

## **Dirty Oil, Snake Oil: Categorical Illegitimacy of Alberta's Oil Sands**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Organizational research has focussed almost exclusively on legitimate categories of practices, strategies, and structures while neglecting the strategic creation and use of illegitimate categories. In order to begin to address this gap, we draw on social semiotics to explore how illegitimate categorizations are dialectical, embedded within symbolic systems of meaning and emotion, and used to affect organizations' performance. More specifically, we analyse how the categorical illegitimacy of a controversial energy source – oil from Alberta's oil sands – is visually constructed and inter-textually contested by organizations taking a discursive stake in this field. In doing so, we offer an approach for bridging field-level “organization as communication” (Boje, Oswick & Ford, 2004) and organizational-level “communication as constitutive of organizations” (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009) perspectives.

**KEYWORDS:** social semiotics, (il)legitimacy, categorization, emotion, visual rhetoric, imagery

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Organizational legitimacy has been an important focus of research in organization and management theory for decades. Much of this research has focussed on how organizations are pressured to conform to institutionalized norms of form, structure or process in order to gain access to resources (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Zuckerman, 1999; Suchman, 1995). From this perspective, legitimacy is a core concern of organizations and seeking legitimacy with important stakeholders is required for organizational success. In addition, legitimacy is dichotomous; you are either legitimate or not (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008).

But organizations may also attempt to become “as different as legitimately possible” (Deephouse, 1999: 147) in order to profitably differentiate themselves from competing organizations. It is important therefore to balance the need for strategic differentiation with the isomorphism needed for legitimacy (Martens, Jennings & Jennings, 2007). As a result, while organizations may need to conform to norms to gain legitimacy, they will also seek to legitimize differences in order to gain competitive advantage. Thus, the literature also includes a concern with how organizations balance inclusion versus exclusion from legitimate categories and how they become legitimate and unique.

As a result, organizations that are highly legitimate themselves often become templates for new or revised categories: “Legitimation, in this sense, refers to the processes by which specific ‘value standards’ (Giddens, 1976: 102) are generated and accepted as a ‘sanctioning feature of interaction’ in a social setting” (Richardson & Dowling, 1986: 92). This literature examines how high-status originators create a new form or practice, which is then mimicked by others as this new category becomes (re)institutionalized (i.e., Rao, Monin & Durand, 2003). Yet, “much work remains to be done on how the processes of legitimation, reputation-building, and status-seeking intersect and overlap” (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008: 66; citing Vidaver-Cohen, 2006; Rao, 1994).

Besides these legitimate categories, there is the potential for creating illegitimate analogues using oppositional reasoning (Saussure, 1916/1960; Barthes, 1967). Examined pairings include: science vs. nonscience (Gieryn, 1983); living, sleeping vs. dead (Barley, 1983); literature vs. obscenity (Beisel, 1992); authentic vs. manipulated, sustainable vs. exploitative, and natural vs. artificial (Weber, Heinze & DeSoucey, 2008). As legitimacy has been considered dichotomous, these analogues have often been used to define exclusion from legitimate categories. Yet,

illegitimate categories are not simply that which is not legitimate. The relations between legitimate and illegitimate is more complex than simple opposition in a way parallel to how mistrust is more than a simple lack of trust (Schoorman, Mayer & Davis, 2007?; Rousseau et al. 1998?)

In focussing on processes of legitimation and isomorphism, researchers have overlooked the processes by which illegitimate categories are formed and how organizations are placed within these. The performance outcomes from being in an illegitimate category may equal exclusion from a legitimate category per Zuckerman's (1999) illegitimacy discount, or it may not. Illegitimate does not necessarily equate to not legitimate. Besides the potential for definitional asymmetry, there also may be asymmetry by which such illegitimate categories are constructed, the means by which inclusion or exclusion is defined, and the outcome of such definition. On this basis, we ask: *How do organizations strategically create illegitimate categories (versus legitimate categories), inclusion and exclusion, and to what effect?*

In answering this, our research makes several theoretical contributions. First, we explicitly examine illegitimate categorizations as compared to legitimate categorizations – their strategic construction, means of inclusion and exclusion, and the consequences. We present a model that explains the relation of legitimacy and illegitimacy, the differences in the motives and strategies of those involved, and the difference in the impact of these two related processes.

Second, in taking a rhetorical and social semiotic approach to legitimacy, we recognize that it is a *dialogic* phenomenon amongst discursive stakeholders and a *semiotic* phenomenon fundamentally dependent on symbolic texts produced and interpreted by these stakeholders (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Eco, 1976; Gardiner, 1992). The formation of legitimacy judgments has been simplistically depicted as linear (Bitektine, 2011) or following a lifecycle (Greenwood & Hinings, 2006; Oliver, 1992), rather than as a messy dialectic (following Maguire and Hardy, 2009). We offer an approach for bridging field-level “organization as communication” (Boje, Osrick & Ford, 2004) and organizational-level “communication as constitutive of organizations” (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009) perspectives (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975).

Third, such meaning-making is often assumed as cognitive, but it also has inseparable emotional (Vaara & Monin, 2010; Rogers, 1995) and normative elements (Parsons, 1960; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975) that have been largely overlooked within legitimacy studies (Bitektine, 2011). Rhetoric and social semiotics are able to capture these elements. To address these

oversights, it is our intent to explore how illegitimate categorizations are dialectical, rhetorically crafted, and embedded within symbolic systems of meaning and emotion.

We begin by describing the means by which categorization brings moral order. Incorporating the normative good/bad into our theoretical construct opens the door to examining the role of affect in the assessment of legitimacy and to using a social semiotics and visual rhetoric approach. Following this, we describe our methodology in examining a once legitimate energy source - the Alberta oil sands - as particularly visual, emotional, and variously categorized as legitimate and illegitimate as members of the discursive field struggle to shape their meaning for stakeholders. We analyze the various strategies used by proponents and opponents to this development. We conclude with a discussion of the theoretical and methodological contributions.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Categorizing as Bringing Moral Order**

The extent to which members of a social group share the same meaning systems determines how they interpret organizational practices, strategies, or structures as “desirable, proper or appropriate” (Suchman, 1995: 574) and which category they understand the practice strategy or structure to inhabit. If you are not included in a legitimate category, you suffer a performance discount (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Zuckerman, 1999). Thus, much research has focussed on the mechanisms of creating legitimate categories of roles, practices, strategies, and structures (Creed, Scully & Austin, 2002; Green, Babb & Alpaslan, 2008; Zilber, 2006; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Yet, organizations must also profitably differentiate themselves from their competitors. Thus, research has also focussed on balancing the curvilinear novelty-performance relationship by straddling legitimated categories (Deephouse, 1999; Martens, Jennings & Jennings, 2007). See figure 1.

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Figure 1 about here  
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“Language, through socialization, provides the categories and conceptual schemata by which members of a community know reality” (Richardson & Dowling, 1986: 101, following Lakoff &

Johnson, 1980). Besides being sorted in or out of a legitimate category, sorting also relies on foundational meanings grounded on oppositional categories (Saussure, 1916/1960; Barthes, 1967). Oppositions are essential to the generation of meaning; there is no light without dark, no heaven without hell (Chandler, 2007). The ways in which social collectives construct these distinctions allows us to understand how they structure meanings. For example, nature is often represented by ‘the raw’ while civilization is represented by ‘the cooked’ (Lévi-Strauss, 1969). Such binaries may be 1) direct *oppositions* - mutually exclusive, logical contradictories (i.e., positive/negative, where positive is not negative) or 2) *antonyms* – comparatively graded, logical contraries (i.e., good/bad, where not good is not necessarily bad) (Barthes, 1967). Direct oppositions result in crisp categorical boundaries - a digital either/or distinction like living vs. dead (Barley, 1983). Antonyms result in fuzzy categorical boundaries - an analogue more/less distinction which allows for intermediates; the grey between the black and white. Such antonyms include literature vs. obscenity (Beisel, 1992); authentic vs. manipulated, sustainable vs. exploitative, and natural vs. artificial (Weber, Heinze & DeSoucey, 2008). While such antonyms are fuzzy contrarities, they are often treated as direct contradictions with crisp categorical boundaries.

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Figure 2 about here  
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The degree that the “social” depends on language or other forms of communication for its production depends on an analyzable semiotic system (Eco, 1976). Within the communications of a culture, norms and values are visible (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975: 125). One approach to studying social phenomena is, thus, to approach them as semiotic (or more appropriately, social semiotic) phenomena that arise out of communication and that are constructed and maintained through ongoing interpretation. The task of interpretation is to understand the categories surrounding a practice and the relationships between these categories. For example, within texts, semiotic categories are indicated by the use of axiological markers - evaluative and emotionally-laden words, usually adjectives or adverbs (Flottum & Dahl, 2012; Rossolatos, 2011; Bahktine), that mark preferences - as key words in concept formation (cf. Somers, 1994; Fiss & Hirsch, 2005). These binary categories can then be mapped into semiotic relationships and larger meaning structures using the Greimesian, or semiotic, square (Greimas, 1966/1983; Chandler,

2007). Reapplying the semiotic square through time illustrates how semiotic frames may synthesize, evolve and re-synthesize over time, as the semiotic categories and preferences change (Humphreys, 2010). With shifts in the axiological markers between competing value systems, what is considered legitimate will be threatened and possibly change (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975).

Our impulse to create hierarchy as a fundamental characteristic of humanity, as a way we distinguish among and rank order our interactions and ideas, “hierarchic principle is indigenous to all well-rounded human thinking” (Burke, 1969: 141). Burke (1966) includes hierarchy as a central element in his definition of man: “Man is the symbol-using . . . animal[,] inventor of the negative . . . separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making[,] *goaded by the spirit of hierarchy* . . . and rotten with perfection” (Italics added, *ibid*: 16). He sees hierarchy as motivating humans to aspire to higher positions and relegate others to lower positions, “the incentives of organization and status” (*ibid*: 15). He also notes that implicit in the concept of hierarchy is the “possibility of reversing highest and lowest” (*ibid*: 140). He elaborates the idea of reversal: “King and peasant are ‘mysteries’ to each other. Those ‘Up’ are guilty of not being ‘down,’ those ‘down’ are certainly guilty of not being ‘Up’” (1966: 15).

Burke also applies his notions of hierarchy to language itself in his description of “ultimate” terms that are ordered “in a *hierarchy*, or *sequence*, or *evaluative series*, so that . . . the members of the entire group [are] arranged *developmentally* with relation to one another” (Italics in original, 1969: 187). In this conception the key terms in a discussion can be arrayed in a hierarchical sequence with terms in a positive sequence leading up to a “ ‘god-term’ as the completion of the linguistic process” (*ibid*: 276). “God-term” represents the ultimate positive term to which discussants can appeal in an argument. Burke also notes the role of antithesis in the relationship of terms, “where the extremes of a developmental series are presented as harshly antithetical” (*ibid*: 189). The counterpart to a “god-term” then is a “devil term,” which is presented as diametrically opposed to the ultimate positive term.

Since meaning depends upon an ongoing dialogic interaction between participants acting from different social positions, with different interests, and in fluid and changing social situations, meaning is always provisional and unstable. Further, the pairing of text and visual creates a relationship between the two which can create further interpretive ambiguity: sometimes they present the same information, but more often they present different information, and each format contributes unique features to the meaning. There is a continual struggle over

the meaning of texts and an inescapable ambiguity. Central to meaningfulness, thus, is the idea of struggle and conflict. The management of meaning is continually undermined by the ambiguity of the text and the room this leaves for resistance. Viewers of texts are not bound by some external code to a particular interpretation but are able to interpret and re-interpret the text. Interpretation requires interpreters and the resulting dialogism produces space for resistance. This social contradiction goes hand in hand with ambiguity; the very nature of interpretation makes resistance possible. Other discursive stakeholders can, and often do, invert and otherwise resist dominant interpretations. They also produce alternative texts that differ in meaning - to further their interests in the construction of the complex myths that underlie images. Out of this often complex semiotic struggle grows the sets of understandings of what is legitimate or illegitimate (Richardson & Dowling, 1986). It is possible to say that the management of legitimacy is primarily an exercise in the management of inter-textuality.

Parallel to the Greimasian square, if we combine these two dimensions, in/out (assertion/negation) with positive/negative, we can examine the range of possible combinations of legitimacy/illegitimacy. See figure 3. For example, categorizations that are based upon supposed oppositions may result in absent or false dichotomies like mind/body or masculine/feminine (Chandler, 2007). Straddling such fuzzily-bounded antonyms may result in a legitimacy premium. For example, literature is often obscene, which may add rather than discount its value. Besides the potential for definitional asymmetry, there also may be asymmetry by which such illegitimate categories are constructed, the means by which inclusion or exclusion is defined, and the outcome on performance. It is possible that inclusion within such an illegitimate category may result in an illegitimacy discount, similar to the exclusion from a legitimate category (Zuckerman, 1999). Yet, it is doubtful whether exclusion from illegitimate category equates to a legitimacy premium. Even though gambling has been legalized, it is not necessarily considered acceptable (Humphreys, 2010).

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Figure 3 about here  
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**Types of legitimacy, processes of legitimation**

Organizations that incorporate societally legitimated rationalized categories in their formal structures maximize their legitimacy and increase their resources and survival capabilities

(Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Legitimacy has been categorized as being pragmatic, moral or cognitive (Suchman, 1995); sociopolitical and cognitive (Aldrich and Fiol, 1999); or defined by media statements, certification and licensing, endorsements, and links to prestigious organizations (Deephouse and Suchman, 2008). Care must be taken in specifying which organizational elements are affected by institutional processes, which audiences confer legitimacy, and what form of legitimacy is being conferred (Ruef & Scott, 1998; Scott et al., 2000). As a category of practice or structure becomes institutionalized and taken-for-granted, it diffuses across the field in a lifecycle (Greenwood & Hinings, 2006; Greenwood et al., 2002) or a hierarchical linear manner (Bitektine 2010).

Meta-organizations, such as professional associations (Greenwood et al., 2002) or identity movements (Rao, Monin, and Durand, 2003) provide templates and legitimate the associated new/revised categories by hosting debate. Legitimation strategies are rhetorical (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Vaara & Monin, 2010; Vaara, Tienari & Laurila, 2006). The persuasiveness of discourse (or rhetoric) within this contestation of meaning, depends upon the credibility of the ‘speaker’, the logic of the argumentation, and the emotionality of the message. As part of a neo-Aristotelian concept of modes of persuasion (i.e., *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*), pathos/emotion serves ethos/credibility and logos/logic: they are relational (Grimaldi 1980). Aristotle (1984) identified credibility as the primary appeal: if audiences do not trust speakers, neither their logic nor emotion can prevail. In contrast, audiences who trust the source are susceptible to emotional appeals and will weigh evidence that supports the argument. However, Walker (2000) notes that the visual can arouse emotions that over-ride judgment: “a state of emotion once aroused will tend to ‘warp’ the mind and thence will strongly determine how it perceives any ‘premises’ [i.e., logic] presented to it” (81). As a result of this state of emotion, listeners may find particular claims compelling or ignore them completely.

There is a spatial relationship among these modes of persuasion (Kinneavy, 1971); discourse shifts writer and reader onto common ground based on shared value in their argumentative positions (Killingsworth, 2005). The writer is like an air traffic controller, directing the progress of readers (emotion) through signals (logic) to the desired destination (persuasion). Oftentimes in contemporary society, emotional appeals hold weight equal to evidence and argument in legal and other types of debate (Katula, 2003) to “persuade when the facts alone do not” (9). Emotion

grabs an audience's attention (Green, Babb & Alpasian, 2008), creating an appeal by invoking confidence and optimism (McAdam, 1982); the pursuit of dignity (Wood, 2001); anger, fear, indignation (Fairclough, 1986); or 'moral shock' or a sense of outrage (Jasper, 1997) - generating sympathy and trust with speaker (ethos), and emotional identification (Nepstad & Smith, 1999). Emotion is central to enthymematic reasoning; style is central to creating emotion in discourse (Walker, 2000). In discourse style consists of word choice, specific detail, and figuration. Walker further notes that the truncated syllogism of enthymematic reasoning functions through emotion. He suggests that rendering an argument in lively terms guides readers to a "heartfelt thought" (85); that is, style links logic and emotion. Fahnestock (2000) notes that rhetorical figuration gains force beyond mere ornament from "access[ing] conviction or creat[ing] insight in a uniquely efficient way" (172). Portulano and Evans (2005) also note that knowledge or cognition is "a prerequisite for an emotion" (137). Audiences must learn something before they experience an emotion. Yet, rhetorical analysis often focuses logic or credibility, with less attention given to the emotional (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005).

The means by which symbolic legitimation is used to create these new value standards, templating by legitimate actors, categorization, and diffusion is considered by Richardson & Dowling (1986), as illustrated in the top half of figure 4. Given that institutional theory has occupied itself with the question "Why are organizations so strikingly similar?" attention has been almost exclusively on the creating and diffusion of legitimate categories of strategies, structures, processes, markets, etc.

Processes of stigmatizing and delegitimation have been overlooked (Hudson, 2008; Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009). We contend that, parallel to the negative analogues as depicted in the bottom half of our 2X2 (figure 3), there will be mirroring processes of delegitimation. 'Bad actor' organizations can provide the negative examples, around which a new stigmatizing value standard is created, forming the nucleus for a new illegitimate category of practice or structure, for which other organizations are pushed into. This is illustrated in the bottom half of figure 4.

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Figure 4 about here  
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It is these negative processes that are of interest to us. How do organizations strategically create illegitimate categories, the means of inclusion in or exclusion from those categories, and the resulting effect.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Research Context: Categorical Illegitimacy of the Alberta Oil Sands**

The oil sands provide an instrumental case (Stake, 1995) to examine the dialogical and political processes of illegitimate categorizations. We begin by describing the oil sands and our rationale for choosing this particularly visual, controversial and emotional context. Then, we outline our method of analyzing the associated categorizations of this energy source.

There are three main oil sands deposits within the Athabasca, Peace River, and Cold Lake areas (see Figure 4). Conventional oil is extracted by drilling oil wells into a petroleum reservoir, allowing the oil to flow due to natural reservoir pressure. Conversely, the oil sands are an *unconventional* source of oil – a mixture of viscous petroleum (technically referred to as ‘bitumen’, or colloquially as ‘tar’ due to its appearance), sand, clay and water. Given their viscosity, the oil sands are strip-mined if they are close to the surface. Or, if they are deeper, the oil is made to flow into wells by an in-situ injection of hot air, solvents, or steam using cyclic steam stimulation (CSS) or steam assisted gravity drainage (SAGD). For mined oil sands, hot water is used to separate bitumen from the sand and clay. Thus, oil sands production typically uses larger amounts of energy and water than conventional oil production. The process tailings (a mixture of water, sand, clay and residual bitumen) are sent to a tailings pond to settle out the sands and clays and to recycle the water.

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Figure 5 about here  
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We choose this context for three reasons. First, the oil sands are very large and visual. Much of northern Alberta is underlain with oil sands. The deposits are as large as the United Kingdom. The strip mining and tailings ponds can be seen from space. Given that it takes decades for tailings to settle, these ‘ponds’ have also become very large, covering 50 km<sup>2</sup>. Syncrude’s

Southwest Sand Storage Facility is the second largest dam in the world, outsized only by China's Three Gorges dam.

Second, the oil sands are becoming an increasingly strategic energy source. The petroleum industry is the largest single private sector investor in Canada (~\$35B in 2009) (CAPP, 2009) and it is projected that the petroleum industry will contribute \$1.7 trillion to Canada's GDP and create over 456,000 jobs over the next 25 years (Canadian Energy Research Institute, 2009). Canada's oil reserves are considered to be a strategic resource (see figure 5) with most reserves in Alberta and the oil sands. Given the relative political stability of Canada as a source of oil to the U.S., the Alberta oil sands are undergoing a \$250B expansion (AII, 2008).

Third, development of the oil sands has become increasingly controversial. There have been increasing concerns of cumulative environmental effects, habitat destruction, water use and contamination. The oil industry in Alberta (especially the oil sands) is the largest source of GHG, in a country with rapidly growing (not decreasing) emissions. As a country, Canada's GHG emissions have increased 26.6% from 1990 to 2004, rather than decreased by 6% as required by the Kyoto Protocol (see Figure 6 & 7). With >15% higher greenhouse gas emissions than conventional oil, the oil sands have been categorized as particularly 'dirty oil' (Nikiforuk, 2008) and have become the 'whipping boy of European and American green groups fighting the 'Great Climate War'' (Sweeney, 2010: 160). Extraction and processing of the oil sands is extraordinarily thirsty: it takes between one and four barrels of water to produce one barrel of oil. The resulting tailings ponds are taking decades to reclaim and are a hazard to migratory birds. In April 2008, 1600 ducks landed on Syncrude's tailings ponds and died. Syncrude was charged and subsequently found guilty under provincial and federal laws in 2010. There are also concerns about the oil sands polluting the Athabasca River and its tributaries with Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) and heavy metals (Kelly et al., 2009). Scientists and aboriginal peoples downstream are blaming deformed fish in the Athabasca River and higher cancer rates to oil sands pollution. While petroleum companies have claimed that they are adopting environmental initiatives (CAPP, 2007), critics question the veracity of those claims (Dyer et al., 2008; Nikiforuk, 2006). This has resulted in increased attention and contestation of the oil sands as an energy source.

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Figure 6 & 7 about here

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To examine this contestation through time, we examine the discourse evolution from the beginning of oil sands development from 1969 to 2011. A full text search of LexisNexis articles for ‘Alberta’ and ‘oil/tar’ and ‘sands’ gave us 12,533 articles over this 43-year time span. We read a random sample of these articles for the emergent semiotic categories and we created dictionaries of meaning synonyms for these, in an iterative manner (see table 1 for dictionaries of the most frequent categories). These categories were then automatically coded using MaxQDA 10 software and the frequencies of these categories were compared over time (following Mohr, 1998; Fiss & Hirsch, 2005; Weber et al., 2008). While quantitative content analysis does not reflect nuances in meaning, it does allow the examination of historical trends in the discursive context (see figures 8 & 9).

This debate has become increasingly emotional and contested. To better understand these contestations of meaning within this discursive context, we also constructed a timeline of events and stakeholders’ categorizations of the Alberta oil sands from newspaper articles, magazine advertisements, and Internet websites (see Table 2). Opponents to oil sands development depict these operations as *avatar sands* - with demonstrable environmental impacts (i.e., oiled ducks dying on tailings ponds, deformed fish, leaking pipelines, greenhouse gas emissions) and political ramifications - to delegitimize the oil sands as *dirty oil*. Proponents counter with a visual campaign of their own; portraying the oil sands as *ethical oil* or *green oil* in comparison to *conflict oil* from the Middle East and Africa. Opponents are outraged by this and have counter-counteracted, stating that proponents’ imagery is false advertising and *snake oil*. An indication of the relative frequency of the online interest in the terms *dirty oil*, *ethical oil*, *snake oil* within energy and utility industries is given in figure 10.

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Tables 1 & 2, and Figures 8, 9, 10 about here

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### **Analyzing Social Semiotics and Visual Rhetoric**

From our timeline of events and different categorizations of the Alberta oil sands, we sampled advertisements based the criteria that: 1) a meaningful link existed between the ads (visual or argumentative), 2) each advertisement contained both text and image, and 3) the

example expanded or changed the grounds for argument about the oil sands. Therefore, we chose images that contributed to an ongoing and evolving debate about the oil sands; the various sponsors for the positions presented are not uniform: one organization sponsors a perspective, briefly engages the debate, then vanishes, and a different organization or sponsor picks up and reinvents the grounds for argument.

The selected advertisements were coded using five different theoretical frameworks drawn from semiotics and from rhetoric to identify and categorize the various types of persuasive elements present in the text of the ad, the images, and the interaction between the two (see Table 2). We analyzed the text from each advertisement using concepts from Aristotelian/classical and Burkean theories of rhetoric. The concepts selected from Aristotle (1984) include the modes of proof: *ethos* (appeals to credibility); *pathos* (appeals to emotion); and *logos* (appeals to logic). These categories were assigned based on standard criteria for establishing each appeal. For example, *ethos*, or establishing textual credibility, arises out of phrases that demonstrate the ad sponsor understands the problem (or is competent to speak on the issue) or that establish common ground with viewers (show the sponsor and viewer share similar values). *Pathos*, or an appeal to emotion, arises from effective use of word choice (negative/positive connotations) and figurative language (metaphors). *Logos*, or the internal consistency of the message, arises out of series of claims, both formal (syllogisms) and informal (enthymemes). Words, phrases, and sentences that appeared in the chosen advertisements were analyzed to determine which label(s) best explained their function (or multiple functions) in the argumentation process.

The concepts from classical rhetoric include the use of rhetorical tropes and figures in the linguistic structures of the text (for example, metaphor, irony, metonymy, parallelism/isocolon, *paronomasia*, *antithesis*) (Corbett & Connors, 1998; Crawley & Hawhee, 2008). The text in each advertisement was analyzed to identify patterns of phrasing that correspond to traditional definitions for the appropriate trope (phrasing that results in a change of meaning) or figure (phrasing that results in a change of word order) (Corbett, 1990).

From Burke's theory of rhetoric, we selected the concept of identification (1969). Identification, or the sense of shared sameness created between sponsor and viewer, arises through five tactics that are usually (but not always) textual: 1) establish shared values and beliefs between sponsor and viewer (this element aligns with establishing credibility in Aristotelian rhetoric); 2) demonstrate the alignment of interests between the sponsor and the

viewer; 3) illustrate that the sponsor and the viewer belong to a privileged group; 4) set up a dichotomy between “them” (the enemy) and “us” (allies); and 5) invite viewers to join the sponsor in taking common action against the enemy. Textual phrases or images that reflected any of these tactics were coded as instances of identification.

The images were analyzed using relevant concepts of visual grammar from semiotics, specifically Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). These categories included figure/gaze, viewer distance, viewer vantage point, image framing, and image positioning (see table 2 for coding scheme). First, we identified the appropriate label for the relevant area of the image (that is, details in the images were considered and coded separately), and then we assessed the function of that area/detail to either a part of the argument or to the whole argument (or both, in some cases). For example, the woman in the chador who is buried to her waist in the ground has her eyes closed and appears to be grimacing: the gaze between viewer and pictured is indirect (no eye contact); the distance is medium; the viewer vantage point is looking down on the woman; she is framed by earth or sand; and the photo occupies the “given, familiar, known (left)” side of the two-frame ad. The indirect gaze presents the woman as an object; the middle distance estranges the woman from viewers; the vantage point gives viewers power over the woman; and the image is presented as unsurprising, a fact with which viewers are well familiar. From the perspective of argument, the sponsors of this advertisement have presented the woman as someone in a subordinate position to viewers, a relationship that gives viewers power over the woman, the power to, therefore, save her. Presenting the woman (who is about to be stoned to death) as “familiar” information creates a strong and ironic emotional appeal, because most viewers of this ad would not find this image “given, familiar, or known.” The positioning of the viewer in relation to the image creates a powerful motivation to, for example, buy “ethical oil” rather than “conflict oil,” which the advertisement advocates. This example captures the layers of complexity inherent in this analysis of argument through text and image.

The final area of analysis, the interaction of text and image and its contribution to the argument, required multiple coding of the same details in each advertisement. We also drew on several theorists to develop labels that categorized the ways that text and image worked together to develop the ad’s argument. We adopted three categories from Karen Schriver’s (1994) taxonomy of the relationships between text and image: 1) supplementary (one mode is dominant, the other elaborates); 2) complementary (each mode presents different information, combined

they give the whole story); and 3) juxtapositioning (each mode seems unrelated, combined they reveal a new meaning).

First the advertisements were coded by hand using the rhetorical and semiotic frameworks discussed above. A table was developed with a column for the following headings: topic or advertisement title; code or label; text; image; and analysis. The topic or title came first, usually selected from the topmost text or most visually emphasized text on the ad. Second, the codes or labels were applied in the following order: the relationship between text and image (to establish the visual impact of text and visual together) and the type of representation; the semiotic codes (assessing the visual elements of the ad) of gaze, viewer distance, vantage point, image frame; the rhetorical codes (assessing the textual/argumentative features of the ad) of tactics of identification; argument frame, methods of argument; modes of proof (ethos, pathos, logos); positioning (left/right; old/new; familiar/strange); and rhetoric tropes (e.g., metaphor, metonymy, irony). The third column identified the textual passage being grouped together, and the fourth column identified the visual feature being considered. The fifth column contained a concise summary of the analysis pertaining to the code and the textual or visual detail identified in columns three or four.

To ensure complete and systematic analysis of the various features of each ad, the analysis began with identifying the relationship between the text and image (using Schriver's categories) and the type of representation (using Idhe's categories). Next the analysis focused on the visual elements of the ad, starting in the top left-hand corner and working systematically from left to right down the page. The rationale for this left-to-right, top-to-bottom movement is to follow the conventional trajectory of eye movements for readers of the English language (cf. Gutenberg diagram, Lidwell et al 2010). Similarly, page layouts take into account these conventions: for example, the [ethicaloil.org](http://ethicaloil.org) advertisements feature two adjacent visual panels. In this case, the left panel is viewed first, the right panel second, and then viewers combine their understanding of both panels to construct the advertisement's point. Given this layout, the visual elements in the left panel were analyzed first, then the textual elements. This chronology was repeated for the right panel, first the visual elements and then the textual ones. Finally, the advertisement was re-analyzed with the two panels considered as a unit. Again, the images were considered first and then the textual/argumentative features. In all cases, only the codes that applied to a particular

advertisement were used in the analysis. If a particular code was not relevant, it was omitted from the table for that example.

When this stage of coding was complete, the hand-coded information was then entered into MaxQDA software and attached to the relevant features of the advertisement. Each feature was labeled and cross-labelled to capture the multiple layers of meaningful relationships among the elements of text, of image, and then of text and image combined (see table 3). The labels were assigned based on the identification noted in columns three and four in the table. The analysis (from column five in the table) was attached to the relevant sections of the advertisement using the “memo” function of MaxQDA.

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Table 3 about here  
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## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **BP Low Carbon diet and Greenpeace ads**

Lest viewers object to the hypocrisy of an oil company accusing them, BP devotes the rest of the ad (a two-by-two table) to a textual description (logic) of how the company is developing alternate sources of energy beyond petroleum. In fact, the ad has hailed viewers as gluttonous users of carbon; next it elaborates BP’s contribution to low-carbon fuel diets by developing alternative fuel sources such as natural gas-, solar-, and hydrogen-fueled power stations. These innovative efforts support the claim that BP is moving beyond petroleum, building its credibility as a legitimate environmentally conscious organization. These facts also show that BP is on the viewer’s team (identification) (Burke 1964). BP advertises its long-standing environmental credentials (“over the last 30 years, BP has taken solar energy”) and distances itself from its traditional role of purveyor of carbon-based fuel (“beyond petroleum”). In this case, BP uses data and statistics to build a logical argument (logic/cognition) and to support the case for itself as environmental steward (ethos/credibility) (Aristotle 1984). The company intends viewers to be surprised at BP’s efforts to achieve cleaner power generation (cognition) and to admire it for, in fact, exceeding themselves in caring for the environment (pathos/emotion) (Walker 2000; Portulano & Evans 2005).

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Figure 11 & Table 4 about here  
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The main visual elements in this predominantly textual advertisement are the yellow highlighter on key words, the 2x2 grid design, and the BP logo (a sunburst quilt square, yellow at centre radiating out to green). Viewers regard the logo from an extreme long range, increasing the distance between viewer and visual to characterize the company as harmless—working quietly in the background to solve global warming (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996). These visual elements supplement the text (Schriver 1994). The grid design offers a given-new layout that highlights the discussion of natural gas and solar power as familiar/given and the hydrogen-generated electrical plants and BP’s trajectory beyond petroleum as unfamiliar/new (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996). The ad designers present this new idea to evoke admiration and appreciation in viewers for BP’s efforts to solve climate change (Portulano & Evans 2005).

Greenpeace undercuts BP’s slogan, beyond petroleum, in “black in the new green,” (see figure 11, table 5) by juxtaposing temporal events (the Deep Water Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, ducks dying in a tailings pond near Fort McMurray, AB), text (tar sands, paragraph, slogan, BP), and images (oil-dripping egret, sunburst BP logo) (Schriver 1994). Viewers are required to connect temporal events such as the oil spill to the images and text displayed in the ad, an activity that requires linking the writer/Greenpeace (ethos), the audience/viewer (pathos), and the values/beyond petroleum-oil spill-tar sands (logos) (Kinneavy 1971). A realistic cartoon silhouette (i.e., isomorphic representation) (Ihde 2007) of the bird flies upwards against the sunburst logo, creating an ascending power scale: viewers subordinated to the bird, the bird to the logo, and then bird and viewers to the company itself (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996). This trajectory suggests that bird and viewers are victims of a powerful, unscrupulous company (BP). The sunburst quilt logo metaphorically references the sun, yet Greenpeace uses irony (a trope) to twist its meaning through visual chiasmus: sun = giver of life x giver of death = sunburst/bp. The irony of BP’s sunburst bringing death creates an emotional appeal in viewers of guilt (for the bird’s situation), fear (that BP will kill more birds), and contempt (that BP pretended it cared about wildlife) (Walker 2000).

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Figure 12 & Table 5 about here  
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This ad uses four lines of text in small type beside “tar sands.” The text links BP/oil spill with the oil sands, noting that BP is “thinking about” (thinking is synonymous with acting) investing in “the dirtiest oil currently being produced” (according to Greenpeace, yet total emissions from developing the oil sands are less than emissions from coal burning power plants in the state of Michigan), an argumentative move that refutes the BP claims of moving “beyond petroleum.” Greenpeace further compromises BP’s self-characterization of environmental stewardship by charging it with “threatening the Canadian wilderness” (actively menacing) and “threatening to accelerate dangerous climate change” (a future danger); the parallel phrasing emphasizes the evil of BP at local and global levels (place), immediately and in the future (time). Greenpeace proposes the slogan, “black is the new green,” again using irony to indicate that BP fits the definition of “green” (or environmentally responsible) only if we redefine green to mean black (or environmentally irresponsible). This irony shifts BP from being the legitimate participant in environmental stewardship that it depicted itself as in the earlier ad to an illegitimate, hypocritical threat to local and global wilderness now and in the future. As noted, the “logic” of Greenpeace’s argument is emotional not factual; in contemporary society emotional appeals have gained sufficient weight to equal evidence and argument (Katula 2003).

### **Dirty Oil, Ethical Oil... Snake Oil**

Following the publishing of his book “Ethical Oil: The Case for Canada’s Oil Sands” in 2010, Ezra Levant established the Ethical Oil Institute with industry funding. The institute published a number of ads in an attempt to create a new category of ‘conflict oil’ from Middle Eastern countries as juxtaposed with ‘ethical oil’ from Canada’s oil sands. Rather than using an environmental frame, they reframe our choices of energy source as an ethical decision based upon human rights. We examine two of these ads. Both of these ads argue using a parallel, two-panel structure to juxtapose the familiar/given sources of oil from conflict oil countries to unfamiliar/new sources of oil from ethical oil countries.

The first ad juxtaposes women’s rights in a conflict oil country (where women are stoned) versus an ethical oil country (where women are elected) (see figure 12 and table 6). The left panel uses a black and white photograph of a Muslim woman buried to her chest in dirt, her eyes

closed, her face grimacing, moments before she is killed by stoning. She is offered as a curiosity, an object of contemplation. Conversely, the right panel is also a portrait of Melissa Blake as she is inaugurated as the Mayor of Wood Buffalo Municipal Region (which includes the oil sands) at her moment of triumph. Mayor Blake is happy, relaxed, and making eye contact to create a ‘demand’ relationship with the viewer. The contrast of these two portraits is painfully ironic: one documents a woman’s last moments of life, one documents a woman’s achievements; both arise out of the human rights policies of the countries they inhabit.

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Figure 13 & Table 6 about here  
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In a similar manner, the second ad juxtaposes aboriginal rights in Sudan’s oil fields (where indigenous peoples are slaughtered and discarded) versus an ethical oil country (where aboriginals are employed and valued) (see figure 13 and table 7). The left panel depicts a close up of a skull and corpse, lying exposed in a fetal position, the skeleton stripped of its flesh. We look into the empty eye sockets of the skull, meeting its gaze; ironically creating a ‘demand’ perspective. Soldiers are above the corpse, with their backs turned, superordinate to the viewer. This creates an implicit threat to the viewer, just as these soldiers threaten Sudan’s indigenous peoples. In contrast, the right panel depicts an aboriginal woman working in an oil sands plant, in the midst of doing her job. She is turned to a co-worker and seemingly unaware that she is being viewed. She is wearing a white hardhat indicating that she is a supervisor with Esso, a subsidiary of Exxon. She is happy and healthy, with beautiful teeth, and wearing personal protective equipment. She is productive and valued. The viewer is subordinate to her; she is being raised up.

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Figure 14 & Table 7 about here  
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Both these ads parallel the old/familiar with the new/unfamiliar. Presumably, we know that such countries are cruel to their women and genocidal. In contrast, Canada’s treatment of women and aboriginals is treated as new/surprising information (i.e., the antithesis of the cruelty in conflict oil countries). The parallelism of both these ads is extended to the use of epistrophe

(.... oil.... oil) and isocolon with the same length and structure of text, to create repetition and rhythm. The imagery is provocative, even abhorrent, in an attempt to evoke pathos, whereby the emotionality of the images (horror vs. pride) furnishes support for the credibility (ethos) of ethicaloil.org. Viewers' lack of familiarity with Islamic punishment and Sudanese history means that most cannot verify these claims of human rights violations. Thus, most viewers are likely inclined to accept these claims based upon this visual evidence and perhaps ingrained prejudices against African and Middle Eastern countries. This parallelism also creates identification by creating a 'them' that kills vulnerable people versus 'us' that raise people up to their highest purpose. The implicit ethical appeal of viewers is: What kind of person do you want to be? What country will you support?

Opponents to oil sands development found Ethical Oil's approach to be particularly misleading (see figure 15, table 8). Thus, in response one critical blog, Creekside, added a third panel that questioned the Conflict Oil/Ethical Oil distinction. This ad mimics ethicaloil.org's parallel structure, argument framing as political/human rights, epistrophe, and isocolon. Yet, besides the thesis/antithesis, it adds a synthesis in the third panel. The left panel "Conflict Oil – Dictatorship" depicts the leaders of Iran as 'objects' with averted gazes, level and of equal power with the viewer. The flag in the background emphasizes both religious and secular dictatorships of Iran, i.e. the two types of tyranny supported by the purchase of Iranian oil. The middle panel "Ethical Oil – Democracy" depicts an intimate close-up of the Canadian flag, fluttering in the sunshine, creating aspirational guidance to viewers. Interestingly, Canadian leaders are absent, perhaps as a means to avoid partisan response in viewers. The right panel depicts a Suncor project manager and employee surrounded by a construction site and pointing outside the frame. Their gaze is indirect, offered as objects for viewer contemplation. The viewer is on the level and of equal power. The relative positioning of these panels juxtaposes the old/familiar vs. new vs. newest. The left panel maps the type of government onto the symbol of the nation, as aligned and united around the flag. The middle panel overlays democracy atop the red maple leaf; again mapping the type of government on the symbol of the nation. The right panel depicts the collaboration of Suncor and dictators. This makes a shocking connection between Suncor's work in the oil sands and its work in Syria. Indeed, Suncor is not separated from conflict oil at all; rather it profits from that conflict. The viewer is shocked, then outraged, then cynical about the spuriousness of the so-called high road in the ethicaloil.org ads. Identification shifts across

the panels. In the left panel, viewers are aligned as “us” vs. Iran & leaders as “them”. In the middle panel, viewers are aligned with Canada as part of “us” vs. Iran & other dictatorships as “them”. In the right panel, viewers are aligned as “us” vs. all oil producers as “them”, with Suncor being used to represent all oil companies who are involved in the production of oil sands and conflict oil simultaneously. This juxtaposition of these three countries and their oil dissolves the differences between the philosophical stances originally staked out by ethicaloil.org. All three are charged with the production of snake oil (i.e., a fraudulent hoax). In doing so, this ad also invokes the metaphor of the unscrupulous quack doctor selling fraudulent and harmful products, smooth talking with empty rhetoric.

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Figure 15 & Table 8 about here  
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### **TankerFreeBC: Immoral Energy, Ethical Energy**

An ad by TankerFreeBC.org, “Immoral energy, ethical energy,” (see figure 16, table 9) stakes out moral ground above that claimed by ethicaloil.org. It frames oil as immoral energy because it is energy pursued “at any price,” including the price of animal life such as the oil-covered bird making eye contact with viewers. This direct, demand gaze creates an equal relationship between viewer and viewed (Kress & van Leeuwen 19); the threatened bird stands in for all wildlife—all *life*—threatened by oil production. Red text boxes associate “stop” with immoral (oil) energy, and green ones signal “go”: ethical energy sources value *all* life. Viewers make eye contact (demand) with the left cub; the mother polar bear and second cub are “offers” (Kress & van Leeuwen 19). This use of gaze establishes an intimate relationship with the cub that “demands” viewers value its family. The first line uses isocolon (phrases of the same length and structure) to present the argument: six syllables and adjective + noun. The second line has three syllables, although different structure. Again, the parallelism emphasizes the contrast through repeating the similar (Fahnestock 2000). This ad is a clear emotional appeal that invites viewers to choose/support developing energy sources that preserve non-human life. The oil-covered seabird reminds viewers of the immediate environmental threat posed by oil-based energy; the polar bear family reminds viewers of the long-term threat through global warming, a threat to polar bear habitats in the Arctic. This ad makes an explicit connection between the oil

sands and its point in the slogan to the left of the sponsoring agency, “Help keep the Tar Sands in the ground and off our coast>> TankerFreeBC.org.”

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Figure 16 & Table 9 about here  
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By appealing to the value of *all* life (not just *human* life), this ad illegitimizes the argumentative framework posed by ethicaloil.org because in the hierarchy of values human life may supersede the environment per se, but the value of *all life* supersedes human life. Invoking and emphasizing this scale of value serves to re-establish concern for the environment as a legitimate basis for argument about the oil sands. The environment is re-legitimized because TankerFreeBC.org has joined it to the over-arching value of life: concern for the environment is redefined as concern for human **and** animal life, both of which, TankerFreeBC.org implies, are threatened while oil energy contributes to global warming. This series of advertisements illustrates a dynamic rather than linear relationship in the process of legitimacy and illegitimacy. They suggest that illegitimacy can be reversed, given an appropriate re-framing of the values that underpin the argument.

### **TankerFreeBC: Oil Economy, Green Economy**

A second ad, “Oil Economy, Green Economy,” sponsored by TankerFreeBC.org (see figure 17 and table 10), imitates the layout of ethicaloil.org but reframes the argument ostensibly using environmental economics. This ad invokes a stock plot of good vs. evil: “Canada’s tar sands,” the evil villain who “destroys the planet,” is juxtaposed with the green economy—wind-generated power—the superhero who “saves the planet.” The evil villain is portrayed in “black and white” (pun intended); the superhero in vibrant greens and blue. Viewer vantage point reinforces the mythology: a god’s eye view of the oil sands depicts miniature trucks that viewers could easily squash; in contrast, a worm’s eye view has viewers gaze upwards in awe to the majestic wind turbines powering a healthy economy (Kress & van Leeuwen ?). Both the tar sands and the wind turbines function metonymically to stand in respectively for the current oil-based economy and the desired future economy powered by environmentally friendly energy.

Parallel phrasing presents the argument. The first line uses *epistrophe* (the same word repeated at the end of phrases) to emphasize the contrast between *oil* and *green*. The first three lines use *isocolon*: *oil economy* and *green economy* use the same structure and length; *Canada's tar sands* and *green economy* use phrases of the same length (5 beats); *destroys the planet* and *saves the planet* use phrases of the same structure (present tense verb+article+noun). The third line also uses *epistrophe* to emphasize and associate *destroys* with “Canada’s tar sands” and *saves* with “green economy.” This repetition creates an emotional appeal that contrasts and emphasizes the deviations in meaning (Fahnestock 2003). The concluding exhortation also fits the pattern of juxtaposed phrasing: “stopping the tar sands” points to the villainous oil sands, and “a choice we have to make” invokes ethicaloil.org’s concluding message, but ironically delivers a forceful rebuttal. This ad trumps the ethicaloil.org argument by noting that destroying the planet precludes *any* kind of economy as well as further *choices* for humanity. This framework resurrects the environment viewpoint and aligns it with not only valuing human life but also valuing human existence. This ad is also significant for what it does not say: it omits a “value life” ethic because it would undercut TankerFreeBC.org’s position. Wind turbine vibrations compromise human and animal quality of life, and collisions with turbine arms cause significant bird death-rates. While TankerFreeBC.org acknowledges a need fuel to maintain world economies; they propose wind power, but it is not a realistic alternative to oil since wind power can generate only 7% of future global energy needs. The ad suggests that stopping this oil extraction will end global warming but, in fact, oil from other sources will continue to fuel global warming. This ad simplifies the issue & ignores the very real problem of how, realistically, to replace oil as a fuel source; it replaces legitimate argument with emotional appeal.

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Figure 17 & Table 10 about here  
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A second ad by TankerFreeBC.org, “Immoral energy, ethical energy,” stakes out moral ground above that claimed by ethicaloil.org. It frames oil as immoral energy because it is energy pursued “at any price,” including the price of animal life such as the oil-covered bird making eye contact with viewers. This direct, demand gaze creates an equal relationship between viewer and viewed (Kress & van Leeuwen 19); the threatened bird stands in for all wildlife—all *life*—

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### **Rhetoric and Legitimacy/Illegitimacy**

The discursive context for this debate about the oil sands includes two groups: the pro-oil sands entities, comprised of oil companies and non-government organizations (NGOs) (i.e., ethicaloil.org), and the anti-oil sands entities, composed largely of environmental activist groups or non-government organizations (ENGOS) (i.e., Greenpeace, TankerFreeBC.org). The various

groups construct arguments about the oil sands that draw on a range of shared values and assumptions that they direct to a broad audience of the general public. See table 11.

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Table 11 about here  
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These arguments either acknowledge and/or contest the “legitimacy” of the oil sands as an organization. In fact, the oil sands are not a monolithic corporation, but the ENGOs tend to hale it as such (Althusser 19?). In some spheres—the province of Alberta, for example, the project is largely legitimate: it conforms to standards for regulatory, pragmatic, cognitive-cultural, and moral/normative legitimacy. Within the various levels of government in Canada (regional, in Northern Alberta; provincial, in Alberta; and federal), it holds regulatory legitimacy by striving to meet regulations for clean air, water, and soil associated with the project. Beyond these sectors, however, the oil sands’ legitimacy at all levels is attacked and contested by various interested groups including other political organizations (e.g., New Democratic Party leader, Thomas Mulcair), non-government organizations (e.g., Greenpeace), and activist groups.

## **THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Based on extended analyses of these images and their inter-textuality, we identify the semiotic oppositions and construction of categorizations of the Alberta oil sands leveraged in this public discussion and explore the implications of these genres of argument for future political, cultural, and economic decisions related to energy.

Bitektine (2011) posits a linear and hierarchical model of stakeholder evaluation through which an organization is selected for sanction or accorded legitimacy. He notes that evaluation begins with attitudes expressed by groups external to the organization (media, government regulators, investors, etc.), moves on to assessing its managerial and technical legitimacy, and then makes a judgment about its cognitive legitimacy. At this point, stakeholders may confer legitimacy on the organization or continue the evaluative process, assessing sociopolitical,

pragmatic, normative and regulative legitimacy, culminating in a decision to sanction the organization or legitimate it. Our data contradicts both a linear process and a set hierarchy for the stakeholder evaluation. In fact, the five sponsors invoke various types of legitimacy in the arguments they present to consumers/readers. They all invoke cognitive and moral/normative legitimacy in their arguments. Media legitimacy is not overtly invoked at all, and the remaining types are invoked in three or fewer arguments (see table 12). The central focus of debate rests in according and denying cognitive and moral/normative legitimacies. Of course, both the oil company and the NGO assume cognitive legitimacy for BP and for the oil sands; the ENGOs and activist deny it uniformly. Similarly with according moral/normative legitimacy, BP and ethicaloil.org assume it and the ENGOs and Creekside activist deny it. Despite their stands, moral/normative and cognitive legitimacy seem to be the primary category types invoked by speakers on this subject.

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Table 12 about here  
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In his model, Bitektine places regulatory legitimacy as the final stage in legitimacy judgment, locating it on top of his hierarchy. In contrast, our evaluators placed moral/normative legitimacy at the top of their scale. They did not value transgressions of government regulation as the final judgment point. In fact, none of them explicitly addressed regulatory legitimacy; instead they transposed the discussion into a hierarchy of values that resulted in de-legitimation of all oil companies operating in the oil sands. The flip side of Table x is, in fact, a distribution of illegitimacy, at least from the 2010 Greenpeace ad onwards. Greenpeace highlights the illegitimacy of BP in its ad: it underscores BP's cognitive *illegitimacy*, challenging its "taken-for-grantedness," by castigating the company for "thinking about" investing in the oil sands; it assumes regulatory *illegitimacy* by alluding to the Deep Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico that contravened government environmental regulations; and it ironically underscores the fundamental hypocrisy (i.e., moral *illegitimacy*) of BP re-branding itself as an environmental steward who is moving "beyond petroleum" when that move is juxtaposed against the oil spill and the plan to invest in the oil sands (i.e., "black is the new green"). In this configuration, moral *illegitimacy* is relegated to the bottom of the legitimacy hierarchy and moral legitimacy is

situated at the top (a continuum from moral illegitimacy at the bottom to moral legitimacy at the top?).

In response, ethicaloil.org highlights the grotesque human rights violations perpetrated by “conflict oil countries” that include stoning women and killing indigenous peoples to emphasize the moral *illegitimacy* of environmental groups like Greenpeace, who valorize “clean oil” from *those* countries and demonize development of the oil sands. Burke (1969) suggested that hierarchies invoke “the possibility of reversing highest and lowest” (140), a process that we see enacted among these advertisements. Whereas the Greenpeace ad relegates one oil company (BP) to moral illegitimacy, the ethicaloil.org advertisements elevate selected oil companies to moral legitimacy and de-legitimate organizations such as Greenpeace because they characterize the environment as being more important than, for example, women’s or aboriginal people’s lives. In morally de-legitimizing environmental organizations (i.e., Greenpeace), ethicaloil.org transforms the organization into a scapegoat, “moralizing its status” (Burke 1969, p. 140) so that Greenpeace’s position on the oil sands becomes negligible in the ongoing discourse.

In her response to ethicaloil.org, the Creekside blogger flips the values hierarchy again, conflating the “conflict oil/ethical oil” dichotomy that ethicaloil.org so carefully delineates, by pointing out that Suncor, one of the oil sands/ethical oil producers, also operates in Syria, a “conflict oil” country. This exposure of “ethical oil” producers as equally “conflict oil” producers destroys the distinction and illegitimizes the higher moral ground claimed by ethicaloil.org. In this advertisement, the Creekside blogger brands Suncor as “snake oil” producers—fraudulent hoaxes—once again highlighting the moral hypocrisy (that is, *illegitimacy*) of Suncor and (metonymically) of *all* oil producers. Notably, although the Creekside blogger de-legitimizes ethicaloil.org on moral grounds in this response, she does not propose a legitimate alternative.

In contrast, TankerFreeBC.org takes on the ethicaloil.org effort to illegitimize the environmental movement and recuperates it by aligning it with a higher moral purpose—the valuing of *all* life, not just human life. This re-alignment evolves in two stages: first, the immoral energy/ethical energy ad, and then, the oil economy/green economy ad. The immoral/ethical energy ad highlights the pursuit of financial gain implicit in oil production (“at any price”) and juxtaposes it against “life valued” to emphasize the moral illegitimacy of sacrificing animal life for dollars. Finally, oil/green economy explicitly addresses the cataclysmic end of human/all life:

the ad asks viewers to contemplate their own demise if they continue to promote an oil economy, represented by “Canada’s tar sands: destroys the planet.” As noted, TankerFreeBC.org flips the values hierarchy proposed by ethicaloil.org. While the Creekside blogger identifies corporate hypocrisy, the anti-pipeline group (re)legitimizes an environmental-life values argumentative position and de-legitimizes economic-based arguments by pointing out that if the planet is destroyed (presumably by global warming accelerated by an oil economy), humans have no economy. This argument de-legitimizes any counter positions or rebuttals based on economic grounds.

Linear and lifecycle models of legitimacy suggest that agents have some control over its path. Rather we find a shifting dialogical seascape, where discursive stakeholders have only limited/partial control. Business communication theory conceptualizes primary audiences, secondary audiences, initial audiences that grant permission to speak (who has the support?) and other gatekeeper audience. Besides these audiences, there are also other players in the same game. And other spectators. Thus, we must understand these various audiences, players, and spectators and their ability to themselves shape meaning. They can set their sails and rudder to adjust for the wind and current. But, ultimately, they’re just riding the semiotic wave.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1974) identified *presence*—the elements of the topic that speakers choose as their focus—as an important concept in argumentation. The focus of the discussion brings the topic alive for listeners by making it real and concrete. At the same time, a subtle argumentative strategy lies in the fact that what *is* said diverts listener attention away from what is *not* being said. For example, when we are confronted with the image of a dying, oil-covered bird, we are probably going to censure the oil company responsible for the spill, but we are probably not going to think about the bird whose wing is torn off in a collision with a wind turbine or a power line. The second bird is not “present” to us as is the oil-covered bird.

Given that legitimacy is that which is ‘desirable, proper or appropriate’ (Suchman, 1995); a seemingly affective assessment. Yet, affect has been overlooked. Visual rhetoric and social semiotics can capture (de)legitimation processes as *dialogic* phenomenon amongst discursive stakeholders, a *semiotic* phenomenon fundamentally dependent on symbolic texts produced and interpreted by these stakeholders, and an affective process as evoked through imagery.

On this bases, we forward a series of propositions. First, rhetorical strategies for categorical Delegitimation and (re)legitimation are becoming more complex and sophisticated. ENGOs’

delegitimation strategies include creating a 'new' illegitimate category and placing certain companies within this. Oil sands companies counter by contending that such illegitimate category doesn't exist or it is not indeed illegitimate by reframing. Subsequent arguments can nullify or recategorize previous' categorizations, by demonstrating hypocrisy or reframing argument as broader morality question (i.e., valuing all life, not just the rights of humans). We can understand these arguments about the oil sands as discourses of resistance and counter-resistance to the ways in which opponents characterize the supporters of *dirty oil* versus *ethical oil*. Our analysis shows how these discourse of resistance emerge from particular moments in history (*kairos*) and are appropriated, rejected, or silenced by the scopic regime (the visual conventions that determine how and what we see) that dominates our historical era (Fleckenstein, 2007). Finally, we discuss how the shift in the grounds for the discussion between the *dirty oil*, *ethical oil*, *snake oil* and other categorizations create incommensurate philosophical positions that render some of the most persuasive arguments unspeakable. Rather than being a technical debate of pragmatic illegitimacy or a rationalized debate of cognitive illegitimacy, this has become an affective debate of moral illegitimacy that is tied to broader questions of energy sustainability. There does not appear to be symmetry in rhetorical tactics or delegitimation processes.

Legitimacy is not only reflected in stock price, box office sales, or market share, with a discount measured as a reduction in these. Increasingly, the social license to operate (i.e., legitimacy granted by key audiences) is fundamental for the granting of resources (support of host communities, equity & debt markets, favourable policies). A legitimacy discount can result in mutinies in local communities or amongst shareholders, a failure to raise capital, and regulatory boycotts. Oil sands companies have faced all these legitimacy discounts as seen in the table X timeline. Categorical illegitimacy can have profound material consequences.

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Figure 1 – Inclusion within versus exclusion from a legitimate category

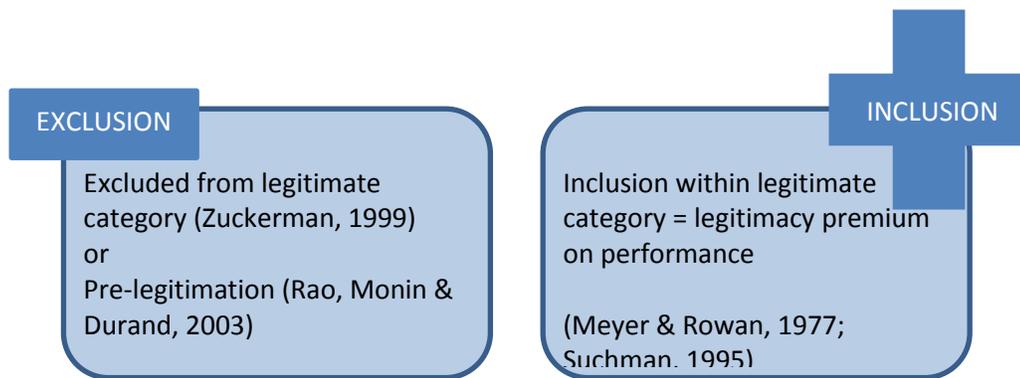


Figure 2 – Semiotic Oppositions of Good vs. Bad

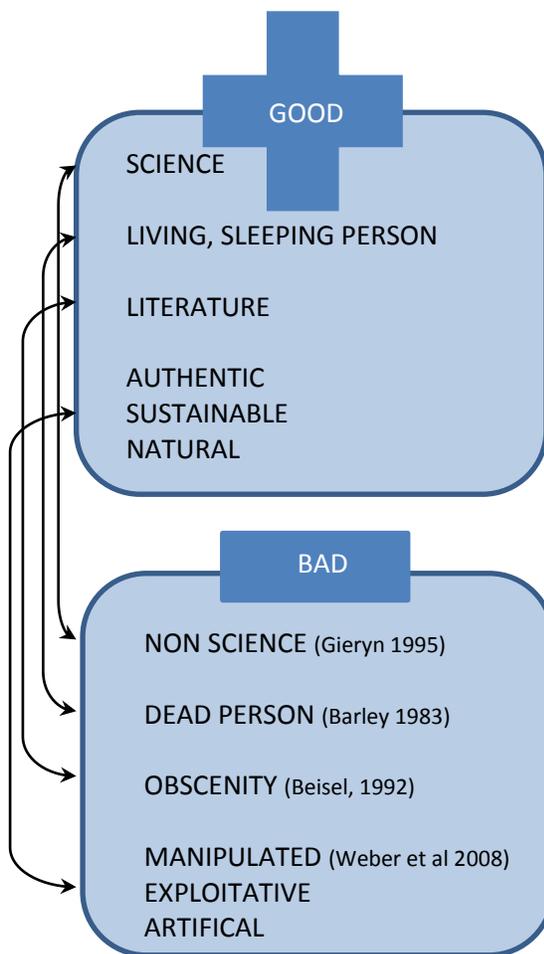


Figure 3 – Legitimate vs. Illegitimate Categorizations, Inclusion vs. Exclusion, and Performance Outcomes

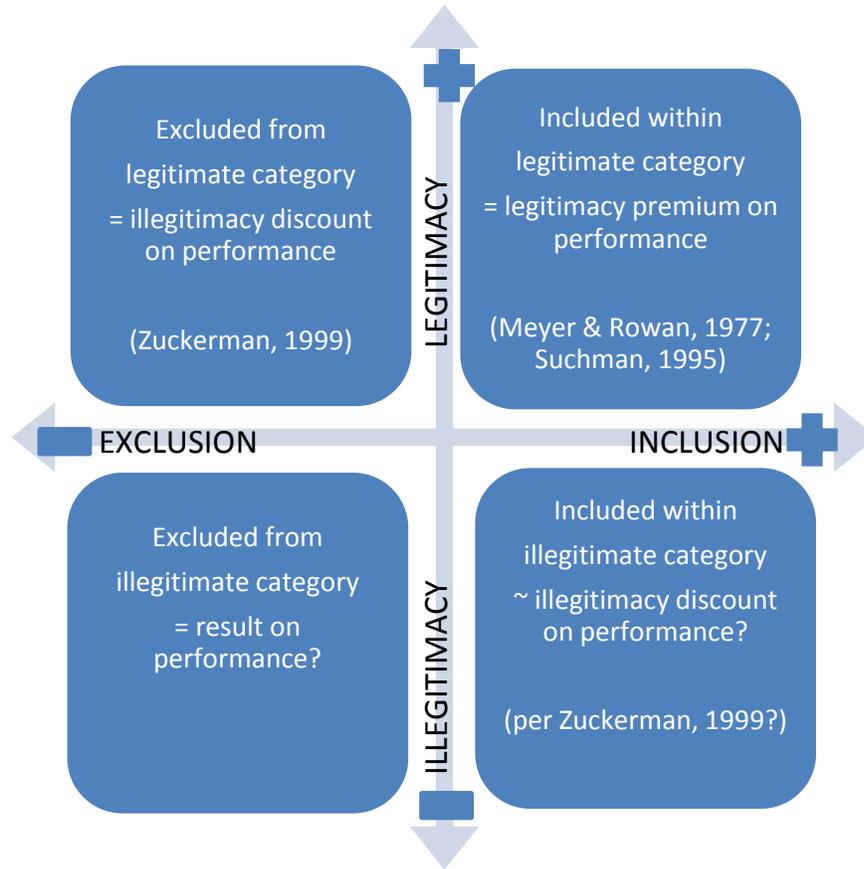


Figure 4 - Processes of legitimation (following Richardson & Dowling, 1986) and parallel processes of delegitimation

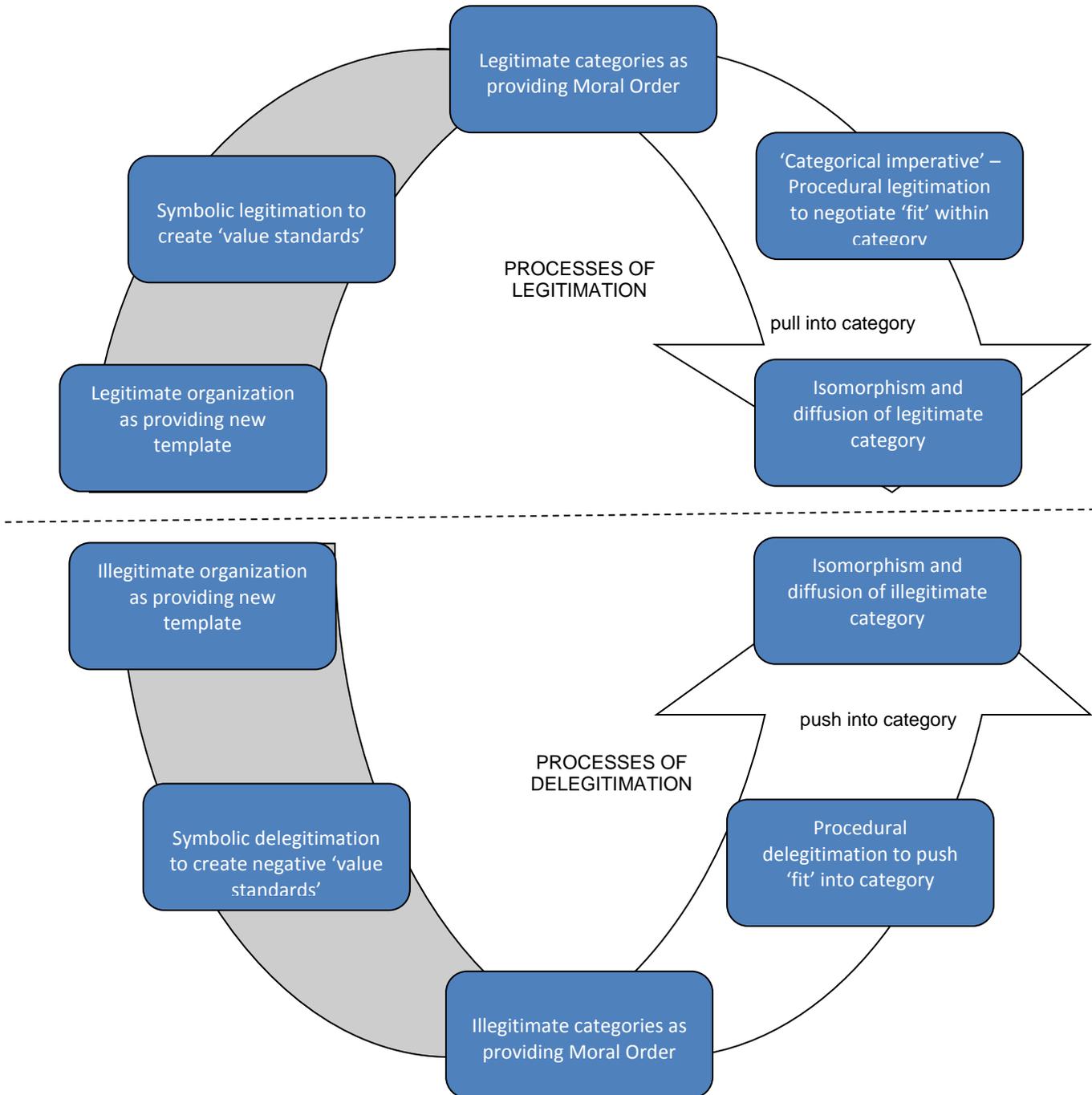


Figure 5 – Map of Alberta’s oil sands

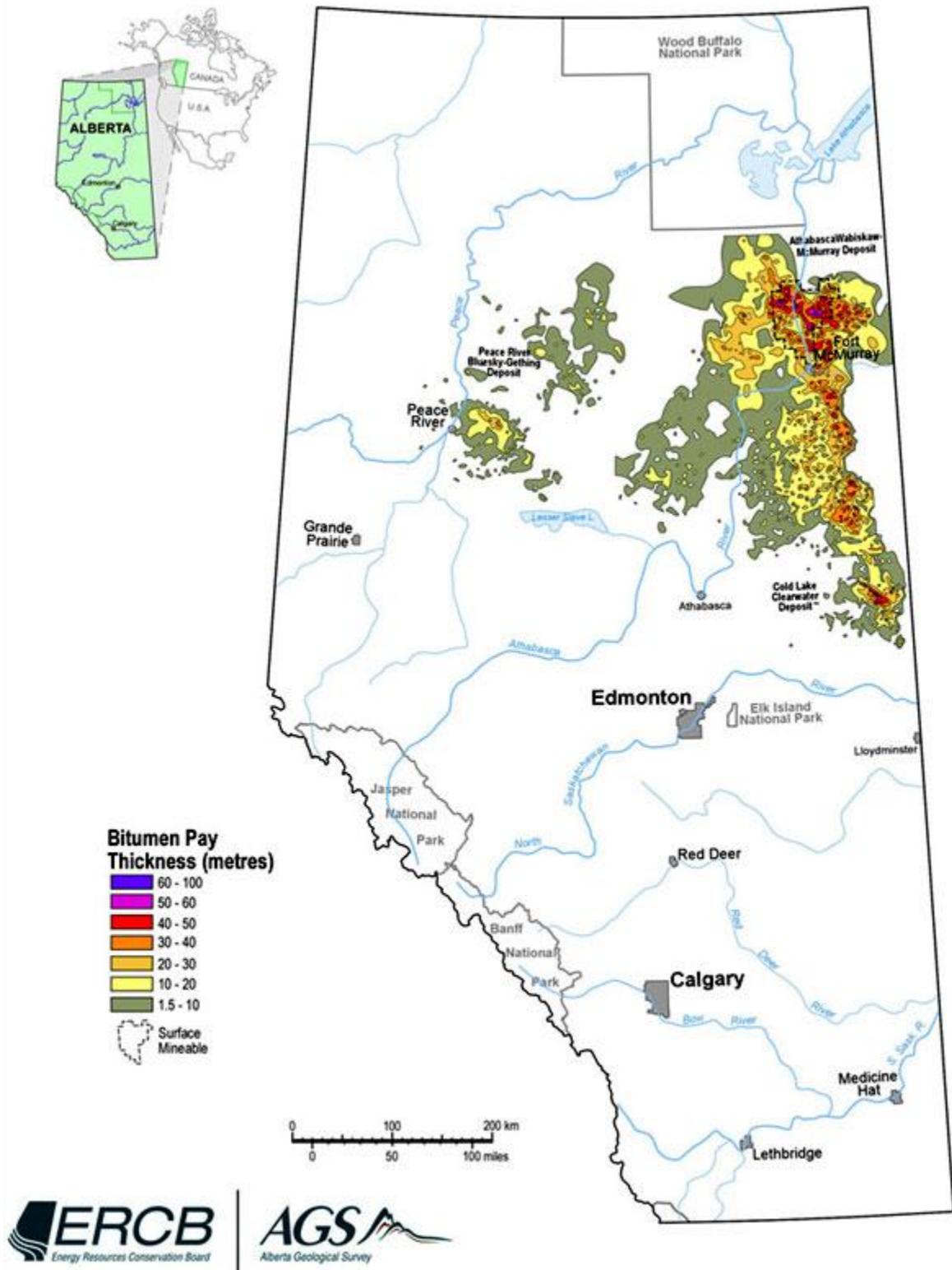
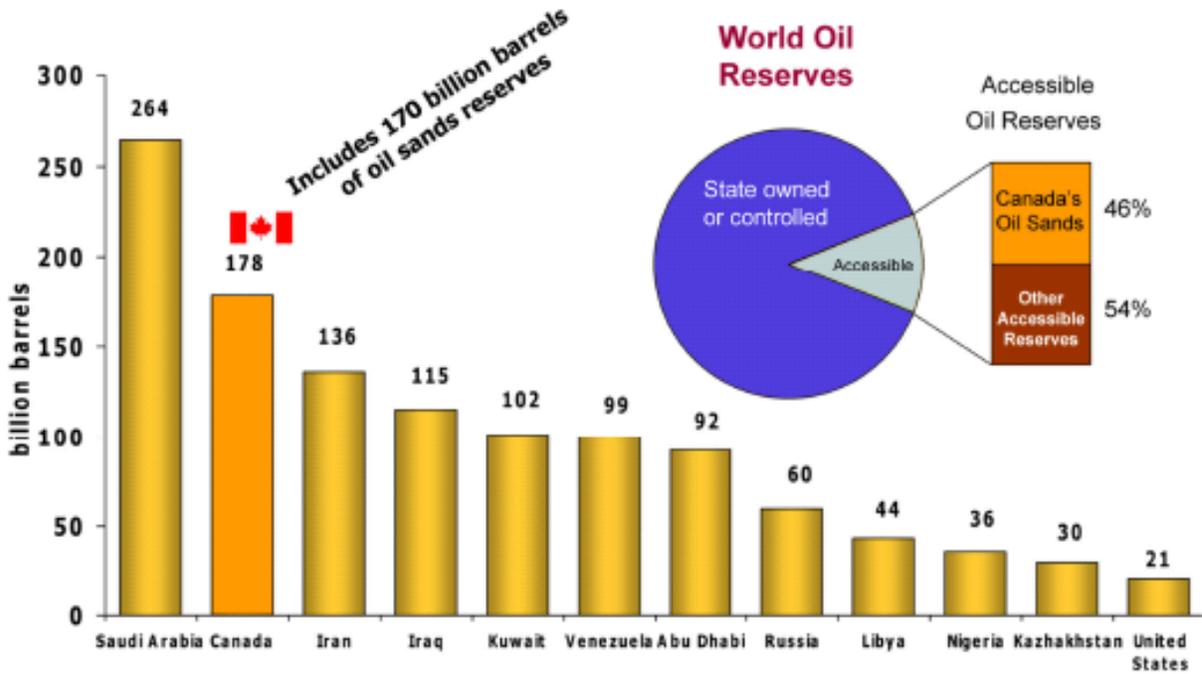


Figure 6 – World Oil Reserves by Country



Source: Oil & Gas Journal Dec. 2008

Figure 7 – Annual Carbon Emissions by Region

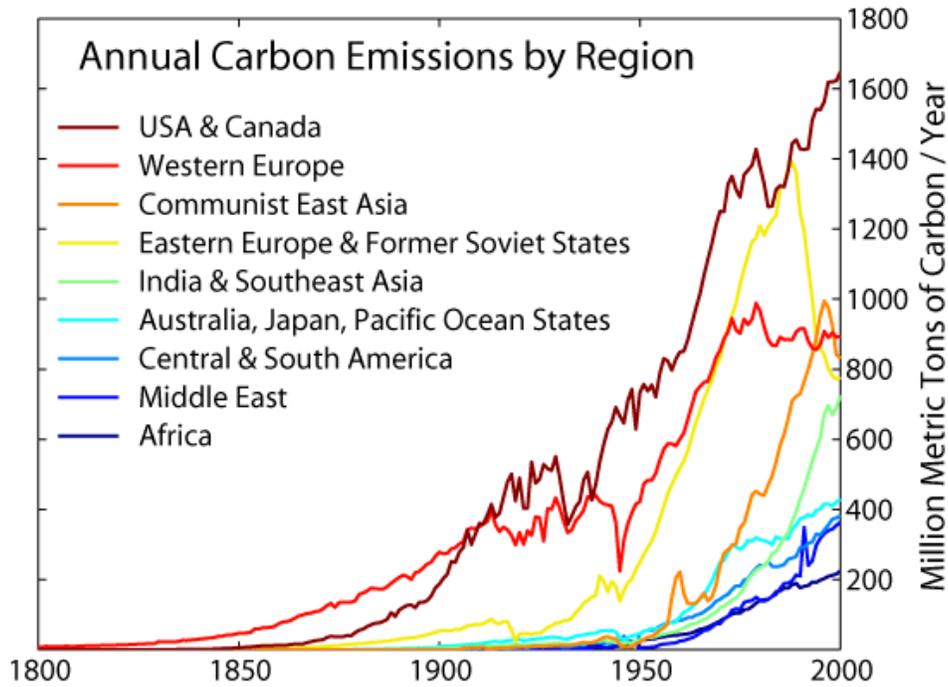


Table 1 – Dictionaries for quantitative content analysis of most frequent categories over the last 10 years

<b>Category</b>	<b>Most frequent words in category</b>
Man	Man, people, social, human, society, folk
Nature	environment, natural, wild, nature, ecolog*, species
Development	develop*, industr*, improv*
Global	world, nation, global, international, far, foreign
Local	near, region, home, local, mcmurray, resident, neighbo(u)r, grassroot
Economic	invest*, econom*, pay, revenue, fund, sale, earn, profit, income, incent*
Uneconomic	debt, deficit, uneconomic, poor, poverty
Efficient	produc*, efficien*, effectiv*, derive*, demonstra*
Inefficient	delay, decreas*, deplet*, disadvantage*, inefficien*
Recycling	renew, refine*, reduc*, recover*, recycl*, restor*, recla*
Clean	green, pur*, clean, clear, fresh
Dirty	emi*, dirt, spill, waste, contamina*, degrad*
Future	futur*, propos*, forward, hope, prospect*, pursu*, horizon, wish, dream
Past	histor*, past, previous, prior
Present	now, today
Old	old
New	new

Table 2 – Timeline of oil sands development, various categorizations, and rhetorical contestations

Date	Support / Oppose Development	Title	Categorization	Actor/Speaker	Speaker's website	Audience	Genre	Argument/Action
1-Jun-05	-	What's in your tank?	dirty gasoline, tar sands	No Dirty Energy	<a href="http://www.nodirtyenergy.org">www.nodirtyenergy.org</a>	US public, politicians	Fact Sheet - 2p	dirty, inefficient, destructive
20-Nov-05	+	It's time to go on a low-carbon diet	low-carbon diet	BP	<a href="http://www.bp.com">www.bp.com</a>	EU public and policy-makers	advertisement	low-carbon energy sources are needed to shift the balance of our fuel mix
1-Apr-06	-		Oil sands threaten our survival as a species	Al Gore		US public		Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" wins an Oscar.
24-Jan-07	+	Get your Terror Free Oil	terror free oil	gas station owner		Nebraska public	sign on gas station pump	Terror-free oil comes from the US or friendly country. Middle eastern oil supports Islamic terrorism.
1-Apr-07	+	Release targets for the Kyoto Protocol using 2006 as base year instead 1990, intensity based targets for the oil sands industry.						
1-Apr-08	-	1600 ducks land on a tailings pond at Syncrude's Aurora mine and die. Their deaths are video-taped and posted online. Video goes viral.						
1-Jul-08	+	Iran missile launch creates 'fear premium' and sends oil to record \$147/barrel. \$250B in new oil sands development is announced						
1-Sep-08	-	<u>Tar Sands: Dirty Oil And The Future Of A Continent</u> by Andrew Nikiforuk is published						
1-Feb-09	-	Syncrude is formally charged by the Government of Alberta with "Failure to have appropriate waterfowl deterrents in place at a tailings pond", a contravention of the <i>Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act</i> , section 227 (j) (Government of Alberta,						
14-Feb-09	-	President Obama, you'll never guess who's standing between us and our new energy economy	tar sands, new energy	Forest Ethics	<a href="http://www.forestethics.org">www.forestethics.org</a>	President Obama, US public	newspaper advertisement	Canada is turning a blind eye to tar sands problems. President Obama should discuss new energy future on his visit.
Mar-09	-	National Geographic publishes "Scraping the Bottom", 16 pages of images of tailings ponds from the Alberta Oil Sands						
1-Jun-09	-	US House and Senate each passed clean energy bills. House Resolution 2454, better known as the American Clean energy and Security Act, or the Waxman-Markey Bill						
1-Jun-09	-	Secretary Clinton can Stop Dirty Oil	dirty oil	the green pages	<a href="http://www.thegreenpages.ca">www.thegreenpages.ca</a>	US public, politicians	cartoon	dirty oil threatens the US's clean energy future
8-Dec-09	-	The Story of the Oil Sands	H2Oil	Watch Mojo & Walsh director of H2Oil	<a href="http://www.watchmojo.com">www.watchmojo.com</a>	public	Youtube video	<a href="http://www.WatchMojo.com">http://www.WatchMojo.com</a> speaks with Walsh about the tar sands, and their effect on the environment
1-Feb-10	-	Dirty Oil: The Movie	Dirty Oil	Dogwoof, Lesley Iwerks	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEopisQUfiA">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEopisQUfiA</a>	public	YouTube video	America's addition to oil is causing a global crisis
1-Mar-10	-	Canada's avaTarsands	dirty oil vs. clean energy future	Corporate Ethics Institute with 54 other US and international ENGOS	<a href="http://www.dirtyoilsands.org">www.dirtyoilsands.org</a>	public	advertisement	Variety magazine advertisement, prior to Academy Awards stop tar sands development that lock us into tar sands oil instead of transitioning to clean energy future
1-Apr-10	-	BP shareholders defeat motion calling for review of Oil Sands operations but Tony Hayward, BP's CEO publicly pledges to not use open pit mining in Oil Sands operations						

16-Apr-10	+	OSLI signing	oil sands oil	Oil Sands Leadership Initiative	<a href="http://www.osli.ca">www.osli.ca</a>	media & public	video	Oil Sands Leadership Initiative signed charter to lead the oil sands industry in the responsible development of Alberta's bitumen resource
1-May-10	-	Tar Sands Invasion	dirty and expensive oil threatens America's new economy	Corporate Ethics International, Earthworks, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club	<a href="http://www.nrdc.org">www.nrdc.org</a>	US public and politicians	Fact Sheet, 4 p	tar sands oil brings severe negative impacts to America
1-Jun-10	±	Suncor announces regulatory approval of a new tailings management plan, representing an accelerated strategy						
14-Jul-10	-	Alberta: The OTHER oil disaster	oil disaster	Corporate Ethics International	<a href="http://www.corpethics.org">www.corpethics.org</a>	US public	billboard	Alberta tar sands oil disaster is the same as the Gulf oil spill disaster
1-Nov-10	-	Harper I'm sorry	dirty oil	350 or bust	<a href="http://350orbust.wordpress.com">350orbust.wordpress.com</a>	CN public, politicians	mock billboard	Harper could have stopped climate change and didn't
1-Nov-10	+	Publication of <i>Ethical Oil</i> , by Ezra Levant						
1-Dec-10	-	Stop the tar sands - RBC: stop funding dirty oil	dirty oil	Rainforest Action Network	<a href="http://www.ran.org">www.ran.org</a>	RBC shareholder s, TMT, Board	Poster at RBC AGM	RBC does not support sustainability
1-Dec-10	-	Cancun climate agreement raises temperature on Harper	tar sands, ecocide	Wilderness Committee	<a href="http://www.wildernesscommittee.org">www.wildernesscommittee.org</a>	media, public	press release	Canada awarded 'Fossil of the Year' award. We need to shrink oil from tar sands
12-Jan-11	+	Christmas Lights & Saudi Oil: Don't Twinkle for Terror	terror oil	Agnosticism / Atheism	<a href="http://atheism.about.com/gi/pages/story.htm">http://atheism.about.com/gi/pages/story.htm</a>	right wing Christians	propaganda poster	Christmas Lights & Saudi Oil: Fight Christmas Because it Wastes Energy and Keeps America Dependent
1-Feb-11	-	Tar sands impacts on people, climate and environment - from Canada to Africa	tar sands	Friends of the Earth	<a href="http://www.foeeurope.org">www.foeeurope.org</a>	EU public and policymakers	Fact Sheet, 2 p	oil sands creates GHG, which impacts global climate
1-Apr-11	-	No [Keystone] pipeline, it's getting hot in here	dirty oil	It's getting hot in here, dispatches from the Youth Climate Movement	<a href="http://itsgettinghotinhere.org">itsgettinghotinhere.org</a>	CN & US public, politicians	cartoon	dirty oil burned the last bridge to the US
6-Apr-11	-	For Our Grandchildren	tar sands, dirty and dangerous	Norwegian Grandparents Climate Action, partnering with Canadian FOG (for our grandchildren)	<a href="http://www.fourgrandchildren.ca">www.fourgrandchildren.ca</a>	AB public	advertisement running in Edmonton Journal	oil sands creates GHG, jeopardizing the prosperity/safety of our grandchildren. Statoil is to be condemned.
1-May-11	+	Prime Minister Harper reelected with majority government: Pledges there will be no major changes in federal management of oil sands						
23-Jul-11	+	OilPeakalypseNow	OilPeakalypseNow	Bruce's Rights Riders - for bikers' rights	<a href="http://ldrlongdistance.com/bikers_rights_motorcycle">http://ldrlongdistance.com/bikers_rights_motorcycle</a>	motor cycle riders	Poster	The impending oil crunch is going to lead to apocalyptic wars
Jul-11	-	Ethical Oil, Conflict Oil		Ethical Oil Institute	<a href="http://www.ethicaloil.org">www.ethicaloil.org</a>	online audience	blog	Ad campaign premised on the notion that oil exports ultimately underwrite the values of those states that produce them.

Jul-11	-	Ethical Snake Oil	snake oil	creekside blog	<a href="http://www.creekside1.blogspot.com">www.creekside1.blogspot.com</a>	online audience	blog	Velshi's blog <a href="http://www.ethicaloil.org/">http://www.ethicaloil.org/</a> has been relaunched with an expensive, new, and particularly misleading look. So, creekside added a third panel to Velshi's
Jul-11	-	Immoral Energy, Ethical Energy	Immoral Energy, Oil Economy	Tanker Free BC	<a href="http://TankerFreeBC.org">TankerFreeBC.org</a>	online audience	blog	Develop ad campaign to counter the Ethical Oil institute's categorization of the oil sands as ethical oil
10-Aug-11	-	Mark Ruffalo Supports The Tar Sands Action	tar sands oil, defuse largest carbon bomb	Mark Ruffalo, tarsandsaction	<a href="http://www.tarsandsaction.org">www.tarsandsaction.org</a>	US public	YouTube video	tar sands pipeline will go through America's richest farmland, create GHG, destroy Aboriginal homeland. Join protest in DC.
21-Aug-11	-	The Campaign to Stop the Keystone XL Pipeline	threat of foreign oil	Jane Kleb, Video Nation, Bold Nebraska	<a href="http://www.boldnebraska.org">www.boldnebraska.org</a>	US public	YouTube video	not just big environmentalist vs. big oil, it's a land rights issue: foreign oil threatening generational Nebraskan landowners. Come to DC, write to Obama
23-Aug-11	-	Anti Tar Sands 'Super Hero'	dangerous tar sands, setting a fuse on a carbon bomb	Wilderness Committee	<a href="http://www.wildernesscommittee.org">www.wildernesscommittee.org</a>		press release	We need to show US opponents to Keystone XL that we support their efforts
2-Sep-11	+	Patrick Moore, Ph.D., Environment alist and Greenpeace Co-Founder	oil sands	Patrick Moore, CAPP	<a href="http://www.capp.ca/">www.capp.ca/</a>	public	tv & print advertisement & youtube	<i>Where there was once an oil sands mining operation, you now have a beautiful, bio-diverse landscape again, where you'd never know there'd been a mine there in the first place.</i>
1-Oct-11	=	Robert Redford: Join the Nov. 6 Keystone XL Protest	tar sands oil, dangerous pipeline	Robert Redford, tarsandsaction	<a href="http://www.tarsandsaction.org">www.tarsandsaction.org</a>	US president and public	YouTube video	US will be more dependent upon foreign oil with greater environmental impacts. Obama - say no to Keystone
31-Oct-11	-	Robert Redford: THANK YOU President Obama	dirtiest oil, tar sands oil vs. clean energy future	Robert Redford, tarsandsaction, Natural Resources Defense Council	<a href="http://www.tarsandsaction.org">www.tarsandsaction.org</a>	US president & public	YouTube video	Big Oil has pressured Obama, but he didn't cave. Keystone would carry dirtiest oil through America's heartland - threatening water, land, economy.
1-Nov-11	-	From DC to BC rally	dangerous tar sands, defusing a carbon bomb	Wilderness Committee	<a href="http://www.wildernesscommittee.org">www.wildernesscommittee.org</a>	media, public	press release	We need to show US opponents to Keystone XL that we support their efforts
11-Dec-11	+	Canadian Federal Government withdraws from Kyoto Protocol to avoid \$14B in penalties						
20-Dec-11	-	Dole's Forest Ethics Response	toxic tar sands	Forest Ethics vs. Dole VP Sylvain Cuperlier	<a href="http://www.forestethics.org">www.forestethics.org</a>	US public	Youtube video -> blog comment	Dole is repeating same misleading lines used in August
12-Jan-12	=	Obama administration rejects Keystone XL Pipeline proposal						

Figure 8 – Frequencies of semiotic oppositions in LexisNexis oil sands articles by year (1969-2011)

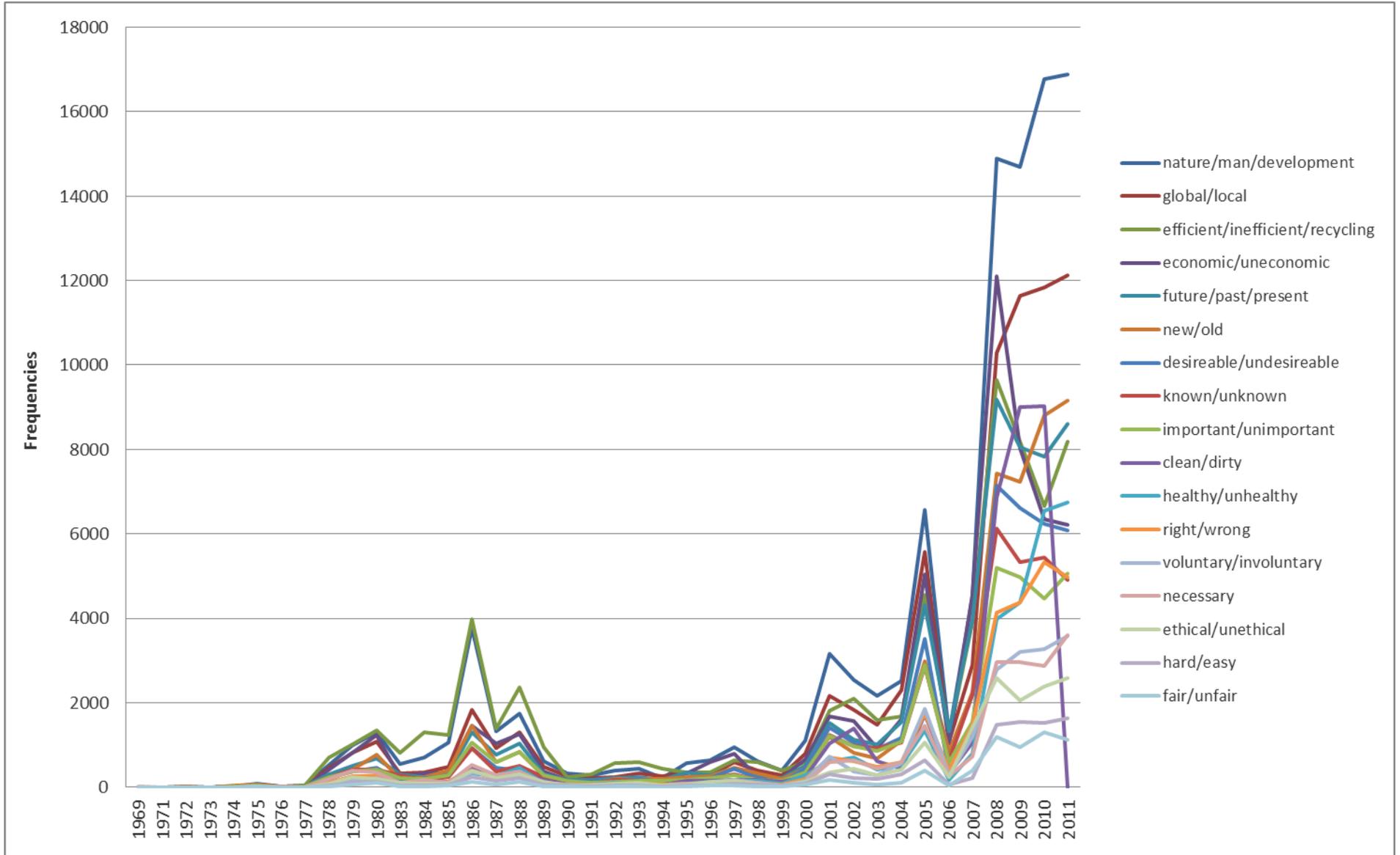


Figure 9 –Frequencies of semiotic oppositions in LexisNexis (2004-2011) in sampled ads

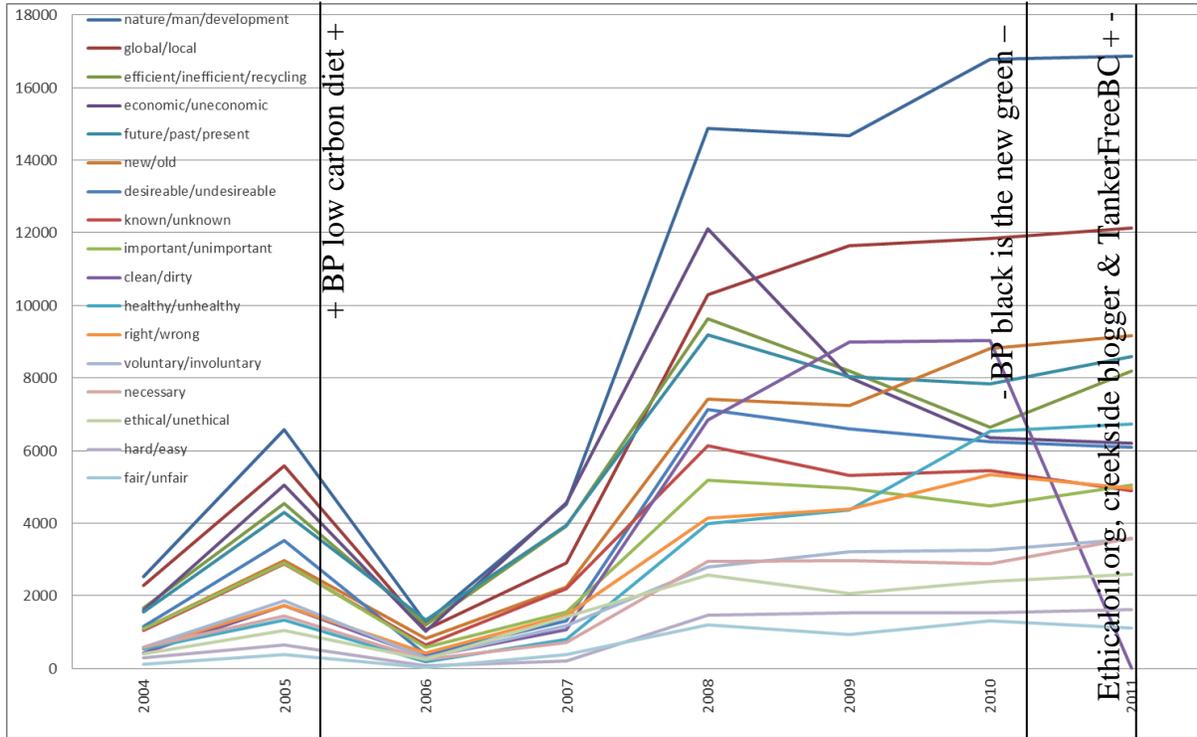
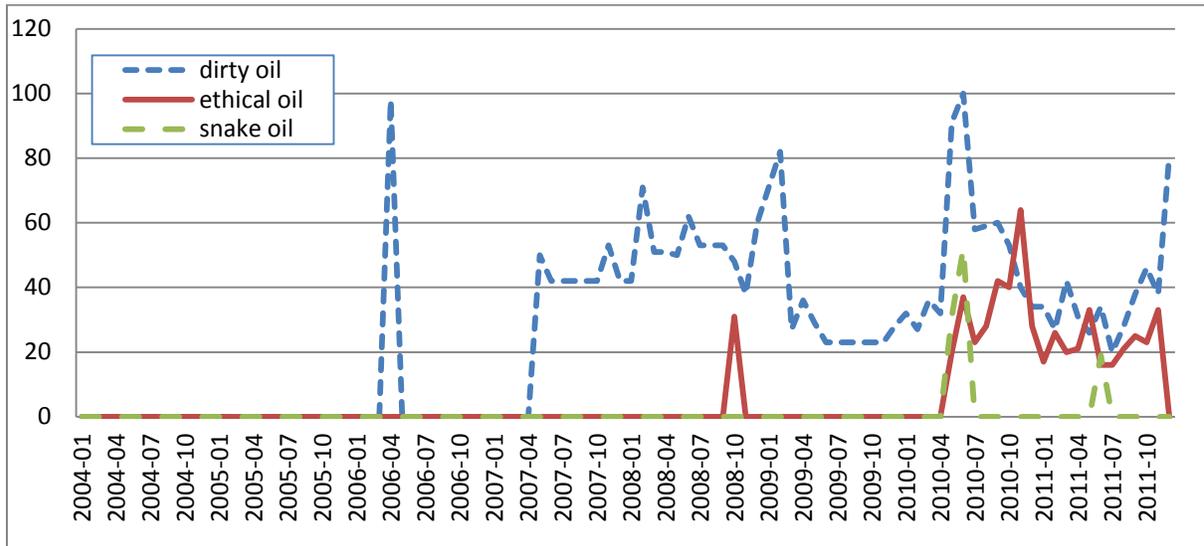


Figure 10 - Use of *Dirty Oil*, *Ethical Oil*, and *Snake Oil* within Energy and Utilities Industries<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> The numbers on the graph reflect how many searches have been done for a particular term, relative to the total number of searches done on Google over time. They do not represent absolute search volume numbers, because the data is normalized and presented on a scale from 0-100. Each point on the graph is divided by the highest point, or 100. If Google has insufficient data, 0 is shown.

Table 3 – Coding Scheme for Advertisements’ Images and Text

<b>Coding</b>	<b>Example</b>
Type of visual representation - isomorphic	Photograph: traditional portrait shot celebrating figure’s achievement
Image framing – natural, cropped	Cropped view, chest upward (traditional photo portrait)
Relationship between text and image - complementary, supplementary, juxtaposition	Supplementary (image is dominant; text supplements) Women can be leaders in their community
Gaze of figures – object/subject	Direct gaze, viewer makes eye contact with MB: she could be viewer’s friend
Viewer distance – intimate, mid, estranged	Close up (chest up) Creates intimate relationship
Vantage point of viewer – subordinate, level, superordinate	Level: equal relationship between viewer and MB
Framing of argument – environmental, economic, morality/ethics, political/human rights	Political: human rights
Identification - creating ‘us vs. them’, creating shared vision, invoking mythologies	Creates shared purpose: We want a society that values women
Modes of argument – ethos, pathos, logos	Ethos: sponsor values women; viewer should too Pathos: Pride in female mayor, Canadians for enabling woman’s success Logos: What kind of person do you want to be? The gas you buy reflects your values
Method of argument – anaphora, epistrophe, analogy, simile...	Isocolon “conflict oil, ethical oil”, anastrophe “. . . OIL, . . . OIL” <b>thesis/antithesis</b>
Positioning – old/familiar, centred/emphasized, new/unfamiliar	Canada’s treatment of women placed as “new/surprising” information (i.e., the antithesis of how conflict oil countries treat women)
Tropes – irony, metonymy, pun, metaphor	Metonymy: Mayor Melissa Blake stands for all women in Canada; Oil Sands stands in for Canada; “Valuing women” represents kind of person viewer wants to be

Figure 11 and Table 4 – BP’s Low Carbon Diet Ad and Analysis

# It's time to go on a low-carbon diet.

**Natural Gas** Natural gas is a bridge to clean, renewable energy. By shifting the balance of the fuel mix from coal to natural gas, carbon dioxide emissions in new power generation can be reduced by 50%. Today, natural gas accounts for about 40% of BP's global production.

**Electricity** Cleaner power stations are vital to meet demand for energy and help meet Kyoto targets. BP is leading plans with its partners to develop a power station in Scotland to run on hydrogen. This would produce electricity with 90% lower carbon emissions for 250,000 homes.

**Solar** Energy produced from the sun emits no carbon. Over the last 30 years, BP has taken solar energy to 160 countries worldwide, in both urban and remote locations – from solar solutions available in select retail outlets in California to the largest off-grid system in the world in the Philippines.

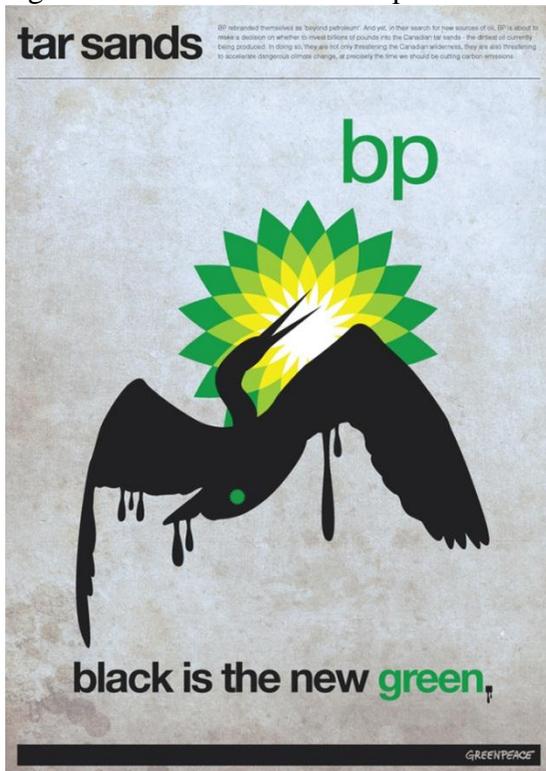


beyond petroleum™

bp.com

Code	Text	Image	Analysis
Relationship X text & image: supplementary	Slogan: It's time to go on a low-carbon diet	Yellow highlighter on "low carbon"	Image (yellow highlights) subordinated to text: yellow draws the eye to key terms, i.e., three types of energy <i>beyond petroleum</i> that bp produces
Viewer Distance: extreme long range to logo	BP Beyond petroleum	BP logo (green & yellow sunburst/ quilt design)	Distance minimizes viewers' relationship with bp logo Sunburst represents BP working in the background on all of these alternatives to oil energy?
Argument Frame: environmental stewards	Beyond petroleum		BP argues they are reducing carbon fuels and working towards a cleaner global environment while also meeting global demand for energy
Identification: shared purpose, vision	Natural gas Hydrogen Electricity Solar	Yellow highlighter	Natural gas is a bridge to clean, renewable energy; Cleaner power stations; solar emits no carbon ... Argumentative pitch: BP is part of the solution (ethos/pathos). Viewer & BP are on the same side
Logos: evidence used to support claims: facts, data, & statistics	Natural gas Solar Hydrogen electric		Statistics (reduce co2 emissions by 50%; 40% of BP's global production is natural gas, BP has developed solar energy technology for 30 years) Claim: BP is reducing carbon emissions to reduce greenhouse gases: BP is solving global warming (ethos)
Tropes: pun (paronomasia) & analogy	It's time to go on a low-carbon diet.		Pun: "low carbon" = "low carb" Analogy: Viewers tried low carb diet to lose weight & improve personal health; now viewers/all of humanity need low carbon fuel diet to reduce greenhouse gases, improve the planet's health(pathos)

Figure 12 and Table 5 – Greenpeace’s Black is the New Green Ad and Analysis



Code	Text	Image	Analysis
Relationship x text & image: juxtaposition	Tar sands, paragraph, BP, black is the new green, Greenpeace	BP logo is sun, Oil covered sea bird flying against the sun	Paragraph connects sea bird to oil/tar sands (no sea birds within 1000 km of oil sands) Only processing text & image together allows viewer to comprehend fully
isomorphic		Sun & egret	Images are cartoon-like but still recognizable
Gaze: offer		Bird	Object for our contemplation
Viewer distance: middle distance	BP	Sun: starburst quilt patch	Metaphorical: sun gives life to bird but in this case BP gives death to bird (antithesis/chiasmus?) through oil spill
Vantage point: worm’s eye view		We look up at the bird then to the sun	BP is ascendant in this layout; company is more powerful (god-like) than viewer or bird (both are victims of unscrupulous corporation?)
Argument Frame: environmental	Black is the new green	BP’s Oil spill kills birds & the tar sands kills birds	Greenpeace says BP “thinking” of investing in oil sands, equates investing to “threatening ... wilderness ... accelerate climate change”
Method of argument: Anaphora (repeat words beginning of phrases)	“they are not only threatening . . . , they are also threatening”	n/a	“Threatening” has different meaning in each phrase: 1. BP is “menacing” (active danger) the Canadian wilderness; 2. BP “suggesting they might” take an action (passive danger—no action taking place)
Modes of proof: ethos	BP /Greenpeace		BP is branded hypocritical ( <b>not</b> environmentally friendly; “beyond petroleum” is empty words
Pathos: ironic slogan fosters contempt for BP	Black is the new green		Ironic statement: the only way BP can be “green” is if we redefine “black” (as in oil spill) to be “green”
Logos: claims but <b>no</b> evidence	Paragraph re. BP “thinking about investing in oil sands” & potential outcomes		Claim: “thinking about investing” . . . “threatens Canadian wilderness” Fact: bitumen-soaked sand has been leaking bitumen into the Athabasca River for thousands of years; the oil sands unrefined ≠ hospitable area for wildlife; if oil <b>is</b> removed, it can be rehabilitated into refuge for wildlife.

Figure 13 and Table 6 – Ethical Oil Institutes: Conflict Oil, Ethical Oil Ad on Women and Analysis



Code	Text	Image	Analysis
Figure Gaze:		Eye contact indirect, object: “offer”	Her eyes closed means that she does not know she’s being viewed: she is offered as an object of contemplation; she’s grimacing in fear or pain (we observe her moments before start of her death by stoning). Indirect gaze dehumanizes her: she’s a curiosity, to evoke compassion/horror/outrage?
		Eye contact “demand”	Viewer makes eye contact with Melissa Blake, Mayor of Region of Wood Buffalo. She has no veil (in contrast to Muslim woman in left photo), her hair it pulled back into a bun or pony tail. She’s smiling; her face looks happy, relaxed, pleased to be mayor She meets viewer’s gaze, so “demand” relationship (personal); we could be friends with her
Viewer distance:		Middle/close up View from waist up; dirt is burying her body from waist down.	Close enough to see her features, eyes closed, grimacing expression She is both close enough to evoke a connection with viewers and far enough away that we are distanced from her: we are observers but not perpetrators (?) Knowledge of her fate provokes shock/outrage
		Close up, from chest up	Proximity creates personal relationship with woman. We can see details of her facial expression. Eye contact creates equal relationship
Positioning:	Old, familiar	Located on left	Shocking image is positioned as old information – emotional appeal such that viewers are jaded by cruelty? This behavior is acceptable to viewers who support purchasing of conflict oil over Canadian oil?
	New unfamiliar	Located on right	Presents Canada’s treatment of women as “new/surprising” information, (i.e., the antithesis of the treatment of women by conflict oil countries)
Identification:	Creating ‘us’ vs. ‘them’	Treatment of women	Conflict oil countries stone their women (barbaric medieval practice in western eyes)
	Creating shared purpose	Close relationship created through presentation of figure	We live where women are elected mayor. Viewers want to claim woman mayor as one of their achievements. Entices viewer to choose Canada because it allows women to fulfill their potential as human beings. We want to live in a society that values women, not destroys them
Argument Frame:	Political, human rights		Treatment of women, opportunities for women. Canada Oil Sands/Canada respects & values women; unnamed oil producing countries disrespect & persecute women
Argument Method:	Thesis/ antithesis. Parallelism.		Isocolon used in “conflict oil countries” & “Canada’s oil sands”. Lines are same length & structure: repetition in this line draws viewers’ attention; rhythm fosters pleasing style. Parallel structure sets up contrast in following line that highlights differences (woman elected mayor has more syllables; uses singular noun [woman] vs. plural noun [women])
Pathos & Ethos		Woman stoned vs. woman elected	Viewers support stoning of women through choosing “environmentally friendly” conflict oil. Viewer exhorted to value human life over environmental concerns
Logic	Syllogistic/ enthymemic		Full argument proceeds from juxtaposition of two panels. Source of oil is viewers’ choice. Viewers should choose ethical sources of oil.
Tropes: Irony		Traditional portrait	One documents last moments of her life. Other documents her achievements. Both situations arise out of the policies of the countries they inhabit. Implicit comparison highlights the bad policies of the COCs

Figure 14 and Table 7 – Ethical Oil Institutes: Conflict Oil, Ethical Oil Ad on Aboriginals and Analysis



Enter the site to learn more about Ethical Oil from Canada >> [EthicalOil.org](http://EthicalOil.org)

Code	Text	Image	Analysis
Figure Gaze:		indirect “offer” on soldiers; direct “demand” on skull	We cannot see faces of soldiers; soldiers are objects for our contemplation. We look into empty eye sockets of skull, meeting its gaze (ironically, a “demand” perspective). Skull demands that we, viewers, act?
		indirect “offer”, she is looking up and away	Pictured as an object for our contemplation. Viewer can’t be friends with her because she represents her people (not her individual self). She is also in the midst of doing her job, not aware that she is being viewed
Viewer distance:		close up to skull long range on soldiers	Personal connection and equality established with skull/corpse. Distant, impersonal relationship with soldiers. Viewers are subordinate to soldiers (they are an implicit threat to viewers, just as they were to indigenous peoples [represented by corpse])
		Close up, traditional portrait	Viewer sees details of her face, facial expression, captured in the middle of working: she’s smiling and looking at a co-worker (presumably)
Positioning : left/old vs. right/new	Conflict oil, Sudan’s oil fields: Indigenous peoples killed	Image of corpse, skull and armed patrolling soldiers	Sudan’s attitude towards its aboriginal peoples is depicted as ‘old/familiar’. This ad draws on viewer ignorance and negative stereotypes about Sudan, its history and culture; stereotypes are characterized as common knowledge, nothing new when likely, it <u>is</u> news to viewers.
	Ethical oil, Canada’s Oil Sands: Aboriginals employed	Happy, productive aboriginal employee of oil sands	Fact that aboriginal peoples work in good jobs in the oil sands is presented as new, surprising, unfamiliar information. Implies that some Canadian aboriginals benefit from and support the development of the oil sands [this point presented as news to viewers?]
Identification:	Text & image together create anti-vision		Creates a shared purpose to repudiate actions that support genocide
	Text & image together create shared vision		Highlights integration and valuable contribution of aboriginal peoples to mainstream society. Represents the ideal for a country’s treatment of its aboriginal peoples
Tropes: metonymy		skull	Skull stands in for all of Sudan’s indigenous people, implying that all of Sudan’s indigenous peoples have been killed.
		happy employee	She represents all aboriginals in Canada: happy, productive citizens employed by Oil Sands projects; signifying Canada’s ethical treatment of its aboriginal peoples.
Argument Frame:	Killed vs. employed	Dead vs. living	Political—human rights. Sudan ignores human rights of its indigenous peoples while Canada treats its indigenous peoples as equal citizens
Argument Method:	Epistrophe	Parallelism	Epistrophe. “Oil” repeated at the end of both phrases. Same grammatical structure (adjective + noun). Parallelism sets up comparison between the two cases offered.
Ethos & Pathos	Killed vs. employed	Dead dehumanized vs. healthy, wanted	Sudan doesn’t even bury its dead indigenous peoples but discards them like the carcasses of animals
Logos	syllogism/enthymeme		Full panel makes complete argument that concludes: Ethical Oil. A Choice we have to make. Major premise (unstated): Ethical people (should) choose products manufactured by ethically responsible countries. Minor premise (unstated): Ethically responsible countries (like Canada) manufacture ethical oil. Conclusion (stated): Ethical people (should) choose ethical oil.

Figure 15 and Table 8 – Blogger’s Conflict Oil, Ethical Oil, Snake Oil Ad and Analysis



Code	Text	Image	Analysis
Figure Gaze:	Conflict Oil – Dictatorship	Indirect ‘object’ averted gaze of both leaders	Pictured as objects for viewer contemplation. Therefore, leaders of Iran are characterized as sub-human, subordinate to viewer (i.e., we have power over them, as we have power over our choice of oil).
	Ethical Oil - Democracy	No Figures/gaze	Canadian leader(s) absent from representation: why? To avoid partisanship (esp. negative) response in viewers to image of PM Harper & Conservatives?
	Snake Oil – Suncor in Syria	Gaze indirect. Both figures are looking away and up at something	Pictured as objects for viewer contemplation. [Indirect gaze tends to dehumanize or subordinate figure represented] Therefore, PM and Suncor employee are characterized as sub-human, subordinate to viewer (i.e., we have power over them)
Viewer distance:		middle distance; on level with leaders, above the flag	Facial features are recognizable. Recognition of flag emphasizes both religious and secular dictatorship in Iran (i.e., two types of tyranny supported with purchase of Iranian oil). Viewer on the level of leaders; of equal power (i.e., they tyrannize their citizens but they can’t tyrannize the viewer)
		Maple leaf (red leaf on white background), superior to viewer	Intimate relationship established between flag and viewer, increases emotional appeal for viewer (esp. if Canadian viewer). Flag has power over viewer Viewers aspire to this flag (?) as a guide to viewers (i.e., purchase oil from ethical countries)
		Middle distance; waist-up shot of figures; dwarfed by metal structure	Medium-distance relationship between viewers and figures. Power dynamics are basically equal, with PM slightly higher than employee (signifying his higher social/political status?)
Positioning : left/old vs. right/new	Left/Old- Text aligned: Centered	Aligned, united around flag symbol	Maps type of government onto symbol of nation; transfers results to philosophical judgment about natural resource nation produces (i.e., conflict/not ethical).
	Middle/New Text align: centered	Democracy overlays red maple leaf	Maps government onto symbol of nation; transfers results to philosophical judgment about a natural resource the nation produces (i.e., ethical/not conflict)
	Right/Newest : Snake oil	Collaborating Suncor & dictator	Emphasizes the hypocrisy of the ethicaloil.org stance
Identification:	Identification shifts across panels Left panel: viewers align as “us” vs. Iran & leaders as “them”. Middle panel: viewers align with Canada as part of “us” vs. Iran & other dictatorships as “them”. Right panel: viewers align as “us” vs. all oil producers as “them”		
Argument Method:	Dictatorship, Democracy	Iranian flag, Canadian flag	Isocolon (length & structure). Repetition highlights differences by emphasizing the similarities. Snake oil breaks the repetition, patterning
epistrophe	----- oil, ----- oil		Repeats same word at end of successive phrases. Three syllables; four syllables; two syllables. Repetition builds to the crescendo “snake oil,” which undercuts the dichotomy established in the first two
Modes: pathos/emotion	Conflict oil = dictatorship	Iranian leaders = dictators + conflict (politically)	Images of Iran’s leaders produce fear/hatred/maybe pity for the Iranian people. Image of hanging Canadian flag evokes images of pride, patriotism, etc. (in North American/Canadian viewers). Makes shocking connection between Suncor’s work in the oil sands and its work in Syria. Viewer is shocked, then outraged, then cynical about spuriousness of the so-called high road in ethicaloil.org ad.

Ethos/credibility	Conflict oil, dictatorship	Iranian flag and leaders	Negative ethos/trustworthiness on world's stage (at least from NA perspective). Builds viewer confidence in competence of ad designers because it has correctly identified Iran as a dictatorship & Canada as a democracy
Modes: Logos	Conflict oil, ethical oil, snake oil. A choice the tarsands finds easy to make	Evil empire; good empire; unscrupulous oil company	Conflict oil panel is the thesis: i.e. dictatorships produce conflict oil the image provides evidence to support this enthymeme (conclusion: Iran produces conflict oil: don't buy their oil). Ethical oil is the antithesis of conflict oil. The image serves as an example to support the enthymeme (Canada produces ethical oil; buy their oil). Synthesis: Snake oil panel aligns conflict oil & ethical oil to show there is no distinction; <u>it's a false dichotomy</u> . Suncor deals both conflict oil and ethical oil; profiting from democracies and dictatorships
Relationship x text & image	Conflict oil, ethical oil, snake oil	Iran, Canada, Syria Suncor	Juxtaposition of three countries and their oil dissolves the differences between the philosophical stances originally staked out by ethicoil.org. All three are charged with production of snake oil (fraudulent hoax).
Tropes: Irony	Snake oil	Collaborating employee and dictator	Suncor pretends to be pure re its oil production at the Oil Sands but it's implicated in production of conflict oil simultaneously
Metonymy	Suncor		Suncor represents all of the oil companies who are involved in the production of Oil Sands oil as well as conflict oil
Metaphor	Snake oil		Unscrupulous quack doctor selling fraudulent and harmful products Contains element of smooth talking, empty rhetoric

Figure 16 and Table 9 – TankerFreeBC’s Immoral Energy, Ethical Energy Ad and Analysis



Help keep the Tar Sands in the ground and off our coast >> TankerFreeBC.org

Code	Text	Image	Analysis
Relationship x text & image: juxtaposition	Our energy future: the real choice	Oil-covered bird, and bears who are endangered species	Immoral energy choices value economics over environment and human convenience over animal/bird health/life Ethical energy choices demonstrate value of ALL life (not just human) Ethical choices aren't about countries' treatment of humans but about countries' treatment of all living creatures (refutes ethicaloil.org position) Implication that it's not just polar bear life that immoral energy choices threaten: it threatens all life (through global warming)
Relationship of figures to viewers: as subjects creating 'demand'		Oil-covered bird; polar bear cub and mother eyeing viewers	Extreme close-ups in both cases; direct gaze makes eye contact between bird & cub & viewers Personal relationships established with viewers: they become responsible for the situations that threaten these animals Offer viewers the choice whether to be immoral or ethical
Identification: "we" vs "them"			Viewers offered the chance to kill birds and polar bears through choosing oil energy or become steward of animals through ethical energy sources that safeguard birds from oil spills and halt or reverse global warming to preserve polar bear habitat/lives. Viewers offered choice of immoral "them" or ethical "us"
Argument frame: morality/ethics—animal health/rights	Immoral energy vs ethical energy	Dying bird & endangered polar bears	The real choice is what kind of energy we will choose for our future
Argument method: Parallelism, comparison Epistrophe	Immoral energy, ethical energy		Energy repeated at the end of each phrase: adjective changes
Isocolon	At any price? Life valued. Immoral energy, ethical energy		Elements of equal length (3 beats)  Elements of equal length and structure (3 syllable adjective + 3 syllable noun): repetition establishes rhythm, emphasizes the differences between the two repeated structures
Parallelism	Our energy future: The		Balanced phrases (pronoun + adjective + noun = article + adjective + noun) similar structure Restates ethicaloil.org's argument: choice is not what kind of oil to buy but

	real choice		what kind of energy to choose
Modes of Proof: logos Syllogism/ enthymeme	Help keep the Tar Sands in the ground and off our coast>> TankerFree eBC.org		Major premise: Our energy choices must be ethical Minor Premise: it is unethical to kill birds Conclusion: Our energy choice must not kills birds. Major Premise: Oil spills pollute BC shores Minor Premise: Undeveloped oil cannot spill Conclusion: Keep Tar sands undeveloped and BC shores unpolluted

Figure 17 and Table 10 – Oil Economy, Green Economy Ad and Analysis



Code	Text	Image	Analysis
Vantage Point: God's eye view & Worm's eye view		Aerial view of oil sands development; Viewers level to crop, looking up at turbines	Oil sands look small from this vantage point & distance, so it wouldn't be that difficult to stop the development Viewers have god-like relationship with oil sands: Viewers see turbines will save the planet (and humans)
Argument frame: environmental/ Economic	Oil economy Green Economy Tar Sands Climate Crime		Economic argument: Oil economy equates to tar sands (ignores other oil producing locations, also environmental hazards) Acknowledges economic necessity of fuel but ignores fact that turbines can generate only 7% of future fuel needs
Identification: Mythology invoked	Canada's Tar Sands: destroys the planet		Evil tar sands villain (Canada) destroys the planet Turbines are green super hero who will save the earth Ad "scapegoats" oil sands & Canada
Argument Method: Parallel, epistrophe, isocolon, Thesis/ antithesis	Canada's Tar Sands: Destroys the planet Green Economy: saves the planet	Image of white trucks crossing black field Pastoral field with turbines: Wind turbines maintain beautiful natural environment	Three words balanced by three words: Possessive Adjective + [3 letter] adjective + noun = verb + [3 letter] article + noun 5 beats = 5 beats: repeated length, not exactly repeated structure Wind power offered as complete opposite to black & white tar sands/destruction, etc. Compares two scenarios to emphasize environmental outcome of oil-based economic base
Modes of Proof: pathos	"destroys the planet" "saves the planet"	Black & white photo Blue & green field	Evokes fear in viewers, guilt re global warming (androgenetic aspects), anger that Canada's evil tar sands is doing this Pastoral scene allows viewers escape fear & dread (of destroyed planet), feel gratitude & happiness that wind power can save us
Trope: metonymy	Canada's tar sands	Turbines	Tar sands represents all of oil economy that will destroy the planet; Wind turbines represent all non-oil sources that can fuel earth-friendly economy
Metaphor	Earth Destruction	Turbines as superheroes	Stock plot: Supervillain threatens to destroy Earth

Table 11 – Semiotic categories/values invoked by each advertisement

	Initial Position	Response	Initial Position		Responses			Frequencies of mention in LexisNexis 2011
Axiological Categories/ Values invoked	BP	Greenpeace	Ethicaloil.org	Ethicaloil.org	Creekside Blog	TankerFreeBC	TankerFreeBC	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Support	Oppose	Oppose	Oppose	
	BP low carbon diet	BP black is the new green	Conflict oil, Ethical oil – Women	Conflict oil, Ethical oil – Aboriginals	Conflict oil, Ethical oil, Snake oil	Immoral energy, Ethical energy	Oil economy, Green economy	
	Nov 2005	May 2010	July 2011	July 2011	July 2011	July 2011	July 2011	
Efficient	+						+	3887
Inefficient							-	1291
Economic	+						+	5736
Uneconomic							-	441
Global	+	-	-	-	-		-	8772
Local			+	+	+/-		+	3351
Nature	+	+				+	+	7755
Man	+	-	+	+	-	-	-/+	5339
Future	+	-					+	4224
Present		-	-/+	-/+	-/+/-	-/+	-/+	2425
Past	+	-						1376
New	+		+	+			+	8958
Old	+		-	-			-	203
Clean	+					+	+	
Dirty		-				-	-	
Life			+	+		+	+	2715
Death		-	-	-		-	-	4029
Ethical			+	+		+		2591
Unethical		-	-	-	-	-	-	234
Important							+	4235
Unimportant								820
Known	+							3196
Unknown								1708

+ Positively invoking, supporting value

- Negatively invoking, opposing/negating value

Table 12: Oil Sands Legitimacy/Illegitimacy Typology. Types of legitimacy invoked in arguments by Ad Sponsor

	BP	Greenpeace	Ethicaloil.org		Ethicaloil.org		Creekside Blog	TankerFreeBC		TankerFreeBC	
	Support	Oppose	Support		Support		Oppose	Oppose		Oppose	
	BP low carbon diet	BP black is the new green	Conflict oil, Ethical oil – Women		Conflict oil, Ethical oil – Aboriginals		Conflict oil, Ethical oil, Snake oil	Immoral energy, Ethical energy		Oil economy, Green economy	
	Nov 2005	May 2010	July 2011		July 2011		July 2011	July 2011		July 2011	
	Us	Them	Us	Them	Us	Them	Them	Us	Them	Us	Them
Media											
Managerial			+	-	+	-	-				
Technical	+									+	-
Cognitive	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	-
Pragmatic							-				
Moral/ Normative	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	-
Regulatory	+	-						+	-		

+ organization judged legitimate by ad sponsor  
 - organization judged illegitimate by sponsor