

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

The Social Construction of the Deserving Poor within Renewable Energy Policy

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Abstract:

Renewable energy policy serves as a tool to combat the hazards that fossil energy sources pose to human health and the global environment. It is also being used to achieve additional social and economic goals alongside environmental policy, namely, bringing equitable liberation to populations disproportionately affected by increasing global temperatures. Legislation such as the Green New Deal serves to bring awareness to the United States' obligation to create a future of zero emissions energy sources, clean water, air, and healthy food for all citizens, and high-wage jobs within the green jobs sector. Likewise, Oregon's Green Jobs Growth Bill and Clean Electricity and Coal Transition Bill aim at doing away with coal-fired energy and growing the green jobs sector within the State by providing unskilled, prevailing wage jobs through the growth of renewable energy manufacturing and production. The analysis looks at the language employed within the Green Jobs Growth Plan, Coal Transition Plan, and Green New Deal to examine how the working poor and the coal industry are represented within the current debate over renewable energy. Using the Social Construction Framework, the analysis addresses the manner in which these legislative efforts have adopted an approach that not only describes, but helps to construct, the idea that different actors impacted by renewable energy policy are deserving of government action to provide support and prosperity.

Introduction

The use of renewable energy policy in the United States has grown significantly due to the support of legislation at both the federal and state level. With the goals of reducing emissions and the environmental impacts of energy use, policy makers are seeking to combat the negative effects of climate change, and because of this, renewable energy policy is becoming more and more conventional across the country. With the growing need for environmental justice, energy legislation is targeting social and economic inequality. Local and national governments are setting standards for lower emissions and less eco-intensive manufacturing to combat the negative effects of climate change. These policy makers intend to bring equity and economic justice to groups previously passed over by public policy through the creation of prevailing wage green jobs, targeting an unskilled workforce.

As a commitment to a more prosperous and equitable future, Oregon made a commitment to grow renewable jobs within the State with the Green Jobs Growth Plan. The bill, which passed through the Oregon House in August of 2009, works to create high paying jobs for targeted groups of under-educated and unskilled workers. These workers receive on-the-job training and education within their specific environmental field and gain high-wage work as a result. The Jobs Growth Plan came as a response to the emergency that has arisen from environmental degradation due to an increasing global temperature, as well as the income crisis among individuals without vocational training or secondary educations.

Oregon passed another landmark bill in March of 2016; The Clean Electricity and Coal Transition Plan. This bill is also a response to the growing disparity that comes with environmental degradation brought on by climate change. It articulates that Oregon Utilities will

do away with coal-fired energy no later than 2030. It also promises the State will transition to 50% of its energy being derived from renewable sources by 2040. These goals come with a revised Renewable Portfolio Standard and the assurance that energy customers will be spared from cost hikes by a 4% cap on rate increases. The bill is also accompanied by a community solar program, which gives 10% of the energy created by joint solar ventures to low-income families. The overall goal of this bill is to reduce Oregon's total emissions below the standard set by the Paris Accord by 2050.

Federally, the Green New Deal was proposed as a move toward closing the gap of income inequality, bringing clean water and air to all citizens across the U.S., and creating green jobs, including domestic manufacturing jobs, aiming at creating a more prosperous and environmentally conscious phase of the American economy. The Green New Deal articulates that there are critical events happening around the world: extreme drought, loss of 90% of the earth's coral reef, trillions of dollars in damage to infrastructure and coastal property, threats to human health, communities, and biodiversity. The resolution purports that the United States is to blame for much of the emissions of greenhouse gases through the history of the industrial era, because of this and because of our technological abilities, the United States should be responsible in cleaning up the mess that has been created. Therefore, the goal of the Green New Deal is to reach net-zero emissions, clean up water, air, and food supplies, and construct a thriving middle class through the creation of the largest renewable energy jobs sector the country has ever seen. What policy makers wish to communicate with these innovations is a prospective future with greener energy, more jobs, decreased expenses, and help for the less fortunate within our society.

An analysis of the Green Jobs Growth Plan, Coal Transition Plan, and Green New Deal will serve to demonstrate that low-income and underprivileged individuals make up target groups of renewable energy legislation, by suggesting these individuals deserve consideration they have previously been denied. Further, the language used within these bills portrays these target groups as being the driving force for the construction of a renewable energy future, both within the State of Oregon and across the nation. Low-income groups are represented as being deserving of high wage jobs, health care, and retirement packages; far removed from the health disparity and depressing wages of the coal industry. To that end, this analysis looks specifically at the language employed within Oregon's Green Jobs Growth Plan, the Oregon Coal Transition Plan, and the federal Green New Deal, and addresses the manner in which these legislative efforts have adopted a set of frames that 'construct' the notion of how different actors are impacted by renewable energy policy.

The first section of the evaluation will review the literature surrounding the human health and social justice issues that arises from the disproportionate effects of climate change and the use of coal-fired energy. The literary evidence specifies where the issues with environmental volatility come from, the need to create a more adept class of people to take on the needs of the energy future of the U.S., as well as examining the idea of the deserving poor and why they are represented as such. Next, the analysis will turn to the theoretical frameworks which provide evidence from which to understand how political actors are constructed within renewable energy policy and why they are targeted. Finally, the analysis section will provide the bulk of the information on the two political actors the investigation will focus on, the coal industry and deserving poor, and how they are represented within the Green New Deal, Oregon's Green Jobs Growth Plan, and the Coal Transition Plan.

Literature Review

Environmental activism and, moreover, renewable energy legislation are a response to a growing disparity against the inequality of climate degradation for poor, minority, and low-income communities, as well as a providing these vulnerable groups with the ability to mitigate pollution induced health problems. Within the United States, many local governments are taking on these responsibilities by passing laws which make it easier for citizens to live greener lives, and which hold industry and business to the same obligations. These commitments target a more environmentally conscious and sustainably equal way of life for current and future generations. Though the efforts are not without opposition; corporations then fight back against the shift in energy production, causing a chasm between those who support fossil fuel and those who do not. This causes the human health aspect of renewable energy to become a social justice issue, where activists and policy makers are forced to advocate for the deserving poor, as the war for equitable sustainability rages on.

Social Justice and Human Health

Policy makers and environmentalists have seen the growing disparity within underprivileged communities mounting under historical economic policy. Renewable energy policies are a response to the human and environmental health issues that have risen from fossil energy infrastructure, as well as a more thorough understanding of the poor and why they exist within their current economic position. Advocates of renewable energy policy see it as a way to reduce health risks associated with energy production and use, while also creating more livable conditions and better paying jobs for the poor across the nation. Not only does the literature on these subjects suggest that renewable energy has the capacity to reduce climate degradation, but

it also gives the U.S. the opportunity to bring equity to citizens across the board by giving them the life they deserve.

According to Roger C. Field, in his essay “Repoliticizing Environmentalism”, the environmental movement began on Earth Day in 1970. On this day, Field witnessed scores of locals in New England picking up trash on Route 201. These individuals were joined by over 10 million people across the country wanting to do their part to clean up the world around them.¹ Likewise, Timothy O’Riordan articulates that this was the beginning of a social movement where community values were effecting change. O’Riordan boasts that this time in environmentalism was a time when people began to have growing anxieties over the negative changes the land was undergoing. He states that it was during the dawn of modern environmentalism that people first began seeing the disproportionality of environmental degradation and, in this, they found a moral obligation to act. In the following quote he suggests the idea that ruin of the land separates us from our natural humanity and when we see this occur, it is something that we must act upon, based on a natural instinct that resides within us.

“In its simplest form, environmentalism is a moral brake and a constant reinterpretation of our human-ness...The moral brake is the anxiety that excessive exploitation of both natural life support processes, and weaker peoples, will destroy or fragment the natural and social fabric that holds the planet together.”²

The moral anxieties, when it comes to the adverse effects of climate change, are founded in that they are becoming more and more difficult to ignore. Americans in particular are consuming goods and energy and an alarming rate; exponentially contributing to greenhouse gas emission

¹ Roger C. Field. “Repoliticizing Environmentalism,” *New City Magazine* Vol. 16 no. 3, 1995.

² Timothy O’Riordan. “From Environmentalism to Sustainability,” *Scottish Geographic Journal*. June, 1, 1991. 153.

and global warming. The energy created to run a single American home for one day uses 775 gallons of water to produce, the average coal-fired generator can emit 913 tons of CO₂ every hour, and the air pollution coming from just 9 of the power plants within the Northwest causes 1500 premature deaths, 70,000 asthma attacks, and 2 million daily incidents of upper respiratory issues to the 33 million people within close proximity. This devastation occurs over a 5 year period.³ Coal-fired energy alone produces CO₂ and sulfur and other harmful greenhouse gases. When sulfur mixes with oxygen it creates sulfur dioxide, which leads to the ruin of trees and water supplies and creates acid rain.⁴ Coal mining causes soil dilapidation, depletion of habitats, including the bleaching of streams, forests, and coral reef, and puts biodiversity at risk.⁵ ⁶ In 2005 41% of CO₂ emissions were due to coal mining, transportation, and energy transitions.⁷ A 2014 study found that fossil energy outputs 300 billion tons of CO₂ throughout a single human lifetime, and the output grows by 4% each year.⁸ Coal also poses risks to human health with dust from mines, contamination of water supplies, and noise pollution. Further, those health risks are disproportionate to low-income and underprivileged communities.⁹ The Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES) found that the U.S. spends \$3.2 trillion per year on the adverse health effects of climate related damages. These damages doubled between 2001 and 2016. C2ES predicts that these issues could bankrupt the U.S. economy if left unchecked.¹⁰ Moreover, change in global climates is already affecting human health and will continue to do so through increased

³ Benjamin K. Sovacool. "The Dirty Energy Dilemma: Introduction." (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008).

⁴ Switch Curricula Fact Sheet. "Intermediate Energy Infobook," The NEED Project. 2013

⁵ Benjamin K. Sovacool, Marilyn A. Brown, and Scott V. Valentine. "Is Industry the Chief Energy Villain?" in *Fact and Fiction in Global Energy Policy: 15 Contentious Questions*. (John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, Maryland, 2016).

⁶ Emily Morrice and Ruth Colagiuri. "Coal Mining, Social Injustice and Health: A Universal Conflict of Power and Priorities," *Health and Place*, November 9, 2012

⁷ Emily Morrice and Ruth Colagiuri. "Coal Mining, Social Injustice and Health: A Universal Conflict of Power and Priorities."

⁸ Benjamin K. Sovacool, Marilyn A. Brown, and Scott V. Valentine. "Is Clean Coal an Oxymoron?" in *Fact and Fiction in Global Energy Policy: 15 Contentious Questions*.

⁹ Emily Morrice and Ruth Colagiuri. "Coal Mining, Social Injustice and Health: A Universal Conflict of Power and Priorities."

¹⁰ Benjamin K. Sovacool, Marilyn A. Brown, and Scott V. Valentine. "Are We Nearing a Global Energy Crisis?" in *Fact and Fiction in Global Energy Policy: 15 Contentious Questions*.

patterns of infectious disease, higher levels of pollutants, and changes in weather patterns; including rainfall and drought.¹¹

Michelle L. Bell, in her article “Advancing Science and Public Health Practice in Climate Change and Health Justice,” proposes that climate degradation is a social justice issue that must be addressed before the problems get much worse. Often, those that produce the most emissions are the least affected by them. She posits that areas with lower socioeconomic prosperity, even within countries such as the United States, are more likely to suffer from the impacts of climate change. These impoverished areas are more likely to suffer health effects and less likely to be able to adapt to the changes. She claims: “...populations by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic position, gender, and other factors can have higher levels of disease or different health responses to exposure to harmful contaminants.”¹² These adverse effects are what Rob Nixon calls “slow violence”. Slow violence is a myriad of slowly unfolding environmental crises. While the violence we are accustomed to is immediate and explosive, the violence that comes from climate degradation often takes generations to unfold. This violence is rarely covered by media sources so there is an element of disbelief any time these events are discussed. In order to confront slow violence we must take up the politics of what is both visible and invisible and this must be done by shaping a relationship between the environmentalism of the rich and of the poor. For these issues to be addressed we must bring the structures of power and the resistance of change to the forefront of average citizen’s consciousness. Political action must be compatible with the ideals of worldwide environmental movements.¹³ Therefore, the social justice problem that arises from climate change is something that must be understood in terms of why the asymmetry exists in the

¹¹ Michelle L. Bell. “Advancing Science and Public Health Practice on Climate Change and Health Justice,” *American Journal of Public Health*. Vol. 107 no. 11. November 2017.

¹² Michelle L. Bell. “Advancing Science and Public Health Practice on Climate Change and Health Justice.”

¹³ Rob Nixon. “Slow Violence,” *Chronicles of Higher Learning*, Vol 57, no 40. 2011.

first place, and what can be done to alleviate those differences. Undeniably, a country's ability to make significant change when it comes to its equality and ability to dissolve climate effects, then, is an issue of the country's "moral temper". In order to slow or reverse the effects of climate change a country must make logical economic decisions to mitigate climate issues before they become prohibitively expensive and unable to be reformed.¹⁴

Due to the high use of energy outflows from fossil fuel sources, and the high levels of greenhouse gas emissions as a result, it has become increasingly important to take energy efficiency into account. One of the major points made within renewable energy policy is that energy efficiency measures can reduce climate affects significantly. Too, using energy efficient means saves millions of dollars and improved quality of life, while also creating the best environment for economic growth. In the year 2000, the U.S. consumed the same amount of energy as it had in 1973, within this span of time the economic output had increased by 74%. This is due to an increase in energy efficiency. Research shows that energy efficiency is one of the most effective ways to combat climate related degradation on a global scale, and creates jobs and prosperity on a local scale.¹⁵ Equally, the transition to renewable energy is the most superlative way to ensure a sustainable and energy rich future. In studies conducted in 2012 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that 80% of the world's energy needs could be met by renewables, the Energy Strategies Review found this number to be closer to 95%. Similarly, the U.S. Department of Energy found that 93% of energy available domestically comes from renewable sources, such as wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass power.¹⁶

¹⁴ Bradley C. Parks and J. Timmons Roberts. "Climate Change, Social Theory, and Justice," *Theory, Culture, and Society*. Vol. 27, no. 2-3. 134-166.

¹⁵ Benjamin K. Sovacool, Marilyn A. Brown, and Scott V. Valentine. "Is Energy Efficiency a Worthwhile Investment?" in *Fact and Fiction in Global Energy Policy: 15 Contentious Questions*.

¹⁶ Benjamin K. Sovacool, Marilyn A. Brown, and Scott V. Valentine. "Can Renewable Electricity Ever be Mainstreamed?" in *Fact and Fiction in Global Energy Policy: 15 Contentious Questions*.

When taking these numbers into consideration it seems that looking toward renewable energy is the shrewdest move that can be made for the future of the energy industry. However what is equally important as energy sources cutting down on emissions, is that the energy is sustainable for generations of the future. Marjolein Helder, in her article “Renewable Energy Is Not Enough: It Needs to Be Sustainable,” expresses that there are three types of sustainability that must be taken into account; one of which is the social sustainability of an energy source. This goes along with the social justice aspect of renewables in that socially sustainable energy must provide a healthy work environment, decent wages, and promote prosperity for local communities. This point is made time and again within renewable energy legislation, the notion that all working individuals deserve humane conditions and the change at a good life; i.e. basic human rights. Equally, Helder claims that a sustainable energy source must work for the people, it must make sense economically for the workers and the system as a whole and it must aim to create the least damage possible to local and global environments.¹⁷ O’Riorden agrees, sustainability must seek to bring social disparities and exclusion into a structure of progress and liberation from inequality. Benjamin K. Sovacool within his work, “Fact and Fiction in Global Energy Policy,” also postulates that renewable energy improves environmental performance and human health, while keeping water, air, and land clean and efficient, and has the power to improve system efficiency. Renewable energy uses billions of gallons less water than its fossil energy counterparts, keeping water clean and readily available for other uses. Further, he claims, renewable energy leads to a decrease in costs for energy consumers.¹⁸ Similarly, Robert Watts, in his book “Innovative Energy Strategies for CO2 Stabilization,” states that renewables can

¹⁷ Marjolein Helder. “Renewable Energy Is Not Enough: It Must Be Sustainable,” *World Economic Forum*. September 2, 2015. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/09/renewable-energy-is-not-enough-it-needs-to-be-sustainable/>

¹⁸ Benjamin K. Sovacool. “The Big Four Clean Solutions,” *The Dirty Energy Dilemma* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008). 73-109.

significantly decrease the amount of pollution that is created each year. This leads to an increase in human health and a decrease in environmental degradation. He declares: "...in the long term, renewables are one of the few sustainable energy supply options available."¹⁹ Renewable energy policy, then, is not merely about creating a sustainable future or reducing emissions, it is about providing prosperous jobs that last for decades, in addition to clean air, water, land, and food; in general passing down a legacy we can be proud of.

The legacy that renewable energy policy aims to create is one in which the social justice issues that surround the poor are dissolved. Renewable energy illustrates the poor as being a deserving class of people that found themselves on the wrong side of history. Advocates of renewables believe that global warming has contributed to the condition of the poor is a big way, through degradation of the neighborhoods and communities in which they live. Some of the inequality that exists can be attributed to greedy corporations that exploit the powerless position of the poor for to gain more and more influence. Ingram and Schneider articulate that often what occurs, even when public policy is written with the idea of helping the poor, are gains for corporations and already wealthy individuals. Renewable energy policy, however, seems to truly aim at giving the poor what they deserve, in terms of a clean environment, good jobs, and a prevailing wage; thus, awakened the notion of the deserving poor.

Conceptualizing the Deserving Poor

In 1976 Ronald Reagan began his Presidential Campaign, where he exploited society's growing distaste for the poor, across the nation. He repeatedly articulated that the poor where in their situation due to laziness, underhandedness, and a pessimistic view of life. This view, he

¹⁹ Robert Watts, "The Potential of Renewable Energy to Reduce Carbon Emissions." *Innovative Energy Strategies for CO2 Stabilization*. Accessed: January 15, 2019. 123-180.

articulated, had to be shed were the poor to free themselves from government assistance. The government policy of the time followed Reagan's lead.²⁰ However, it was also at this time within the 1970's that society underwent a change where social justice became a mainstream crusade. The struggles of the underprivileged began to be noticed and a marked change was taking place throughout society. It was due to this adaptation that Thomas Halper wrote his essay "The Poor as Pawns: The New 'Deserving Poor' and The Old". Within this work Halper articulates that at the turn of the century the poor were only seen as deserving if they were hard at work, constantly striving for something more than they had. In order to be seen as deserving, one must have worked as hard as possible and only then could he rise above the conception that he was immoral and vindicated by his station. The view of the poor, at the time, was that they were poor by their own doing and therefore must live with the consequences of their choices. To be seen as moral and deserving meant to accept the economic and social system for was it was; this meant understanding that one's current place was as high as he would ever rise.²¹

This sentiment of the poor is very similar to the way in which they are represented by Ingram and Schneider. Within Social Construction Theory the poor fall within the category of dependents. This target group is made up of individuals that are seen as being dependent on the government to supplement their livelihood because they are unable to do so on their own. Aligned with this view, the poor are positively constructed as being deserving of sympathy for their position, though not so deserving as to choose which supplementary benefits are granted to them and when.²² The poor, as a dependent group, are subject to little political power and the policy tools geared toward them are often symbolic in nature, without giving any tangible

²⁰ Max Rose and Frank R. Baumgartner. "Framing the Poor: Media Coverage and U.S. Poverty Policy 1960-2008," *Policy Studies Journal*, February 2013. 23.

²¹ Thomas Halper. "The Poor as Pawns: The New 'Deserving Poor' and The Old," *Polity* Vol 6 no 1 (1973). 71-75.

²² Anne L. Schneider, Helen Ingram, and Peter DeLeon. "Democratic Policy Design: Social Constructions of Target Populations." 110-125.

benefit. These programs portray the poor as lacking self-sufficiency and, though these merits are granted to the poor, government never seeks out those who qualify; instead, the poor must pursue the benefits for themselves. Ingram and Schneider articulate that: "...the tools and rationales imply that government is responsive to them only when they subject themselves to government and relinquish power over their own choices."²³ This means that the poor must accept the benefits given to them through policy while also being stigmatized for it. The target groups of these benefits are expected to stand in line to eventually get what others want them to have.²⁴ This view of the poor aligns with the work of Karen Rowling and Stuart Connor. Their essay, "The Deserving Rich? Inequality, Morality, and Social Policy," states that there is a docility element to those who are seen as deserving, meaning if a person is passive, grateful, and decent they will be seen as worthy, though if they are aggressive, ungrateful or impudent, they will be seen as unworthy.²⁵ Politically, this sends a message to the poor that they are unable to dictate what is good for them, in addition to being unable to get what they without help and without having gratitude for the handout. Thus, furthering the notion that the poor has little political sway when it comes to judgement, their ability is so deprived that they cannot even provide for themselves, let alone make important political choices. Max Rose and Frank R. Baumgartner in their essay "Framing the Poor: Media Coverage and U.S. poverty policy 1960-2008," articulate that the poor felt stuck within their narrative, never being able to move away from the stigma that followed them, while also suffering the plights of actual poverty. They express: "The poor were seen as victims of an economic system that had no place for them, trapped by dysfunctional

²³ Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram. "Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol 87 no 2 (1993). 342.

²⁴ Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram. "Social construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy." 335-332.

²⁵ Karen Rowlingson and Stuart Connor. "The Deserving Rich? Inequality, Morality, and Social Policy," *Journal of Social Policy* vol 40, no. 3 (2011).

schools, a potential threat to social stability and peace, if their needs were not met.”²⁶ Likewise, Joe Soss, in his essay, “Making Clients and Citizens,” presents the notion of New Paternalism, a movement which gives direction and civic obligation to the poor. The programs that have emerged from this movement are ones which teach civility and compliance within the constructs of society views of the poor’s un-deservedness. This version of Paternalism, Welfare Paternalism, values social order in favor of social justice, sending a message to the poor that their political engagement is unwarranted and unwanted.²⁷ Contrarily, Rowlingson and Connor suggest that wealthy individuals are seen as being deserving due to hard work or effort, the idea that the higher the income the more likely one is to be able to trickle down some of that wealth to less worthy people. Based on the character of the wealthy, whether they are careless or frugal with their money, they are sometimes seen as even more deserving of their position.²⁸

Though Halper’s definition of the poor stems from his work done in the 1970’s, it is most closely linked with the representation of the deserving poor as articulated by renewable energy policy. Halper articulates that today’s poor are deserving only if they refuse to be ignored and “shunted off to dead end jobs”.²⁹ According to Halper, today’s poor are deserving if they refuse to accept the lot they have been given by society and fight against the injustices they sustain. He states that those who accept their fate are “dupes of the power structure [and]...suckers unworthy of compassion”.³⁰ With the increase in awareness of social justice that has emerged, comes the idea that middle class standards are the bare minimum that should be accepted by any self-respecting individual. Therefore, the notion set forth by policy makers that poverty is a normal

²⁶ Max Rose and Frank R. Baumgartner. “Framing the Poor: Media Coverage and U.S. Poverty Policy 1960-2008.” 22.

²⁷ Joe Soss. “Making Clients and Citizens: Welfare Policy as a Source of Status, Belief, and Action,” in *Deserving and Entitled: Social Construction and Public Policy* ed. Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram. (New York, NY: State University of NY Press, 2005).

²⁸ Karen Rowlingson and Stuart Connor. “The Deserving Rich? Inequality, Morality, and Social Policy.” 440.

²⁹ Thomas Halper. “The Poor as Pawns: The New ‘Deserving Poor’ and The Old.” 75.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 75.

stasis of any economic system is no longer being tolerated.³¹ With this change in attitude comes a change to the social construction of the poor. Rose and Baumgartner postulate that the new narrative is a deficiency of the availability of jobs for unskilled and low-income individuals, which then lends to them a sense of sympathy for their position:

“...lack of access to a quality job is understood to be because of racial discrimination, a geographic mismatch between where the poor live and where the jobs are available, or any other system-level factor, this suggests a more generous stance toward the poor. In this view, the poor may be less to blame for their lack of a job than they are victims of a social or economic system that has let them down.”³²

The social and economic systems that have historically overlooked the poor across the country are being exposed for the inequality it has promoted for decades. Now, these views of the poor are changing with the emergence of the renewable energy policy. The poor are needed in order to build green technologies, quickly and efficiently, and to transform the energy industry within the United States to a more renewably minded endeavor. With this, comes the promise that the poor will no longer be overlooked by public policy. Rather, that policy promises to work with the poor to revolutionize the American system into one that is more efficient and equitable. Renewable energy is not only about a need for sustainable energy that will bring the U.S. into the future, it is also a way of mitigating the disproportionate burden that is place on the poor by degraded and unhealthy living conditions. While it could still be argued that the poor are being used as pawns within a renewable energy game, what is becoming apparent is that policy makers are at least promising to provide training, job security, and a living wage to a large, unskilled work force; thus providing them with power and representation they need to build influence. It has become

³¹ Ibid. 75.

³² Max Rose and Frank R. Baumgartner. “Framing the Poor: Media Coverage and U.S. Poverty Policy 1960-2008.” 24.

undeniable that a transition away from fossil energy can happen without low-income individuals to move the transition along. Green jobs are emerging all over the world with the expectation that it is the poor who will fill them.

The next section will look into Social Construction Framework and the philosophies from which it emerged. Primarily these philosophies paint public policy as a means of controlling the masses by exploiting their emotional intelligence. Further, this section will draw upon similarities within the philosophies of Harold Lasswell, Michele Foucault, and Michael Shapiro, and create a point from which the analysis of renewable energy policy can be examined.

Theoretical Framework

The culmination of Helen Ingram and Anne Schneider's works suggests that society is framed around social constructions, or powerful stereotypes that place people into clusters. These sets provide them with power or keep them submissive. There is a fourfold typology that individuals are cast into by Social Construction Theory and these are advantaged, contenders, dependents, and deviants. Policy design, and in turn policy, keeps these groups in check. The advantaged group is made up of politically powerful and positively viewed individuals and institutions. This is the group that public policy is written for and more often than not, gives benefits to. Society has a favorable view of this group and feels as if they deserve the benefits that policy lends to them through its design. Contenders are also politically powerful, though they are seen as greedy; working for themselves rather than the good of society. Often these groups were once viewed positively, though they fell from grace. Contenders are often still allowed benefits through public policy because of their powerful status. However, they are seen as undeserving and the benefits must be given in a devious way, disguised as burdens or as

benefits for a more deserving group. Dependent groups are viewed positively, though they have little political sway. This group is often alluded to as low-income individuals and families that depend on the government for welfare benefits. Policy sends messages to these individuals that they are unable to effect change for their group, though they are pitied and seen as deserving the handouts they receive. The final group in the fourfold typology is the deviants. This group is highlighted as criminals, addicts, and gangs within the system.³³ They have no political power and are negatively view by the population. These typecasts that individuals are caged by are value-laden and emerge from immediate and emotionally intuitive reactions.

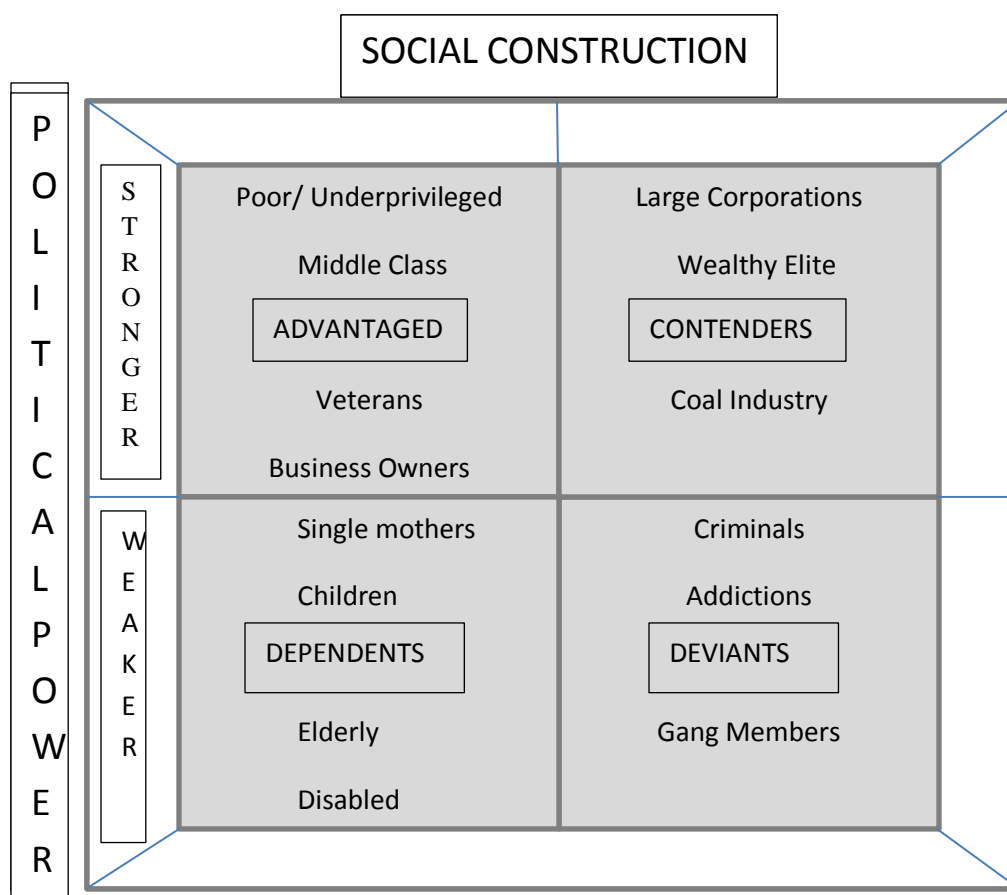


Table 1: Shows the relationship of each group to their social construction and political influence as articulated by Ingram and Schneider. The table shows the coal industry's position within the "advantaged" quadrant and the poor within the "dependent" quadrant; as was their position before the onset of renewable energy policy.

³³ Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram. "Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy."

Policy makers, then, play to the emotions of the people and exploit those feelings in order to pass or restrict certain policy procedures. Reactions are quick, drawing on the mind in a way that allows the individual to subconsciously make decisions about certain target groups. Policy design has both material and symbolic effects on society. Policy dictates and sends messages to target groups about their group's capacity to instill change. Participation patterns are directly affected by policy in that the more powerful groups receive messages that they are able to create change, while the less powerful are given messages allowing them no political sway.³⁴ Policy design often includes political goals or problems to be solved and these are used as tools which are intended to change behavior. Policy makers use "conformity basis" which is the tendency of people to conform to a belief structure they already possess, meaning policy can predict how people will vote or act based upon previous patterns of behavior. Policy makers also use "anchoring" where adjustments are made to the original way of thinking by slightly altering their views through emotional manipulation. This can be done by "maximizing the difference" or enhancing the wanted differentiation between themselves and other groups.³⁵ From here social constructions can be changed, policy is an important force behind this change. To create a transformation, policy makers merely have to plant a seed within the minds of the population and from there the people's mindset on a certain issue or goal can be converted. This can be difficult to do, however, because social constructions are inherently resistant to change. This is owing to the emotional and automatic nature of judgements associated with target groups. Policy change can lead to an increase in support for target groups, or a decline in support. The largest problem to be had with Social Construction Theory is that it is not self-corrective because society is not

³⁴ Anne L. Schneider, Helen Ingram, and Peter Deleon. "Democratic Policy Design: Social Constructs of Target Populations."

³⁵ Anne L. Schneider, Helen Ingram, and Peter Deleon. "Democratic Policy Design: Social Constructs of Target Populations."

willing to mobilize against popular groups. Therefore, the view of prevalent individuals, or the advantaged within the fourfold typology, must have their statuses slowly chipped away by policy design and change. Ingram and Schneider et al. articulate that:

“In the course of creating categories of target groups and conferring social meaning on them, public policy can serve to diminish social inequality and divisiveness and encourage active citizenship.”³⁶

Therefore, public policy does not always have to be a negatively used tool that oppresses populations. Instead, it can be used as a mechanism to liberate outlying or underprivileged groups, and an instrument to create more power for these from within policy design. The language used within public policy and the policy makers enacting the legislation are key elements that dictate whether the tools will be used for liberty or subjugation.

Another individual who wrote about public policy as a means of controlling society was Harold Lasswell. He wrote on the ability of political figures to exploit their position to fit their own gain, though he condemned the use of their power to that end. Michele Foucault also saw government as an oppressive entity that divvied out punishments to every class of people in degrees of how much autonomy they deserved. Foucault claimed that punishment was the prime undertaking of government and that the aim of policy was to persecute the masses. He believed that government wanted people to work hard for very little and to keep people oppressed by their social status. Finally, the analysis turns to the perception of Michael Shapiro who stated that policy’s purpose is to create representative images within our minds based on emotional leverage. In this way, the ‘self’ is created by policy and the groups that individuals are situated

³⁶ Anne L. Schneider, Helen Ingram, and Peter DeLeon. “Democratic Policy Design: Social Constructs of Target Populations.” 132.

within. He does not articulate whether policy makers use this power for the good or the ill of the people. Shapiro's philosophy aligns almost perfectly with Ingram and Schneider, allowing for the possibility that the agenda of public policy is in the hands of the policy makers. An investigation of how social construction equates to the work of Lasswell and Foucault will also serve as a starting point from which to study how renewable energy policy shapes the social order and how that social order is changing with the emergence of renewable energy versus fossil fuels.

Political philosopher, Harold Lasswell, saw that it was the elite class that public policy was written for, it was those that were most influential who had the most political sway. He stated that "the study of politics is the study of influence and the influential."³⁷ Lasswell devoted his life to writing and philosophizing how to be the best political scientist possible so that he may pass down his insight to future generations of political scientists and policy makers. Lasswell saw that the world was divided into groups of those who are powerful and those who are not, the group that one fit into was based upon shared symbols, values, and loyalty to one's nation, their class, and occupation. The degree to which an individual held influence was dependent upon their proximity to the elite group that policy worked to benefit.³⁸ He articulated that the masses "venerate the symbols" and the elite suffer no guilt due to the exploitation of the poorer classes.³⁹ The creation of symbols and values within policy also created the social constructions that individuals and groups fit into, these could be positive or negative depending on the types of symbols and values were placed upon each.

³⁷ Harold Lasswell. "Politics: Who Gets What, When, How?," (Meridian Books: New York, NY) 1958. 13.

³⁸ Harold Lasswell. "Part I: Elite," in *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How?*"

³⁹ Harold Lasswell. "Part II: Methods," in *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How?*"

Lasswell's philosophies are those that Ingram and Schneider's specifically site as being their inspiration for Social Construction Theory, and they are so closely related that it can be difficult to make a distinction between the two. Where Ingram, Schneider, and Soss write about New Paternalism as a movement that supervises the use of public policy and enforces it as a civic obligation to social order over social justice,⁴⁰ Lasswell writes of propaganda through symbols that are utilized by the "ruling elite [who] elicit loyalty, blood, and taxes from the populace with new combinations of values and consonants."⁴¹ Each talk about a lower class of people held down by symbols and emotional manipulation; where playing one's role within society is meant to bring satisfaction, it can create a prison system that is impossible to rise above. The symbols alluded to within both theories, box in target groups and serve as a means to justify the allocations of rewards to the elite or penalties to the lesser classes, such as the poor.⁴² Further, Ingram and Schneider hypothesize that policy creates the symbols that typecast certain groups as powerful, deserving, undeserving, and so on. They claim:

"Manipulating such images in the political process can and usually does result in radically different treatment of various target groups and affects their identities, images of government and notions of efficacy, thereby encouraging or discouraging their political participation."⁴³

These images conjure certain feelings or emotions within individuals and dictate how they view policy. These feelings are exploited by policy makers to sway votes and send messages to certain groups about their ability to effect change. Lasswell, Ingram, and Schneider are not the only

⁴⁰ Joe Soss. "Making Clients and Citizens: Welfare Policy as a Source of Status, Belief, and Action,"

⁴¹ Harold Lasswell. "Part II: Methods," in *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How?*"

⁴² Anne L. Schneider, Helen Ingram, and Peter DeLeon. "Democratic Policy Design: Social Constructs of Target Populations".

⁴³ Anne L. Schneider, Helen Ingram, and Peter DeLeon. "Democratic Policy Design: Social Constructs of Target Populations". 106.

individuals to toy with the notion that government can work for itself or an elite class of people. Michele Foucault delves even deeper into the hypothesis that government is a system meant to keep subordinate classes of people as low and as subjugated as possible.

Michele Foucault wrote about the concept of efficiently manipulating the masses through subtle encryption, which he coined as punishment, both indirect and extreme. Within his book “Discipline and Punish,” he articulates that policy design forms a ‘policy of coercions’. Through this coercion an ordered society is formed in which individuals are exploited by the economy, where domination through labor is the primary goal. Foucault expresses that “each individual has its own place; and each place has its individual.”⁴⁴ Further, each person is unknowingly brought into the circle of punishment by perpetuating the punishment of others and their groups. At times the punishment is what can hardly be recognized as punishment at all. Instead it is ‘petty humiliation’ which penalizes even the slightest misstep. The system creates an arrangement in which we inadvertently inform on our peers, and where “each subject finds himself caught in a punishable, punishing universality.”⁴⁵ Foucault goes on to further explain that one’s rank within society serves to provide an even deeper mechanism through which to punish. This is similar to what Ingram and Schneider assert when it comes to the dependent group being told what they need, how much, and when. Within Social Construction Theory, policy is written to give benefits to certain target populations and give burdens to others. The burdens are given through policy tools such as subsidies with eligibility requirements that stigmatize users, or the concept that individuals must present themselves in order to receive benefits from agencies that dictate what sort of help is sufficient.⁴⁶ Foucault postulates that the ranking of individuals by public policy not only dictates one’s skill and abilities, but provides punishment or reward for those capabilities

⁴⁴ Michele Foucault. “Docile Bodies,” in *Discipline and Punish*. (Vintage Books: New York, NY) 1997. 143.

⁴⁵ Michele Foucault. “Docile Bodies.” 178.

⁴⁶ Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram. “Social construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy.”

and aptitudes. If the person is skilled in the right way they are able to move up in rank, and if they are skilled in the wrong way they are punished by demoting the individual or keeping them down economically.⁴⁷ Michael Shapiro, in his book “The Politics of Representation,” draws heavily on Foucault’s works for his theory of the same name. He articulates that public policy shapes who we are through representative means, no matter if we are within the elite or lower class. Further, the conception of population puts humanity into a collective which decrees how the parts are to be organized, from this comes concealed acts of exclusion and repression.⁴⁸

Shapiro’s concept of representation is uncannily similar to the idea of Social Construction Theory in that it is the means by which an individual or group takes on meaning within society. Representation is regarded as being real, though it is created through a value system that only has meaning within its societal context.⁴⁹ Ingram and Schneider articulate that social construction is an attribution of values, symbols, and images that characterize and give meaning to target populations⁵⁰, whereas Shapiro takes the notion of symbolism creating value to a higher level. He postulates that what we see as real is actually the use of interpretive codes, though we view this as perception of the real world. Moreover, Shapiro goes on to point out that “policy [is] immanent in the ideas of the self and the order within which what is commonly thought of as public policy is executed”.⁵¹ He states that policy language poses as non-valuational fact, though it is anything but. Rather, our existing legal codes represent time-honored political successes and the language used within laws reflects our institutionalized values, while rejecting others.

Ingram, Schneider, and Shapiro agree that society is made up of a series of “quick thinking”

⁴⁷ Michele Foucault. “Docile Bodies.” 181.

⁴⁸ Michael J. Shapiro. “The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in the Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis,” (The University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, Wisconsin) 1988. 5, 9, 11-12.

⁴⁹ Michael J. Shapiro. “Preface,” in *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis*.

⁵⁰ Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram. “Social construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy.” 336.

⁵¹ Michael J. Shapiro. “Chapter 1: The Problem of Ideology: Locating the Political Analyst/Writer,” in *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis*. 5.

value decisions that are more connected to our emotions than the truth of the world. This is precisely what allows social construction to hold weight within our minds. As a result of the close ties between Social Construction Theory and Representation, these terms will be used synonymously within the remainder of the exploration. Much like the ideologies of Lasswell, Foucault, Ingram and Schneider -- Shapiro claims that policy is a representative power that creates social categories and dictates the way society is structured.⁵²

Changing the social construction of a target population is a difficult task, though it is not an impossible feat. When small variations occur within policy, a change in the commonly held beliefs of groups or even institutions can be changed over time. Sometimes fluctuations are a result of inadvertent or unforeseen effects from previous policy designs. Other times, policy makers will work to instill a modification to value-driven symbols of target populations to allow change to happen. One of the examples that Ingram and Schneider give of successful change to the social construction of a target population is given rights to homosexual groups. These came about through rewritten public policy and have helped destigmatize the group throughout time. However, the type of transformation that occurs and how quickly depends upon the existing social construction of the target group and the power that population possesses.⁵³ Renewable energy policy is creating a change in how low-income individuals are being included within policy goals, as well as how the coal industry is viewed by the majority of the population. Low-income individuals are being used to rebuild the current infrastructure and are enticed with the promise of better paying jobs, improved working conditions, and a more prosperous way of life. The coal industry is taking a hit when it comes to its representation within modern society,

⁵² Michael J. Shapiro. "Preface," in *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis*. 50.

⁵³ Anne L. Schneider, Helen Ingram, and Peter Deleon. "Democratic Policy Design: Social Construction of Target Populations." 125.

increasingly industry leaders are seen as greedy, money driven, and indifferent to the health of average Americans and the global environment as a whole.

Analysis

The majority of Ingram and Schneider's writing on the Social Construction Framework takes on a pessimistic view of low-income individuals and uses them as an example of a group used to gain votes through policy design that later only benefits the politically powerful. While this has been true of policy design in past decades, it can be argued that a change has occurred within recent years. Within the context of the fourfold typology that individuals fall under within Social Construction Theory, advantaged, contenders, dependents, and deviants, this analysis will show that low-income individuals have changed their social construction from the dependent group to the advantaged, and that the coal industry has moved from the advantaged group to contenders. From here, the analysis will draw from the theoretical frameworks of Ingram and Schneider et al. in order to demonstrate this point. Ingram and Schneider posit that the fourfold typology is not meant to create clean lines within conceptual groups, rather the groups are meant to create a concept of the symbolic nature of policy and the clusters that entities fall into.⁵⁴ Still, looking into how low-income individuals and the coal industry have transformed over past decades will be helpful in understanding how renewable energy policy is working toward changing policy and policy makers as we recognize them today.

⁵⁴ Anne L. Schneider, Helen Ingram, and Peter Deleon. "Democratic Policy Design: Social Constructs of Target Populations".

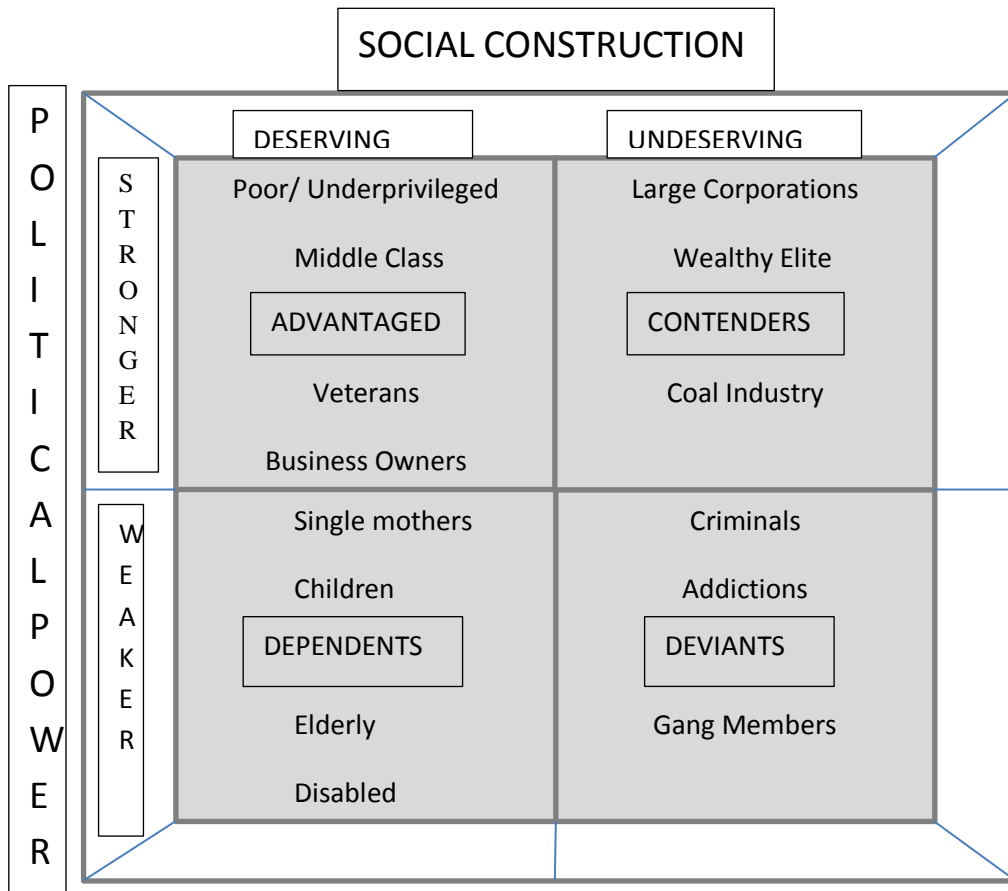


Table 2: Shows how the positions of the coal industry and the poor have changed with the inset of renewable energy policy. The coal industry has moved to the “contender” quadrants and the poor have moved to the “advantaged” quadrant.

The Social Construction of the Poor: Dependent to Advantaged

In the wake of World War II, employment was geared toward educated and highly skilled Americans with technological backgrounds. The jobs sector at the time was positioned to create a boom in economic growth, while undereducated and unskilled Americans were essentially left in the dust.⁵⁵ Today, undereducated and unskilled workers are the target of green jobs because the transition to renewable technology requires a labor force that is willing to undergo extensive training within in a new field. It is not just energy technology that is being transitioned, but the collective knowledge that is needed within the American work force in order

⁵⁵ Ronald Roach. “Harvesting ‘Green-Collar’ Jobs,” *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, Vol 26, no 7 (2009).

to make the transition to renewable energy happen as smoothly as possible. The emergence of the green jobs sector has been a long time coming within the U.S.. The movement began with social and political activists petitioning for fair and living wages for low-income individuals. The issue has, within the past decade, become more mainstream. Scholars and educational institutions have joined the movement to create a group of people best positioned to take on the role of green jobs employees. Ingram and Schneider assert that social movements are exactly the types of events that successfully instantiate change within policy design. They postulate that:

“Social movements have become a powerful force for social change. History has shown repeatedly that even the powerless have power when they are able to come together and resist dominant constructions, oppose oppressive policies, mobilize, and associate themselves with widespread fundamental values of fairness and justice.”⁵⁶

When a group of people stand together against a wrong that has been done to them, they create a powerful movement for change. Today, those wanting to reverse negative health related effects, through energy reform, have begun to do so through a movement of the American poor into positions surrounding green technologies. This is not without good reason; the green jobs sector is the fastest growing in the country. There was a mere 750,000 green jobs in 2008 and that number is projected to be somewhere around 4.2 million within the next few decades, accounting for 10% of new employment growth throughout the country.⁵⁷ Likewise, in 2009 the National Renewable Energy Laboratory projected that solar and wind jobs would account for 94% of new jobs growth within the coming decades. Construction and installation jobs were projected to account for up to 75,000 domestic jobs per year, indirect and manufacturing accounted for up to

⁵⁶ Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram. “Introduction: Public Policy and the Social Construction of Deservedness,” in *Deserving and Entitled: Social Construction and Public Policy* ed. Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram. (New York, NY: State University of NY Press, 2005).

⁵⁷ Ronald Roach. “Harvesting ‘Green-Collar’ Jobs.”

66,000 jobs per year, and maintenance and operation jobs accounted for up to 5,500 per year for an ongoing period of 20 to 30 years.⁵⁸ Therefore, it is becoming increasingly apparent that renewable energy is the future of public policy and could prove to be the most effective way to create a boom in the United States economy. Jobs growth in the green energy sector could bring the entire country into economic success, while also increasing the prosperity of previously overlooked communities of American poor. The transition to green technologies and the growth of green jobs must come through policy changes, which then create a shift in the social construction of the target groups the policy aims to support.

The Green New Deal is a pioneering resolution meant to spur public policy makers to take action against climate induced degradation and systemic inequalities created by wage stagnation and economic disparity. The resolution proposes that the United States should be responsible for “leading the role in reducing emissions through economic transformation.”⁵⁹ It also asserts that the United States Government should undergo a complete revolution when it comes to industry, jobs sector inclusion, and fundamental rights for its citizens. In general, the Green New Deal is a mobilization of the American economy over a 10 year period. During this time the nation would marshal, much like it did after World War II under FDR’s New Deal. The goal of the resolution is to reach net-zero emissions while also achieving economic prosperity for underprivileged and vulnerable communities. This would be achieved by transforming the energy industry into 100% renewables, while training the American work force to take on this transition. Unfortunately, the resolution was shot down receiving zero votes from Republicans and “present” votes from Democrats. Later Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the primary initiator of

⁵⁸ Daniel Steinberg and Gian Porro. “Preliminary Analysis of the Jobs and Economic Impact of Renewable Energy Projects Supported by the 1603 Treasury Grant Program,” *National Renewable Energy Laboratory* (2009)
<https://permanent.access.gpo.gov/gpo22535/52739.pdf>

⁵⁹ 116th Congress of the United States. “Green New Deal,” February 7, 2019.
<https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hres/109/BILLS-116hres109ih.pdf>

the resolution, articulated that the text of the resolution that was never intended to be passed into law. Rather, it was a “vision document” that was meant to be the beginning of a conversation on climate and emissions issues that was previously ignored by almost every member of the United States House and Senate.⁶⁰ The hope was that the resolution would push local, state, and national policy makers to take a stance on climate issues and begin to make necessary changes to combat negative aspects as they arise. In essence, those who support this mass mobilization to renewable technologies wish to revolutionize the social construction surrounding the energy industry to one that favors more environmentally minded power generation.

At the outset, the text of the Green New Deal asserts that global “climate change constitutes a direct threat to the national security of the United States”.⁶¹ Global warming has transformed the earth through the rising of sea levels, loss of 99% of the earth’s coral reef, mass migration from warming effected areas, and an “increased wildfires, severe storms, drought, and other extreme weather events that threaten human life, healthy communities, and critical infrastructure.”⁶² These changes to critical habitats and vulnerable communities have unreasonably burdened the poor across the globe. In the United States alone, the cost of environmental damage has reached trillions of dollars. The Green New Deal suggests that it is the responsibility of the United States, as a leader of the first world, to mitigate and reverse these damages. This is, in part, due to the fact that “the United States had historically been responsible for a disproportionate amount of greenhouse gas emissions, having emitted 20 percent of greenhouse gas emissions through 2014, and has a high technological capacity.”⁶³ Thus, because the U.S. is able to afford the technology transfers needed to reduce emissions, and due to the fact

⁶⁰ Justin Worland. “The Senate Will Reject the Green New Deal, But It’s Already Changing the Debate on Climate Change,” *Time Magazine*. March 27, 2019. <https://www.time.com/5558370/green-new-deal-senate-vote/>

⁶¹ 116th Congress of the United States. “Green New Deal.” 4.

⁶² *Ibid.* 2.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 3.

that it was the U.S. that was the largest emitter in the world for almost two centuries, it is the responsibility of the country to show the rest of the world that a prosperous government can exist where emissions are at an all-time low, and citizens enjoy the rights and privileges they deserve. The representation of the U.S. as being an economic leader is still intact, those who support the green energy transition wish to ensure the country's status remains intact, while leading the rest of the world in the notion that net-zero energy. The Green New Deal states that all Americans deserve prosperity and freedom from hardships byway of:

“...directing investments to spur economic development, deepen and diversify industry and business in local and regional economies and build wealth and community ownership, while prioritizing high-quality job creation and economic, social, and environmental benefits in frontline and vulnerable communities, and deindustrialized communities, that may otherwise struggle with the transition away from greenhouse gas intensive industries...guaranteeing a job with a family sustaining wage, adequate family and medical leave, paid vacations, and retirement security to all people of the United States.”⁶⁴

In essence, the Green New Deal is an ode to FDR in the form of a bill of rights: job benefits for working individuals, high-quality education and health care for every citizen, and clean air and water, and healthy food, across the board. After World War II the United States economy revolutionized what could be done by the average working class family and the power they had to create positive change in a short time. The years after The War were a time of prosperity for middle class Americans, though lower class and poor citizens were left behind by the newly found wealth and comfort. The Green New Deal suggests that this mobilization can happen once

⁶⁴ 116th Congress of the United States. “Green New Deal.” 12-13.

again, though this time it is low-income citizens that will reap the benefits and have the bulk of the influence over the transition. Instantiating a change within the construction of poor Americans will ensure that the growing stagnation of the United States economy, when it comes to vulnerable communities, will be rectified for those who previously had little to no political influence. Thus, there has to be a revolution within the economic system for tangible prosperity to take place. As mentioned above, Thomas Halper believed that today's deserving poor are those who do not accept their economic position for what it is, rather they demand what they deserve and work to gain it. Halper claims these individuals: "owe their title to having rejected all that yesterday's deserving poor believed...By so doing, the new deserving poor legitimate not the current system but rather the current opposition to it; and instead of serving the Establishment, now serve its opponents."⁶⁵ The Green New Deal and those who support legislation similar to it are the opponents of the old way of thinking; they are taking over the Establishment and making it into one that is successful for all citizens. Those previously dependent on government for prosperity are becoming the advantaged by way of necessity. Legislation is targeting groups believed to modernize the American economy. Though the Green New Deal suggests that a revolution of the American way of life should be undertaken in order to strengthen the economy and create fair and just livelihoods for each and every citizen; the resolution also acknowledges that the current system is leaving citizens unable to prevail due to unfair wages and an extreme income gaps that keeps the economy from moving forward. The resolution purports there is:

“...a 4-decade trend of wage stagnation, deindustrialization, and anti-labor policies...
[which have led to] hourly wages overall stagnating since the 1970's despite increased

⁶⁵ Thomas Halper. "The Poor as Pawns: The New 'Deserving Poor' and the Old. 86.

worker productivity; the third-worst level of socio-economic mobility in the developed world before the Great Recession; the erosion of the earning and bargaining power of workers in the United States; and inadequate resources for public sector workers to confront the challenges of climate change at local, State, and Federal levels; and the greatest income inequality since the 1920's.”⁶⁶

Therefore, the Green New Deal acknowledges the lack of political power that low-income and poor individuals have previously been allowed, and supports their rise to power through a reform of the energy and jobs sectors from the ground up. The resolution postulates that the disproportion between classes of Americans has to be addressed in order for the country to move forward into the future in a viable way. Halper agrees that it is the public system that is to blame for the disadvantages that some groups face, and articulates that there has been a transition in who, or what, is given the blame for these detriments. Halper proposes that: “instead of shifting the locus of liability to fate, modern analysts place it upon society, which is said to have a collective obligation to uplift the millions it has shamefully abused.”⁶⁷ This obligation is precisely where the notion of cleaning up the environment, and training the lower income classes for green jobs, comes into play. It is a meticulously laid out plan to get the country back on its feet, while quelling the gross inequality that has been allowed to reign for decades upon end. The Green New Deal also calls for the removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, a restoration of ecosystems, and the removal of toxic waste from exposed habitats and communities. The resolution suggests that the threat to human health is caused by fossil energy sources. It states:

⁶⁶ 116th Congress of the United States. “Green New Deal.” 3-4.

⁶⁷ Thomas Halper. “The Poor as Pawns: The New ‘Deserving Poor’ and the Old. 78.

“...the United States is currently experiencing several related crises with- life expectancy declining while basic needs, such as clean air, clean water, healthy food, and adequate health care, housing, transportation, and education, are inaccessible to a significant portion of the United States population.”⁶⁸

The language of the resolution, over and over again, acknowledges that there are individuals within the country that are saddled with disproportionately negative circumstances, and that this must stop in order to bring justice to the people of the United States. Though it may be the case at present that poor citizens are being left behind by public policy, the U.S. is not without the ability to revamp its economy into a prestigious and fruitful venture for all citizens. Further, the resolution promotes sharing these ideas of new and better technologies, goods, and monetary means with the rest of the world, and advises the utilization of indigenous people when it comes to their involvement in public policy. A Fact Sheet released by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez articulated that: “we invested 40 to 50% of GDP into our economy during World War II and created the greatest middle class the U.S. has seen.” Hence the goal of the Green New Deal: to take wealth from the hands of the 1%, do away with corporate monopolies that sway policy makers, and create a more prosperous nation for each and every citizen.⁶⁹ The resolution itself states that this is:

“...a historic opportunity to create millions of good, high wage jobs in the United States [and] to provide unprecedented levels of prosperity and economic security for all the people of the United States; and to counteract systemic injustice... [including] social,

⁶⁸ 116th Congress of the United States. “Green New Deal.” 3.

⁶⁹ The Heartland Institute and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. “Green New Deal: Fact Sheet and FAQ from Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Sen. Edward Markey,” *From the Official Congressional Site of AOC* (later removed). February 8, 2019. <https://www.hartland.org/publications-resources/publications/green-new-deal-fact-sheet-and-faq-from-rep-alexandria-ocasio-cortez-and-sen-edward-markey>

environmental, and economic injustices...affecting indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth.”⁷⁰

Not only does the resolution indicate the United States’ ability to create economic and political justice for low-income and poor citizens, it names each group that has been overlooked by public policy in the past. It can be suggested that by including these vulnerable communities, a more equitable and overall prosperous future will be the result. By giving these communities a voice and more political influence, there becomes a change in the dynamic of which groups are given political advantage. When equity is given to groups previously held out of sight by political design, they are allowed power in a way that then makes them the politically influential when it comes to making decisions for their families and communities. Thus arises the creation of a country which fundamentally strives for the success of its people. This is accomplished through:

“...directing investments to spur economic development, deepen and diversify industry and business in local and regional economies, and build wealth and community ownership, while prioritizing high-quality job creation and economic, social, and environmental benefits in frontline and vulnerable communities, that may otherwise struggle with the transition away from greenhouse gas intensive industries...”⁷¹

Not only, then, are vulnerable communities not struggling financially with the transition to renewable energy, they are headlining that transition by way of the green jobs that make the conversion possible. By empowering the people throughout the country with green job training and a living wage, they are given the reigns and allowed the advantage of creating an economy,

⁷⁰ 116th Congress of the United States. “Green New Deal.” 5,4.

⁷¹ 116th Congress of the United States. “Green New Deal.” 12.

public policy, and an overall infrastructure that works for them. Consequently, transforming previously underprivileged communities from being dependent upon the government system, to being an advantaged group that dictates how the system can keep each and every citizen affluent.

In Oregon, a bill similar to the Green New Deal was passed in 2009. The House Bill called the Green Jobs Growth Plan demanded the creation of a green jobs initiative which was to build increasingly, between 2011 through the end of 2018, using three phases to accomplish the goal. The jobs created by the plan were to be in support of green technology and increased prosperity for underprivileged and under-education Oregon families. It was the first in the state's movement toward environmental protection, a reduction of greenhouse gases, and a growth in economic opportunity. The majority of the jobs created were to be those within industrial and construction jobs with on-the-job training and a promise at high wages and a better life for Oregon families. Though the bill did not merely work toward putting unskilled and undereducated individuals in green technology positions, it also created green jobs initiatives to clean up communities most affected by disproportionate climate degradation. Through orchestrating the renewable energy transition themselves, these individuals gain more advantage within society. The Green Jobs Growth Plan defines green jobs as those which:

“...provides a service or produces a product that: Increased energy efficiency; Produced renewable energy; Prevents, reduces, or mitigates environmental degradation; Cleans up and restores the natural environment; Provides education, consultation, policy promotion, accreditation, training, and offsets or similar supporting services.”⁷²

Hence, the plan ensured under-educated and poor Oregonians, not only better paying jobs, they were promised that their communities will be cleaned and environmental degradation alleviated

⁷² 75th Oregon Legislative Assembly. “House Bill 3300,” Oregon Legislative Assembly. August 2009.

from the pressures that global warming has placing upon them. This is significant in that the economic and community pressures that these citizens previously faced were now being rectified through policy that specifically targeted vulnerable groups. The Green Jobs Growth Plan explicitly provided training in renewable energy and green technology fields for those who were dislocated from fossil energy or other environmentally damaging sectors, as well as training for low-income and under-educated individuals so they may gain employment with fair compensation. The majority of low-income individuals are those without secondary educations or professional training, and as a way to provide a better life for those citizens, the green jobs market is primarily built for workers with only a high school diploma. By providing these poor and under-educated groups a platform from which to gain on-the-job training, they are also given the ability to take on a more influential role within society. Ingram and Schneider agree that an increase in political influence comes from communities working together to demand public policy that benefits their group. They postulate that change in the social construction of a group can then create change within public policy and vice versa. When low-income and undereducated individuals are able to gain the training they need to feel powerful within their communities, they are then able to better influence policy that caters to their target group. To this end they state: “Public policies and social construction of groups interact in a reciprocal manner so that they mutually affect each other. A changed social construction of deservedness can precipitate change in policy and, alternatively, public policy change can alter constructions.”⁷³ A pamphlet released by 3E Strategies and Work Source Oregon suggests under-educated and low-income individuals within Oregon have been provided a significant leg up through the creation of jobs, by public policy, which works to ensure economic success for their target group. The pamphlet states:

⁷³ Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram. “Introduction: Public Policy and the Social Construction of Deservedness.” 9.

“Many green jobs require no education beyond high school. Of those green jobs where an education requirement was reported, 32 percent has no minimum education required to obtain the positions and 33 percent reported that a high school or equivalent education was necessary. That is significant. Two-thirds of Oregon’s green jobs currently require no education beyond high school.”⁷⁴

The number of green jobs requiring little to no prior education is noteworthy due to the fact that it opens the door for those stuck within stagnant wage or minimum wage jobs to enter into a workforce where they are able to better provide for their families and to rise above their current economic position.⁷⁵ When these groups rise from the disparity that previously held them down, they are able to realize their potential in affecting positive change for themselves and others. In order to achieve this transition for the working poor, the Green Jobs Growth Plan had targeted certain individuals within the population, those who were under-educated and economically vulnerable, to fill the jobs that were proposed:

“‘Target Populations’ means: Entry level or similar workers in high demand green jobs careers who are in or preparing for high wage green jobs; dislocated workers in declining industries...dislocated workers in agriculture or energy sectors...veterans who are residents of Oregon...or members of disadvantaged groups.”⁷⁶

No longer are the poor puppets of the government, dependents on assistance programs in order to live a mediocre life, now they are in necessary jobs which have influence within the State economy. They are the prime movers of the transition to renewable energy and will be

⁷⁴ Cylvia Hayes and David Rafkind. “Green Jobs Growth Plan 2011 to 2019: An Eight-Year Map to a Green Economy in Oregon.” *3E Strategies, Work Source Oregon, and the Oregon Green Jobs Council*. October 6, 2010. 16.

⁷⁵ Cylvia Hayes and David Rafkind. “Green Jobs Growth Plan 2011 to 2019: An Eight-Year Map to a Green Economy in Oregon.”

⁷⁶ 75th Oregon Legislative Assembly. “House Bill 3300.” 1.

remembered as such throughout history. The green jobs sector intends both to increase prosperity for those who need it most, while targeting the environmental problems that plague the country. Green jobs also create more sustainable means of energy production, transportation, and waste removal. They also mitigate some of the destruction that has already been done by climate change. When the Green Jobs Growth Plan was passed in 2009, Oregon State Legislature planned on growing the green jobs market by 30% within the 8 year time frame. The overall goal was for Oregon to become a leader in green economic activity. Achievement of these goals was split up into three phases throughout the recommended years of the proposal. The first phase, between January of 2011 and December of 2013, was the introductory phase in which the State would begin to pull itself out of the recession. The State knew resources would be limited, though it still planned to focus on near-term jobs creation where the foundations for future, long-term green jobs would be created. The second phase, between January of 2014 and December of 2016, was meant to be a step up in the fulfillment of the State's monetary goals. Though, policy planners knew there would still be restrictions on the State budget at this time. This phase was designed to "catalyze vigilant evaluation of changing market conditions and creative options for financing economic incentives and workforce services".⁷⁷ This allowed policy makers to focus both on the future goals of the Growth Plan, while also being mindful of the current situation of the State economy. The third phase, spanning from January of 2017 to December of 2018, was meant to be the culmination of the entire project, with the end results being heavily dependent on updates to the labor market and technological advances made within the time span on the Growth Plan. At this time it was believed Oregon would be in a position to reduce any limits associated

⁷⁷ Cylvia Hayes and David Rafkind. "Green Jobs Growth Plan 2011 to 2019: An Eight-Year Map to a Green Economy in Oregon."

with funding needs and expand investments in the State workforce.⁷⁸ When the plan was enacted successfully, the green jobs sectors in Oregon would be present throughout all economic facets and throughout all demographics of workers. Likewise, the creation of green jobs ensures that high-wage jobs are available for all. Studies show that green jobs have higher wage levels than their counterparts within other worker populations in other industries. 3E Strategies and Work Source Oregon articulate: “Green jobs wage levels are spread across a wide spectrum, just like wages of all occupations and jobs. However, based on current information, few green jobs pay low wages and on average green jobs tend toward slightly higher wages than jobs across the entire economy.”⁷⁹ Therefore, it makes sense that Oregon State Legislature would target green jobs to grow the State economy and that they would petition low-income individuals to fill the roles needed to get the projects off the ground. Not only do Oregon policy makers recognize that global warming is a looming threat, but that there is a specific population of citizens that are being overlooked, despite how useful they can be in orchestrating positive change for the economy, in Oregon and across the country. Those that are being overlooked possess the power to mobilize the green jobs sector into action, with a willingness to take on the training it would take to completely renovate the energy industry. It is more than rational for the State of Oregon to finally take notice of those within vulnerable communities as being deserving of a better life, and to recognize that climate issues are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the inequalities they have faced. There is no better way to give them political sway than to hand them the proverbial keys to the kingdom and allow vulnerable communities to steer the transition to a renewable energy future.

⁷⁸ Cylvia Hayes and David Rafkind. “Green Jobs Growth Plan 2011 to 2019: An Eight-Year Map to a Green Economy in Oregon.”

⁷⁹ Cylvia Hayes and David Rafkind. “Green Jobs Growth Plan 2011 to 2019: An Eight-Year Map to a Green Economy in Oregon.” 16.

Over the past decade in Oregon, the objective of public policy has stayed much the same. The Clean Electricity and Coal Transition Plan is another piece of the renewable energy puzzle meant to strengthen the renewable energy sector and gear economic prosperity to low-income individuals. The bill intends to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and assist in the efforts to slow rising global temperatures. The text of the bill itself states that it is a necessary enactment: “for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety”.⁸⁰ The State will achieve this through creating 50% of the energy consumed within Oregon through renewable energy sources. As per the parameters of the bill, Oregon must reach this goal by the year 2040.⁸¹ Another intention set by the bill is the removal of coal-fired energy imported from across state lines, by the year 2030. Further, the bill keeps in place the previous 4% rate cap and has extended of Renewable Energy Certificates to 2022, as well as a stipulation that 8% of energy output must be made up of small-scale renewable projects or facilities that generate from biomass or thermal energy. One of the most significant aspects of the bill is the new community solar program which allows citizens to co-op solar equipment for the use of their residential energy needs. This is a move to: “Incentivize customers of electricity to be owners or subscribers [and] minimize the shifting costs from the program to ratepayers who do not own or subscribe to a community solar project [in order to] ...protect public interest.”⁸² The small scale renewable projects are those which generate less than 25 kilowatts and fall into the category of the community solar program. Excess energy transmissions from these small scale projects then go to low-income families to help offset the cost of their energy bills. The energy generated within the small scale renewable projects is credited to the bill of the owner or subscriber, and in essence gives a small amount of

⁸⁰ Oregon State Legislative Assembly. “Senate Bill 1547,” *Oregon State Legislative Assembly*, 2016. <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2016R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SB1547/Enrolled>. 18.

⁸¹ Oregon State Legislative Assembly. “Senate Bill 1547.”

⁸² Oregon State Legislative Assembly. “Senate Bill 1547.” 14-15.

the energy generated within these projects to low-income families, free of charge.⁸³ The bill states: “Any value associated with the generation of electricity in excess...must be used by the electric company procuring electricity from the community solar project in support of low-income residential customers of the electric company.”⁸⁴ The move to protect low-income families from unfair burdens associated with the transition to renewable energy means that policy makers have taken into account the unfair burden that could be placed on low-income and poor families as a result of the transition away from fossil fuels. At least 10% from each small scale solar venture must remain available for the benefit of low-income customers. Hence, one of the primary goals of the Coal Transition Plan is to create social justice through energy reform. The language of the bill demonstrates the need to take underprivileged citizens into account when it comes to the destruction that has taken place within communities due to climate degradation, and the need to ensure low-income families do not take the brunt of the financial burden when transitioning from fossil energy to renewables. The Coal Transition Plan is meant to be a pioneering piece to develop businesses’, individuals’, and local and State governments’ ways of thinking and to encourage them to take action to combat climate related problems. Hence, change the representation of energy use across the State to a more environmentally minded structure. The bill further requires the reduction of emissions created through means of transportations and to offset the damage done to human health:

“Transportation electrification is necessary to reduce petroleum use, achieve optimum levels of energy efficiency and carbon reduction, meet federal and state air quality standards, meet the state’s greenhouse gas emission reduction goals...and improve the

⁸³ Portland General Electric. “Oregon Clean Electricity Plan Summary,” Portland General Electric. Accessed: March 7, 2019. <https://www.portlandgeneral.com/-/media/public/our-company/news-room/documents/oregon-clean-electricity-plan-summary.pdf>

⁸⁴ Oregon State Legislative Assembly. “Senate Bill 1547.” 15.

public health and safety...Energy efficiency programs promote lower energy bills, protect public health and safety, improve environmental benefits, stimulate sustainable economic opportunities, and reduce reliance on imported fuels.”⁸⁵

The health, safety, and prosperity of citizens across the State is the driving force behind the declarations asserted within the bill. The language used within the Coal Transition Plan provides evidence of the notion that climate degradation and the thriving of vulnerable citizens was at the forefront of the minds of policy makers when creating renewable energy policies and that they aim to create a more equitable future through policy reform. Policy makers in favor of the transition away from coal wish to change the representation that fossil energy holds while presenting climate change as a more serious and looming threat. The vision of a healthier and more prolific way of life for all Oregon citizens was seen and fought for by many for years before the bill came to fruition. In order to bring Oregon to a place that allows the Coal Transition Bill to be successful, stakeholders who believed in a renewable energy future fought to make their efforts come to fruition for some time. Sierra Club was a major player in the creation of the bill and had lobbied for similar bills in the past. With improvements to the legislation and an ever increasing need to do something to reduce emissions, both in Oregon and across the nation, many environmental organizations got involved in bringing the change to life.⁸⁶ A Sierra Club press conference also revealed: “Environmentalists are lauding the legislation as a landmark because it makes Oregon the first State in the nation to attempt to divest from coal.”⁸⁷ These organizations teamed with businesses, environmentally conscious citizens, the two major utility companies (PacifiCorp and PGE), and Democrat policy makers,

⁸⁵ Oregon State Legislative Assembly. “Senate Bill 1547.” 12-13.

⁸⁶ Gordon Friedman. “Gov. Kate Brown signs Oregon Clean Energy Bill,” *Statesman Journal*. March 11, 2016. www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/politics/2016/03/11/gov-kate-brown-signs-oregon-clean-energy-bill/81644682

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

were able to get the bill off the ground.⁸⁸ In essence, the Coal Transition Plan was a response to growing environmental concerns across the state. This, in addition to the need for equitable living situations for low-income Oregonians, created the perfect environment to get the bill off the ground. In actuality, this move allowed Oregon to be the first state to attempt to divest from coal-fired energy, making the state a pioneer in the future of energy and in advocating for vulnerable communities. When those communities are allowed a voice when it comes to the necessity of revolutionizing the energy industry, policy makers are, in essence, instantiating a change to their representation by public policy. Renewable energy policy, at its core, is working to change the way vulnerable communities, as well as greenhouse gas emitters, are represented within society.

These landmark actions taken by the Oregon State Senate culminate the emphasis put upon creating ‘resiliency’ for low-income families, primarily in the form of affordable housing, energy efficiency, and the creation of high wage jobs.⁸⁹ According to Renew Oregon, citizens within the State are reaping the rewards: “including clean, renewable energy and thousands of good paying jobs all over the state”.⁹⁰ Renew Oregon also claims renewable energy jobs have increased at an 11% growth rate, higher than the national average, and many of the jobs promised are those within fields such as manufacturing, sales, construction, and road crews.⁹¹ When looking at these renewable energy bills it cannot be denied that low-income and poor individuals are necessary within the green energy movement to supplement jobs and create a new work force where green technology takes the stage. The notion that renewable energy policy has the ability to create equity and prosperity for low-income and under-educated individuals across

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Oregon State Legislature. “Clean Energy Jobs Work Draft, LC 44, January 8, 2018 (Senate Version).” 30.

⁹⁰ Renew Oregon. “Clean Energy Jobs.”

⁹¹ Renew Oregon. “Clean Energy Jobs.”

the country is significant in that it provides evidence for just how powerful policy can be. Ingram and Schneider state that one of the most advantaged abilities of public policy is its ability to create change for entire groups of people. They articulate: “Public policy is able to ensure that all people-not just the select few- are considered deserving and entitled.”⁹² Therefore, affording low income individuals the luxuries that other classes of American already enjoy. The demand for unskilled and under-educated workers by renewable energy policy has the ability to bring the energy transition to life and has allowed poor Americans to take back their political power and become advantaged when it comes to their influence within that policy. It is these individuals that will be the heart-and-soul of the transition to a greener and more environmentally minded future. The Green New Deal holds the same message when it comes to creating a better life for low-income individuals and those that are disproportionately affected by the health hazards of coal-fired energy and other sources of greenhouse gas emissions. The language within the Green New Deal specifically sites a need for higher wages, cleaner communities, and an increase in prosperity for underprivileged individuals. The inclusion of low-income and poor individuals within policy is more of the same narrative, as Ingram and Schneider articulate, where policy makers want to appear to do good deeds for good people. Though in doing so, and in creating a demand for an untrained workforce, they have procured a place for the vulnerable communities across the country to have a voice when it comes to the social justice movement surrounding renewable energy transitions. The social construction of low-income groups is changing to favor them as politically powerful and renewable energy policy is helping that transition along. As in Halper’s definition of the new deserving poor, the average person is no longer willing to take their misfortune lying down. As the gap between rich and poor grows, the poor are pushing back in a big way.

⁹² Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram. “Introduction: Public Policy and the Social Construction of Deservedness.” 2.

Part of that push back comes in the form of voting power, where before poor citizens were sent the message that their votes held little weight, the emergence of renewable energy policy and the need for groups targeted by that policy to instantiate the transition, has allowed the poor to find their voting power in a politically significant way. In Oregon alone 13.2% of the population lives below the poverty level and the median household income in 2017 was a meager \$56, 119 dollars per year.⁹³ This leaves many Oregonians left behind when it comes to a middle class lifestyle and living wages. It also boasts a fair amount of voting power when giving those individuals a political voice. It is exactly this potential that has motivated Oregon policy makers to give political power to the disenfranchised within the State.

Traditionally, individuals with lower incomes are less likely to vote. Research continually demonstrates that individuals with more wealth have more political sway. Predominantly, business executives have enormous influence over policy views and government officials, and the higher one is within the income brackets the more influence he enjoys. This is why the coal industry has stayed so powerful for so long. The inequality, when it comes to political influence, effects voter participation. Frederick Solt in his essay “Does Economic Inequality Depress Electoral participation?” articulates: “where there is more income inequality, fewer citizens vote.”⁹⁴ In fact, he claims, there are two prominent and disturbing trends within American politics: high rates of abstention and extreme gaps between rates of participation of the rich and poor.⁹⁵ Further, Solt postulates “if inequality continues to increase, politics will be less and less likely to address issues of importance to broad sections of the electorate.”⁹⁶ This means that already low participation by low-income individuals could increase even further in the coming

⁹³ United States Census Bureau. Accessed: January 15, 2019. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/or.INC110217>

⁹⁴ Frederick Solt. “Does Economic Inequality Depress Electoral Participation? Testing the Schattschneider Hypothesis,” *Political Behavior* Vol 32 (2010). 286.

⁹⁵ Frederick Solt. “Does Economic Inequality Depress Electoral Participation? Testing the Schattschneider Hypothesis.” 285.

⁹⁶ Frederick Solt. “Does Economic Inequality Depress Electoral Participation? Testing the Schattschneider Hypothesis.” 298.

years. What is then implied is that it is more important than ever to give low-income individuals political voting power and empowerment through policy design meant to increase wages and create better and more socially just living conditions. When the million and millions of low-income and underprivileged are given a voice, and shown that they are needed to reinvent the energy industry across the country, they will mobilize in an unprecedented way. Ingram and Schneider postulate that political participation increased when individuals know that others within their groups are also working to substantiate change. They argue:

“...participation is greater among those with a highly developed sense of their own interest...Those who believe that their cause is worthy, that there are many others just like themselves who are mobilized for effective action and see their cause as being beneficial to the entire nation are more apt to participate...”⁹⁷

Therefore, renewable energy policy is leading the way and lending a voice to those no longer willing to see the global environment decimated and decline in the health of the American people. Policy working to revolutionize American energy is giving disadvantaged groups a means through which to mobilize against the disparities they see within society. For the coal industry to compete, it has been forced to fight back against the representation renewable energy has created, and is working to disavow renewables as an impractical endeavor. As can be seen in the following section, those who support coal energy are pushing back with political power and new technologies. Use of coal continues to wean, and try as it might, the industry will be hard pressed to reverse the negative representation that surrounds it.

The Social Construction of the Coal Industry: From Advantaged to Contenders

⁹⁷ Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram. “Introduction: Public Policy and the Social Construction of Deservedness.” 23.

The history and emergence of the coal industry is interlaced with the rise of the industrial age of America. Coal mining began in the 1740's in Virginia for the purpose of burning coal as fuel for locomotives and other steam powered technology of the time. It was very early on that nationalists began viewing coal as the answer to domestic growth and prosperity. In 1924 over 860,000 men were employed within the coal industry.⁹⁸ The use of coal-fired energy peaked between 2007 at 1.128 billion tons per year and 2008 at 1.17 billion tons per year. In fact, coal consumptions stayed over 1 billion tons per year starting in 2000 and ending in 2012. Coal demand began to wean, and in 2016 sat at 800 million tons per year.⁹⁹ According to a report released by the Energy Information Administration, in 2019 demands for coal have dropped to a staggering 555 million tons, the lowest since 1979.¹⁰⁰ Despite the decline in usage of coal-fired energy, the commodity has continued to be viewed as the savior of the American economy; that is until the surge in renewable energy policy and growing concern with human and environmental health. To say that the coal industry has been completely transformed to a contender would be an oversimplification of the political disarray that plagues the U.S.. There is still a blatant power struggle between industry giants that fund political campaigns and environmentalists who want to do what is necessary to end the ever destructive cycle of fossil energy. Both groups are concerned fundamentally with the legacy that is being left for generations of the future. Renewable energy supporters believe that low emissions and environmental concerns are what should be thought of when speaking of America's future. Coal supporters still see it as being an affordable energy source that creates high paying jobs for hard

⁹⁸ Arcadia Publishing. "Evolution of the Coal Industry in America," *Arcadia Publishing and the History Press*. October 2017. <https://www.arcadiapublishing.com/navigation/community/arcadia-and-thp-blog/october-2017/evolution-of-the-coal-industry-in-america>

⁹⁹ Congressional Research Service Report. "The U.S. Coal Industry: Historical Trends and Recent Developments," EveryCRSReport.com, August 18, 2017. <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R44922.html>

¹⁰⁰ Energy Information Administration. "Coal Stockpiles at U.S. Coal Power Plants were at their Lowest Point in Over a Decade," Energy Information Administration, May 17, 2019. <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=39512>

working Americans. Despite those who staunchly support coal, it can still be said that the reputation of the coal-industry has begun to change, and this change is happening in large part due to the environmental movement and renewable energy policy. The coal industry has fallen from being thought of as the redeemer of the U.S. economy, to a scourge threatening equity and prosperity. Congressional Research Service Reports articulate that: “As a result of societal concerns, among them the desire for cleaner air, coal consumption may have peaked. But in either case (declining or flat demand), coal is a smaller share of the total U.S. energy pie.”¹⁰¹ So, no matter if renewable energy demands increase or decrease, coal energy demand is steadily becoming a thing of the past. This is merely the beginning of a revolution of the social construction of the coal industry, which will take place over several years. Renewable energy, and the policies that surround it, presents sustainable technologies as being the viable answer to issues of energy needs and the necessity of justice that exists for underprivileged communities. While coal supporters claim that a transition to renewables will destroy the jobs of hard working Americans and cause electricity costs to rise significantly. There is still a tussle between environmental groups, liberal and conservative policy makers, and corporations with vested interests in coal technologies. Below some of the discrepancies will become evident as will the argument of how the perception of the coal industry is transforming within the context of the Social Construction Framework.

One of the largest factors condemning coal to its contender stance is the science that tells us that coal poses unequivocal risks to human health. This amounts to a growing concern for the fate of the global environment and future generations. Due to the adverse consequences of the coal-fired energy, the notion of the coal industry as a capitalist monger is causing strife for the

¹⁰¹ Congressional Research Service Report. “The U.S. Coal Industry: Historical Trends and Recent Developments.”

once venerated industry. Even as far back as World War II, capitalists were seen as deep-pocketed and greedy. Harold Lasswell described popular cartoons painting capitalists in a bad light: “The ‘Capitalist’ fat necked, round bellied, and bald. The hands at times are excessively large to emphasize the grasping habits of the owner. Most of the time the ‘Capitalist’ has been grinning, or smiling, at the expense of the ‘Laborer’ or ‘Public’.”¹⁰² This is much the same as the coal industry’s representation by environmentally minded Americans today. The coal industry has moved to the position of contender though still retaining the power and influence that the industry is known for. Not only is the industry seen as greedy and unconcerned with the plights of average citizens, the coal industry is also reputed as being the cause of average citizens’ and workers’ oppression. Ingram and Schneider assert that: “Contenders have ample political power resources that generally equal those of advantaged groups, but [the difference is] contenders are not valued as deserving.”¹⁰³ Thus, the coal industry does have political sway, which can make passing renewable energy policies into law that much harder for those who support it. Coal and other fossil energies remain relevant, in some ways, due to the fact that there is security in repetition. The infrastructure of America is made for fossil fuels, and these energy sources are trusted because they have stood the test of time. Foucault argues that public policy remains the same often due to an obligation to stay in keeping with what is known. He postulates that the use of enforced actions through policy is “not so much the vengeance of an outraged law as its repetition, its reduplicated insistence”.¹⁰⁴ This is why renewable legislation is working to change the representation of coal in the eyes of the American people; so that the repetition can then become what is healthy and sustainable, rather than harmful for the sake of keeping with tradition. Again and again within renewable energy policy does the language point toward the

¹⁰² Harold Lasswell. “Part II: Methods,” in *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How?* 37.

¹⁰³ Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram. “Introduction: Public Policy and the Social construction of Deservedness.” 17.

¹⁰⁴ Foucault, Michele. “Discipline and Punish,” (Vintage Books: New York, NY) 1997. 180.

need of an energy industry dominated by low or zero-emissions energy sources. The Green New Deal demands a fair transition to renewable energy in order to secure a moral and equitable outcome for the future of clean air, water, and food. This demand comes from the long history of the United States as the largest emitter on earth and though the bill never specifies coal as the energy villain, it does call for zero-emissions energy sources to replace fossil energy across the board. Similarly, Oregon's Coal Transition Plan pinpoints coal as the prime industry to be targeted and destroyed. The highly technical bill never explicitly states why it is that coal-fired energy must go, outside of the necessity "for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety,"¹⁰⁵ though it does provide the metrics by which the energy source should be weaned from Oregon Utilities. The objective is loud and clear, that renewable energy policy makers and designers believe that the only way to secure the fate of the nation in coming years is to significantly reduce the health effects caused by fossil fuels and move into an era of renewable energy domination.

Nevertheless, the transition does not come without contest. For decades the coal industry has had access and knowledge of resources that give it greater political control. Reports put out by industry leaders and politician with vested interests paint the industry as an economic sanctity with an over-emphasis of the monetary benefits, while ignoring social and environmental consequences. Emily Morrice and Ruth Colagiuri in their essay entitled "Coal Mining, Social Injustice, and Health," approximate that there are three elements that have kept the coal industry strong; these are the notion that the industry holds unequal political and institutional power, the industry's control over natural resources, and the industry's ability to gain information compared with disproportionately affected communities. Morrice and Colagiuri state that "these three

¹⁰⁵ 78th Oregon Legislative Assembly. "Senate Bill 1547." 18.

elements are each capable of generation social injustices in their own right but their greatest strength lies in their ability to reinforce one another, thus making power and priority the central mechanism underpinning coal mining related social injustice”.¹⁰⁶ This means that the coal industry has enjoyed an advantaged position for much of its lifecycle. Industry giants were allowed to grow larger and more powerful because, as Ingram and Schneider assert¹⁰⁷, no one is willing to challenge popular institutions due to the simple fact that they are positively viewed. Despite growing concerns on the left leaning side of the political aisle, right wing Republicans have maintained the notion that coal-fired energy is the only energy source that can keep energy costs down and bring jobs to the American people. This type of fluctuation within policy trends is normal, according to Ingram and Schneider. In fact, the transition away from coal-fired energy should have been anticipated. Ingram and Schneider state: “A kind of punctuated equilibrium exists in many policy areas whereby long periods of policy stability are interrupted by short bursts of innovation, which in turn, becomes entrenched into another long-term regime.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, the coal industry’s reign was never going to be permanent, there was always going to be another energy giant that took its place. Renewable energy is perfectly poised to do so because renewables have what the coal industry does not; creation of prosperity free from health risks. Supporters of renewables have every intention of holding that against the coal industry in order to ensure it does not reemerge as a national energy leader. Renewable energy is the only type of energy that can boast its ability to completely do away with greenhouse gas emissions, giving the sector bargaining power denied to other energy leaders.

¹⁰⁶ Emily Morrice and Ruth Colagiuri. “Coal Mining, Social Injustice and Health: A Universal Conflict of Power and Priorities.”

¹⁰⁷ Anne L. Schneider, Helen Ingram, and Peter DeLeon. “Democratic Policy Design: Social Construction of Target Population.” 132.

¹⁰⁸ Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram. “Introduction: Public Policy and the Social Construction of Deservedness.” 8.

The first attempt to regulate coal due to health hazards was in the 1940's, though at this time the regulations had little effect. The real change came later in 1969 with the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act which strengthened health standards and gave financial penalties for violations. Due to the increase in concern the coal industry's influence has decreased over time. It was in 2016 that natural gas surpassed coal sales within the U.S. for the first time.¹⁰⁹ Health concerns have caused the coal industry to do as much as possible to regulate the adverse effects of coal-fired energy. Truthfully, much has been done to minimize exposure to coal dust during mining and the use of scrubbing systems has allowed some coal-fired plants to be deemed as "clean".¹¹⁰ Though, these technologies are unable to completely reduce the damage caused to the environment and the occupational hazards. Further, there is no evidence that suggests that mitigation efforts to reverse the damage caused by mountain top mining can be offset or reversed. These impacts cause the U.S. over 1 trillion dollars per year.¹¹¹

These health and environmental concerns are what has driven renewable energy policy to impose regulations that do away with coal-fired energy all together. Michael Shapiro expresses that the moral compass of a society is what defines it, and its ability to make needed changes is even more important to the fundamental character held within. He claims we must "recognize that the ethical discourse of a society is closely tied to its developing social, political, and administrative practices...It is created by such things as technology change."¹¹² Renewable energy supporters believe that an investment in environmentally minded energy sources is an investment in a better infrastructure for future generations. Coal-fired energy advocates also

¹⁰⁹ Charles Herrick. "Real Numbers: President Obama's War On Coal? Come Historical Perspectives."

¹¹⁰ Benjamin K. Sovacool, Marilyn A. Brown, and Scott V. Valentine. "Is Clean Coal and Oxymoron?" in *Fact and Fiction in Global Energy Policy: 15 Contentious Questions*.

¹¹¹ Benjamin K. Sovacool, Marilyn A. Brown, and Scott V. Valentine. "Is Clean Coal and Oxymoron?" in *Fact and Fiction in Global Energy Policy: 15 Contentious Questions*.

¹¹² Michael Shapiro. "The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis." 9.

believe that they are doing the right thing for the American people, by keeping energy costs low and saving jobs that have existed for decades. They hope to achieve this by creating new technologies that reduce the health risks associate with the coal industry. Each have chosen a deserving group which they support, and this is the prime reasoning behind the decisions that drive their backing for either a transition to renewable energy or protecting the existing fossil energy infrastructure.

The divide between Republicans and Democrats when it comes to the energy sector, has become one of the fundamental issues that drives a wedge between the two parties. Republicans are resisting the new representation of the coal industry, with the science behind climate change being the prime cause. They, in general, believe that fossil energy is, and continues to be, the smartest choice for the American energy industry. They disavow the notion that emissions from fossil fuels are as harmful as science claims, and articulate that the current energy system is set up for fossil energy sources; making a switch to renewable energy impossible without spending billions the country does not have. Republicans also believe that coal, oil, and nuclear industries will contribute to a sturdier grid systems and an influx of jobs for average Americans.

Overwhelmingly, science disproves many of these claims. So why are Republicans so contrary to the scientific community?

According to S. Mo Jang and P. Sol Hart it is due to a “preoccupation with hoax frames”. This means that many Republicans believe that information from climate scientists reflects a problem far worse than the actual truth, due to the notion that these scientists are seeking funding for left leaning policies and infrastructure. Furthermore, research shows that ‘interpretive packages’ or information coming from news sources, are confusing the matter with contrary or fossil industry promoting information, social problems, and suggested solutions. Jang and Hart

found that policies within societies more accepting of anthropogenic causes of climate change are more likely and more readily willing to adopt climate mitigating policies. Findings suggest that the United States population is more acutely embedded with hoax theories than that of our European counterparts. American media sources focus more on skepticism of climate science than actual ways to fix the problems that arise, leading to harsher lines between Democrats who believe that climate change is an immediate threat and Republican who are skeptical about the truth of climate science.¹¹³

Nationally, there is an extreme divide between those who see climate science as providing evidence of a threat and those who view it as a hoax. In order for environmentalists and supporters of renewable energy to convince the masses that climate change is a serious and direct threat, and use that platform to create tangible change to energy policy, there must be a sort of ‘coming together’ of experts and those tired of the disproportionate health risks. It is not enough for a scientist to release a set of data showing the coal industry is harmful; influential groups must then also get behind the science. Ingram and Schneider assert that “...science itself is not enough to instigate policy change. For real effectiveness ...scientists also usually need to be aligns with interest groups and social movement, like environmentalism, that are able to capitalize their findings.”¹¹⁴ Thus, there is power in numbers, and the more that get behind climate scientists, the more likely a change to the representations present within the energy industry are likely to occur. Ingram and Schneider also postulate that this resistance to the social construction of a group is a normal aspect of the change within its representation. Not only is this change resisted by the industry itself, but stakeholders who believe they have something to lose from the transition. Ingram and Schneider state that “change is also resisted by policy networks-

¹¹³ S. Mo Jang and P. Sol Hart. “Polarized Frames on ‘Climate Change’ and ‘Global Warming’ Across Countries and States: Evidence from Twitter Big Data,” *Global Environmental Change*, Vol 32 (2015).

¹¹⁴ Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram. “Introduction: Public Policy and the Social Construction of Deservedness.” 16.

constellations of elected officials, agency representatives, interest groups, scientists, and policy analysts- which share the core beliefs that undergrid the policy philosophy.”¹¹⁵ The Green New Deal brought the opposition to light in a big way. As soon as the Resolution was released the attacks by Republican policymakers began, calling it elitist, leftist, and in general, too much for America to take on. Republican chairmen of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) claims the Green New Deal would bankrupt the country and raise the cost of energy for families. He claimed it was a “government takeover of the economy masked as an environmental proposal” and that the proposals held within the deal are “unreachable”. Further he stated that “the United States and the World will continue to rely on affordable and abundant fossil fuel” in an effort to “focus on freedom and the innovation we’ve had.”¹¹⁶ Similarly, Lamar Alexander, U.S. Senator from Tennessee positions that energy should be cheap and clean; it should boost the economy and increase income for Americans. He believes that the U.S. should double the amount spent on energy research. Moreover, Alexander asserts that the Green New Deal is an “assault on cars, cows, and combustion,” and that “windmills make as much sense as going to war on sailboats”.¹¹⁷ Mike Lee, a U.S. Senator from Utah was one of the staunchest critics of the Green New Deal. His speech, made on the Senate Floor before the vote on the resolution made of mockery of the bill and of AOC and her ideals. He began by articulating that fear is a prominent feature within American dialogue, citing that his own fear arose from what the Green New Deal would do to the economy and government. He articulated, “The Green New Deal is a joke. It is the legislative equivalent of Austin Powers’ Dr. Evil demanding ‘sharks with freaking lasers on their heads’.” He went on to approximate that the resolution is part of the

¹¹⁵ Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram. “Introduction: Public Policy and the Social Construction of Deservedness.” 8.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. “Press Releases,” March 6, 2019.

<https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2019/3/barasso-responds-to-democrats-republicans-are-putting>

¹¹⁷ Lamar Alexander United States Senator for Tennessee Press Release. “Alexander offers ‘One Republican’s Response to Climate Change’,” March 25, 2019. <https://www.alexander.senate.gov/public/index/cfm/2019/3/alexander-offers-one-republican-s-response-tp-climate-change>

problem within American and the solution can be found “In churches, wedding chapels, and maternity wards...[with] babies”; presumably, for Senator Lee the solutions lies within a new generation of American innovators.¹¹⁸ The punitive and flamboyant backlash received by the Green New Deal from the Republican Party is a sign that the coal industry and its supporters know that the representation of the coal industry has begun to change. The industry and individuals backing coal are not ready to let go of their advantaged place within U.S. policy, they wish to maintain their established position as long as they can. The most effective way for supporters to ensure coal retains its construction is to attack renewables as being unrealistic and fantastic.

In Oregon, Senate Republican have taken the same stance on the Coal Transition Plan as many United States Senators took on the Green New Deal. When the Oregon State Senate convened in March of 2016 to vote on the historic Coal Transition Bill, Republican Senators worked to stall the Bill as long as possible. The Democrats, who have an Oregon State Senate majority, “used a procedural workaround to stuff the coal-to-clean bill into another piece of legislature, bypassing any Republican stall tactics.”¹¹⁹ Though the bill was voted through, Republicans released anti-coal-to-clean propaganda almost immediately after its passing. The first of these pieces was a pamphlet entitled “Governor Brown’s Environmental Policies Don’t Result in Real Carbon Reduction”. This piece outlined the notion that Governor Brown vocally condemns carbon emissions in order to protect the environment, though lamenting that she only supports “feel good environmental policies” which “do little to actually reduce carbon,” as well as being cost prohibitive to low- income families and barring investment within the State due to high costs of energy. The pamphlet went on to state that Governor Brown is “lining her pockets

¹¹⁸ Mike Lee US Senator for Utah. “Remarks on the Green New Deal,” *Speeches*. March 26, 2019. <https://www.lee.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2019/3/remarks-on-the-green-new-deal>

¹¹⁹ Gordon Friedman. “Gov. Kate Brown signs Oregon Clean Energy Bill.”

with campaign contributions from out-of-state-environmental special interests”.¹²⁰ These statements suggest that Oregon Republican wish to create and unfavorable representation of the Governor in order to make legislation she supports also seem unfavorable. Oregon Senate Republicans also released a fact sheet entitled “10 things You Don’t Know About the ‘Coal to Clean’ Bill”; this piece eluded to the concept that eradicating the use of coal-fired energy within the State of Oregon does not lead to a reduction in the creation of emissions from those sources because no coal plants are actually being shut down. The fact sheet claims that Oregon’s coal usage only amounts to .04% of totally greenhouse gases in the United States, meaning there is a trivial reduction of emission by transitioning from coal to renewables. Moreover, Senate Republicans, like those within federal seats, feel that the cost of the transition is unfair to Oregon families who would take on the \$8.8 billion dollar cost.¹²¹ The backlash concerning the coal Transition Plan is more of the same from Republican supporters of coal-fired energy that wish to see its representation stay within the advantaged position. Despite their efforts, however, coal has taken on a contender stance within the American economy and its hope for resurgence does not seem optimistic with current trends toward renewable energy.

What must be remembered about the contender position within public policy is the power that still exists despite the public distrust. The coal industry is not going to disappear or drop from political influence any time soon. Industry leaders and politicians will continue to attempt to bring coal into relevance, and discredit any industry that threatens that ability. If anything, this plays into the persona of contender that coal fits into. Contenders are placed into that typecast because of the greed and corruption that exists within the power struggle. Contenders are not

¹²⁰ Oregon State Republicans. “Senate Republicans: Governor Brown’s Environmental Policies Don’t Result in Real Carbon Reduction,” June 2, 2016. <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/senaterepublicans/Documents/0602161/Senate-Republicans-GovernorBrownsEnvironmental>

¹²¹ Oregon State Legislature. “10 Things You Don’t Know About the ‘Coal to Clean’ Bill,” *Oregon State Republicans*. June 02, 2016. <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/senaterepublicans/Documetns/10ThingsCoaltoClean.pdf>

popular, as are the politically advantaged, and it is for good reason. Ingram and Schneider articulate that contenders know how to work the system to stay politically relevant, though it is not always through the most honest of ways. They suggest:

“Contenders come to believe that politics is a corrupt game that requires cunning strategies to be successful. They learn to look for opportunities when no one is watching, to carefully craft opaque policy with complicated provisions, through which government will insure their continued success.”¹²²

This puts forward the notion that the coal industry does not have the interests of the American people in mind; instead they are playing a political game in order to stay relevant within the energy industry and in order to exploit American workers and politicians for monetary gain. It is not a stretch then to see why the industry has fallen from a popular advantaged stance to the deep-pocketed entity we see today. Ingram and Schneider suggest this fall from grace took little evidence poised against coal power. They state that:

“The negative construction of industry as polluters and the development of regulatory policies were made possible by the ability of the environmental scientists to identify very small trace amounts of toxic and hazardous substances in the air, water, or soils and the improved ability of health scientists to link illness to human exposure to such substances.”

Treating policy as a political game is exactly the move coal supporters are making in order to keep the industry relevant. Under President Donald Trump’s administration, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has decided to change the metrics used to calculate human health risks

¹²² Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram. “Introduction: Public Policy and the Social Construction of Deservedness.” 20.

associate with coal-fired energy use. Five current and former EPA officials suggested that the new modeling will appear within the Affordable Clean Energy Rule, which will be released to the public in June of 2019. According to a New York Times article, the Trump administration and other supporters of coal are undermining the health risks within their official reports in order to make emissions from coal-fired energy seem less harmful than they truly are. The article specified:

“The E.P.A., when making major regulatory changes is normally expected to demonstrate that society will see more benefits than costs from the change. Experts said that, while benefits would appear on paper in this case, the change actually disregards potential dangers to public health.”¹²³

Not only will the report undermine the health risks associated with coal fired energy, experts say it will sweep 1,400 premature deaths, directly caused by the coal industry, under the rug. This will be achieved by stating that there are no health benefits to be had by making the air cleaner than what existing laws require.¹²⁴ This assumption essentially asserts that there are no health risks if emissions are kept under federal regulatory numbers, and that simply is not the case. Unfortunately, this has not been the only move by the Trump administration to create a positive representation of fossil energy sources. In a press release announcing the expansion of a liquid natural gas terminal in Texas, two EPA officials referred to natural gas as “freedom gas and “molecules of freedom”.¹²⁵ Essentially, this is an effort to represent fossil energy as the energy of the American economy, synonymous with freedom and the booming United States economy.

¹²³ Lisa Friedman, “E.P.A. Plans to get Thousands of Pollution Deaths Off the Books by Changing Its Math,” *The New York Times*, May 20, 2019.

¹²⁴ Lisa Friedman, “E.P.A. Plans to get Thousands of Pollution Deaths Off the Books by Changing Its Math.”

¹²⁵ Megan Geuss. “US Department of Energy is now Referring to Fossil Fuel as ‘Freedom Gas’,” *Ars Technica*, May 29, 2019. <https://www.ars Technica.com/tech-policy/2019/05/us-department-of-energy-is-now-referring-to-fossil-fuels-as-freedom-gas/>

The effort to create a positive construction of fossil energy is also evidence of playing the political game, and ‘crafting opaque policy’, as Ingram and Schneider articulate. These moves solidify the industry’s place as a contender within the political system due to the fact that it is feeding into the very notion of what makes it a contender in the first place; an underhandedness that manipulates policy and the people into ensuring these harmful industries remain relevant within the American economy.

While the coal industry does enjoy support from Republican policy makers and industry leaders, it does not go unnoticed by the masses that a transition to a cleaner and more equitable future is possible with alternative modes of energy production. Science backed studies and environmental movements have brought to light the environmental and health risks that coal energy poses to society, and this has made evident the greed that exists within the industry. In many ways scientists who linked human health risks to coal mining and energy creation, and those working to make renewables an industry leader, are merely confirming what low-income communities have seen for decades. Those exposed to harmful chemicals, dirty water and air, and in general the most affected by the coal industry, have known all along the health and environmental risks involved. It took scientists, environmentalists, and a change in the way public policy talks about the coal industry for there to be a substantial change in its representation. Once influential groups became involved in mitigating and exposing the negative aspects of the coal-fired energy, the fall from politically advantaged to contender came naturally. Today, a new era of energy has been ushered into the American way of life that promises equity for all and a future with fewer emissions and a cleaner environment. This teamed with the demand for the U.S. to be a pioneer in green technologies has ensured the transformation of

renewable energy in to a political trailblazer and has ousted the coal industry as being toxic for the future of the nation.

Conclusion

History is being made with the implementation of renewable energy policies, such as the Green New Deal, Oregon's Green Jobs Growth Plan, and Clean Electricity and Coal Transition Plan.

The Green New Deal suggests that in order for the United States to move into the future of global energy the country must mobilize around renewables and, in doing so, create better affluence for low-income and vulnerable communities. This can be achieved through a reduction in emissions and the promise of better paying jobs, clean air and water, and healthy food for all.

Oregon's Green Jobs Growth Plan has similar goals in that it aimed at creating prosperity for an unskilled and under-educated work force to take on green technologies and industry in order to find an increase in economic promise. The State's Coal Transition Plan is a pioneering venture that will eradicate coal from the State and which holds it to a conversion to 50% renewables by 2040. Though there is much support for this government mandated environmental movement, Republican policy makers are not often happy with the switch in energy dependence.

Conservatives traditionally are big supporters of the coal industry and believe that it is this industry that will give American jobs and keep the country prosperous. Renewable energy policy, on the other hand, has allowed the middle class to shed their previous social construction as dependents within Ingram and Schneider's fourfold typology to being politically advantaged. This comes from the needs of unskilled and low-income workers to assist Oregon and the rest of the country in its transition from coal-fired energy to renewables. The coal industry is also undergoing a change to its representation in the eyes of the American people in that the human health hazards and environmental degradations created by the industry is no longer being

tolerated under the guise of economic impact. Coal has moved from an advantaged stance to contender within Ingram and Schneider's classification. Renewable energy has promised a more prosperous life than its fossil energy counterparts, with little to no emissions and where all classes of people within the country can find a thriving existence. This has caused a revolution in the view of the energy industry, and this change will likely continue and grow in strength within the years to come.

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