Fossil-Fueled Discourse

Introduction[1]

As the world approaches irreversible climate tipping points and critical levels of environmental degradation, much attention has been given to how governments might respond and how individuals might go about altering their own consumption, but comparatively little thought has been devoted to the knowledge infrastructure surrounding fossil fuel production decision makers. Although many argue that it is the profit-driven CEO who controls all production decisions and, as such, cannot be swayed, that model of decision making fails to account for the incredibly complex logistical challenge that characterizes the entire fossil fuel supply chain. Although executives certainly do have the greatest power to influence company policy writ large, those policies are only as effective as their implementation and enforcement by those at the point of extraction.

As such, an unexplored yet critical question is to determine the nature of the informational discourse surrounding those at the ground level. Tremendous bodies of research have shown that the fossil fuel worker is not particularly well-off in the industry and by choosing to mine, pump, or otherwise produce fossil fuels, that worker is endangering his or her own local as well as global community. However, the fossil fuel industry has poured hundreds of millions of dollars into a systematic disinformation and misinformation campaign to perpetuate the myth that fossil fuels are necessary components of economic wellbeing (Bonds 16). Most essentially, the goal of this research was to begin to determine how this campaign is constructed to perpetuate not only the production of, but the foundational belief in the ethicality of fossil fuels. To determine the informational scaffolding upon which this effort is built and convinces fossil fuel laborers to stay the course on a fundamentally unethical path, I analyzed company reports to investors and employees, third-party industry publications, and the newspapers of the top fossil fuel producing localities. Both corporate reports and industry publications contained language designed to insulate workers and convince them of the necessity of their work, the former often subtler than the latter. Local newspapers did not seem to be especially influenced by the level of fossil fuel production in their environs.

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Although it is beyond the scope of this research to determine the extent of the relationship between the information ecosystem and decision making, the rational decision maker model can be borrowed from economics to offer basic theoretical support for this link and to frame the implications of the analysis below. The model states that with complete information, individuals will make the best decision in their self-interest. Although the precise validity of this model can be debated, it is widely accepted as a valuable, even if somewhat simplified model of decision making. The main criticism of the model, in fact, is that decision makers almost never have complete information, which is the subject of this study. In order for individuals to make rational decisions, according to the model, they must be able to weigh potential costs and benefits, calculated with available information. As such, misinformation and disinformation can be used as powerful tools to hold the fossil fuel worker economically hostage *even if* ideological components are not especially powerful.

Literature Review

Fossil fuel extraction is one of the most critical issues to which scholars may devote their time because the future production of fossil fuels may be inversely related to the future of humanity itself. As such, it should be highly prioritized as a structuring constraint on all discussions of human rights and social justice (Princen; 198). Although there is a tremendous body of research devoted to investigating the implications of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, precious little attention has been directed toward the mine, the wellhead, and the other points of extraction that act as the sprout from which the pervasive impacts of fossil fuels stem. The goal of this study will be to analyze the representations directed at those who operate those facilities, so it is important to be aware of existing research regarding systems of ethics in which fossil fuel workers are implicated and the impact of representations on the discourse of fossil fuels and climate change.

The ethics of fossil fuels are generally considered under two frames: the local impact of extraction and the global impact of extraction and emissions. First considering their local implications (Bonds; Bozzi; Brasier et al), fossil fuels have an undeniably negative impact on non-economic factors in communities. Brasier et al considers the health impacts of shale development, specifically in New York and Pennsylvania, and finds that a majority of localities have an unfavorable view of this new resource exploitation due to its impact on water quality, biodiverse species loss, and chronic disease (38). This example is interesting, yet incomplete for the purposes of this study, because these are communities reacting to new sources of extraction rather than those communities whose foundations are based on fossil fuels and may accept or even be blind to many of these downsides. This study investigates the perceptions of those communities whose identities are fueled by oil, gas, and coal. Bozzi offers a critique of the coal industry based on a corporate colonialism model and one that voices the concerns of the local “Keep-it-in-the-

Ground" movement in coal-rich Appalachia (98). Bonds has a similar yet distinct approach that cites limited examples of resistance from those in the fossil fuel industry that leverage their power as laborers to limit or subvert extraction (12). Although both Bonds and Bozzi forward examples of people in fossil fuel-reliant communities resisting, neither study documents the proportion of protest relative to the community at large.

Despite extraction's local nature, it is inextricably tied to a system of global ethics (Harris; Princen). Harris argues that a cosmopolitan system of ethics is necessary to expand the horizons of those who work at the point of extraction (178). The issue is that despite the individual calculation by the fossil fuel worker that the economic benefit of employment may outweigh the costs to the local environment and his or her own health, that employee may ignore the broader implications of his or her role in producing a fuel that physically alters the planet. Princen also forwards a criticism of this kind, one that establishes that each unit of fossil fuel extracted is fundamentally unethical. Not only to the local community, but to the global and future communities as well because of the inseparable nature of extraction and combustion (99). Although both argue that an ethical extension beyond the self is required to connect those on the ground level to all those impacted by their work, neither approach explains how this extension can take hold nor the barriers to this ethical paradigm shift.

Finally, to address these material and ethical concerns, one must start from the level of representations. There are gaps in the way that communication flows between those who are most concerned about extraction to those that have the most direct power to do something about it, i.e. from the activist to the extractor (Bonds; Bozzi; Princen). Bonds and Princen both argue that status quo representations of the perils of fossil fuels are overly focused on the impact of emissions while implicitly taking levels of production as given (94; 100). This discourse is dangerous as, Bonds argues, it allows fossil fuel companies off the hook as they continue their 140-million-dollar misinformation and disinformation campaign regarding the negative consequences of fossil fuels (22). Princen, Bonds, and Bozzi all agree at two levels: that representations of extraction are critical and that those at the point of extraction do have power to leverage over extraction decisions. However, none of the three authors bridge the gap between representations in the general public and the specific representations that are communicated to those with their hands – quite literally – on the levers of production. In that way, these previous studies assume that representations can shape reality if dispersed enough amongst the general public without recognizing the ways in which those that they have deemed to be the most important actors may have their personal reality insulated by representations created by the fossil fuel industry. Filling that research void is a core aim of this study so that future policies, discourse, and solutions can be crafted

with an awareness of how those at the point of extraction think and react to information.

Research and Results

In order to represent the diversity of sources that provide information to fossil fuel employees, this study analyzed three categories of media: company reports, industry publications, and local newspapers. Each source has a distinct relationship to the employee, but in sum represent the avenues through which descriptions of the extraction worker's own job are likely to reach him or her.

Company reports can be broken down into three subcategories: annual reports to investors, corporate responsibility reports, and company magazines that are distributed to employees. This study analyzed the most recent issue (at the time of writing) available online to the public of each of the three types of media for Chevron, Shell, and Conoco-Phillips. This did create some asynchrony: Chevron's most recent annual report was from 2016, its responsibility report from 2015, and its corporate magazine from 2012; for Conoco, the corresponding publications were from 2016, 2015, and 2015; and for Shell, 2016, 2016, and 2015. These three companies were chosen because they are three of the eight largest global emissions sources as well as having all three of the report types listed above (Negin 2016).

Annual reports are more a mode of communication with investors than with employees, but are still a way to communicate with those at the ground level because they may look to annual reports to get an idea for the direction of the company and are likely to own shares of the company through a pension or other compensation (Basu 2017). A common theme between these company reports was the disregard - if not outright disdain - for environmental policy. This observation comes perhaps with the exception of Shell, whose report to investors most mirrored its sustainability report, with robust calls for climate policy (15). Conoco-Phillips is on the other end of the spectrum.

The Conoco annual report identifies many risks regarding climate change such as extreme weather that may interfere with drilling operations, but the conclusion of the report negatively frames climate regulation as something that will cut back on investor profits rather than something that will benefit the company by resolving other long-term concerns (67). Chevron is aligned more closely with Conoco than Shell. Chevron also identifies carbon regulation as a risk to investors, but the report's discussion of these policies is shorter, only dedicating three quarters of one page in a 90-page report to all discussion of "environmental matters" (26). Annual reports do not necessarily represent how fossil fuel executives shape messages for communication with their employees, but they do reveal what information those executives choose to prioritize when given the opportunity to write about whatever they see as most pertinent to all company stakeholders. In addition to the limited number of employees that may skim the report, an annual statement is relevant to the study of top-down communication in that it provides a

baseline norm from which other communications to employees may divert. One such departure is the nature of discussion in company sustainability reports.

Corporate sustainability reports or responsibility statements are of interest because they represent an instance in which the company has made the proactive choice to communicate to shareholders regarding the sustainability and environmental impact of the company. It is unnecessary to dissect each report individually because the three are nearly carbon copies of each other. Every report remains relatively surface-level in discussing environmental issues, with a ten-or-so page section on climate change and a brief discussion of an array of other environmental issues. However, there are two aspects that are useful to analyze: each report's focus on transparency and the necessity of energy. The entire purpose of this kind of report is to legitimize the company's ethicality and these two elements are the frames through which any argument against the company can be filtered.

The appeal to ethos, or the idea that the company is being open, transparent, or otherwise straightforward is relatively unique to sustainability reports as opposed to the other media in this research. Take a sentence from Chevron's report, for example: "among Chevron's core values is integrity, which means: we strive to meet the highest ethical standards in all business dealings. We are honest with others and ourselves. We do what we say we will do." (4). Similar quotes or mission statements appear in the parallel reports. The irony of this statement is twofold: first, Chevron and others simply do not tell the truth or hold themselves to high ethical standards. Investigations into company knowledge have found that fossil fuel corporations withheld information regarding the dangers of climate change and risks to employees on the job and to the local communities for decades to allow the companies to continue to operate without restriction (Mulvey et al 28). This is not simply the subject of academic contestation, either: ExxonMobil is currently the defendant in a suit that claims the company endangered millions by withholding knowledge of climate risks (Hasemyer 2017).

The second irony is that, in this call to integrity and transparency, they are making very clear the purpose of the report: to mask the true intentions revealed in financial reports by giving those on the fence 100 or more pages of relatively meaningless activities to point to in defense of the company. Skeptical readers may analyze the responsibility statements in a more critical light, but fossil fuel employees who already want to believe that their employer is doing some good may readily accept this message because of simple confirmation bias (Neudorf 2017). This is made only more clear in direct appeals to employees: "we treat our employees with dignity and respect and promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Our Company policies and procedures adhere to all applicable domestic laws and are consistent with the ILO's core labor principles," (Chevron CRR 7). A close read reveals that this statement only holds Chevron to minimum labor

standards, but it is one component of a broader narrative that fossil fuel companies construct to sustain their image and to allow employees to buy into corporate culture without apprehension or guilt.

The quote about the company abiding by basic laws is used as an ethical justification across all media types. There seems to be the presumption that if a corporation is operating legally, then it must not be harmful. This is another convincing narrative to employees who are already predisposed to want to believe in corporate ethicality, but it is extremely dangerous. This perspective holds extractors to the bare minimum while ignoring the hundreds of millions of dollars they pour into lobbying efforts to continuously lower minimum safety and environmental standards and put more people at risk (Bonds 2016). The power to establish legitimacy by simply adhering to legal minimums will only present greater risks as the Trump administration attempts to gut environmental regulation, as has already been the case with a major regulation protecting water sources around coal mines (Tyson 2017).

The necessity of energy is an argument that appears countless times across all media types in this paper. This argument is used to implicitly answer any criticisms by arguing that regardless of the costs of fossil fuels, the benefit is the foundation of modern industrial society. In so doing, employee readers may justify or even praise their own work based on the idea that it is the necessary underpinning of global development. The most common refrain that appears in many different forms is spelled out most explicitly in Chevron's "Next*" employee magazine:

> And while renewable energy will play an increasing role in the energy landscape, according to the International Energy Agency, it is still expected to account for only 15 percent of the world's energy. The lion's share of the need—nearly 80 percent— will be met by the conventional resources of oil, natural gas and coal…As more of the conventional supply comes from challenging sources— such as heavy oil, shale, tar sands—and regions—such as the Arctic and the deepwater Gulf of Mexico—innovative technologies will play a critical role in our ability to supply the energy the world demands. (12)

This rhetoric reveals the deeply embedded nature of the fossil fuel addiction. As the corporation communicates to its ground-level labor most directly through the employee magazine, it can shape messages and statistics to convince them that their work is the only way to provide energy around the globe. The gestural acknowledgement of renewable energy here is only to establish that it is underdeveloped and so, in response, Chevron should develop technologies to extract unconventional fossil fuels. The logic of this is entirely backwards because both solutions (alternative renewable technology or alternative fossil fuel technology) require technological advancement, but one solution risks the lives of employees and the health of the planet while the other does not.

The importance of employee magazines is relatively well-established. They were first introduced by the coal industry in order to "influence worker behavior" and to give the company's side of stories in the news and argue against regulation (Buckley xvii). Many of these same storylines pervade today's magazines as well. There are no mentions of industry decline or potential risks to employees in any of the publications analyzed. There are mentions of employee health and safety, but, much like the sustainability reports, these are surface-level discussions to mask a deeper, structural problem. For example, an article in "Next*" briefly discusses how hydraulic fracturing projects address risks by asserting that "safety is not just a priority, it's part of our culture," (17). How exactly a culture of safety addresses the myriad of risks facing fossil fuel employees and proximate communities is unclear, but it certainly does continue to construct the narrative of corporate responsibility. This narrative is important in creating an affective rather than effective relationship between the employee and the corporation that allows those at the bottom to make excuses for incidents of harm as careless exceptions to the idealistic rule established in these publications. This is to say that the precise calculation of the transaction between the employee and corporation does not have to benefit the employee in real terms (an effective relationship for the worker) so long as the employee *feels* that the relationship is safe and prosperous for both sides (an affective relationship).

This is not only reinforced through discussions of company "culture", but also small initiatives like the wellness program reported on by Conoco's "Spirit Magazine". The article is entitled "Good for You!" and is accompanied by a photo of employees holding dumbbells on top of an oil rig (Spirit 20). The obvious absurdity of the picture is a separate issue, but the article title and content show how the company can be seen in a positive light by providing minimal benefits (a program to reduce employee obesity) while systematically increasing risks of chronic disease, death on the job, and a variety of other serious health risks (Weiss and Vasquez 2011).

In addition to these publications that come from the company, there are also third-party industry journals, magazines, and websites that are meant to communicate directly to those at the point of extraction. However, before launching into a discussion of the rhetoric of the industry magazines, it may be useful to look at a control variable. The industry magazine PowerMag is funded by energy interest groups, but unlike other publications to be examined shortly, it receives funding from, and reports on, all forms of energy. As one might expect, the reporting turns out to be relatively balanced: significant climate change reporting, polls from credible sources, praise and criticism for all types of energy, and so on. The single-industry publications, on the other hand, are not nearly as balanced. Although the journals do not represent a direct communication between company and laborer, they do indirectly because fossil fuel companies sponsor many of them (Goldenberg

2013). Regardless, a substantial portion of readership is industry employees, so these sites do represent part of the informational ecosystem in which fossil fuel employees live.

The coal publications analyzed for this study were "Coal Age," "Mining People," and "American Coal Council". The oil and gas journals were "Oil and Gas Journal," "Shale Mag," and "The American Gas Association Magazine". Although these were split when researching, there was significant argumentative overlap. As language moves away from the highly-censored, lawyer-advised, investor-speak of corporate reports, the overwhelming tone becomes far more aggressive and the most common theme is a battle between fossil fuels and alternative energy. The coal publications often mentioned the "war on coal" and many oil and gas articles utilized this language as well. This bellicosity is pervasive and the "battle" is fought on several fronts.

First, nearly all publications thoroughly rebuked regulation and the justifications for regulation, describing the Clean Power Plan as "kneecapping" the coal industry based on a "climate change agenda that likely has no merit" (Fiscor 2016). These widespread criticisms establish government regulation as one of the most significant fronts and clearly demarcates the government, as a whole entity, to be the enemy of fossil fuels and the livelihoods of extraction workers. Arguments against regulation were both specific and general, for instance criticizing ethanol mandates that may threaten to lower the price of oil or the entire US Environmental Protection Agency as a "reckless" organization better equipped to "safeguard standards for tadpole habitats" than energy policy (OGJ 24, Popovich 2015). Universally delegitimizing regulation is a particularly influential line of thinking because, if effective, it can convince employees to ignore the specificity of restrictions that may benefit their health and safety and instead to resist under the overarching idea that regulation imposed on the company presents a risk to all of its 'beneficiaries.'

The second front is scientific. There was at least one article per publication that described climate science as "dogma" or praised conferences established as alternatives to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) or suggested skepticism regarding climate science. A number of academic studies have thoroughly documented these efforts (Boykoff and Boykoff 2007). However, the breadth of the attacks on climate science can be deceptively diverse. One article deftly positioned climate science as not about science or even politics, but types of people, arguing that the "green fantasy sells among the fashion conscious. Leonardo DiCaprio, star of Titanic, hailed the president's plan, leaving one sinking ship to board another," (Popovich 2015). This quip implies that only people who care about outward appearances buy into climate science, whereas those who do not care about being fashionable have no reason to buy in. This logic is symptomatic of a broader culture war between types of Americans that is sometimes extended to types of

Americas. Those studying the outcome of the 2016 election have explored this idea in quite some depth because it was a deciding factor: "urban elites" (like Leonardo DiCaprio) and the "common man" (like fossil fuel employees) voted opposite each other (Badger et al 2016).

The third front, briefly noted a moment ago, is political. This research was conducted in the spring of 2017, so many of the sources published articles leading up to the 2016 presidential election discussing the candidates and implications of the election. The result was straightforward: nearly every publication published at least one article about the presidential election and all articles were written in support of Donald Trump. A significant component of Trump's platform was pro-oil, gas, and coal as opposed to Hillary Clinton's renewable energy promotion, so this finding is unsurprising, but bears mentioning.

The fourth front is literal and physical. Although this front is the least discussed across publications, it is perhaps the most important. Two articles in Shale Mag spoke to the violence between protestors and police at the Dakota Access Pipeline demonstrations and some other scuffles between "keep-it-in-the-ground" activists and fossil fuel proponents (Keffer 2017, Mulkin 2017). These articles describe these physical confrontations as the war on "muscle fuels" (a propagandistic rhetorical substitution for fossil fuels) hitting the streets and as a "key struggle in a much larger fight" (Keffer 2017, Mulkin 2017).

In sum, these four fronts serve as the battlefield of an "us versus them" mentality in which those in the fossil fuel industry are pitted against all those who seek to limit fossil fuel production. According to this philosophy, all those who hold the opposite opinion regarding public policy, science, politics, or are literally opposite oneself in a physical confrontation are part of the opposition forces in a war in which one's employment, livelihood, and sometimes physical wellbeing are at stake. This war-like mentality is likely to be self-perpetuating, creating ever deeper isolationism and skepticism to all claims from the other side, a stance that will inhibit any attempts to convince labor to leverage their power at the point of extraction to limit fossil fuel production. There is one quote that concludes the Coal Age article entitled "Clash of the Coal and Renewable Titans" that neatly represents the entelechy of this war-like mindset:

> At a time when many coal operators are *fighting for their lives*, reorganizing under bankruptcy and seriously considering *capitulation on the climate debate and the "war on coal,"* Murray and his team are *slugging it out in a street fight with environmental activists*, trying to debunk a well-funded, but misguided movement that *few outside energy understand*. They have also scored a *victory against the EPA* from which the entire coal industry will benefit as well as many other industries suffering from regulatory overreach. [Italics Added]

This quote poses the war on coal as a fight not only for employment, but also livelihood and way of life. Its physical metaphors are stark and serve to further the idea that there must be violence to defend fossil fuels in order to declare a winner and loser. By asserting "few outside energy understand" the article has inserted an implicit criticism of any information to the contrary as a misunderstanding on the part of anyone who is not part of the industry's operations, furthering the notions of identity, culture, and in-group versus out-group with lines drawn along fossil fuels.

The "war on energy" is just one way in which third party publications impact the thinking of those at the wellhead and mine. There are also the quieter campaigns of disinformation and culture construction that parallel the efforts of corporate publications. Disinformation is discussed at length in the Mulvey et al report, but there is one specific case that came about during this research that relates the problem of disinformation specifically to the wellbeing of employees and is demonstrative of the broader problem. The American Gas Association website mostly, understandably, promotes natural gas. There are a series of links to pages that describe the benefits and provide statistics in support of gas. Under the "safety and operations" header, selections such as pipeline safety, consumer safety, and technical papers are all publicly available with descriptions of how the industry approaches certain problems. For employee safety statistics, however, the inquirer needs to create a login with a home address, phone number, and email address. Even after confirming that account, that is not enough to access those statistics; only those with a certified membership in the AGA may access them. Although a seemingly insignificant instance of poor web design, it is representative of a systematic effort of information suppression, particularly regarding those at the level with the power to turn the flow of energy on or off.

Culture creation was discussed in the corporate report section and is powerfully reinforced by the war narrative, but there is another small example in the "Mining People" magazine. It is right there in the title and reinforced throughout the magazine. Whenever a mainstream publication might say "miner" or "employee", the choice instead is to use "mining person". This choice may seem insignificant, but it is deliberate and consequential in that it cements the sense of identity around being a fossil fuel employee by collapsing everything discussed above into a single descriptor. Although "miner" simply labels a person according to an act they perform to earn an income and is alone insufficient to describe a person's identity, "mining person" encapsulates all of the associated issues with being a fossil fuel employee, which is then taken as sufficient to establish identity. To make this connection clearer by way of a non-occupational analogy, consider the difference in calling someone a "friend" or a "friendly person." Although not a perfect parallel, this example conveys the changeable and limited nature of the first and the element of character involved in the second.

The final method of communication analyzed was local newspapers. The sources were the largest news outlets based in each the top two coal, oil, and natural gas producing counties in the United States. There were also three newspapers that were randomly chosen from an online list of 200 medium-sized newspapers to serve as controls. The nature of news reporting seems to have relatively little correlation with the significance of fossil fuels in a particular area. Instead, the size of the publication seems to be a more reliable indicator of the content.

Although the Sublette Examiner, Mansfield Enterprise, Kern Valley Sun, McKenzie County Farmer, and Gillette News Record have a combined two mentions of climate change, these sources do not have many mentions of the benefits of fossil fuels either. Each newspaper has perhaps one article that strongly defends the major local fossil fuel or simply documents the prominence of fuel in a particular town, but it would be cherry-picking to say that those articles indicate a systemic bias at any given publication. These small, local sources seem to be more interested in high school sports or the local hunting season.

In contrast, larger publications such as the control group (Seattle Times, Hattiesburg American, and Baltimore City Paper) and the West Virginia Gazette all have an extensive selection of articles discussing climate change and fossil fuels. There may be distinctions to be made regarding the relative nuance of each climate piece or whether the newspapers have original content or are simply republishing articles from other sources, but this seems to be splitting hairs in such a way that is irrelevant to the question of the general nature of information consumed by the fossil fuel worker.

The fact that this news media analysis did not align with the findings regarding corporate and industry sources is an important finding. In an era in which the internet, social media, and increasing partisanship reinforce each other to continuously reduce the diversity of opinions that a person consumes, promoting neutral news sources is an important task (Messing and Westwood 2012). Although this essay does not have a prescriptive recommendation, the finding here supports the distinction between truly "fake" or biased news and the reliability of traditional sources.

Conclusion

Fossil-fueled discourse represents a risk to social justice now and the impact of that discourse will only continue to grow as local pollutants accumulate, mountaintop coal removal destroys more rivers and streams, and temperatures continue to climb. Fossil fuel production clearly presents a sweeping risk to the entire planet, yet the most direct and immediate way to halt it would be to convince each actor at the ground level simply to close the spigot because each unit of fossil fuels produced is fundamentally unethical. Such an ideal is an unrealistic task, but it does beg the question of why fossil fuel extraction is thought to be ethical or socially just in the first place. This research has explored that question by analyzing

the knowledge bubble that fossil fuel proponents have established to shelter themselves from the harsh truths regarding the true consequences of extraction and combustion. The fossil fuel employee can be sure to find solace in both corporate and industry publications.

Corporate publications are likely to omit information regarding the impacts of fossil fuels if they do not identify them as some sort of necessary evil to power global economic growth. Industry publications are typically less tactful and are more likely to make arguments outright in favor of fossil fuels rather than just defending the industry against criticism. Ultimately, the unique combination of these two approaches creates a more nuanced defense of the employee's work combined with a call to arms in the war on whatever. These defenses are far more convenient to accept than not for those already deeply invested in the fossil fuel economy and, as such, it seems that it may be difficult to convince the fossil fuel worker to radically overhaul the industry anytime soon. Even as his or her own community suffers from coal dust runoff, destruction of aesthetic beauty, species loss, and global populations choke on the pollutants of combustion, the level of insulation created by misinformation and disinformation allows the worker to turn a blind eye to local issues and never begin to consider global ones.

Future research ought to expand the sample size, to determine whether the findings in this paper hold true across companies, years, and other potential variables. It should also attempt to determine the strength of the relationship between information and decision making for fossil fuel employees through interviews or other modes of analysis. Research should also continue to investigate the influence of fossil fuels on local and national media because although this study did not find a relationship, that does not definitively determine that there is no effect. Finally, individuals should make it a priority to clearly communicate the consequences of fossil fuel use in mainstream media and discourse, especially when interacting with any potential decision makers. Although consumption decisions should continue to be altered at the individual level, that idea ought to be expanded to the production decision as well. Without concentrated efforts to alter the rhetoric surrounding fossil fuels, fossil-fueled publications will continue to fiddle as the world burns.

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