

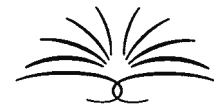
# **Social Movement to Address Climate Change**

**LOCAL STEPS FOR GLOBAL ACTION**

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## CHAPTER 4

# STEP WHAT UP?

### RHETORICAL FRAMING AND DIALECTICAL TENSIONS IN SALT LAKE CITY'S STEP IT UP EVENTS

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While melting polar ice caps and rising sea levels seem to be far-away concerns, Utah's precious winter snow pack, our primary water source, is at risk due to climate change and will suffer more and more in the future unless we can work together as citizens and governments to dramatically cut carbon emissions. Please join us as we honor our life sustaining water supply by participating in a gathering-of-the-waters celebration at the Sugarhouse Park pond.

—Salt Lake Spring Runoff Celebration (2007) organizers

Gather to put motion behind our intentions for positive change! Protect the future by telling Congress to “Step It Up” in the face of our current climate crises and be part of the largest rally in history against Global Warming! Join in on 108 Sun Salutations at your local Salt Lake City Action, come meditate under our banners for change, or just come and watch to show your support!

—People Protecting the Planet (2007) organizers

Salt Lake is planning the grandest Step It Up event in the nation! The day will be packed full of music by Los Lobos, the Salt Lake Alternative Jazz Orchestra, Brenn Hill, Motherlode Canyon Band, Salty Rootz, and Blue Haiku. On the plaza grounds, there will be food, exhibits, presentations, vendors, informational booths, and people to help you get messages of concern to members of Congress...Our goal is to send thousands of messages to Congress asking them to pass legislation to cut carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. With local events like this happening across the country, Congress and the presidential candidates will have to listen and take action!

—Step It Up! Salt Lake City (2007) organizers

The three epigraphs above demonstrate the variety of actions planned for the Step It Up 2007 (SIU) campaign to cut carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions and address global warming. In addition to these Salt Lake City (SLC) events, nationwide there were over 1,400 SIU actions that ranged from rallies and marches at centers of government to image events (DeLuca 1999) underwater in coastal reefs and at sites of diminishing glaciers to group hikes in iconic national parks. The national SIU organizing team called for one message, “Step It Up, Congress: cut carbon 80 percent by 2050,” to unite these varied actions.

In this chapter, we grapple with some of the communicative challenges faced by a national campaign that strives to loosely choreograph over 1,400 individual, locally organized actions. Using the SLC actions as an illustrative case study, we identify some barriers to movement building that may arise when there are disconnects, or ruptures, in communication between organizers and participants in environmental campaigns. We argue that

one of the most important challenges of environmental campaigns is to rhetorically frame the campaign in a way that reaches multiple audiences and motivates them to act. Yet, campaigns can easily be crippled by communicative disconnects between organizers and the public. These disconnects have implications not only for the success of a single campaign but may also have implications for the larger movement.

We use two concepts from communication theory to identify sites of potential disconnect between organizers and participants: rhetorical framing and dialectical tensions. First, we draw from the concept of rhetorical framing (Burke 1966; Entman 1993; Goffman 1974; Lakoff 2004; Ott and Aoki 2002). To explain the concept of framing, Kenneth Burke stated, “Even if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must also function as a *deflection* of reality” (1966, 45). Any message is, consciously or not, rhetorically constructed to emphasize certain things and de-emphasize other things, like wearing a pair of colored glasses. Rose-colored glasses, for instance, tend to emphasize positive aspects of a situation while the negative aspects of the situation fade out of view. Framing is a rhetorical device that can be employed by both individuals and groups or organizations. In the case of the SIU actions in SLC, we identify several tensions in the ways that national organizers, local organizers, and participants at the SIU actions rhetorically framed the action, the participant, the problem, and the solution.

In order to further our understanding of these tensions in framing, we also draw on the concept of dialectical tensions (Bakhtin 1981; Baxter 1988; Frey and Barge 1998; Johnson and Long 2002; Kramer 2004; Mabry 1999). A dialectical tension exists when two ideas are valid on their own but become contradictory when paired together (see chapter 5). However, dialectical tensions should not be seen as mutually exclusive options from which one must choose. Rather, dialectical tensions are conflicts, or opposing pulls, that need to be communicatively managed (Kramer 2004). We cannot solve a dialectical tension, but we can work to use communication strategies and tactics to manage the situation.

In this chapter, we identify four dialectical tensions within the rhetorical framing of the SLC SIU actions: protest-oriented/awareness-oriented, collective affiliation/individual activity, unified/fragmented, and political/symbolic. Management of these tensions through precise rhetorical framing can be beneficial to most campaigns or movements in widening the appeal of their message and reaching multiple contradictory but not mutually exclusive audiences.

Our chapter begins with a short description of the SLC SIU actions as the context for our case study. The next section analyzes the three SLC SIU actions, focusing specifically on the four dialectical tensions that emerged from our data. The chapter concludes with implications and suggestions for environmental movements and campaign practitioners to manage dialectical tensions through rhetorical framing.

#### SALT LAKE CITY AS A SITE

Utah is known for many things—skiing the “greatest snow on earth,” the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), and magnificent national parks—but protesting and activism are usually not included in the list. The majority of Utahns (though not the majority in SLC) are politically conservative, registered Republican, and members of the LDS religion (Canham 2007). Yet, SLC, the state capital and largest city in Utah, was the site of three SIU actions to call for Congress to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The first action took place at Washington Square Park in the downtown area; the park surrounds the Salt Lake City and County Building. The largest of the three SLC actions (with an estimated five thousand participants) was billed as a free concert and featured Los Lobos, several local bands, over thirty informational and commercial booths, food and beer stands, and a bank of computers for sending e-mail messages to Congressional representatives. An interview with one of the organizers after the action illustrated the organizers’ intent to create a “family-friendly” venue that would reach multiple audiences, such as “people in the middle class with normal jobs, families, members of the LDS

church, everyday citizens that watch the news [who] are too busy to get involved...the Wal-Mart crowd, [and] the Costco crowd,” as opposed to the progressive Democrat, traditional protester, or the “Prius-driving Wild Oats crowd.”

The other two actions in SLC were much smaller—drawing between thirty and fifty people each—and took place in the morning, before the Washington Square action. The Liberty Park action invited participants to do yoga as a form of collective intention setting to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. About two-thirds of the participants did 108 sun salutation yoga formations while the other third watched or meditated. According to an interview with the organizer at the action, “The sun salutation is usually done once a year. It is a cleansing ritual. It is how you put out intentions... We’re setting an intention to gather awareness and ask Congress to step it up.” At another popular SLC park, Sugarhouse Park, graduate students from a local university arranged the spring runoff or “gathering-of-the-waters” celebration that drew about fifty participants. According to one of the organizers, “We felt that to best illustrate our community’s stake in the climate-change issue, we needed to focus on our dependence upon snowfall and snowpack for our water supply.” The climax of the action was a symbolic act in which participants poured the water they brought (from seven local watersheds and beyond) into one common vessel. This action engaged participants in human interconnection with the water cycle, and the dousing of a symbolic fire of global warming that burned in an adjacent vessel. An organizer reflected about the participants at this action:

We wanted to attract our friends and families and our neighbors to our event, and for the most part, we were able to do that... We felt that our action was primarily attractive to an audience [that was] already concerned about the potential impacts of climate change.

Unlike the Washington Square and Liberty Park actions, the organizers of the Sugarhouse Park action intended to reach and motivate a sympathetic audience of people already concerned about global warming.

### RHETORICAL FRAMING AND DIALECTICAL TENSIONS IN SIU

Using participant observation, our five-member research team gathered texts from all three SLC actions, including field notes, photos, face-to-face interviews, one-page questionnaires, and recordings of speeches. We also quantitatively analyzed seventy-four short questionnaires completed by participants. From these data, we uncovered dialectical tensions within the rhetorical framing of (1) the action, (2) the participant, (3) the problem, and (4) the solution.

#### Framing the Action

Our analysis of the three SLC actions reveals that organizers chose to frame their actions in very different ways. The national organizers' call for local organizers to create their own "actions" is broad and nebulous. This resulted in actions ranging from free concerts to rallies, festivals, image events, and ceremonies. Examination of the framing of the SLC SIU actions reveals a dialectical tension between framing actions as *protest-oriented* and framing them as *awareness-oriented*. Protest-oriented actions are designed to challenge the status quo and promote change through confrontation and dissent (Gamson 1975; Stewart, Smith, and Denton 2007). Participants in a protest-oriented action generally already accept the message of the campaign or movement and work together in a collective action targeted to an outside audience of decision makers. A "protest" calls forth images of people marching and chanting in dissent. At the same time, it deflects alternate ways of engaging in collective action and potentially limits participation by people who do not consider themselves "protesters" or do not want to engage in certain actions that may be associated with "protesting." Awareness-oriented actions are designed to educate the public and potential movement members about the problem that the social movement or campaign is addressing and the need for individual and collective action to address the problem (e.g., feminist consciousness raising; Campbell 1973). Participants in these actions often include a broad range of people, from those who already accept the message

to those who are undecided or know very little about the message. In awareness-oriented actions, the goal is to educate and potentially gather more supporters who may be willing to be involved in collective action, such as protesting, in the future.

The SLC actions were all framed more as awareness-oriented. Even though at one time there was a plan for an additional SLC action in which participants would march to the Utah capitol and demand action on climate change, SLC had no protest-oriented actions on April 14, 2007. To demonstrate how choices in rhetorical framing of an action have implications for who shows up to an action, what publics or participants expect from an action, and how the campaign's message is received, we turn our focus to the Washington Square action.

Participants and organizers used many ways to describe the Washington Square action, including "concert," "festival," "event," "beer garden," and "rally." However, the action was most prominently framed as a "free concert." In addition to being advertised in local media as a concert (Salt Lake City 2007; Gadette 2007; 570 KNRS 2007), the first thing we saw when we walked toward the action was a sign that proclaimed in bold red letters, "Free Concert Tonight! 3-10 PM" (see figure 6). Framing this action as a free concert situates it as an awareness-oriented action. One of the organizers of this action noted that it was the rock bands that attracted people who might not otherwise have been at a climate-change rally, but that the informational booths, speeches, and bank of computers for sending messages to Congress were intended to educate and motivate people to become involved in the campaign.

Our interviews at the downtown action indicate that many of the participants were there for the concert, specifically to see Los Lobos perform, but knew neither that it was an action about climate change nor that the main message of the action was to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. While the framing of the action as a concert did draw a larger, more diverse crowd than the other actions in SLC, our interview data also show a potential disadvantage of this strategy. Several participants were unaware that the concert was related to climate change or were unable to respond to the question,

FIGURE 6. Sign at the downtown Salt Lake City SIU action.



“What is Step It Up?” This reveals a communicative disconnect between the local organizers and the people who showed up at the action. This disconnect could be communicatively managed by local organizers realizing the necessity of cultivating understanding and educating the large group of new people they attracted with the free concert about climate change. However, the main messages of the speeches given between the musical groups mismatched the awareness-raising framing of the Washington Square action. Although the speeches did emphasize and support the SIU message about climate change, they were designed not to educate or raise awareness, but to motivate people who already believed in the need to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and in the SIU campaign. For example, the emcee repeatedly called for the audience to “step it up” without explaining what SIU was. And, a speech by a local university professor gave attendees a

list of things to do, such as changing lightbulbs and riding bikes, but did not educate people about the problem of climate change and how these activities related to climate change. The potential disadvantage of awareness-raising actions was compounded at Washington Square with messages that did not align with the awareness-raising goal of the event.

Another risk in broadly framing the action as a way to raise awareness and educate new audiences is that it may alienate participants who already understand and accept the premise that we need to take action to prevent further human-caused climate change. Our interview data include participants who thought the action was “lame” because it was “not a protest” and “nobody [at the action] care[d]” about the issue. Participants ready for a protest-oriented action may, therefore, express frustration when the action frame is pulled too much toward an awareness-oriented action. As researchers who expected and wanted a protest-oriented action, our field notes attest to this sense of frustration. A more protest-oriented frame would have reached this particular audience better. In a campaign to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the SIU organizers would do well to reach a diverse set of audiences, including those who already believe in the need to protest or take political action to prevent global warming, undecided or unaware publics, and even those who do not believe in climate change or are disinclined to take action.

The framing of SIU actions has important implications for the larger campaign with regard to audiences, participant expectations, and perceptions of success. In essence, participants are interpellated or hailed (Althusser 1984) in certain ways through the framing of actions (e.g., attend a free concert or come do yoga). Hailing is the idea that messages are addressed to particular kinds of people and that if we respond to the message, then we accept this identity. Although each of the SLC actions entailed unique framing and attracted different audiences, they all fell into the category of awareness-oriented actions. As such, local organizers hailed participants as concert-goers or yoga enthusiasts, which deflected attention away from the SIU campaign’s goal for actions focused on congressional action to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. These actions missed their opportunity to reach both the not-a-protestor and the protestor audiences.



### FRAMING PARTICIPATION

As we interviewed people at the three actions, we noticed that attendees offered information about themselves while explaining why they came to the action. While some participants talked about collective action and identification (e.g., affiliation with Moveon.org or the climate-change movement), others identified their individual activities (e.g., taking public transportation and recycling). Our data suggest a second tension, which concerns how participants framed their identities in relation to SIU (or not).<sup>2</sup> The *collective action/individual activity* tension concerns whether participants framed themselves as acting in coordination with others toward collective social change or whether they specified individual activities that do not necessarily imply identification with a movement or campaign. Even though the SIU actions were collective to the extent that there were groups of people, we argue that success for social-movement campaigns depends on participants specifically identifying as part of collective action for social change (Gamson 1995; Melucci 1995). Individual activities like recycling can be a part of collective action if the individual collectively identifies with the movement. Collective action and individual activities stand in tension as opposing approaches and can create a disconnect between organizers and participants. Campaign organizers must not simply take showing up at an action as a sign of participation in the campaign/movement and must therefore find ways to negotiate the tension between participants who frame their participation as collective action versus individual activity.

Campaigns and movements need to draw on collective action and individual activities to be successful; however, these are often perceived to be in tension by both participants and organizers. Indeed, Bill McKibben's (2007) call for people to "do something" other than change out light-bulbs and be part of "the first nationwide do-it-yourself mass protest" indicates a perception that individual activity is not as effective as collective action. As Michael Specter has argued, in the case of climate change, "personal choices, no matter how virtuous, cannot do enough. It will also take laws and money" (cited in Pollan 2008). Tension arises when individual activity precludes collective political solutions; individual lifestyle

choices can satisfy people's personal environmental values or desire to do something about climate change in the absence of identifying as a part of collective social change. Nonetheless, collective action is often fortified by individual activities, such as climate-change movement members who reduce their carbon footprints, invest in alternative-energy sources, and talk to neighbors about climate change. These individual activities contribute to the broad goal of curbing global warming while simultaneously cultivating movement members who embody movement values by demonstrating their commitment to political representatives. Therefore, organizers must manage the potential tension between collective and individual by constructing how collective action and individual activities align with the campaign goal and each other.

Collective action toward social change is the basic goal of any social movement or campaign (Gamson 1995; Melucci 1995; Stewart, Smith, and Denton 2001). Collective action can take many forms, from protest rallies to letter-writing campaigns to boycotts. While collective action can be defined by numerous examples, Alberto Melucci (1995) argued that development and negotiation of a sense of collective identity is crucial to effective collective action. One way to foster collective identity is through identification with organizations or movements. C. B. Bhattacharya and Kimberly Elsbach (2002) contended that people who identify with an organization are likely to take action and get involved in related campaigns or movements. Collective action, therefore, requires collective identification with the movement and also entails taking actions that are geared toward social change as part of a collective. Individual activities are also important to social movements; people often have to make individual changes in their behavior in order to engage in collective action. Moreover, Kent Granzin and Janeen Olson's research (1991) indicated that people who see friends and family members engaging in environmentally conscientious behaviors are more likely to adopt these behaviors themselves. Therefore, individual activities can impact people nearby. However, individual activities are not inherently linked to collective action for social change. Melucci (1995) suggested that collective identity is key to determining if people are acting individually or

acting together with other individuals for collective change. Examination of how participants framed themselves in relation to SIU can help to tease out whether they are part of the movement.

In our interviews, participants evoked their identities to justify why they had attended an action. Interestingly, most participants did not identify as part of the SIU campaign, but rather, either identified with related organizations and movements or listed the individual activities in which they engaged. When asked, "Why are you here?" or other interview questions, some of our participant interviewees noted their affiliation with existing organizations. For example, a participant at the Sugarhouse Park action said she decided to participate in the SIU campaign because she is a member of "Al Gore's Listserv" (i.e., the Climate Project), and a participant at the Washington Square action indicated that he was there because "I've been an e2 citizen for about a month."<sup>3</sup> While some participants listed their affiliation with particular organizations as their reason for participating in the SIU action, others mentioned collective identification with the broader climate-change or environmental movement. Several participants stated being "an environmentalist" as their reason for participating in the action. Our survey of 74 participants indicates that 63 percent of our survey participants perceived themselves to be part of a movement to prevent human-caused climate change, 22 percent were not sure, and 15 percent did not see themselves as part of a movement. Those who collectively identify with organizations or a movement are likely to engage in collective action toward social change (Melucci 1995). Because these participants already framed themselves as part of collective action, they participated in SIU as part of a movement for collective social action on climate change.

Although many participants cited collective identification and collective action as their reasons for participation, other participants cited personal behaviors—individual activity—as an explanation for their participation in the SIU event. For example, a Liberty Park participant said that he was participating in the SIU action because "I bike everywhere [motioning toward the bike he was leaning on]." In response to the question "What is Step It Up?" a participant at the Liberty Park action talked about taking individual actions and gave examples of her efforts to ride

her bike, be a vegetarian, and use compact florescent lightbulbs. Often participants answered our questions about their participation in SIU by offering examples of activities from their own lives that they believed supported environmental or climate-change efforts. However, people who use individual activities to define the campaign (e.g., bike riding in answer to "what is Step It Up?") may not have collective identification with the campaign and hence may not understand the need for collective action for social change. These responses indicate that some participants framed their participation in SIU as individuals taking individual actions. If the person is not identified with the collective, he or she may see individual actions as doing enough. Moreover, when individuals frame themselves in relation to their individual activities as opposed to collective identification with the movement, the campaign's central collective goal can be lost. There is no clear connection between bike riding and SIU's goal of congressional legislation to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. These comments suggest instances where individual activities are standing in for collective goals. It weakens the campaign when participants are not able to express collective goals to the media or when politicians hear mixed messages about what the campaign wants. Moreover, this supports the idea that solving climate change through individual activities is possible, which is not true in the case of climate change (McKibben et al. 2007).

Organizers should be cautious not to conflate showing up at an event with participation and collective identification with a movement. Our analysis has shown that while many participants did frame themselves as part of collective action for social change, there were also many people whose references to individual activities indicated that they may not have viewed themselves as part of collective action. It would be ridiculous to suggest that organizers should spend all of their efforts trying to find out if participants identify with the movement or not; it is important for them to recognize that there will likely be people from both ends of the dialectic at their actions. In order to manage the collective-action/individual-activity tension, organizers could focus some of their energies on establishing how individual activities can be a means of supporting the collective action. In other words, participants on the individual-activity end of the dialectic may



need to be persuaded to identify as a part of collective action for social change. Campaign and movement organizers should explicitly frame participation for the participants in an attempt to move participants into the collective action rather than assuming that participation automatically implies or creates collective identification.

### Framing the Problem

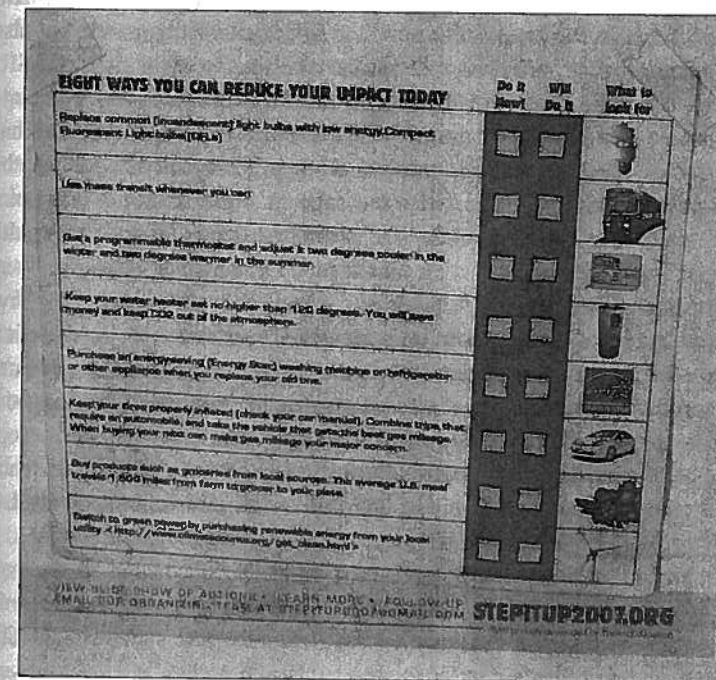
The national SIU organizers clearly framed human-caused climate change as the problem the campaign was created to address. Phil, one of the organizers of SIU, stated on the Web site, "If we don't start to curb carbon emissions now, we're in for a very different future for us and our children, even beyond the devastation that Hurricane Katrina wreaked on the gulf states" (Step It Up 2007). Additionally, an interview with two of the national organizers confirms the primacy of framing climate change as the problem. Despite the clarity of the national SIU problem frame, our analysis of local actions and interviews with participants reveals that this was not the only frame adopted by the participants at actions. Some participants linked climate change with the problem of local snowpack. The presence of more than thirty local organization booths with divergent agendas persuaded people that animal rights or workers' rights were the real problem. In our interviews with participants at the SLC actions, we found confusion among participants about the campaign-defined problem. In this section, we discuss the dialectical tension between the *unified* and *fragmented* framing of the problem.

There was some unity in the framing of the problem across the SLC actions. The national SIU Web site included marketing materials such as printable posters, flyers, and personal checklists presenting climate change as the major problem. We observed these at each of the actions. At the Sugarhouse action, the SIU materials were a central focus and were prominently displayed. A poster about global warming from the national SIU Web site, a banner with the "Step It Up Congress: Cut Carbon Emissions" message, and an SIU checklist for what people can do in their everyday lives to reduce their impact on global warming were also

prominently displayed (see figure 7). At the Washington Square action, a large "Step It Up, Congress: Cut Carbon 80% by 2050" banner reminded people of the campaign and the problem. Our interview data across all three actions reveal that the local organizers consistently framed the problem, at least in part, as "global warming," "climate change," and "carbon emissions."

Despite this unification of the national and local messages, local actions also displayed other ideas about the problem that fragmented the problem frame. Instead of framing climate change as the main problem, local

FIGURE 7. SIU materials displayed at the Sugarhouse action.



organizers and participants often framed the main problem as something other than climate change. At the Washington Square action, this fragmentation was due in part to the more than thirty "advocacy-type" organizations with disparate messages that were invited to set up informational booths. Each of these groups had its own mission, name, and frame of the problem. Although three out of the thirty groups (e.g., Post Carbon Salt Lake) addressed climate change specifically, most of the groups identified a different problem, not specifically related to climate change but generally related to the environment. For instance, the Utah Animal Rights Coalition (UARC) advocated that eating meat and animal testing were the main problems to be addressed. In this case, the local organizers, knowingly or not, invited competing organizations with different campaigns and problem frames that not only resulted in fragmentation between the local actions and the SIU national campaign, but also risked confusing participants about the goal of the action and the SIU campaign. This opened discursive space for participants to articulate their own ideas about the main problem to be addressed. If everyone has a different idea of what the problem is, then it may be difficult for the campaign to advance a consistent message about the solution. This point was made by a Washington Square participant who claimed that health effects were the main concern; he stated, "The message is askew. They seem totally uninterested in the health effects that automobiles are having on people's health." Similarly, another Washington Square participant claimed that a large part of the problem is automobiles: "People use cars for convenience...It comes down to ego problems, convenience, and power. People feel God-like driving fast." These participant perceptions of the problem, while certainly related, serve as important evidence of the lack of a unified frame of the problem as climate change at SLC SIU actions.

Alternate problem frames are not completely detrimental to a movement or evidence that SIU has "failed" *per se*. There can be value in having "something for everyone" at such actions to spark interest, identification, and mobilization in the movement (see also chapter 11). However,

this dialectical tension highlights the importance of communicative management to help link these possible alternate problem frames together to develop realistic solutions that individuals can work toward. For example, some organizers and participants attempted to link the problem of global warming with local issues. The Sugarhouse Park action framed the problem as the risks to local water supply but related those risks to climate change. Similarly, the HEAL Utah booth at the Washington Square action linked climate change with the local controversy over nuclear power. It is important for local SIU organizers to recognize and understand local concerns so that messaging can be used to link these local concerns to the central target. When done well, strategic linking of local issues to the campaign's main problem frame can not only garner support for a general national campaign, but can also raise awareness about the interconnections between local water or air quality and climate change.

The dialectical tension between unification and fragmentation of the problem frame helps us to understand a site of disconnect between the common national SIU message, the diverse messages about the problem at local actions, and SIU participants' perceptions. While it is important for local SIU organizers to be consistent in the message to cut carbon emissions, they also must be prepared to speak to other associated and immediate problems with which audience members are concerned. While some people may realize that climate change exists, they may be more likely to identify with and therefore move to action as a result of a concern closer to home (e.g., nuclear power in Utah or a freeway being built nearby). In other words, a general message about global warming may fall on deaf ears for those who are concerned with other problems. However, it is also important for practitioners to be able to manage the tension between the need for unification while still attending to other, fragmented messages. Organizers must also be able to educate and make people aware of how the problems and concerns they have do, in fact, relate to the bigger problem of global warming due to human-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This will inherently impact how interested parties devise a solution.

### Framing the Solution

The overall solution presented by the SIU campaign is clear: "Step It Up, Congress: cut carbon 80 percent by 2050." Our analysis reveals that while the loosely organized national campaign clearly targeted congressional legislation as the solution, it did not specify for local actions *how* to achieve this solution. Consequently, local organizers interpreted various ways to affect climate change that were influenced by local customs and cultures. This disconnect resulted in a dialectical tension between *political* and *symbolic solutions* in the various ways that local SIU organizers and their respective participants internalized the national SIU campaign solution. By political solutions, we mean messages specifically crafted to influence policy and governmental decision makers. Symbolic solutions, on the other hand, target nonlegislative changes within the body politic through enactments, promises, and shifts in language. Both political and symbolic actions can be performed on individual and collective levels, so we are not making a distinction between individual and collective action in this dialectical tension. This political-/symbolic-solution tension relates to ruptures between the congressional solution framed by the SIU national political campaign and the (near-) absence of this frame in local organizer solutions. Only one of the three SLC actions directed political messages toward a congressional audience.

In anticipation of national climate-change day, SIU founder Bill McKibben wrote, "Many more [actions] will still be organized by people who aren't official activists at all, just so concerned about climate change that they're ready to *do something*" (2007; original emphasis). Interestingly, this action phrase, "do something," is prominent throughout our data. Doing something to effect change (through congressional action or otherwise) is obviously essential and critical to dealing with global warming, but this vague rhetorical framing at the national level might have created disconnects regarding the intended audience(s) at the local level.

The local SLC SIU actions called for solutions to climate change that pulled toward the symbolic-solution end of the dialectic. Consequently, the national campaign organizers' vision for congressional action to cut carbon emissions largely faded from view. For example, the Liberty Park action

framed symbolic solutions through sun salutations that simultaneously set individual intentions about climate change. The Washington Square organizers framed the solution through speeches (e.g., a list of twenty nonlegislative things that individuals can do to lower their carbon footprint) and diverse messages found in the advocacy booths on the perimeter of the space (e.g., what individuals can buy to reduce carbon emissions).

Unfortunately, the foregrounding of free music relegated these solution messages to background noise. However, this was the only SIU SLC action that did offer e-mail options targeting congressional decision makers (an advocacy option on par with the national organizers' congressional solution frame). The Sugarhouse Park organizers spanned the political/symbolic- solution tension by organizing a collective symbolic-response ritual (the gathering of the waters) and creating a collection of individual political messages on a banner that they had planned to deliver to Utah's governor (see figure 8).<sup>4</sup> While this action framed solutions as both symbolic and political, the symbolic activity entailed individuals collectively promising to effect change, and the political activity involved a collection of individual calls for policy changes at a gubernatorial, not a congressional, level. This solution frame acknowledges that both the body politic and the governmental representatives are needed to mitigate the effects of exponential increases of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere.

Stanley Deetz (1992) inferred that resistance to collective political action is not unique to SLC. In discussing resistance to collective action embedded in U.S.-American discourses, he wrote,

Clearly there has been a fear of participation equal to or greater than the fear of tyranny, whether tyranny by either autocrats or the majority...The emphasis has been on the freedom *from* the decisions of others rather than the freedom *to* participate in collective decisions. (155; original emphasis)

The absence of political protests as a solution to global warming at the SLC SIU actions seems to reflect this tacit fear of collective political action; that is, the actions tended to offer a means for simultaneous individual actions short of traditional political protesting. One participant explained

FIGURE 8. Individual political action.



that protesting, from her perspective, meant inaction. She said, “I don’t think it does a lot of good. It means people are not doing things, not taking action.” In short, the absence of collective political action from the SLC SIU solution frames could be construed as local conservative influence, but it also could reflect broader, national political-action discourses.

The focus of the SLC actions toward individual symbolic activities created some tension for those who value collective political action as a viable solution to effect change. Feeling marginalized, a group of participants we interviewed expressed a cynicism toward their apolitical peers. They pointed to signs they were carrying that read: “Stop Global Warming” and “Cut emissions by 80% by 2050.” These participants explicitly called for more political solutions, such as what California is doing to outlaw specific problematic elements, at the federal level. In short, the

absence of a specific call for collective political action entailing traditional political protesting at the national organizers’ level resulted in a missed opportunity in SLC (and perhaps in many other locations) to unite voices in a collective body politic calling for congressional action to cut carbon emissions. Instead, the vague “do something” frame manifested in this dialectical political-/symbolic-solution tension. This offers us a site where we can see how solution disconnects occurred between the national and local organizer solution frames. Unfortunately, the creative license granted to local organizers to “do something” thwarted Congress as the target audience. With the exception of the e-mail advocacy option, local organizers reframed the climate-change solution site away from congressional decision makers and toward an array of personal (yoga and prayer flags), local (gathering of the local waters, listening to free music), or state (gubernatorial advocacy) solutions.

In summary, the consistent call by national SIU organizers for local political action as a solution to cut carbon emissions, coupled with the loosely organized national campaign structure, allowed for local creativity and empowerment but resulted in an array of solutions that were primarily incongruent with the overall national campaign message targeting Congress as the audience (or locus for change). The local political action messages also fell short of reaching protest audiences. Thus, ruptures in communication occurred between the national SIU message and the solutions developed by local actions. Only one aspect of the Washington Square action targeted a congressional audience. Otherwise, the symbolic solutions acted in tension with and potentially undermined the national campaign’s call for a political solution. Political and symbolic solutions, as is the case with all dialectical tensions, are not mutually exclusive. Most campaigns/movements will call for both types of solution. However, they come in tension when they are not complementary. In the context of a loosely organized, open-source campaign like SIU, local organizers’ focus on symbolic solutions could undermine the national organizers’ call for political solutions. This political-/symbolic-solution dialectic requires careful management by national organizers to ensure that their emphasis on a political/symbolic solution is not undermined by the other.

### CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Bill McKibben touted SIU as “the first nationwide do-it-yourself mass protest,” a coordinated set of actions with a shared message that would be more effective than a traditional march on Washington (2007). Our chapter points to the benefits and challenges of this new type of environmental campaign. Although a loosely organized structure allows for personalization of actions for local audiences and has the potential to reach more people with the message, it also allows for interpretation and framing of the message that could lessen the effectiveness of the campaign’s message (see chapter 11). The dialectical tensions we identified represent the seemingly contradictory pulls faced by the national organizers and local organizers that we believe are typical of many environmental movements and campaigns today. The awareness and careful management of these tensions by national and local organizers can help to take advantage of the benefits as well as handle the challenges that arise from a loosely organized national campaign. Therefore, we will conclude our chapter with a series of practical yet theoretically and empirically informed guidelines for managing these dialectical tensions for the purpose of minimizing communicative disconnects and maximizing the campaign or movement’s goals.<sup>5</sup>

*Be aware of tensions.* Although obvious, our first suggestion is that national organizers and local organizers should be aware of the dialectical tensions we discussed and decide how these tensions can more effectively be managed to achieve the particular goals of the campaign or movement.

*Coordinate to reach multiple audiences.* If the campaign’s goal is to reach a wide audience of participants, national campaigns should make efforts to coordinate actions that are both designed to reach participants who favor protest-oriented events and to raise awareness with participants who would not be likely to attend a traditional protest. Along with the do-it-yourself cookbook of materials for potential local organizers (see chapter 9 for more discussion of the cookbook), national campaign organizers should also provide explicit guidance about managing the

dialectical tension between protest-oriented and awareness-oriented actions in particular locations. If there will be only one action in a particular location, an action that begins with an awareness-raising component (e.g., a festival-like rally with information booths) and is followed by a more protest-oriented collective political action (e.g., a march to the local government center with a mandate to take political action) could be one way to manage this tension. The action could be framed as an “information fair and march,” and publicity could emphasize different elements of the action in different venues (e.g., focus on the information fair in broad media venues and focus on the march and political action in specialized Listservs and media related to the campaign’s topic). If there will be multiple actions in one location, encourage the organizers to coordinate the actions so that some are more oriented toward raising awareness and some are more oriented toward political protest. Moreover, the coordinated local organizers could cross-promote each other’s actions. The organizers of each action could be well informed about the nature of the other actions and could let people at their actions know if the other actions may be of interest to them.<sup>6</sup>

*Frame what counts as participation.* Movements and campaigns should attend to how the movement/campaign frames participant identification with and participation in the movement. If a person’s attendance at an action is framed as participation in the movement, participants may not take any next steps after the action, even if this is the goal of the campaign. National and local organizers should be clear about the goals of the campaign (e.g., for Congress to cut carbon emissions) and clearly frame participation by defining how actions relate to the campaign goal (i.e., continuing to ride your bike is a good thing, but pressuring Congress to cut greenhouse-gas emissions will require that you contact your senators on a regular basis). Specifically, campaigns should design and disseminate specific action plans that are tailored for specific audiences/people. These action plans should create relationships between individual and collective actions.

*Address fragmentation through interconnection.* Part of the success of a campaign/movement comes from the development of a shared



understanding of the problem in the status quo being addressed (Stewart, Smith, and Denton 2007). Some fragmentation of the framing of the problem is inevitable and can benefit the movement/campaign. However, fragmentation can also make it difficult to convince participants that the campaign's problem is the most important one, which can lead to fragmentation of solutions or lack of adherence to the campaign. By anticipating the alternate problems/concerns of the audience(s), local organizers can frame them as being interconnected with the campaign's definition of the problem. For example, the organizers of the Washington Square action could have framed the problem of human-caused climate change as an umbrella problem that included the problems of asthma, nuclear power, and so forth in a way that was consistent with the movement/campaign's goals.

*Decide whether to emphasize political or symbolic solutions.* It is important to recognize the value of the symbolic and the political in a movement/campaign's solution. Symbolic actions and political actions are not entirely separable concepts, yet a tension exists for campaigns seeking both symbolic (constitutive) change and political change (Buechler 2000). We recommend that campaign organizers decide what balance of symbolic and political actions is important for the campaign and strive for a complementary blend of both in the framing of the solution. Considering the unique context in which a campaign is initiated, organizers could ask themselves whether the presence of many people at a protest as a symbol of resistance to the status quo is more important than advocating for a specific legislative change, or vice versa (DeLuca 1999; Schutten 2008). In an awareness-raising phase of a campaign, for example, it might be more appropriate to emphasize symbolic solutions that can lead to the desire to advocate for political change. Or, if the campaign has a sufficient base of supporters who are already engaged in nonpolitical actions (like lowering their carbon footprints), it would be most appropriate to emphasize political solutions. Otherwise, more emphasis on symbolic solutions may just reinforce behaviors instead of pushing for change.

*Use push and pull methods of message dissemination.* We noticed that the Washington Square action was planned and spatially constructed

to be a *pull* medium, not a *push* medium. A pull medium, such as the Internet, relies on people taking initiative to find information, whereas a push medium, such as television advertising, disseminates information to anyone watching. At the Washington Square action, having informational booths was very helpful, but their placement around the perimeter of the action, away from the music stage, meant people had to choose to look at the information at the booths. These booths might have only pulled in people already interested in the movement. Combined with a majority of the focus of the stage on the musical acts and just a few speeches or articulations of the SIU message, the people who showed up for the free concert may not have felt the pull of the booths and hence did not leave with a clear understanding of the action. Designing this action to have more aggressive push techniques for getting the message across might have more effectively spread the message. This could include more focus on the SIU message from the stage. Or, drawing on a word-of-mouth approach, the organizers could have pushed the message by having organizers walk through the crowd to "spread the word" about the message by asking simple questions such as "Have you learned today how you can step it up?" A combination of push and pull techniques can be helpful in managing communicative disconnects at the action itself.

These suggestions are not the only ways to manage the dialectical tensions we have developed in this chapter, but they provide a good starting point for examination of how rhetorical framing can be used by campaigns and movements to further their goals and minimize communicative disconnects. Furthermore, these are not the only dialectical tensions that exist for movements and campaigns. For example, in addition to the tensions we discussed in this paper, we also saw tensions in vagueness/specificity and long-term/short-term articulations of the campaign's solution. We believe that further research into the common dialectical tensions that affect campaigns and movements, particularly ones that follow the SIU model of movement building, is extremely important for understanding and utilizing new social movements as a proactive method for creating positive change in society.



## ENDNOTES

1. Danielle Endres (assistant professor of communication at the University of Utah) is the first author of this chapter. Deborah Cox Callister, Autumn Garrison, and Samantha Senda-Cook (in alphabetical order, PhD students at the University of Utah) are co-second authors of this chapter. Julie Kalil Schutten (lecturer, Northern Arizona University) is the last author. The authors would also like to thank Craig O. Rich, Rulon Wood, and Wayne Davis for their help in gathering materials for analysis.
2. We treat identity as a rhetorical construction as opposed to an innate quality, which means that people make (un)conscious decisions about who they are and how they express that identity. We do not think that an essential, natural identity exists that simply shines through behaviors and attitudes.
3. e2 Citizen stands for the Salt Lake City Environmentally and Economically Sustainable Program. Started by the mayor's office, the program is "designed to educate and support citizens who take steps in their own lives to address climate change and the further degradation of the planet" (<http://www.slcgreen.com/e2citizen/default.htm>).
4. In our "member-check" meeting with the Sugarhouse organizers, they told us that they were not able to deliver the sign to the governor. They tried multiple times to contact the governor to set up a time to give him the banner, but they were unable to set up a meeting. The governor signed the Western Regional Climate Initiative in May 2007 (Bauman 2007), and it is unclear if he was aware of the Sugarhouse Park action banner at that time.
5. We call these guidelines instead of rules because the context, goals, and audiences are different for each movement or campaign; there is no fool-proof list of steps to take.
6. We do recognize the challenges to coordination of local actions. Indeed, our interviews with the organizers of the Sugarhouse Park action reveal that there was some tension among the organizers of the three actions in SLC. However, we do not take the existence of tension between the SLC organizers as a sign that coordination between the actions is impossible. On the contrary, if each action is primarily designed for a different audience, the organizers would not be in competition for the same audiences. Similarly, if actions are coordinated to take place at different times, it could also reduce competition over audiences.

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## CHAPTER INTERLUDE

# INTERVIEW WITH ADELE BEALER, CO-ORGANIZER OF SALT LAKE CITY GATHERING OF THE WATERS SIU EVENT

*Samantha Senda-Cook*

Background note: Adele Bealer was one of several primary organizers for Step It Up (SIU) Salt Lake City, Sugarhouse. At the time, she was a graduate student in the environmental humanities program at the University of Utah. As part of a class project, the students had to organize an SIU event. What follows is an edited transcript of an e-mail interview, returned on May 8, 2007. Senda-Cook and Bealer met in a class they had together in the spring of 2007.