "developed." The construction of the developed/developing categories is not rooted in progress toward Paris Agreement goals, but on capitalist and imperialist histories that work to justify which countries get to be leaders and which are treated as followers.

The implication that developing countries need to be supported in these efforts by the stronger leaders of the developed countries is further solidified in the quotation: "The efforts of all Parties will represent a progression over time, while recognizing the need to support developing country Parties for the effective implementation of this Agreement" (UN, p. 3). In this case, "developing" country Parties are there to receive support. While all parties have a similar goal, only some parties require support in order to meet said goal, even though many developed countries are by far the greatest producers of GHG emissions. The implication is that some parties (i.e., developed countries) are capable and self-sufficient to address their GHG emissions, although they have not yet done so, but "developing" parties are not. Hence, "developing" countries need support; based on the capitalist framing of the document, the Agreement establishes "support" to mean "financial resources" from developed countries.

In sum, the rhetoric of the Paris Agreement regarding developing countries as not being self-sufficient and instead being in need of help establishes the "problem" of support which sets

up a "solution" to be provided by those who are able to give support. When parties to the Agreement are split into hierarchical categories and then attributed characteristics of financial need, developing countries are being rhetorically excluded from leadership positions and decision-making capacities. Broad categories of "development" obscure actual GHG regulation progress and eliminate the many differences between these countries, which could provide insight and policy success if treated more individually or locally.

IA considers that collaborations may at times be hierarchical, but this does not necessarily stop them from being successful. However, I argue that success is contingent upon how parties within these hierarchies relate to one another. Specifically in the context of this chapter, I argue that it is crucial to examine how leadership hierarchies are functioning in ways that are restrictive and silencing. Leadership itself, then, is not something that needs to be coveted or fought over if all participants are well-served within an organization. But when leadership becomes self-serving or even exploitative, parties may find themselves seeking the power to benefit their own interests through seats of leadership positions, or, may not question who is in leadership and why. Unfortunately, for many people and the planet, the Paris Agreement prioritizes economic and financial goals—as discussed in the previous chapter – and ignore environmental goals and the knowledge and expertise that developing countries have to reduce emissions and adapt to a hostile world in which they are suffering the bulk of damages due to climate change (Sultana, 2022).

To complement this analysis of the Paris Agreement, I analyze how leadership from a country identified as developed, the United States, frames their role within the collaboration and how policy-makers navigate their constructions of leadership.

Defining Leadership

Leadership in and of itself does not necessarily have to be inequitable, but how we define it and the assumptions we make about it do construct the dynamics of power that either perpetuate oppression or serve to uplift our communities. These are, however, mostly hidden within assumptions of "leadership" discourse. Therefore, it is crucial for policy-makers, publics, and analysts to question what "leadership" means in any given context, and who it has been constructed to serve best.

What populations does a "leader" commit to represent and how? Throughout the texts, the concept of "leadership" remained relevant, but the definitions of leadership are not consistent and warrant further examination. Especially within the context of granting authority to populations and enacting voice in policy-making, defining leadership is a crucial step in deciding which decision-making foundations a policy is built on. For example, there were differences between how Republican and Democratic leaders in the US constructed "leadership" as it relates to the Paris Agreement. But, overall, both Republican and Democratic arguments for leaving or joining the Agreement hinged upon these differing notions of leadership.

President Obama's and President Biden's reasons for staying in the Agreement were largely based upon definitions of leadership. Hence, Congressional supporters of President Obama's involvement in the Paris Agreement praised, "The President's decision for the United States to be among the *first* nations to sign the agreement" (Congress, Paris Climate Change Agreement, S2488, 2016, emphasis added). Congressional records during the forging of the Paris Agreement show that Democrats praised President Obama as a world leader due to his crucial involvement in making this policy come together. President Obama spoke about the Agreement saying, "Today the American people can be proud — because this historic agreement is a tribute

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to American leadership. Over the past seven years, we've transformed the United States into the global leader in fighting climate change" (Obama, 2015b). While the Paris Agreement is being held as a sign of collaboration, it is more so significant as a symbol of "American leadership."

This notion carried through to President Biden's discourse on the Agreement as well. When the US rejoined the Agreement, President Biden stated, "We'll demonstrate to the world the United States is not only back at the table but hopefully leading by the power of our example" (Biden, 2021b). Once again there is an emphasis that the US is not simply a collaborative participant in these efforts. The Presidents make it a point to highlight that the United States has a leading role in the Agreement and perhaps even a moral obligation of the United States to occupy that leadership position as a developed country. It is not enough for the US to be part of a world-wide alliance for environmentalism. Instead, U.S. policy-makers consistently emphasize that they are proud to be team players—as long as they get to be team captain.

In contrast, the Trump administration's working framework of leadership does not seek to forge collaboration through egalitarian efforts of uplifting the marginalized. Instead, he states clearly that, "As President, I can put no other consideration before the wellbeing of American citizens" (Trump, 2017). His emphasis on his decision as a President to reject the Paris Agreement is also justified by the statement that he has been chosen to represent the "People of Pittsburgh, not Paris," where American interests trump those of other countries (Trump, 2017). For Trump, leadership was not a global matter, but a national one.

President Trump and other dissenting policy-makers offer a definition of leadership that prioritizes the American economy set apart from the need to collaborate with other international powers. As Trump (2017) justified his decision to reject the Agreement, he stated, "... I cannot in

good conscience support a deal that punishes the United States — which is what it does — the world's leader in environmental protection, while imposing no meaningful obligations on the world's leading polluters." In this speech, Trump rejects the idea that leaving the Agreement means that America will stop being a world leader. Instead, he is proclaiming the US' power and independence through leaving the Agreement. He does so by arguing that the Agreement is actually a punishment to "the world's leader in environmental protection" (Trump, 2017). As opposed to Obama and Biden who hinged U.S. participation in the Agreement as a sign of world leadership, Trump establishes that the US is the world's leader with or without the Agreement and that leaving it would help preserve American leadership. Trump goes on to state, "I will work to ensure that America remains the world's leader on environmental issues, but under a framework that's fair and where the burdens and responsibilities are equally shared among the many nations around the world" (Trump, 2017). This quotation simultaneously frames America's leadership as paramount to secure, but also that responsibilities need to be shared equally among nations. This suggests that Trump's construction of leadership does not entail a leader taking on any additional responsibilities from other collaborating participants – leadership is not sacrifice for others or even listening to others, but doing what America was going to do anyways with only what benefits them as a priority.

Additionally, Trump undercuts the US' obligations to other countries or environmental changes as "punishment" and "unfair" throughout his speech. This leaves the question, what differentiates a leader from other collaborating parties? If Trump believes a "fair" deal means that "burdens and responsibilities are equally shared among the many nations" then it is possible that a leader's job is to give orders and define what these burdens and responsibilities are. Defining what constitutes a burden or responsibility, and defining what makes these equally

distributed, then, is not a collaborative multi-vocal process. Rather, it is determined by a leader. IA theory explains this by stating that "Authority can be reframed as the ability to influence the organization's trajectory, goals, and purpose—in other words, authority should be thought of as the ability to, in a given interaction, author or define the organization" (Rice, 2021, p. 19). Re-defining the United States' responsibility within the Paris Agreement as "punishment" provides Trump with a rationale for justifying the rejection of this Agreement as "unfair" to the United States. Redefining leadership as something America is entitled to allows Trump to ignore the international goal of environmentalism. In his discourse, the quality of the Agreement is defined by how it benefits the U.S. economy, not the planet, thereby emphasizing the divisions between nations despite our interconnectedness.

As previously discussed, both Obama and Biden retain a focus on the economy and economic leadership, except they do so to justify support for the Agreement. Congress believes the US should stay in the Agreement. For example, Congressional representatives during the Trump administration wrote in opposition to the President, "Whereas the United States can lead the world in innovation and manufacturing clean energy technologies, creating good-paying jobs, modernizing the energy grid, and growing new companies that will be the titans of a new clean energy economy" (Congress, H.R. 390, 2017, p. 3). This quotation highlights the US as a "titan" or superhuman leader charting an economy that could work both for the US and for the environment.

Thus, whether policy-makers are supporting or rejecting the Agreement, there are two consistent rhetorical arguments that arise—1) the centering of the U.S. economy as a way to measure the utility of this Agreement, and 2) the importance of guaranteeing U.S. leadership on the world stage. As a result, American policy-makers imply that 1) the Paris Agreement is not

about the planet as a whole, nor is it about environmentalism; and it is not about 2) collaborating and participating in a multi-vocal international effort toward a common outcome. These rhetorical constructions of leadership establish that to the United States, the Paris Agreement is a question of U.S. financial benefit, and U.S. international authority through titles of "leadership." Now that I have introduced the main rhetorical components of leadership in the discourse surrounding the Agreement, I want to focus on how leadership is defined as a means of maintaining control—as opposed to being a role which benefits the whole collaborative group. This is because "leadership" in this discourse rhetorically constructs an ethos of authoritative power in decision-making rather than a means of egalitarian collaboration.

Granting Credibility

When I discuss authority and power within U.S. political discourse, I do not mean that the U.S. is able to give direct commands to the rest of the world. Despite what Trump might want to do in levying punishments on other countries instead of the US, its IA is more one of influence and guidance than coercive control. Instead, the US and other imperialist powers have found a way to maintain power through other rhetorical means. First, they do so by centering economic factors—as I discussed in the previous chapter—which allows them to then create measures of success that are founded upon economic, capitalist factors (not environmental factors, which are present but not centered). Second, imperialist powers use definitions of leadership to establish how power flows within the collaboration. These dynamics are not expressed through explicit commands from one country to another per se, but they are created through socially constructed expectations of authority, leadership, and credibility. Important to IA theorizing and my analysis is that expertise and leadership are not established or static, they are the process of

communicative negotiations that may appear to be or are portrayed as natural or normal when they are not.

I have discussed how leadership is rhetorically significant, and now I want to highlight how authority and credibility are relevant within these rhetorical constructions. IA theory posits that "…organizational members can be given the authority to influence, as authority is recast as how different agents 'come to matter' in interactions" (Rice, 2021, p. 6). In the previous chapter I demonstrated that policy-makers established the economy as the most important factor to determine how parties "come to matter" in these interactions. And they do so through the language of "development." Now I want to emphasize how imperialist powers build upon these constructions of development through rhetorical creations of authority, leadership and credibility.

What I mean by this is that according to IA, "authority, too, gets reframed, not as the ability to give commands, but as the ability to influence the organization's goals, actions, and identity" (Rice, 2021, p. 6). It is clear how economic powers have "the ability to influence the organization's goals, actions and identity" since it is their rhetorical perspective which gets honored throughout the Paris Agreement. Economic "development" categorizations are used to establish roles, to define leadership, and to discuss capacity (and capacity-building).

In examining what authority is established by the Agreement, I invite the reader not to focus solely on what the policy states, but *how* the policy states it. That is, analysts ought not only to look at what the policy expects from members, but also question how membership is set up in the first place. Consider Zarefsky's argument that "to view a question of public policy as a problem of rhetoric, then, is to focus on the creation and exchange of symbols through which issues are perceived, defined, addressed, and resolved" (cited in Beasley, 2010, p. 10). In the Paris Agreement, credibility and authority are created through economic symbols. These

symbols are upheld across the political spectrum in gathering support for and against the Agreement.

In a Congressional statement during Trump's rejection of the Agreement, supporters of the policy explained, "Whereas the United States exit from the Paris Agreement will cede leadership on clean energy technologies, and the jobs they create, to China and other nations" (Congress, H. RES. 390, 2017). This quotation is consistent with other Congressional records which de-center the goal of environmentalism and hinge their measures of success on "technologies, and the jobs they create." In leaving the Paris Agreement, Congress under Trump worries that economic leadership and economic potential through job development is sacrificed. This quotation reads as a capitalist, emphatically competitive, effort against "China and other nations" instead of a collaborative group mission meant to incite anger or dismay that the US was not going to function as a leader on this initiative.

When policy-makers do discuss the importance of participating in the Paris Agreement, they still place emphasis on the U.S. as a leader and not just a regular participant in policy efforts. Obama said, "We then led by example, with historic investments in growing industries like wind and solar, creating a new and steady stream of middle-class jobs" (Obama, 2015b). Once again this rhetoric emphasizes the economic significance of the Agreement and the ability of the US to take a leadership role in growing renewable industries. As a result, the discourse of the Paris Agreement favors capitalist measures to define success and leadership. The symbols upon which credibility, authority, influence, and leadership are defined are centered on economic factors. By holding the most financial influence, imperialist, industrial nations grant themselves leadership through the "responsibility" of being developed. Obama noted, "Today, thanks to strong, principled American leadership, that's the world that we'll leave to our children – a world

that is safer and more secure, more prosperous, and more free" (Obama, 2015b). In President Obama's words, the world is better off thanks to "American leadership" and will survive beyond the current generation.

Challenging "Leadership"

While the Agreement was praised for its overwhelming support around the world, one country stood out for intentionally refusing to sign on to the policy. While most sovereign parties were joining the Agreement, Nicaragua made headlines for speaking out against the Paris Agreement. Representatives from Nicaragua directly challenged the "leadership" discourse created in the Agreement. Nicaragua's language reframes what the US calls "leadership" by presenting it as "responsibility" in taking accountability for the country's contributions to the problem—the US is not a "leader" in that it must take "responsibility" for its actions against the planet. In an interview at the Conference of the Parties, representative from Nicaragua Paul Oquist stated:

> AMY GOODMAN: So, Mr. Paul Oquist, what is happening here? Why is Nicaragua not participating? Why didn't you submit voluntary standards for your country?
>
> PAUL OQUIST: Because the concept of universal responsibility and voluntary commitments doesn't work. Universal responsibility is a spin. It's a spin on historical responsibility and common, but differentiated, responsibilities. The first proof that INDC doesn't work is that—
>
> AMY GOODMAN: Wait, wait, just one sec. These terms are terms 99 percent of the world won't understand.
>
> PAUL OQUIST: OK. These voluntary commitments don't work.

AMY GOODMAN: Even "common and differentiated" is a term that is not commonly

used.

PAUL OQUIST: OK. But the—let's say that the voluntary commitments that the

universal responsibility—everyone is responsible—is a spin on historical responsibility,

because everyone didn't create this problem. Nicaragua has 4.8 million tons of emissions

a year, and that's 0.03 percent of emissions. Do we feel responsible for having caused

climate change? No, not at all. Are we doing something about it? Yes, we've gone from

25 percent renewable to 52 percent renewable since 2007, and in 2020 we'll be 90

percent renewable. (Democracy Now!, 2015)

Nicaragua's representatives believe that the "voluntary" aspects of allowing each country to set

its own goals is not enough to hold parties accountable—especially the world's biggest polluters.

Furthermore, Nicaragua's policy-makers believe that "historical responsibility" is being avoided

by invoking a group effort of "universal responsibility." This commentary highlights the

deflection of accountability by the US and other imperialist powers who want to operate under

the "leadership" narrative when there are perhaps better or more logical ways to construct

leadership regarding climate change initiatives.

Additionally, consider this criticism provided by the climate change coordinator for the

"Third World Network" and honorary secretary of "Friends of the Earth Malaysia", Meena

Raman:

President Obama said that the developed world and the United States will assume its

responsibility and will do something about it to combat climate change. But, however,

that is quite rhetorical, because if you look in the way the negotiations are going, the

United States negotiators and their positions in the talks are far away from assuming any

responsibility. In fact, what they're doing is shifting the responsibility to the developing

world… So if everybody is going to take the approach of the United States, where it

decides what it wants to do, when it wants to do, and so this is not assuming

responsibility or leadership… So, what President Obama says is ringing hollow.

(Democracy Now!, 2015)

These representatives are challenging the notion of the United States as a leader of

environmental success. Furthermore, they are challenging the narrative of leadership altogether

by arguing that polluters need to take responsibility for their actions; it is contradictory for them

to be leaders when they are the ones primarily responsible for these problems. This discourse of

accountability is more prevalent coming from the international community, especially when

discussing the biggest world polluters. However, discourse within the United States and the

Agreement does little to talk about responsibility or accountability, instead emphasizing their

role as "leaders."

The Agreement does not provide an equal interpretation of these narratives and instead

leans into rhetorical constructions of "leadership" that favor imperialist polluters, even granting

them greater relevance for ratification. Article 21 states:

This Agreement shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date on which at least

55 Parties to the Convention accounting in total for at least an estimated 55 per cent [*sic*]

of the total global greenhouse gas emissions have deposited their instruments of

ratification, acceptance, approval or accession. (UN, p. 23)

Considering that the 55 percent of the total GHG emissions can be reached through just a few

countries—the world's biggest polluters—those countries with the biggest pollution have a

bigger impact on whether or not the Agreement would go into effect. This limits many countries'

ability to enact the policy even when they will be likely most affected by climate catastrophe. The Agreement is not framed as a way to promote accountability but instead it rhetorically reframes these countries' dynamics through a narrative of "leadership" that hinges upon the economic development categories.

The contested non-legally binding aspects of the Agreement continued to be a point of discussion throughout the international community. The inequitable distribution of power established by the Paris Agreement gained relevance again when Trump decided to remove the US from the Agreement. Analysts from The Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations stated,

> More importantly, the U.S.'s removal proves Nicaragua's original point: that those who created the problem will continue to perpetuate it without a binding legal framework. If the international community intends to survive through 2100, it is critical that developing nations demand more of wealthy nations and that wealthy nations are legally bound to keep their climate change policy promises to prevent repeat withdrawals. (Torello, 2018)

I provide these dissenting perspectives because they help contextualize the intentional linguistic choices constructed in the Agreement. These discursive choices deflect addressing responsibility, and accountability. Instead, participation from the United States is framed through a constructed notion of "leadership" founded on economic principles.

Here, it is appropriate to mention the ongoing prevalence of American exceptionalism philosophies in foreign policy. Restad (2012) writes,

> In essence, the dichotomous view of American exceptionalism and US foreign policy does not comport with reality. Rather, the United States has always sought to expand,

model, lead the way, and meddle—viewing itself as the one country chosen by God to

lead the others to the "end of history." (p. 71)

The Paris Agreement both validates and extends this narrative of exceptionalism in foreign

policy by attributing "leadership" only to "developed" countries. As a result, "leadership"

becomes a tool for dominance rather than advocacy. "Leadership" is attributed to economic

powers in a way that shields them from international accountability because it presents other

countries as non-leaders, who are less capable and in need of support.

How policy-makers implicitly or explicitly define leadership is crucial to understanding

the nuances of group decision-making. I dive deeper into the implications of policy actors

defining their "responsibility" and "obligation" as leaders in regard to the vulnerability of

developing countries in the next chapter. In what follows, I further examine other ways in which

authority, credibility, and influence are defined in the Paris Agreement's policy rhetoric. One of

the most important ways in which environmental policy attributes an ethos of credibility is

through its definition of "expertise," "science," and what counts as "knowledge."

What Counts as Knowledge

So far, I have focused on what policy-makers are saying. Now I consider what they are

not saying; specifically, which communities are not framed in proximity to "leadership" or even

addressed at all. In order to explore this, I am focusing on what the policy-makers count (and do

not count) as knowledge. Rhetorician Eric King Watts (2001) presents "rationalism and

scientism" as "forces that mute 'voice'" (p. 183). In the process of developing a shared definition

of concepts such as "expertise" and "science," policy-makers can silence particular populations.

By analyzing the demarcation of knowledge, rationality, and expertise, I am working to uncover

which communities have and do not have "voice." Referencing the work of Lorraine Code, Watts (2001) explains:

> historically the discourses which establish knowledge claims are "disembodied [and] disconnected" (204). That is, "epistemology makers" are anonymous no ones who speak from nowhere (204). Such a rationalist language system privileges Anglo-American masculinity as a universal construct and disavows the lived accounts of women, people of color, and homosexuals [*sic*]. (p. 183)

When "anonymous no ones" establish claims to knowledge, they can masquerade as normal or natural rational systems. Thus, in order to reject the notion that knowledge—and as a result, epistemic authority—comes from "anonymous no ones," I emphasize how policy-makers treat "expertise" and "knowledge" as social constructions which favor imperialist, capitalist powers and are thus far from neutral, objective, or natural.

I have already demonstrated how the Paris Agreement centers economic rhetoric. I extend that analysis by showing how "knowledge" and "expertise" are based on economic capacity. Previously, I have addressed sections where the Agreement directly addresses the organization's parties (i.e., developed parties, developing parties). When addressing the potential role of "scientists" and "experts," the Agreement does not usually address them directly nor does it give them a clear set of ordinances. Instead, the Agreement more or less acknowledges that "scientists" and "experts" are a part of the equation that some parties have more direct access to than others.

The Agreement reads, "Parties hereby establish the global goal on adaptation… Strengthening scientific knowledge on climate change, including research, systematic observation of the climate system and early warning systems, in a manner that informs climate

services and supports decision-making" (UN, Article 7.7.c, p. 10). This quotation represents the Agreement's treatment of scientific knowledge as an instrumental part of achieving success. The Agreement further notes, "Parties hereby establish the global goal on adaptation… should be based on and guided by the best available science, and *as appropriate*, traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems…" (UN, Article 7.5, p. 9, emphasis added). I want to emphasize what constitutes the sections before and after the Agreement's caveat of science "as appropriate." Observe how the first part of the quotation states Parties efforts, "should be based on and guided by the best available science." Then, "as appropriate," the Agreement may consider "traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems." Notice that the Agreement marks a difference between the "best available science" and "traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples, and local knowledge systems;" one is described as real "science," and one is not.

In doing so, the Agreement implicitly suggests that "knowledge of indigenous peoples" is not the same as "the best available science." Not only does the Agreement create a rhetorical boundary, which Thomas Gieryn (1983) would call the practice of science "demarcation," by differentiating between "best" science and "indigenous knowledge," but it also establishes one as more essential than the other by stating that policy should be "*based on and guided* by the best available science." The best available science is thus construed as Western, non-Indigenous science, which is more crucial than the consideration of "traditional knowledge, indigenous knowledge, and local knowledge systems," which are only to be used when "appropriate." The rhetorical deployment of propriety—saying something is only useful when "appropriate"—is a way in which the Agreement rhetorically constructs "knowledge" and "expertise" to favor

non-indigenous, non-local, non-traditional sources of information. In doing so, the Agreement hinges "knowledge" upon social constructions of propriety.

Whichever party has the power to name "knowledge" as "appropriate" has the ability to influence the implementation and potential outcomes of the Agreement. Structural definitions of knowledge have been previously studied by policy scholars. For example, Danielle Endres (2009) points out how, "Current models of public participation also define what counts as legitimate arguments—scientific and technical arguments—and exclude social, political, and emotional arguments" (p. 47). Unfortunately, formal, official, and Western scientific and technical expertise often underrepresent the perspectives of marginalized communities. As a result, white, patriarchal, heteronormative, capitalist groups become constructed as the epistemological norm.

Specifically, white scientific communities have become associated with "regular" science, and people of color's scientific contributions often get labeled as "other" in some way, a practice that Chanda Prescod-Weinstein (2020) calls "white empiricism." As Prescod-Weinstein (2020) comments, "White empiricism is the phenomenon through which only white people (particularly white men) are read as having a fundamental capacity for objectivity and Black people (particularly Black women) are produced as an ontological other" (p. 421). Thus, when a group of Indigenous analysts provide their expertise, they are not treated as "scientists" due to their unconformity with White, Western standards of what counts as "science." Not only are they removed from "science" and empiricism, but their knowledge is also subcategorized as a non-scientific form of knowledge to be only considered when "appropriate."

Subcategorizing non-imperialist "science" as non-essential ignores the historical reality that Indigenous peoples successfully nurtured our planet, cohabited within flourishing

ecosystems, and stewarded nature for hundreds of years. Yet, Indigenous knowledge is not treated as the most credible—and by extension, the most authoritative—within the Agreement. Instead, the policy makes economic capacity the most essential cornerstone for defining "knowledge." Since the Agreement vehemently protects the "right to development" (UN, p. 2), the reader can deduce that "the best available science" is that which does not challenge the idea of "development" in the first place. This resonates with Endres' (2009) argument that " a phenomenon often expressed with empirical evidence fundamentally relies on discourse for its perpetuation" despite its appeal to material reality (p. 54). The Paris Agreement is an example of how discourse serves to perpetuate the marginalization and silencing of non-imperial communities through rhetorical constructions of the "best available science," and thus, relevant and appropriate expertise and knowledge.

It is important to note that the mentions of Indigenous communities in the Paris Agreement were incredibly brief, but still spoke volumes about how that knowledge is demarcated outside the bounds of appropriate, relevant expertise. Perhaps even more notable is that my analysis of Presidential and Congressional discourse in the US regarding the Paris Agreement only turned up one, single reference to Indigenous populations. In a 2021 speech, Biden said, "We're going to work with mayors and governors and tribal leaders and business leaders who are stepping up and the young people organizing and leading the way." Here, Biden equates tribal leaders with business leaders as collaboration partners, which is a promising start to considering multiple forms of credibility in environmental organizing. However, this solitary reference also demonstrates the lack of authority bestowed upon Indigenous communities overall, despite their closeness to the climate crisis and their historical awareness of climatic changes (Whyte, 2017).

Now that I have explored the Agreement's construction of scientific "knowledge," I want to drive this point home by demonstrating how the policy constructs "capacity" through protocols of "capacity-building," which also contribute to the distribution of leadership.

Capacity-Building

Bringing together the concepts of "leadership" and "knowledge," the Paris Agreement constructs "capacity-building" as one of its procedural guidelines. The Agreement notes, "Capacity-building under this Agreement should enhance the capacity and ability… in particular countries with the least capacity, such as the least developed countries" (UN, p. 15). In an environmental context, it would be reasonable for countries who have met their environmental goals to be the providers of capacity-building techniques toward parties who have not met their goals. Instead, the Paris Agreement assumes that least developed countries need capacity-building knowledge from developed countries.

The Agreement states, "All Parties should cooperate to enhance the capacity of developing country Parties to implement this Agreement" (UN, p. 15). The assumption that developing countries would need assistance in order to implement the Agreement is opposed to the actual data of countries' ability to implement the Agreement so far. By establishing developed countries as sources of knowledge, the Agreement emphasizes the rhetorical construction of what "capacity" consists of. If developing countries are assumed to need "capacity-building," it is not because they cannot achieve environmental sustainability, but because they are not achieving environmental sustainability while upholding economic "development" as a priority. Thus, the need for "developed" countries to spread their techniques

to the rest of the world that lacks the capacity to develop by the nature of the hierarchical definitions of developed and developing.

Throughout the Agreement, there is an emphasis for parties to focus on "adaptation" to and "mitigation" of the effects of climate change. Hence, "Parties recognize the current need for adaptation is significant and that greater levels of mitigation can reduce the need for additional adaptation efforts, and that greater adaptation needs can involve greater adaptation costs" (UN, p. 9). Adaptation is mentioned 47 times throughout the Agreement. By emphasizing adaptation and mitigation, the Agreement prioritizes a country's capacity to recover (mitigate and adapt) from climate change as more "capable." Instead of centering preventative measures—which may counter "development," the Agreement focuses on adaptation to changes brought about by industrialization and capitalism. Preventative measures might mean avoiding the construction of more infrastructure that pollutes the planet, or un-subsidizing industrial growth that may contribute to "development" but exacerbates GHG pollution. Instead, the Agreement emphasizes the need to "develop" and adapt to climate change, which requires little economic restructuring or changes.

Additionally, "capacity-building" is discussed as a relatively one-directional flow of knowledge. To be clear, the Agreement does establish a series of "transparency" protocols where all countries must provide clearance regarding their industrial practices. However, these "transparency" protocols are not treated the same as "capacity-building" efforts. "Capacity-building," then, is not framed as a collaborative multi-vocal process. Instead, it is directed at "developing" parties. This frames "developing" countries as recipients, not authors, of "capacity" or "knowledge." Through naming practices, the Paris Agreement prescribes role expectations from its participants. This policy creates power differentials by outlining the

expectations for its collaborators. IA theory explains, "For communication scholars, collaboration is constituted through talk—communication accomplishes the steps of creating and maintaining collaborations" (Rice, 2021, p. 12). In this policy, collaboration is largely framed by hinging "leadership" to "development." By doing so, the Agreement creates rhetorical boundaries that credit the expertise and experience of some of its collaborators over others based on economic frames of development.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the rhetorical implications of defining "leadership" within the Paris Agreement, which thereby constitutes related notions of expertise, knowledge, and capacity and who has the power to define those terms. Rhetorical theory emphasizes how power can be constituted through naming, in which boundaries are drawn and actions made in keeping with those boundaries (Burke, 1937). Gender theorist Judith Butler argued that "naming is at once the setting of boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm" (cited in Endres, 2009, p. 49). Just like the boundary work of determining what is and what is not science, naming constructs boundaries around what is appropriate, valuable, relevant, and important that are then taken up, repeated, and become the foundational justification for action. As demonstrated in the Paris Agreement, rhetorical boundary work is ever present in policy-making. In the same way in which "appropriate" "knowledge" is constructed in the Paris Agreement, policy-makers draw rhetorical boundaries by emphasizing the need for "timely," "effective," and "relevant" solutions to societal, political, and economic problems.

To conclude this section, there are three important implications for how the Paris Agreement rhetorically constructs group roles. First, this process is indicative of the

categorization of interorganizational roles as prescriptive of power differentials; second, it highlights the malpractice of decision-making "collaborations" as unilateral and authoritative; third, it demonstrates the inadequacies of policy-makers when defining "leadership" attributes relevant to a particular subject matter.

First, having established role differentials from the beginning of the document, the Paris Agreement utilizes the creation of "collaborative" roles to prescribe expectations upon its parties. This serves as an important takeaway for any future policy-makers to consider, especially if policy agents wish to operate in more equitable, collaborative ways. The categorization of interorganizational roles can result in the creation and perpetuation of inequitable power structures that are unproductive to the success of the advertised policy solution and conceal an attempt to consolidate benefits for a particular group of participants above the rest. In short, policy can be used to conceal the consolidation of power by attributing significant roles to a particular group under the guise of how to best solve a particular policy problem. Whether or not any specific group is the most equipped to lead, or is the most knowledgeable, capable, and experienced group needed to solve a policy problem is irrelevant because—in a discursive, decision-making process—being "equipped," "knowledgeable," "capable," and "experienced" are socially-constructed states derived from rhetorical practice, such as through policy-making and interorganizational communication. Furthermore, there are many more rhetorical categories that may be used as rhetorical boundaries in policy-making (i.e., efficiency, propriety, timeliness, relevancy, etc.). Policymakers, analysts, academics, and the public should attend to how although these categories can surely be measured in some type of way, even metrics for measurement and comparison are still rhetorically constructed and can serve a persuasive purpose because they are useful in drawing the lines that: a) keep particular groups in and out of decision-making

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processes, and b) outline the parameters of participation, agency, capacity, and (im)mobility for each participating party.

For instance, recall the discussion on white empiricism and how science is affected by the groups who define what counts as rational, scientific knowledge. In the Paris Agreement, only countries that have been acknowledged by the United Nations are allowed to even participate or enter the treaty. This might fall within the banality of the United Nations' *modus operandi*, but if this policy intends to take on a global issue it would do well to consider global actors, namely Indigenous communities who are structurally not given agency but through their colonial/imperialist representatives. Under the Agreement many Indigenous communities—which have historically succeeded in nurturing and cohabitating with nature—are left no other category but "observers." Looking further into the Agreement, the line drawn between "developing" and "developed" parties allows scholars to see how language is used to draw borders around what "developed" countries are expected to do and sets a path for "developing" countries to participate in only certain, prescribed ways while also perpetuating imperialist interventionist practices.

Finally, the justification behind these arguments is often signaled by language that suggests that "developed" countries are the most "capable." I urge policymakers, analysts, and academics to question definitions of "capability" by examining exactly what policy agents are most capable of doing and how perceptions of lack of capabilities are constructed by the same systems that disempower and silence marginalized communities. These practices of exclusion and silencing are more directly addressed in the next chapter, which emphasizes discourses of vulnerability and saviorism within the Paris Agreement and related U.S. political discourse.

In the next chapter, I explore how the framing and naming conventions in this chapter and the previous chapter pave the way for the rhetorical exclusion of some Paris Agreement parties through the lens of vulnerability. Endres (2009) explains that "rhetorical exclusion is employed by those in power to 'foreclose debate without appearing to engage in undemocratic action'" (p. 46). By silencing certain voices, those in power can appear to be taking in all available viewpoints and collaborating when they are, in fact, not. Policy collaborations can and should find ways to transcend these undemocratic practices. Thus, "Collaborations must transcend boundaries to help members become a 'we' that sees itself as having shared goals that can address a shared problem" (Rice, 2021, p. 4). This requires a more thorough consideration of participant perspectives. However, the Paris Agreement fails to incorporate all voices because of its financial framing and economic measures of leadership that demarcates certain groups, such as Indigenous communities and developing countries, outside of appropriate experience and expertise.

Chapter 5: Voice and Vulnerability

In this chapter, I explore "vulnerability" as a rhetorical construction that can be used to generate voicelessness for particular parties. The Paris Agreement demonstrates policy-makers' rhetorical construction of "vulnerability" as a way to frame participant roles in collaborative problem-solving. Defining some group participants as more "vulnerable" than others invites attitudes and behaviors related to the participants' perceived status. For example, a vulnerable, developing country must be protected and helped whereas a non-vulnerable, developed country must do the protecting. Using an economic development frame as a foundation, the Paris Agreement constructs two major types of participant roles through attributing "leadership" to developed countries and "vulnerability" to developing countries. I elaborate on the rhetorical implications of "vulnerability" as a policy-making construct and explain key terms in the vulnerability narrative such as the "danger," the parties "in danger," and the "solution" to the danger. The Agreement establishes poverty as the "danger," developing countries as "those in danger" and developed countries as the "saviors" who provide the "solution" of development. A reliance on poverty as vulnerability structures a narrative of white saviorism that allows imperialist powers, namely developed, Western countries, to perpetuate the oppression and subjugation of other countries as lacking capacity and as less than fully-fledged collaboration members. The establishment of these definitions serves as a means of rhetorical exclusion through prescriptions of the savior.

"Vulnerability" is a complicated rhetorical construction because of the assumptions that are usually generated by invoking a state of "vulnerability." This is because, while it is true that many marginalized populations are "vulnerable"—as in they are in danger of the disastrous effects of climate change—their position is framed as something naturally inherent to their state

of being and not the result of systemic human-made decisions. By only focusing on vulnerability

as an effect, the state of vulnerability appears static, natural, and causeless. This applies to both

the historical fact that marginalized communities are financially targeted to have less resources,

as well as the fact that climate change is exacerbated by human-made industrial practices.

Furthermore, the framing of marginalized communities as "vulnerable" presents them as

less-capable dependents in need of support as opposed to developed and, thus, capable

collaboration members. I explore the complexities of this term by considering the ways in which

"vulnerability" structures assumptions of these targeted parties who are essentially on the

frontlines of an international crisis due to systems of oppression, imperialism, and capitalism.

Framing vulnerability as a natural state for developing countries enables imperialist parties to

deflect responsibility regarding their role in exacerbating climate change as well as historical

responsibility for the destabilization of now-called developing countries.

  The construction of vulnerability follows from the framings analyzed in the previous

chapters. Through the framing of development, the Agreement shifts the imminent danger from

climate change to poverty, developing countries from leaders in net-zero emissions to lacking

capacity, and developed countries from historic oppressors to heroic saviors. This messaging is

predicated upon capitalist ideals that highlight financial priorities as the keys to development and

leadership. The result is a repackaging of industrial, imperialist dynamics that perpetuate

interventionist practices by presenting them as beneficial to global financial well-being. The

Agreement re-frames the "danger" from climate change to poverty through its emphasis on

economic resiliency, adaptation, and mitigation efforts. Instead of centering environmentalism

and the planet's deterioration, the Agreement is most concerned with countries' abilities to

withstand (not prevent) the effects of climate change in a financial sense. As a result of these

rhetorical structures, authors of the Agreement are able to discriminately give voice to economic powers instead of centering environmental expertise in the decision-making process.

What is the Danger? Poverty

It is important to begin by exploring the assumptions and tensions that arise from the use of "vulnerability" narratives. Note that within "vulnerability" there are both natural and created implications. First, as Judith Butler comments, there are aspects of the human experience which make life precarious by nature of being mortal. However, there are also dangers which can be socially and politically created and exerted on some humans rather than others. That is to say, there are acts of socio-political violence which can purposefully place a person in a vulnerable state. Butler (2009) argues, "Precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (p. 25). As a result of these two aspects, the use of "vulnerability" results in a rhetorical ambiguity that has real implications for the distribution of agency and voice in collaborations. Investigating these ambiguities is a befitting task for communication scholars. Rhetorician Kenneth Burke (1969) notes, "instead of considering it our task to 'dispose of' any ambiguity by merely disclosing the fact that it is an ambiguity, we rather consider it our task to study and clarify the resources of ambiguity" (original emphasis, p. xix). To explore and clarify the functions of "vulnerability" rhetoric, I examine the main assumptions within these differing meanings of the term.

One of the main aspects of the use of "vulnerability" as a rhetorical framing device is how it is used in conjunction with a hazard or danger. Richie (2019) defines vulnerability thusly:

As both a term and a concept, vulnerability typically is not framed in a positive light.

Rather, the term is more commonly used to describe an unfortunate exposure to the threat

of subjugation and injury, which should be avoided or mitigated whenever possible.

These typically negative connotations can be attributed to a wide range of factors,

including culturally learned presumptions and linguistic associations. After all,

vulnerability is derived from *vulnus*, the Latin word for "wound." (p. 85)

Thinking of a "vulnerable" party as "wounded" is useful because it allows scholars to ask

questions about the ambiguities of this term through a more approachable and familiar metaphor.

A participant who is "vulnerable" can be thought of as wounded because of the actions of others

in addition to the nature of their circumstances. By this I mean that a "vulnerable" party has a

natural disposition to acquire wounds as an inhabitant of its environment, and also may itself be

socioeconomically wounded by the oppressive constructions of other parties.

Additionally, a party which has already endured previous wounds now lives in a more

precarious state as their ability to withstand danger has been worn down—especially in

comparison to non-wounded parties. Thus, "vulnerability" can refer to being in a state of

possible danger or being in a debilitated state which impedes withstanding future hazards. With

this in mind, I believe that labeling a participant as "vulnerable" allows rhetors to create

assumptions about the well-being and strength of other collaborators. Similar to how

"development" and "leadership" naming practices can grant and take away voice, I argue that the

deployment of "vulnerability" language has rhetorical implications that result in the

empowerment of some parties over others, despite whether or not these vulnerabilities are

accurate. In order to demonstrate the ambiguity and function of vulnerability, I explore how the

Paris Agreement utilizes "vulnerability" both as a natural proximity to danger as well as a constructed socio-political state.

Vulnerability is invoked a dozen times throughout the Paris Agreement. In multiple cases, vulnerability is adjacent to development. Article 7 states,

> Parties hereby establish the global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing to sustainable development and ensuring an adequate adaptation response in the context of the temperature goal referred to in Article 2. (UN, p. 9)

Notice how in the next excerpt the Agreement builds upon this and adds the language of security discourse—a choice that I will turn my attention to later in the chapter. Article 7 goes on to state "...the long-term global response to climate change to protect people, livelihoods and ecosystems, taking into account the urgent and immediate needs of those developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change" (p. 9). The Paris Agreement emphasizes the need to "protect" from "urgent" needs those who are most "vulnerable." Yet, the Agreement's overall response is through ongoing financial efforts which are again mentioned in Article 9:

> The provision of scaled-up financial resources should aim to achieve a balance between adaptation and mitigation, taking into account country-driven strategies, and the priorities and needs of developing country Parties, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and have significant capacity constraints, such as the least developed countries and small island developing States, considering the need for public and grant-based resources for adaptation. (UN, p. 13)

Notice how these excerpts encapsulate multiple linguistic choices that I have highlighted throughout my analysis, such as an emphasis on "financial resources," "adaptation," and "capacity constraints" in the context of "development."

Furthering this language use, Article 11 reads:

Capacity-building under this Agreement should enhance the capacity and ability of developing country Parties, in particular countries with the least capacity, such as the least developed countries, and those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, such as small island developing States, to take effective climate change action…" (p.15)

This juxtaposition of vulnerability and development is a rhetorical choice that invites a reading of vulnerability in relation to the economic positionality of the parties in the Agreement. By constructing vulnerability as adjacent to financial frames, the Agreement can reemphasize notions of strength and resilience as the product of economic means by alluding to assumptions of weakness in describing "developing" states. Of course, this is where vulnerability becomes complicated as a rhetorical term because although many "developing" countries are in fact primarily affected by natural disasters and climate change, the way in which "vulnerability" is invoked does not only allude to their proximity to hazard but also to the construction of them as a weaker, less-capable collaborator—the latter being a rhetorical socio-political construction which negates the environmental net-zero success of "developing" countries by presenting them as weaker than other parties. This further emphasizes how the language of the Agreement dis/empowers participants through an emphasis on the economy, not on environmental success.

Vulnerability can be a rhetorical tool for both granting and eliminating voice depending on what it is that vulnerability is constructed in relation to. For instance, if the Paris Agreement

constructed vulnerability related to the presence of corporate oligarchies that prevent concerted climate action, then imperialist powers might be labeled as the most "vulnerable" countries in the collaboration. Consequently, a policy that seeks to help these "vulnerable" parties would most likely seek to correct patterns of corporate exploitation. Instead, the Paris Agreement frames vulnerability as proximity to poverty, and defines poverty in terms of "development."

I have demonstrated how the foundations of this policy are constructed through "development" narratives that center and prioritize economic growth above all other factors in a previous chapter. As an extension of this framing, the Agreement justifies its policy decisions by arguing that "development" is for the benefit of the most "vulnerable." Since "vulnerability" hinges upon economic resilience, the Agreement creates a problem whose solution requires economic intervention. This focus happens in conjunction with the acknowledgment of the very real environmental changes around the world. However, the Agreement argues that the solutions are primarily economic—adaptation and mitigation. This is the result of a set of rhetorical choices that construct "vulnerability" in order to justify capitalist approaches to environmental policy.

Scholars emphasize the importance of inquiring about the rhetorical implications of using vulnerability within decision-making processes. For example, Vogel and O'Brien (2004), note:

> Although vulnerability is sometimes discussed in the abstract, it is usually associated with one or more processes, explicitly answering the question "vulnerable to what?" Blaikie et al. (1994, p. 9), for example, define vulnerability as "the characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impacts of natural hazards." (p. 2)

A rhetoric of vulnerability relies on commonly shared assumptions held by individuals that imminent threats may endanger some parties more than others, and that a considerate group would want to protect and help those in need. This thought process appears to have virtuous implications because it seems to be compassionate to those who are most vulnerable. Helping those in need comes across as the opposite of a self-serving policy. However, these policies can still work to engrain existing hierarchies. Thus, there are altruistic implications to using "vulnerability" within policy-making that may conceal potentially harmful implications.

The rhetorical construction of "vulnerability" can be manipulated by authors in order to maintain the impression of altruism while seeking their very own self-interest. This can be done unintentionally by upholding existing orders as natural or strategically to broker compromise on difficult topics such as climate change (Miller & Bloomfield, 2022). This is the case when capitalist powers construct "vulnerability" in proximity to poverty and define poverty as a failure to "develop" economic structures. As Bloomfield (2019) has argued, capitalist rhetoric presents markets as anthropomorphic in ways that construct power dynamics to favor economic rationality. Hence, markets are framed as having "natural" flows as if they were parts of an ecosystem. In a similar sense, "vulnerability" is presented as part of a naturally-occurring process. However, "Vulnerability is not, however, a predetermined state, but instead is usually socially constructed, contextual, dynamic and driven by various causal agents and processes" (Vogel & O'Brien, 2004, p. 2). Defining "vulnerability" establishes a narrative perspective of power by which needs and solutions are defined through economic frames.

When a decision-making group establishes "vulnerability" onto another party, it is prescribing how it will measure what constitutes as a good solution to the need of the "vulnerable," with or without their direct input. This showcases the very profound power of

constructing "vulnerability" throughout the Paris Agreement discourse and its circulation in U.S. political discourse more generally. When President Obama (2015b) presented the Agreement he stated, "And we have secured a broader commitment to support the most vulnerable countries as they pursue cleaner economic growth." This quotation directly posits vulnerability as antithetical to economic growth. Often when talking about the Agreement, vulnerability is emphasized through the need for economic development. Article 6.6 of the Agreement states:

> The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Agreement shall ensure that a share of the proceeds from activities under the mechanism referred to in paragraph 4 of this Article is used to cover administrative expenses as well as to assist developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change to meet the costs of adaptation. (UN, p. 8)

Climate change and its effects enter into the narrative as a potential cause for poverty, which allows policy-makers to treat poverty as the primary need to be solved with climate change merely a factor. In this narrative, addressing the effects of climate change is only part of the solution; it is not the only essential task of the Agreement because the imminent threat is poverty, necessitating financial intervention.

Even when making statements in opposition to the US joining the Paris Agreement, congressional members perpetuated poverty as the main concern. For example, one congressperson stated, "These regulations would prevent struggling communities from accessing reliable and affordable fuel sources, which could eventually lead to poor families choosing between putting food on the table and turning the heat on in the wintertime" (Congress, Paris Climate Agreement, S1887, 2016). Similarly, when discussing his reasoning for withdrawing from the Agreement, Trump (2017) noted:

Under this agreement, we are effectively putting these reserves [regulations] under lock

and key, taking away the great wealth of our nation — it's great wealth, it's phenomenal

wealth; not so long ago, we had no idea we had such wealth — and leaving millions and

millions of families trapped in poverty and joblessness.

Messages both in favor and in opposition to the Paris Agreement make their arguments in

economic terms regarding how well the Agreement affects parties in danger of poverty. In this

scenario, environmental solutions are a means to an end—the end being "development" as a

solution to poverty.

With the consideration that "vulnerability" is a rhetorical construct with policy-making

implications, I now turn to analyze how the Paris Agreement labels some collaborators as more

"vulnerable" and how this gives voice to imperialist economic powers over other participants.

Before I do so, I want to briefly consider how policy-makers treat "vulnerability" as a naturally

occurring state rather than a rhetorical construction.

Vulnerability as a Natural State

By using "vulnerability" language to rhetorically construct the profile of policy-relevant

subjects, policy-makers can perpetuate the idea that poverty and other social ailments are a

natural byproduct of life, and not the intentional harm or violence of an oppressive economic and

imperialist system. Thus, "[vulnerable peoples'] disadvantage is conceptualized as a 'condition

people are in, not something that is done to them'" (Fairclough, 2000, pp. 54-5 as cited in Furedi,

2008, p. 655). This is echoed by Biccum (2006) who states that "development" language is

"filled with qualifiers such as 'try to manage' wealth creation in a way that 'reduces' poverty and

'helps' the poor, 'lifts', as by a strong benevolent 'Western' hand, out of their natural state of

degeneracy, as opposed to addressing, eliminating or eradicating the *conditions of poverty creation* in the first place" (p. 1014, original emphasis).

By arguing that "developing" countries are the "most vulnerable," the Paris Agreement can ignore the need to explain how countries in recovery from imperialist violence are still healing from oppression of many sorts. In other words, they can ignore many of the reasons why developing countries can be constructed as vulnerable in the current geopolitical landscape. Instead of addressing the injustices caused by some parties in the Agreement upon others, the document re-frames the aftermath of imperialist violence through a lens which ignores the past altogether. This is done through "development" narratives which are mainly concerned with capitalist, forward-facing financial efforts. Focusing on "vulnerability" to outside forces (i.e., natural disasters) also shifts the focus from imperialist violence toward seemingly-naturally-occurring threats. In this way "vulnerability" language also serves as a tool of absolution to White, capitalist, colonial, and imperialist powers which might otherwise be held accountable for the harm they have caused and continue to cause through current hierarchical systems.

Who is in Danger? Naming the "Vulnerable"

The Paris Agreement addresses "developing" countries through a frame of "vulnerability" and in doing so it justifies a power differential between "developed" and "developing" countries. For instance, the document describes developing countries as being in need and vulnerable: "recognizing the specific needs and special circumstances of developing country parties, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change…" (UN, p. 1). The Agreement additionally notes, "A share of the proceeds from

activities under the mechanism… is used to cover administrative expenses as well as to assist developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change to meet the costs of adaptation" (UN, p. 7). The Agreement essentially sets up a plan to alleviate the effects of climate change on developing countries through money without identifying why developing countries may be disproportionately vulnerable to climate catastrophe. It does so by emphasizing the need for "vulnerable" countries to focus on adaptation. This is usually where capacity-building comes in—again, reiterating the dominance of economic framing. But as opposed to other countries being labeled "leaders," "developing" countries are framed as most "vulnerable." This is significant because by alluding to the meanings of vulnerability, "developing" countries are both described as being proximal to hazard but also constructed as weaker (wounded) in comparison to the other collaborators.

Congressional representatives stated that the Agreement "would slow global warming and help poorer nations most affected by it" (Congress, Paris Climate Change Agreement, S2488, 2016). This quotation makes the argument that global warming—an all-around geographical phenomenon—will affect poorer nations most. I find this wording to be consequential because it communicates the idea that the effects of climate change show up in poorer geographical sections of the world first. This echoes the rhetorical construction of "vulnerability" to danger/hazard. Instead of saying that poorer nations have less access to contingency plans in their recovery, they are the "most affected by it." Climate change affects the entire world, by definition. The difference between economic powers is not how much climate change affects them but how much access they have to resources for recovery efforts. Instead of acknowledging an institutional lack of access to resources of many kinds, perpetuated by historical oppression and imperialism, policy-makers simplify this to parties being more or less

vulnerable. Thus, "The United States must also be responsive to climate change's impact on our friends in the world's least developed and most vulnerable countries" (Congress, Paris Climate Change Agreement, S2488, 2016). These statements reinforce the Agreement's definition of "vulnerability" as defined by "development" discourse—which, as I have established, is a means for granting voice to imperialist powers through financial framing and perpetuating the voicelessness of other communities.

To further this point, consider the communities that are mentioned in conjunction with "vulnerable situations" in the Paris Agreement:

> Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right of health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity. (UN, p. 2)

Readers of the Agreement are left to make assumptions about who the primary "Parties" are and who is othered (not to be assumed within "Parties"). The Agreement first addresses "Parties" and then lists marginalized communities as if they are not included in "Parties." Signatories to the Agreement are not "indigenous peoples," "local communities," or "persons with disabilities" because if they were then there would not be a need to list them out separately. Instead, the Agreement sees it necessary to list out these groups as if they would be otherwise overlooked or forgotten by the Signatories. In doing so they are also including these groups along with "people in vulnerable situations" (UN, p. 2). While it is true that these groups are usually at the front lines of various dangers and especially so through climate injustice where those least responsible for climate change will bear the brunt of its impacts (Holifield, Chakraborty, & Walker, 2017),

the socio-political consequences also frame these groups as inherently weaker rather than stronger or more resilient. Furthermore, some of the groups named in this passage have been previously identified by policy scholars as being targeted in rhetorical constructions of "vulnerability" throughout policy-making at large (Furedi, 2008).

The Infantilization of Sovereign Nations and Communities

In the context of the Paris Agreement, the construction of "vulnerability" perpetuates imperialism, patriarchy, and capitalism by encouraging the dependence and infantilization of "vulnerable" populations in policy-making. To be clear, infantilization is not inherently negative. However, the status of age has been rhetorically constructed as "less-than" and dependent when compared to the paternal, mature rationality of policy-making (Thomas, 2023, p. 2). Although the Paris Agreement does not explicitly label parties as children, the document constructs a set of dynamics that invites the interpretation of a parent-child dependence. This is done by ascribing child-like traits to "developing" parties and suggesting that "developed" countries are financially mature enough to step in with the solution, thereby appealing to paternalism.

Throughout the Agreement, "developing" parties are described as unable, financially insufficient, unknowledgeable, and vulnerable. They are presented as unable through ableist language that suggests that their efforts are less effective without the support of "developed" countries. Similarly, advising "developed" countries to financially support "developing" countries suggests that developing countries are not financially self-sufficient. Third, they are framed as unknowledgeable when they are prescribed as the recipients of capacity-building. Finally, rhetorically constructing "developing" countries as "vulnerable" invokes a sense that they require protection from a stronger entity. As a result of these rhetorical framings (unable,

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financially immature, unknowledgeable, and vulnerable), "developing" countries are ascribed a sort of naiveté that requires support from a more capable, financially-stable, knowledgeable, protective guardian-figure. The narrative progression of this parent-child relationship results in the creation of "developed" countries as savior-like entities that rescue the "vulnerable" parties who are incapable of protecting themselves.

Before I elaborate on the rhetorical construction of a savior, I want to discuss how the language of "vulnerability" supports the infantilization of marginalized groups. Discourse surrounding the Paris Agreement contains a number of paternalistic references. U.S. Congressional speakers stated, "Earth Day is a reminder of our obligation to preserve and protect our environment for our children and future generations to come" (Congress, Paris Climate Change Agreement, S2488, 2016). Additionally, they noted that, "We have a responsibility to help protect our children and grandchildren from the most severe consequences of global warming by reducing emissions now" (Congress, Paris Climate Change Agreement, S2488, 2016). These rhetorical notions of paternalism perpetuate patriarchal decision-making roles. These passages emphasize the paternalistic persona of policy-makers and political leaders. Instead of thinking of youth and young people as having agency and voice, they are silenced as needing protection (Thomas, 2023), a framing that carries over not just from actual children and youth but countries and communities who are infantilized rhetorically.

Other examples emphasize the vulnerability of marginalized groups. During the Trump Administration, Congress supported the Paris Agreements by saying, "Whereas the most vulnerable among us, including children, the elderly, low-income individuals, and those with underlying health conditions, face even greater health risks as a result of climate change" (Congress, H. RES. 390, 2017). Note how these groups are framed as "the most vulnerable." The

way in which these groups are emphasized through their proximity to hazard, wound, or danger is important because it opens an interpretation of them as dependent upon a stronger entity for their well-being.

As a result, environmental policy-making creates rhetorical boundaries around various communities by framing them as more or less "vulnerable." This has policy implications because when "vulnerability" is used to frame a party as weak or dependent it can result in voicelessness. "Vulnerable" populations are not granted "leadership" in these decision-making processes. Much like children, they do not legally speak for themselves. Instead, infantilized subjects are seen as less-than. They are less than capable of knowing what is best for them. Consider the previous chapter and the exploration of capacity-building as a solution that presents "developed" countries as fully-formed adults who do have capacity. Infantilization serves colonial powers to speak as the parent because it relies on the assumption that children are not fully-formed agents—they are in a "developing" stage.

Endres (2009) writes extensively about the infantilization of Indigenous peoples. She notes that the use of the term "domestic dependents" is used to call forth "paternalistic images of American Indians as child-like dependents…" (Endres, 2009, p. 44). Johnson (2021) also explores how Indigenous people are discursively treated, "as if we were children" (p. 7). The infantilization of Indigenous people is a rhetorical construction that allows policy-makers to function as paternalistic decision-makers who know better than the "children" they are legislating for. The language of vulnerability is thus used to describe marginalized groups as a way that others them, removes them from decision-making positions, and constitutes rhetorical exclusion. To counter this silencing, Johnson (2021) argues that "decolonization necessitates centering the agency of Indigenous nations not as a subset of the United States, but rather as

sovereign entities" (p. 2). Instead of hiding or minimizing Indigenous communities, the Paris

Agreement could raise their agency, capacity, and leadership by treating them as fully-fledged

Parties. As written, Indigenous nations and communities are not seen as sovereign and separate

signatories but are subsumed under the nation-state that often continues to oppress and

marginalize them. If "developing" countries and infantilized communities were treated as

capable partners, the Agreement could establish more collaborative, reciprocal dynamics.

Similar to infantilization, consider other narratives in which subjects are framed as being

"in need" or less "capable." "Vulnerability" rhetorics function through an ableist lens, where

constructing a group of people as "vulnerable" in the context of their powerlessness is proximal

to the treatment of disabled groups in ableist systems. Furedi (2008) points out how, "the manner

in which vulnerability is framed is used to convey the impression that people suffer from

vulnerability as a condition of their existence" (p. 655). The "condition" of vulnerability, lack of

capacity-building, and lack of development are something that policymakers treat as if it were a

disability. This point of analysis is not about having a specific physical or mental disability per

se, but it is about the way in which ableist policy-making systems use the notion of disability to

limit the agency of groups and individuals by emphasizing their "needs" in the context of

powerlessness.

In an ableist way, the Agreement provides a description of "developing" countries as

handicapped—or somehow limited in their abilities—which in turn prescribes them as

less-capable than "developed" countries and in need of support. For instance, the Agreement

reads, "Continuous and enhanced international support shall be provided to developing country

Parties for the implementation of paragraphs 7, 9, 10, and 11…" (UN, p. 11). The emphasis of

"developing" countries as needing support is consistent throughout the document. In turn,

constructing disabled people and groups as powerless is problematic in the larger policy-making context, and it is also problematic in the terms of this Agreement, which is written on the backs of imperialist and capitalist systems that contribute to these impairments in the first place.

In the document, the construction of this "handicap" is based on language that emphasizes their powerlessness, need for support, and lack of capacity. However, these are conclusions which are substantiated in economic factors derived on countries' classification as "developing" and not on their actual ability to set and achieve GHG goals. In this way, the "handicapping" of "developing" countries is a result of what I would call "financial ableism" which is the constructed notion of limited agency through an economic lens. This phenomenon is useful to imperialist, capitalist actors both in that it allows for the anthropomorphism of large capitalist entities but also allows for the discrimination of particular constructed groups as "less-than" within the capitalist system. The anthropomorphism of countries may be interpreted as a similar process in which corporations and industries are referenced through human-like qualities in environmental discourse (Bloomfield, 2019). As a result, seeing countries as different kinds of humans allows policy to treat different sovereignties discriminately in ways that perpetuate imperialist power structures. This language and way of thinking provides a justification for oppressive powers to continue to exert power over other groups. In the context of the Paris Agreement, the powerful groups that are to take the lead are clearly ascribed features of a "savior," hero, and leader. Before I discuss the narrative of saviorism, I want to consider academic observations of "vulnerability" as a means of disenfranchising populations in policy-making.

Vulnerability as Disenfranchisement: Depleting Agency

Furedi (2008) provides a befitting analysis of "vulnerability"-led policy and discusses some of the rhetorical implications of constructing a "vulnerable" population. Furedi (2008) states, "it is remarkable just how prevalent the idea of human powerlessness has become. The emphasis placed on human vulnerability in worst-case scenarios dooms people to the role of helpless victims of circumstances" (p. 654). Furthermore, he notes that "vulnerable people cannot manage the uncertainties facing them. That is why officials increasingly devise policies to 'support' so-called vulnerable groups" (Furedi, 2008, p. 655). In constructing developing countries as experiencing vulnerability, the Paris Agreement frames the help of developed countries as integral to the success of the policy.

By prescribing "developing" countries as "most vulnerable," the Paris Agreement is also constructing the narrative that developing countries are not in a position of ambition but rather in a helpless situation, bound to suffer the consequences of climate change without support from developed countries. Furedi (2008) demonstrates that governments oftentimes create the notion of a "vulnerable adult," which are "presented as biologically mature children who require official and professional support" (p. 655). I consider ascribing vulnerability as an act of rhetorical disenfranchising—devoicing/silencing because vulnerable adults lack power, agency, and the ability to advocate or defend themselves without external support, not unlike an ecoableist lens that disenfranchises disabled voices from environmental decision-making (Cram, Law, & Pezzullo, 2022). Framing policy in service of the "vulnerable" has advantages in the way that it assumes that the "vulnerable" need whatever the policy is attempting to do, and that this legislative solution is for their own good by an all-knowing parental/savior figure. This validates the course of action proposed by the policy as being for the benefit of all parties. In this case, the

Paris Agreement validates an economic approach to environmentalism by arguing that "vulnerability" is the result of an "undeveloped" economic state.

Furedi explains that policymakers have often constructed the idea of a "vulnerability" to target particular communities in order to establish their policy solutions. Furedi (2008) outlines,

Government publications on health, education, crime and welfare continually refer to the targets of their policy as 'vulnerable children', 'vulnerable adults' or just as 'the vulnerable'. Such reports echo the media narrative of vulnerability which conveys a diffuse sense of powerlessness through this term. (p. 655)

Within the narrative of the Paris Agreement, "developing" parties are in a constructed state of powerlessness by being described as "vulnerable" and "most vulnerable" throughout the document while also establishing their "special" circumstances and need for "support." The Paris Agreement notes it is important to "recogniz[e]the specific needs and special circumstances of developing country Parties, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, as provided for in the Convention" (p.1). This type of language creates an image of "developing" countries similar to ableist narratives of helpless vulnerable adults who have "special needs" that must be addressed (Furedi, 2008).

In the Agreement, "developing" countries are in a most vulnerable position to the imminent threat of extreme poverty which is awakened by the effects of climate change. However, "developing" countries are not recognized for making strides against these threats. Instead, the Agreement constructs their existence as needing support in order to begin to tackle such issues and remove vulnerabilities. Therefore, they are constructed to be in a position of danger and powerlessness—rhetorically creating the need for a savior, a hero. Before exploring

the construction of the savior, I highlight the ways in which "vulnerability" also functions as an instrument of deflection.

Vulnerability as an Imperialist Tool

Throughout this analysis I have argued that the Paris Agreement can be read as an imperialist, industrial, capitalist narrative that supports oppressive structures. Policy narratives—such as the construction of "vulnerability"—work to sustain these oppressive systems. Endres (2009) explains that "Colonialism in all its forms is dependent on the discursive apparatus that sustains it" (p. 44). The United Nations is an organization that consolidates international power through its Agreements and intergovernmental collaborations. Policies such as the Paris Agreement perpetuate the "discursive apparatus" that sustains imperialist, industrial power dynamics worldwide. This is not unique to the Paris Agreement, but of UN discourse in general. Corporate, capitalist powers depend on these "discursive apparati" to justify their decision-making.

I want to note two ways in which "vulnerability" is used as a deflection tool for imperialist powers. These are the deflection of climate change by reframing environmental damage toward a focus on poverty as the more urgent problem and the deflection of countries in recovery of imperialism and colonial violence toward an ahistorical focus on development efforts. First, by juxtaposing "vulnerability" to a party's financial ability to cope, the Agreement de-centers environmental efforts and establishes economic frames as measures of success. This deflection makes it more difficult for environmental regulation to be more radical because it protects economic interests. Protecting the vulnerable becomes about ensuring the safety of markets, not necessarily about preventing the deterioration of nature.

The second deflection is the ahistorical reframing of imperialist violence. Instead of discussing how some international sovereignties are in financial need due to destabilization efforts of outside agents, they are described as un-developed. Being "vulnerable" is not a byproduct of historical violence, it is assumed to be a natural state of being for "developing" countries which are just weaker. These deflections are rhetorically important because they absolve imperialist and colonial powers from their role in these issues. By relying on the ambiguity of "vulnerability," rhetors can invite an interpretation that "developing" countries are incurring the disastrous effects of climate change as a natural part of their existence. This ignores the way in which marginalized communities are systematically targeted out of economic progress or resilient infrastructure, which is especially important considering the racial composition of the global South and its continued exploitation by colonial sovereignties (Sultana, 2022). By deflecting, the Agreement creates a need for an economic power to save "vulnerable" countries from their inability to cope with climate change. And through its ahistorical approach, the Agreement allows "developed" countries to step up as the heroic saviors best fit to protect the most "vulnerable" parties.

The Solution – A Savior

Having identified the "vulnerable" populations that the Paris Agreement is designed to help, the policy also identifies the parties who are expected to step up to correct these vulnerabilities. When addressing "developed" countries, the Paris Agreement states the following, "Also recognizing that sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production, with developed country Parties taking the lead, play an important role in addressing climate change" (UN, p. 2). The Paris Agreement offers an opportunity for capitalist

world powers to operate as "saviors" while continuing to deplete the planet of its natural resources because it is founded on imperialist language that, while considerate of the Earth's GHG to a certain extent, it is mainly preoccupied with protecting development as an unquestioned right (UN, p. 2).

Saviorism in this context is not only about protecting the Earth from climate change, but about protecting "vulnerable" parties from the imminent threat—extreme poverty. Biccum (2006) argues, "It's as if the eradication of *extreme* poverty (and, note, not poverty altogether or the conditions that produce it) is the raison d'être of the 'developed' world" (p. 1017). Through this poverty as vulnerability framing, the Paris Agreement attempts to perform a politics of "social justice" because it presents the uplifting of marginalized communities as a step toward "development." The document seeks, "...a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs…" (UN, p. 2). Notice how the idea of justice is predicated on capitalist components. For instance, the Agreement notes that "Emphasizing the intrinsic relationship that climate change actions, responses and impacts have with equitable access to sustainable development and eradication of poverty" (UN, p. 1). Policy-makers wish to equate economic progress with environmental advocacy by suggesting that "development" can be sustainable. These "developed" countries are meant to save the world by spreading development as the solution.

A consideration of the rights of the most "vulnerable" populations becomes an act of white saviorism under the veil of social and climate justice. Bandyopadhyay (2019) notes,

Indeed, development today is a fundamental and invasive white enterprise (Bauman, 2000; Biccum, 2011; Duffield, 2005) and as Sardar (1999) opined, the real power of the

Global North lies not in its massive economic development but rather, in its power to

define, represent, and theorize the "Other." (p. 328)

This "progressive and teleological narrative of history" asserts that "development just happened

spontaneously (development happened to and by the West; the West is the West because it is

developed), which is in effect a narrative of (white) supremacy predicated upon no justifiable

logic," but may appear to be reasonable and natural (Biccum, 2006, p. 1011). The Agreement

does not provide a justifiable logic outside of capitalism, imperialism, white supremacy

either—nor does it need to because it thrives upon the banality of "development" assumptions as

normal and ordinary. Rather, it focuses on the predicament of "vulnerability," those who suffer it,

and those who can do something meaningful about it.

The fact that this interorganizational line of "developed/developing" is mostly drawn in

tandem to White supremacist, capitalist, imperialist countries is a rhetorical benefit to existing

world powers who rely on those structures. The rhetorics of "development" and "vulnerability"

are both elements of absolution to capitalist, white supremacist, imperialist governments. Finally,

in order for the narrative of heroism and saviorism to serve as an appropriate response within

environmental policy-making there is an implied justification of national security that must be

protected at all costs against the risks of climate change and of climate change policies, such as

the Paris Agreement.

The Justification – National Security

Crisis policy-making has often been studied in terms of terrorism, war, and economic

distress. Non-coincidentally, these themes were alluded to in the U.S. political discourse

surrounding the Paris Agreement. President Trump leaned heavily into these themes. This is how

he began his speech about the Paris Agreement, "I would like to begin by addressing the terrorist attack in Manila. We're closely monitoring the situation, and I will continue to give updates if anything happens during this period of time" (Trump, 2017). In his speech, he uses various descriptions to emphasize international dangers:

> We're also working very hard for peace in the Middle East, and perhaps even peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Our attacks on terrorism are greatly stepped up – and you see that, you see it all over – from the previous administration, including getting many other countries to make major contributions to the fight against terror.
>
> (Trump, 2017)

Despite the speech being ostensibly about the Paris Agreement, Trump's references to terrorism are framing devices to emphasize policy-making as part of ensuring national security. Later in his speech, Trump presents the Paris Agreement as an "unfair" deal detrimental to national security. He argues that the Paris Agreement is bad for the U.S. economy, "Including funds raided out of America's budget for the war against terrorism" (Trump, 2017). The Paris Agreement is thus framed as antithetical to national security and thereby reducing security if the US stays in it. Trump (2017) later in the speech reassures his supporters that "Our withdrawal from the agreement represents a reassertion of America's sovereignty [Applause]." His argument emphasizes policy-making as an instrument of ensuring national-security from dangers and something that should only, or at least primarily, benefit the US. For Trump, to compromise or join an international agreement is to compromise American sovereignty and security.

President Trump (2017) argued that "...exiting the agreement protects the United States from future intrusions on the United States' sovereignty and massive future legal liability." Trump's framing of national security especially centers the need to protect economic interests.

He notes, "A cynic would say the obvious reason for economic competitors and their wish to see us remain in the agreement is so that we continue to suffer this self-inflicted major economic wound" (Trump, 2017). But he assures his supporters that "The economy is starting to come back, and very, very rapidly" (Trump, 2017). Notice the prominence of economic arguments and how he frames his decision to exit the Agreement in order to protect the health of the economy from a potential "wound."

Although Trump uses the security narrative to argue that the Paris Agreement is bad for the US, supporters of the Agreement also rely on similar narratives to support the policy. For example, President Biden (2021b) states, "And in an age where this pandemic has made so painfully clear that no nation can wall its all [*sic*] — wall itself off from borderless threats, we know that none of us can escape the worse that's yet to come if we fail to seize the moment." Biden's words emphasize how policy-makers frame the effects of climate change as "borderless threats," in which global, in addition to national, security is at risk. Similarly, President Obama initially presented the Agreement through frames that conjoined national security and the economy as benefiting from environmental action. He argued policy-makers set out to build "...A world that is safer and more secure, more prosperous, and more free" (Obama, 2015b).

As I have previously discussed, voice can be understood as the expression and acknowledgment of grievances. In these speeches, Presidents are giving voice to economic interests and national security grievances (i.e., the fear of a "wounded" economy) even though they are discussing what is supposed to be an environmental policy. These are examples of how discourse of the Paris Agreement continuously gives voice to financial parties by acknowledging and centering economic interests in decision-making. These dynamics are also present in Congressional texts. During President Trump's Administration, policy-makers stated, "Whereas

global climate change is a threat to the United States national security, public health, national economy, and the legacy we will leave to our children" (Congress, H. RES. 390, 2017). Then again during President Biden's Administration, members of Congress argued that "American economic growth and prosperity is essential to the development and deployment of these technologies to address global energy security" (Congress, H.R. 2578, 2021, p. 5). As a result, environmental efforts and marginalized communities in the decision-making process are disenfranchised, they are voiceless because their grievances become subservient to economic and national security interests. Policy-makers rhetorically disenfranchise environmental efforts that might require deeper commitment because they are reframed as a threat to "energy security" or even "national security" at large. And yet, the Agreement stands as a symbol of environmental progress in which economic powers set out to defend the most "vulnerable."

Supported by definitions of "vulnerability" and national security, the Agreement presents an opportunity for the rhetorical construction of a hero and savior to take the lead in tackling climate change. Through narrative techniques such as the infantilization of parties, the Agreement discriminately prescribes interorganizational roles. As a result, the policy reframes imperialist interventionism as "saving" the "vulnerable." This is supported by the development discourse and capacity-building.

Interventionism as "capacity-building" arises in this policy and is justified as a necessary step toward the benefit of global ecosystems. Saviorism and interventionism are, "justified by a narrative of (white) supremacy, because it entails the assumption that the conquered people lack the ability, often racialise [*sic*], to 'civilise' [*sic*] themselves, 'civilisation' [*sic*] having been exclusively defined within the parameters of 'European' social and political organization" (Biccum, 2006, p. 1008). Although "civility" is not explicitly cited in the document,

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"development" is deployed for the same purposes through the construction of "vulnerability."
Furedi (2008) argues, "paradoxically, the growing usage of the rhetoric of resilience in official
discourse is informed by a powerful mood of insecurity that encourages a *vulnerability-led*
response to uncertainty" (p. 646, original emphasis). The Paris Agreement is an example of
contemporary policy strategies to perpetuate interventionism for the benefit of the "vulnerable."

Conclusion

At the United Nations Climate Change Conference of 2022, Representative Nancy Pelosi
spoke about the process of policy-making saying, "You also have to be ready to throw a punch…
for the children" (Browning, 2022). This statement encapsulates the rhetorical need to protect
and defend the need of the "vulnerable." In this chapter, I have explored how "vulnerability" is
constructed as a rhetorical framing technique that at once places marginalized communities
within voicelessness while providing a justification for imperialist, industrial powers to continue
to dominate decision-making processes. Through these rhetorical constructions, "vulnerability"
presents particular policy agents as less-capable and voiceless within policy-making.

Additionally, by establishing "vulnerability" through economic and national security
terms, dominant economic powers are able to place themselves at the lead despite the fact that
they are the most responsible for the policy problem of climate change. Exploring the nuances of
these rhetorical constructions further demonstrates the heuristic value of policy-making. For
instance, as Rice (2021) explains, "Using the lens of authority helps us see that authority is not
about who is right or wrong in these situations. It is about who can persuade others of their
account of the organization" (p. 27).

Furthermore, the Paris Agreements exemplifies the importance of discourse analysis in decision-making. Rice's (2021) analysis of emergency protocols states, "environmental cues like climate change could have been granted authority in conversation but were not given the presence to influence the situation" (p. 33). While climate change is addressed as a crisis situation with impending international consequences, environmental topics are not granted authoritative presence because of having to yield to economic interests. These rhetorical choices are part of the collaborative decision-making progress. The investigation of naming practices, narrative construction, and action justification is an academic imperative for analysts and scholars who seek to deepen their understanding of how policy is made—for what purposes and through what means. By examining language, scholars can discover the very real consequences of policies—not only for what they claim to do, but for the collaborative power structures that they create throughout the process of their deliberation.

Conclusion: What Should Collaboration and Voice Look Like?

In this dissertation, I have presented an examination of the rhetorical implications within the discourse of the policy-making process of the Paris Agreement and its discussion in U.S. political discourse as an organizational response to climate change. Through each chapter I have focused on symbolic choices that construct the organization's framework for collaboration. The main themes explored are the rhetorical constructions of "development," "leadership," and "vulnerability," which stem from a primary focus on economics that orders the document. The creation of these rhetorical themes amplifies the voice of some parties, namely "developed" countries, while limiting the perspectives of other participants, namely "developing" countries, unnamed communities such as Indigenous or marginalized communities within developed countries, and the environment. This dynamic favors imperialist, industrial, capitalist interests by prioritizing financial frames over environmental ones and maintaining a strict hierarchy of leadership and capacity.

The analytical richness of terms such as "development," "leadership," and "vulnerability" emerges from their polysemous construction and ambiguity in policy. While they may appear to be natural, normal, or typical frameworks for policy-making and policy collaborations, they are in fact symbolic constructions that can have far-reaching consequences. Attending to language choices and their subsequent implications highlights the contributions of rhetorical studies to policy-making in that a rhetorical perspective can equip qualitative scholars with the inquisitive tools to explore the fibers of decision-making. In policy-making, rhetorical choices are the intangible but very real frameworks that formulate the power dynamics to rule the citizenry. The ways in which policy-makers define policy problems, policy solutions, success, and leadership

have implications for the lives of its citizens and, in the case of the Paris Agreement, the future of the planet.

The Paris Agreement's discourse ascribes power to economic entities through the prevalence and banality of "development" narratives. The Agreement treats economies and financial growth as a natural imperative ubiquitous throughout policy-making. This shows up in the Agreement through "development" categories which are used to assign roles in the collaboration. Through language, the Agreement establishes positive attributes based on "development." By focusing on economic development as the key to progress and environmental collaboration, the policy prioritizes the economy as the major barometer of a party's success within the Agreement. Therefore, participants categorized as "developed" are treated as more capable than those who are "developing." This results in a dynamic that gives greater importance and agency in the decision-making progress to parties based on their financial profile rather than their relationship with the environment or commitment to addressing climate change.

By emphasizing the economic importance of the effects of climate change, policy-makers rhetorically construct poverty as a policy problem. Therefore, the policy treats poverty as the imminent threat and an economic problem to be solved by the promulgation of "development" across the world. This results in a deflection of environmental catastrophe as the paramount problem, which allows authors to dodge solutions that would radically help the environment in favor of promoting solutions to "poverty." This framing limits more radical environmental solutions that may help the planet but might not be the best for "development," such as refiguring capitalism, decarbonization, and removing subsidies from fossil fuels. Instead, policy-makers operate under the assumption that "development" is congruent with environmental problem-solving—not counterproductive.

A focus on the economy is, as this dissertation has demonstrated, often at the detriment of environmental framing. However, some argue that a focus on economics can work hand-in-hand with environmental protection. For example, authors and critics of the Green New Deal praised its inclusion of the environment and the economy as dual goals as a strategy to gain political buy-in and demonstrate how environmental changes are intertwined with political, social, and economic change (Gunn-Wright, 2021; Hathaway, 2020; Miller & Bloomfield, 2022). Sometimes called "the green economy," this approach to environmental protection still has the baggage of perpetuating the prioritization of financial growth, potentially at the expense of better environmental choices. The focus on the economy in the Paris Agreement could be seen as strategic to appeal to industrial stakeholders especially when policy-makers advocate for the importance of more and new technology as the "innovation" that fuels the "green economy." This focus could also simply be a holdover from imperialist hierarchies and capitalist ideologies that see economic progress as most important in all circumstances. In this context, we may question what is being sustained when we see deployments of "sustainability" discourse. Thus, "sustainable development" has become a popular approach to environmental policy but has been flagged as inefficient for environmental progress by academics (Redclift, 2005, pp.214-215).

As an organizational approach, the "development" categories are used to discriminate among collaborators and ascribe different roles and expectations. The assigning of roles based on "development" grants voice to economic, industrial participants who are historically imperialist nations. At the same time, the Agreement silences the "developing" global South by emphasizing their proximity to the problem of poverty. "Developing" parties are presented as being in a position of need and support which creates the opportunity for a hero to step up. In this narrative, the heroes are the "developed" parties that can save the world from poverty, despite the fact that

these nations have primarily contributed to climate catastrophe and created the conditions for certain countries to be "developing."

Having introduced the foundation of financial frames and how the Agreement functions through "development" language, the next chapter explored the construction and definition of "leadership" within the collaboration. By establishing a hierarchical structure, the Agreement does not assume an egalitarian approach to collaboration, but rather a top-down "development" approach. In this scenario, "developed" countries are explicitly told to take the lead. The Agreement's treatment of "leadership" is constructed based on the economic lens established previously—not on the environmental success of addressing climate change. Additionally, throughout the policy-making discourse, "leadership" is treated as an exceptionally U.S. American quality which rather than being collaborative is the sign of thriving within a competitive environment. Across the political spectrum, policy-makers both rejected and advocated for the Agreement via arguments of "leadership" and the US's obligation to other countries (or itself) as an economic powerhouse. Those who were in favor of the Agreement such as President Obama argued that joining the Agreement was a testament to American leadership on the world stage. On the other hand, President Trump rejected the Agreement because he believed that it was his job as a good leader to defend the economic interests of America first above all other parties. Policy-makers constructed "leadership" as it best served their rhetorical needs, but altogether reinforced the notion that "leadership" was synonymous to economic strength.

The Agreement and the discourse surrounding it grant a type of authoritative, dominant power over the other parties in a way that perpetuates "developed" imperialist practices over "developing" country parties. Definitions of "leadership" grant credibility to "developed"

countries as successful and fully equipped to demonstrate their best practices to other countries. This reinforces colonial conceptions of what constitutes "knowledge," in this case as explicitly capitalist and industrial, which is used as a rhetorical boundary to limit the contributions of particular populations to the Agreement's environmental goals.

The Agreement calls for the "best" available science which invokes particular types of "knowledge" that place the knowledge of Indigenous populations and the Global South as sub-par. This demonstrates a leniency toward what Chanda Prescod-Weinstein (2020) calls "white empiricism." This policy discourse upholds that only certain types of experience and science are "appropriate" "knowledge" that is relevant to the Agreement. And by using "development" as a means of determining where that "knowledge" resides, the Agreement can reject non-white, non-imperialist, non-industrial efforts as meaningful contributions. Furthermore, the policy uses this to validate the interorganizational expectations that "developed" parties should "lead" over "developing" countries through "capacity-building" protocols. Relying on arguments of "capacity," the Agreement attributes an ethos of credibility and "leadership" to "developed" countries as opposed to the way in which "developing" countries are presented. The latter group is then constructed as being in a constant state of "vulnerability" in need of support—a group in distress in need of a heroic savior.

In the last analytical chapter, I discuss how rhetorical constructions of "vulnerability" build upon the "development" financial frames to create an opportunity for "leadership" actors to save those who are most in need. "Vulnerability" is a complex term that both refers to the natural and precarious state of mortal existence—being naturally exposed to the hazards of a hostile world environment, especially in the context of climate change — and refers to a wounded state that makes a party "weaker" and less-capable of withstanding danger due to the actions of others.

"Vulnerability" thrives in the ambiguity of the various assumptions that it invokes. This allows policy-makers to frame "developing" parties as the most "vulnerable" because it establishes poverty as an imminent danger that they are most proximal to. And at the same time, constructions of vulnerability create an image of "developing" countries as less capable of withstanding the dangers triggered by climate change. The use of this term also allows policy-makers to rely on two deflection points. First, the Agreement deflects the importance of environmentalism to prioritize economic resilience by framing "vulnerability" in relation to "development" economic characteristics rather than environmental preservation. Second, the Agreement allows imperialist powers to deflect historical responsibility by presenting "vulnerable" countries as less-capable rather than as countries that have been wounded by colonial exploitative practices. This rhetoric attributes the wounded state of "developing" countries to an assumption of economic inferiority rather than acknowledge the historical exploitation of natural resources and labor that these countries have long experienced.

As a result of these narratives, the Paris Agreement allows "developed" countries to operate as the savior to the most "vulnerable" because of their constructed position through economic frames. Saviorism in this narrative is not centered on climate change but on protecting "vulnerable" parties from the threat of extreme poverty. The solution provided by the discourse is the dissemination of "development" all around the world, where "developed" countries are the heroic saviors most capable of providing the solution. This narrative of saviorism is supported by rhetorical notions of paternalism in which "developing" countries are infantilized because of their lack of development knowledge, capacity, or financial strength. The naiveté attributed to "developing" countries functions as a rhetorical boundary that keeps them from taking on commanding authority within the organization. Instead, they are presented as being in need of a

paternal protector that can save them from the harms of poverty, such as increased exposure to climate risks.

The Paris Agreement exemplifies the power of ambiguity and polysemy when constructing rhetorical narratives that appear to address environmental issues but actually hinge upon economic measures of success. The policy demonstrates the effectiveness of rhetorical banality as arguments hiding in plain sight through its use of "development." The ubiquity of "development" throughout the discourse functions because it does not need to explain itself because it has become normalized and thus invisible to scrutiny (Bloomfield, 2019, p. 324; see also Peeples et al., 2014). Its prevalence, however invisible it may be, creates a stronghold for economic prioritization in discussing policy solutions. This is further emphasized through constructions of "leadership" that uphold capitalist, imperialist dynamics. Additionally, constructions of "vulnerability" suggest the need for a heroic savior to step up and protect the vulnerable. In doing so, the discourse deflects historical interventionist practices from imperialist nations onto the Global South and other "developing" areas and reframes them as altruistic "capacity-building" protocols. The implications of this rhetoric allow some parties to have voice over others and establish an organizational approach that is hierarchical and authoritative.

Now having summarized the main components of my analysis, I want to consider other implications and what policy-makers can do going forward. First, it is important to acknowledge the obstructions constituted by these performative rhetorics. As writer for *The Guardian*, Deborah Doane (2014) stated, "Phrases such as 'sustainable development' have done little to improve the status quo… Describing a country as developing leads to the use of simplistic primary indicators by which we measure success and, in turn, simplistic solutions." It is not only useful but imperative that global collaborations move away from the use of economic terms as

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the foundation of their rhetoric. This includes rejecting "development" narratives as normal, unquestioned standards in favor of new, transformative narratives. As Doane (2014) noted,

> We have shied away from being bolder about what many in development know to be the
> real solutions: stronger rights and accountable governments. The recent global backlash
> against campaigning and rights-based organisations [*sic*] has only further served to send
> some back to the comfort zone of traditional development. It inevitably means they shy
> away from campaigning and solidarity-based activity.

Instead, it is necessary for global collaborators to recognize that participants are vastly heterogenous and therefore success can be defined in a multiplicity of ways. The key imperative for policy-makers to remember is to avoid deflecting the real root of the problem and giving the appropriate attention to the topic at hand—environmental catastrophe, not economics.

It is also important for decision-makers to avoid patronizing their co-participants and understand that efficacy can look different between and within collaborators. Perceived deviance from an economic focus does not warrant a relinquishing of autonomy. An interconnected approach to collaboration should strive to function in a more symbiotic, synergistic manner rather than a centralized-authoritative commanding way. Discourse that assumes that all participants are "vulnerable" to something, and all are capable of "leadership" in different areas can help reconsider contemporary constructions of power. Leadership roles may also be assigned not based on imperialist economic categories but based on countries' previous successes in addressing climate change.

If decision-makers accept that the topic at hand requires a multi-directional approach, they can re-define the characteristics of the policy problem and the policy solution. For instance, international collaborators should question the merits of using socio-political categories to

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measure success and perhaps explore geographic or socio-historical groupings. This would mean that instead of utilizing "development" categories to discriminate countries' roles, an international policy might instead outline major geographical bureaus with committees that include representatives from various countries but do not speak for any one country in particular. These bureaus could represent geographic areas around the world that would address the specific environmental issues relevant to those spaces. Additionally, coalitions can be created to uplift historically silenced populations around the world. For instance, while the Agreement currently makes a few quick notes of considering marginalized groups, a better approach might consider establishing caucuses that represent these marginalized communities and give them more formal voting power and a seat at the table. For example, Indigenous communities who may not be represented officially by government systems could be represented through a caucus that addresses Indigenous-specific needs. These types of coalitions and group efforts are not completely strange to the decision-making history of the United Nations, which recognizes globally-relevant economic groups. Instead, the United Nations should embrace new ways of defining collaboration that do not depend on economic frames and instead center the environmental imperative of addressing climate change through the structures of its intergovernmental collaborations.

Inherent to all research projects are the limitations that arise from choices made in the process of examination. In considering the scope of this analysis, this project was limited by its focus on U.S. discourse. This meant that other international perspectives and the voices of their communities were not centered throughout the analysis. Additionally, this project only set out to examine one major document rather than embark on a comparison of policies or progression of efforts over time. As part of a rhetorical, discursive, critical approach, this analysis weighs

narratives through an idealistic lens of the desired scenarios rather than a pragmatic negotiation of geopolitical tensions.

This brings to the forefront the very difficult and real question of balancing overly idealistic suggestions in light of global competitive markets. The predicament of addressing climate change at an international policy arena presents humanity's long-term struggle for collaboration. Collective action has been a historically difficult phenomenon to enact successfully. The recent global pandemic of COVID-19 brought a multiplicity of tensions to the surface in ways that can generate frustration among policy-makers and citizens alike. But the challenges of the future beckon for a stronger commitment to overcome rhetorical deflections and make a commitment to hold each other accountable in the progression of solving the policy problems at hand.

Rejecting economic frameworks is not only about producing a more productive decision-making practice, but it is also about bringing back voice to the humanity of marginalized communities. Instead of anthropomorphizing markets, industries, economies, and countries, it is crucial to prioritize the humanity of those who have been marginalized throughout history. In order for policy to be effective in addressing climate change, it must have the power to hold humans responsible for climate change accountable for their actions. Jurisdictions meant to address environmental problems must have authority over those exacerbating the problems especially when these are tied to underregulated markets. As currently written, the Paris Agreement does not have mechanisms to hold parties accountable to any particular sustainability goals; instead, they are all self-regulating and adjusting their own emissions targets.

Future studies will find it productive to examine the voices of other international parties outside of the United States. This can help scholars further conceptualize the ways in which

participants frame their role within this problem-solving process. Organizational communication scholars can also extend their library of knowledge by placing a higher emphasis on critical perspectives to collaboration especially in light of the historical silencing of marginalized communities. It would also be enlightening to conduct a comparative analysis of landmark policies produced by the United Nations and how discourses have reconceptualized the policy problems and solutions.

In this dissertation, I have discussed the rhetorical implications of policy-making processes in response to the predicament of human-made climate change. I have analyzed how participants in a collaboration can utilize language to frame their priorities by deflecting the policy-problem at hand and relying on the ambiguity of policy terms. My analysis demonstrates how rhetorical constructions in processes of policy-making are a bountiful sector of academic exploration. It is crucial for scholars—especially those using qualitative methods—to question the assumptions made throughout policy processes. Furthermore, it is imperative for critical researchers to advocate for the humanity of subjects within decision-making. Not only because a failure to do so can eventually result in the evisceration and loss of humanity as a whole, but in a loss of our own humanity as policy-makers, and academics.

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