Civil Disobedience as a Radical Flank in the Mountain Valley Pipeline Resistance Movement

Cameron Reid Baller

Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

in

Sociology

Shannon E. Bell

Dale W. Wimberley

Sweta Baniya

Thursday, May 4th 2023

Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: social movements, civil disobedience, radical flank, Mountain Valley Pipeline

Civil Disobedience as a Radical Flank in the Mountain Valley Pipeline Resistance Movement

Cameron Reid Baller

Abstract

Communities of resistance are increasingly turning to radical tactics, including acts of civil disobedience, to fight back against encroaching fossil fuel infrastructure. The fight against the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) is no exception. The MVP is a 303-mile long proposed fracked gas pipeline in Virginia and West Virginia. I apply radical flank effect (RFE) theory and the theory of movement dynamism to understand the role of civil disobedience, as a radical flank, in the MVP resistance movement. I contribute to the literature on RFEs by focusing primarily on how the radical flank of this movement has affected within-movement social dynamics, like trust, unity, and interpersonal relations. I rely on 15 semi-structured interviews with pipeline fighters, both those who have and have not participated in acts of civil disobedience, to gain insight into the use of civil disobedience, as a radical flank in the movement. This movement has used diverse tactics to challenge construction of the MVP, making it a strong case for understanding the role of radical tactics, and their relationship to moderate tactics. I find several positive RFEs (energizing effects, connecting effects, engaging effects, uniting effects, and movement outcome effects) and some potential negative RFEs (conflict/alienation, fear of consequences and organizational risks). I also find evidence of movement dynamism in the form of an ecosystem of tactics which emerged in the MVP resistance movement. Movement actors kept moderate and radical flanks publicly separate for strategic reasons while overlapping membership bridged the social dynamics of the movement, encouraging cohesion and collective movement identity.

Civil Disobedience as a Radical Flank in the Mountain Valley Pipeline Resistance Movement

Cameron Reid Baller

General Audience Abstract

Communities concerned about climate change are increasingly breaking the law in order to make their voices heard and stop dangerous coal, oil and natural gas projects. These actions are called civil disobedience and they have been used for decades in the United States, most prominently in the Civil Rights Movement. One such example in the fight against climate change is the resistance to the Mountain Valley Pipeline, a 303-mile long proposed natural gas pipeline in Virginia and West Virginia. I use social movement theories to understand the role that civil disobedience has played in the Mountain Valley Pipeline resistance movement. Specifically, I look at how the use of civil disobedience in this movement has affected the social dynamics of the movement, like trust, unity, or relationships in the movement. I spoke with 15 community members who have been active in fighting this pipeline to learn more. This movement has involved a wide range of different tactics, including civil disobedience, so it is a strong example to study for this research. My interviews with the community members revealed several positive effects as a result of the use of civil disobedience in the movement as well as a few potential risks/dangers. I also found that civil disobedience was able to work together with other types of tactics in a vibrant ecosystem that included mutual benefit. At the same time, I find that community members sought to keep some of the illegal tactics separate from more moderate tactics, like lawsuits or public comment submissions, in order to keep the moderate tactics safe. Despite this separation, I find that significant overlap of community members across different types of tactics was able to maintain a cohesive, common identity and unify people who were participating in different tactics, but fighting the same pipeline.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank my advisor and chair, Dr. Shannon Elizabeth Bell, for her thoughtful mentorship and the countless hours that she spent working with me on this project. This thesis would not and could not exist without all of the time and thought that Dr. Bell invested into this project and I cannot thank her enough. I also want to thank Drs. Sweta Baniya and Dale Wimberley for serving on my committee, supporting my work and believing in me. I also benefited immensely from the advice and support of Dr. Emily Satterwhite who, despite not serving on my committee, was always willing to help me at various stages of my thesis research, from gathering participants to editing drafts. Thank you so much Dr. Satterwhite. I would also like to thank all of my participants for being as forthcoming as they felt they could be and for being willing to participate and make my research possible. I also appreciate all of my friends and roommates for being willing to work long hours with me in coffee shops and the library and make those long hours go by a little faster. Finally, I would like to thank my family, especially my parents, who were always willing soundboards and confidants no matter the stage of the research process I was in.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Throughout U.S. history, civil disobedience has been used by various social movements from the Civil Rights movement to the anti-Nuclear and anti-Vietnam war movements (Morris 1986; Epstein 1993; Mollin 2006). Civil disobedience tactics can vary greatly and include actions as diverse as sit-ins and mass arrests at demonstrations as well as activists chaining themselves to trees or blockading work vehicles (Sovacool and Dunlap 2022). The climate justice movement has increasingly turned to tactics involving civil disobedience and direct action over the past decade (Parkin 2020). Parkin explains that "in recent years, growing numbers of people have had enough of oil, gas, and coal wrecking the planet…This has led to a flowering of resistance to destructive industry practices" (Parkin 2020, 91). This has been particularly true for fights against the construction of oil and gas pipelines, Parkin writes, referring to the fights against the Keystone XL (KXL) and Dakota Access (DAPL) pipelines: "Since KXL and DAPL, the fight against fossil fuels has galvanized into a fierce resistance… Whether a mass uprising, or smaller groups shutting down infrastructure in places like Appalachia or Texas, the message is clear – resistance is directly confronting the root causes of the climate crisis" (Parkin 2020, 88). Pipeline fighters are raising the stakes of the fight against climate change, and looking for justice outside of the more traditional avenues of political change. The question remains what effect these more radical tactics will have on the power, and ultimately the success, of climate justice movements.

Decisions by activists to use civil disobedience in the climate movement can be controversial (Epstein 1991; Smith 2018). Some activists may view the use of these tactics as an important symbolic resistance to fossil fuel infrastructure or as a strategic decision necessary for achieving movement goals. Others may see civil disobedience as a last resort or even counterproductive for the movement. In certain contexts, I will argue, activists in the climate movement who engage in civil disobedience can be considered what social movement scholars

call the “radical flank” within a movement, meaning that acts of civil disobedience represent a more radical approach to movement engagement. Previous studies have examined the effects that radical flanks have had on movement outcomes (Haines 1984; McCammon et al 2015; Cloud 2020; Simpson et al 2020); however, less is known about how the presence of civil disobedience, as a radical flank strategy, may affect the internal dynamics of a social movement. These internal social dynamics include unity, trust, as well as the functioning and structure of interpersonal relationships within the movement. These internal movement dynamics can influence several aspects important to a social movement, including how sub-groups work together (or don’t) (Rowe and Carroll 2014; Malm 2021), whether individual actors feel connected to the rest of the movement, and issues of recruitment and retention within the movement (Morris 1986; Epstein 1991). A social movement with a divided front may create opportunities for the radical flank to make moderates seem more reasonable (Malm 2021). At the same time, a divided front can also make a movement seem disorganized, conflictual and can undermine its power (Rowe and Carroll 2014). Thus, how a radical flank functions within its movement can significantly influence the overall success of the movement’s goals.

Although previous studies have focused on the internal dynamics of social movements (Morris 1986; Epstein 1991; McCammon et al 2015), what is missing from these analyses is a more robust understanding of how the radical flank of a movement – and particularly the tactical decisions they make – can affect a movement’s social dynamics. Using the resistance against the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) in Virginia and West Virginia as a case study, I examine how the use of civil disobedience has affected the internal dynamics of the movement. Specifically, I ask: How has the use of civil disobedience by pipeline fighters in the movement against the Mountain Valley Pipeline, as a radical flank of that movement, created risks and benefits for the movement, particularly in terms of the movement’s internal social dynamics? With an eye towards practical application for social movements, I follow this question by asking:

How can the lessons learned from the use of civil disobedience (as a radical flank) in the Mountain Valley Pipeline resistance movement inform how future pipeline resistance movements use civil disobedience?

Literature Review

Radical Flank Effects

Radical flank effects (RFEs) are the positive and negative effects that the more radical actors within a social movement have on the movement as a whole (Haines 1984). The radical flank is defined in contrast to the moderate flank and is characterized by radical tactics, such as property destruction or physically stopping construction of a project, whereas moderate tactics might involve submitting public comments, filing lawsuits or other actions that depend upon institutions to produce positive outcomes (Malm 2021). In this sense, the distinction between radical and moderate can be ideological as much as tactical (Cloud 2020), with radical flanks often having an analysis of power that pushes them to act outside the system, while moderates believe that working within the system can have positive results. In the literature, RFEs have more or less been reduced to the effect that the radical flank has on the ability of more moderate groups to achieve success (Rowe and Carroll 2014). A classic study by Herbert Haines (1984) on the Civil Rights Movement is emblematic of this trend in RFE literature. Haines identifies negative flank effects as the phenomenon whereby radicals harm the ability of moderate groups to advance their goals (Haines 1984). Similarly, for Haines, positive flank effects occur when moderates are helped or their position is improved by the activities of radical groups (Haines 1984). Haines ultimately found, through analysis of financial data, that there were positive RFEs in the civil rights movement (Haines 1984). Haines defined radical and moderate in terms of the relative legitimacy of their tactics and objectives. In other words, he distinguished radical and moderate by whether they worked within the system or engaged in

acts of civil disobedience which operate outside the law (Haines 1984). He urged further research to examine how RFEs emerge in other movements, asking whether the dynamics he observed were unique to the civil rights movement or could be found in other social movements (Haines 1984). Haines also warned that "the difficulties in identifying positive and negative radical flank effects with confidence are considerable" (Haines 1984). This implies that researchers must tread carefully in making claims with confidence about RFEs or any relationship between particular tactics and movement outcomes.

This thesis will not be the first to take on Haines' charge of applying RFE theory to other movements. For example, Dana Cloud argues that the ideological radicalism and tactical militancy of the GetEQUAL organization had a positive RFE in the marriage equality debate (Cloud 2020). Cloud evolves Haines' approach to the radical flank, focusing more on the rhetorical power of the radical flank to stretch the concept of equality, compared to Haines' focus on financial data. Cloud analyzes how the introduction of certain radical concepts to the discussion of marriage equality was able to shift the debate in favor of marriage equality (Cloud 2020). Cloud also makes an important distinction between tactical militancy and ideological radicalism, which is an important contribution to the conversation about what it really means to be "radical," or rather, the different forms that radicalism can take (Cloud 2020). While they often go hand in hand, there is a distinction between radicalism at the level of ideology and radicalism at the level of tactics.

Simpson et al tested whether there is a difference between a radical agenda and radical tactics (Simpson et al 2022). They conducted two separate studies, one on the animal rights movement and another on the climate movement, to better understand RFEs (Simpson et al 2022). They found a positive RFE in both movements, with radical tactics, not a radical agenda, driving the effect (Simpson et al 2022). As they describe, "We consistently found that tactics mattered for the emergence of flank effects, but agendas did not… Findings from both of our

experiments suggest that radical flank effects are more likely when flanks are radical with respect to tactics" (Simpson et al 2022). This finding suggests that tactics may be more important determinants of an RFE than agenda or ideology. In *Fighting King Coal*, Shannon Elizabeth Bell finds a similar result: that tactics matter more than justifications (Bell 2016). Through conducting an eight-month photovoice project with women living in five coal-mining communities, Bell was able to study the factors that both facilitated and prevented residents who had experienced negative consequences from coal industry practices from becoming involved in the environmental justice movement. Importantly, through follow-up interviews four months and then four years after the project ended, she was also able to gather information on the reasons that some women who had started to participate in the movement cut ties with environmental justice organizations. One of her participants, Amber, attributed her decision to withdraw from the movement to the use of tactics that she felt did not align with her own values. As Bell describes, "it wasn't the reasons for the actions that troubled her, but the tactics they used to accomplish their goals" (Bell 2016, 239). Amber was not the only one who withdrew from the movement for this reason. As Bell relates, "within a few months, Arlene, Aileen and Amber had disassociated themselves from the environmental justice movement, explaining that the groups were using tactics that were 'too extreme' for their comfort level" (Bell 2016, 245). As a potential mitigation, Bell suggests that "a balance be struck between actions that draw national media attention and tactics that correspond more readily with the personal identities of the local coalfield residents" (Bell 2016, 255). The takeaway from both Simpson et al and Bell is that decisions about tactics are important for how the radical flank impacts a movement.

McCammon et al. take on the question of RFEs in the context of the women's movement in Texas and the effort to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (McCammon et al 2015). Their intervention adds important nuance to Haines' theory of RFEs "by considering that groups within social movements may attempt to heighten and even exacerbate within-movement differences

and conflict in an effort to persuade political decision makers to enact more moderate reforms" (McCammon et al 2015). McCammon et al. focus on the interaction between the radical and moderate parts of a movement. In this case, activists manipulate movement dynamics to achieve their goals (McCammon et al 2015). The authors argue that further exploration of these phenomena is necessary, arguing that "exploring within-movement conflict's influence further would benefit our understanding of how movements achieve political change" (McCammon et al 2015).

From Radical Flank to Movement Dynamism

James Rowe and Myles Carroll introduce an important critique of the literature on RFEs in their article examining movement dynamics in the Occupy Wall Street and the Battle for Seattle movements (Rowe and Carroll 2014). Speaking of Haines, but making a point that applies to much of the RFE literature, Rowe and Carroll argue: "a significant problem with [Haines'] approach is its bias toward reformers as the political center of movements" (Rowe and Carroll 2014). What they are arguing is that in the literature on radical flank effects – and even about social movements literature more broadly – the bottom line comes down to how any tactic benefits the moderates (Rowe and Carroll 2014). The currency of social movements ultimately becomes the advance of moderate causes, and radicalism is reduced to a means to an end. Rowe and Carroll explain the problem with this bias, arguing it has "obfuscated the inherent value of radicalism, and the benefit of dynamic exchange between differing wings" (Rowe and Carroll 2014). Rowe and Carroll choose instead to focus on movement dynamism (Rowe and Carroll 2014), or the way that different pieces of the movement coalesce to build upon one another.

Rowe and Carroll's discussion of movement dynamism has been elaborated by Nicolosi et al who examine the environmental movement in Salt Lake City over 10 years (Nicolosi et al

2021). Their study goes beyond Rowe and Carroll to examine movement dynamism over longer spans of time and across many mobilizations (Nicolosi et al 2021). They find that “radical politics in Salt Lake City has had a flanking effect… by developing creative forms of protest that have resonated with the public, thus helping increase mobilization and support” (Nicolosi et al 2021). The keys to movement dynamism they identified were the Mormon culture in Salt Lake City, overlapping membership, and cultural similarities, while a major barrier was differences in collective identities and orientations (Nicolosi et al 2021). A key lesson that emerges from both Rowe and Carroll and Nicolosi et al. is the importance of avoiding claims of false unity or overstating the convergence of the movement (Rowe and Carroll 2014; Nicolosi et al 2021). Real and significant differences will persist; however, understanding the opportunities and examples of movement dynamism is essential to learning how to develop global and local alliances for environmental and social justice.

There are several ways that movement dynamics can come together, according to the literature. As mentioned above, Rowe and Carroll introduced a theory of movement dynamism where radical flank effects (or moderate flank effects) occur in a more cooperative sense (Rowe and Carroll 2014). Radicals and moderates work together collaboratively. In the context of the climate movement, Malm has a very different view of the relationship between radicals and moderates, however, arguing the more moderate sections of the movement often “denounce the new flank and accuse it of undermining their endeavours,” for “[i]f they were to applaud the troublemakers who threaten or commit acts of violence, they would not gain the edge of respectability and receive no invitation to the policy-making chambers” (Malm 2021). In this vision of movement dynamics, the more radical and more moderate sections of the movement are completely at odds (Malm 2021). It is the confrontational dynamic that fuels the positive RFEs; it is a necessary precondition for Malm, who argues, “prospective militants should expect and even hope for condemnation from the mainstream, without which the two would become

indistinguishable and the effect be lost" (Malm 2021). I would argue that Malm's interpretation relies on a narrow understanding of what positive RFEs are possible because there are other, more cooperative ways that RFEs can emerge. It is important to note that Malm's understanding assumes a violent radical flank, which is distinct from a radical flank who uses civil disobedience, but does not use violent tactics. Malm's understanding is worth keeping in mind when evaluating the potential of the radical flank because condemnation is a key mechanism in the literature that may produce positive RFEs. Whether moderates and radicals perceive themselves as working together (dynamism) or working against each other (condemnation) has significant implications for the mechanisms of positive and negative radical flank effects. Rowe and Carroll and Malm have opposing interpretations of how moderate and radical flanks interact.

There is some discussion about the radical flank in the climate justice movement, specifically. Schifeling and Hoffman's article on Bill McKibben and the 350.org movement for fossil fuel divestment represents the clearest attempt within the climate justice movement to outline a radical flank and attempt to understand its impact (Schifeling and Hoffman 2017). They argue that the discourse employed by these actors represented a rhetorical radical flank of the movement that made moderate positions, like the carbon tax, seem more reasonable (Schifeling and Hoffman 2017). Schifeling and Hoffman argue that there is much to be gained from additional research into radical flank effects (Schifeling and Hoffman 2017). Malm also introduces some interesting questions to the debate on radical flank effects. Namely, Malm questions why the climate movement has thus far avoided property destruction and sabotage as a strategy and asks how these tactics could fit into a discussion of RFEs in the climate movement (Malm 2021).

Dynamics of Civil Disobedience and the Radical Flank

There is some literature which focuses on the impact of civil disobedience on the social dynamics of movements. Aldon Morris writes, for example, that: “the sit-ins pumped new life into the civil rights movement. They demonstrated that organized disruptive politics could bring about change much faster than the legal approach. In addition, the 1960 sit-ins pulled many people, often entire communities, directly into the movement, making civil rights a towering issue throughout the nation” (Morris 1986, 213). Morris concludes that “the 1960 sit-ins strengthened the organizational base of the movement” (Morris 1986, 215). Barbara Epstein makes a similar argument in *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution*, writing: “by taking a more militant approach than other organizations, direct action groups have provided a cutting edge. Mass civil disobedience has drawn public attention to the dangers of nuclear power, the arms race, and other issues and inspired others to take some action themselves, even if it does not involve the same level of risk” (Epstein 1991, 14). In this sense, there is some evidence that civil disobedience can have an energizing effect as a radical flank that may be beneficial for recruitment and/or mobilization.

Epstein also describes how conflict over direct action tactics (how far to go and which actions to take) in the Clamshell anti-Nuclear movement in New England led to a mass exodus from that movement (Epstein 1991, 76-78). Epstein compares the collapse of the Clamshell movement with a later Abalone anti-Nuclear movement, explaining:

> The differences between the two organizations have to do with what the Abalone was able to learn from the experience of the Clamshell. The Abalone made the consensus process more flexible by introducing some modifications, making it easier for the organization to live with ongoing internal differences. (Epstein 1991, 93)

Epstein explains further how Abalone was able to settle conflicts, writing: “Abalone members were committed to building a movement with room for people oriented toward a variety of modes of protest, and a good deal of effort was put into working out differences” (Epstein 1991, 99). Epstein concludes her chapter on the Abalone movement by writing: “The Abalone did not suffer as much from these problems [of the Clamshell movement] because it did have a concrete objective—closing down the Diablo Plant” (Epstein 1991, 124). Epstein thus also finds that prioritizing conflict resolution and having a concrete common goal can help unify a movement (Epstein 1991).

Stockemer also examined the role that group identity and atmosphere play in social movement conflict (Stockemer 2012). He argues that contention and rifts in internal dynamics can be the pretext for people to leave a social movement, suggesting that within-movement dynamics are important for recruitment and retention (Stockemer 2012). Smith also writes about how conflict plays into the social dynamics of the movement, explaining that:

> There are… likely to be major differences over issues of tactics and strategies… The community withstands such internal divisions as long as there is mutual recognition that all of its constituent parts are committed to the realisation of their priorities and values… There is also likely to be a shared sense that it would be wrong to engage in forms of action that… work to the advantage of their opponents. (Smith 2018, 18)

Ultimately, civil disobedience can create conflict and tension, but these eventualities are managed differently by different movements. Understanding how this movement has managed conflict over radical tactics is a central focus of this study.

Fear is an understandable emotional element of social movements, especially when legal consequences are involved. Parkin explains how fear can be deeply embedded in the

social dynamics of civil disobedience, writing about the scare tactics employed by government and industry:

> Fearful of another Standing Rock, over a dozen states have proposed and, in some cases, passed laws to restrict protest along “critical infrastructure”... The private sector responded with civil litigation against activists and advocates. A Strategic Litigation against Public Participation (SLAPP) lawsuit attempts to intimidate critics campaigning against corporations with time, energy, and money wasted on responding to frivolous charges in civil court (Gilbert, 2018). (Parkin 2020, 89-90)

These tactics have forced activists to face the very real dangers of civil disobedience, which impacts the social dynamics of the movement because fear of legal consequences can force activists to confront the risks of civil disobedience and may deter them from acting.

Bell (2016) found that the influx of non-locals into the mountaintop removal mining resistance movement in Central Appalachia led to a labeling of the movement as an “outsider’s movement,” and found that this has had a cross-cutting effect by bringing more support and attention to the movement, but also making it easier for skeptical locals and the coal industry to dismiss the movement and erase local participation within the movement (Bell 2016, 5). She found, in a conversation with one of her participants, Dorothy, that an action in 2009 may have turned certain people away, Bell explains: “that event, though a successful event in gaining national media coverage, deepened the perception among many coalfield residents that the Central Appalachian environmental justice movement is an ‘outsider’s movement’” (Bell 2016, 240) Further, she explains how:

> Opportunistically, the coal industry has aggressively sought to propagandize the ‘foreignness’ of such activities, manipulating the public’s perception of the environmental

> justice movement such that it is increasingly viewed as an 'outsiders' movement,' rather than as a local struggle. (Bell 2016, 255)

Bell outlines some consequences of this, noting that "there is a *perception* among some (and perhaps many) residents that the movement is an 'outsiders' movement,' and this perception may have profound consequences for recruiting new local participants into the environmental justice organizations working in the coalfields of Central Appalachia" (Bell 2016, 248). Taking it a step further, Bell says, starkly: "these movements need local voices– *many* local voices– to give credibility to the claims of injustice that form the basis of the environmental justice platform. If these movements lose their local identities, they may also lose their power" (Bell 2016, 257). This dynamic is important because of the impact that the local/outsider dynamic can have to undermine the positive radical flank effects that might come from civil disobedience. This and other within-movement dynamics have been relatively understudied in the literature on radical flank effects. Through an examination of the resistance movement against the Mountain Valley Pipeline, this study investigates the ways that the radical flank of a movement can affect—both positively and negatively— the dynamics within a social movement. In the sections that follow, I first outline the case and then provide an overview of my research methods.

The Case: Mountain Valley Pipeline Resistance Movement

Background

The Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) is an approximately 303-mile long natural gas pipeline being built through West Virginia and Virginia (Christopulos 2021). It has been under construction since 2018 (Christopulos 2021). If completed, this pipeline would transport fracked natural gas in a 42" diameter pipe underground (Christopulos 2021). The pipeline was proposed

in 2014, received permits in 2017 and began construction during the first quarter of 2018 (Christopulos 2021). Interstate natural gas pipelines like the MVP must be approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) . One of the first steps in the permitting process is an environmental impact statement (EIS), which “addresses the potential environmental effects of the construction and operation of the proposed facilities” (FERC 2017). FERC’s final EIS of the MVP finds ‘some adverse environmental impacts’ but concludes that these can be mitigated (FERC 2017).

Contrary to FERC’s findings, expert reports have found significant negative impacts from the MVP (Kastning 2016). One major area where some scientists argue that FERC has overlooked potential risks of the pipeline lies in the geology of the region, which is dominated by karst (Kastning 2016). Karst is defined by dissolving bedrock which can create sinkholes, disappearing streams and large underground cave systems. Kastning finds that “karst and associated hazards constitute a serious incompatibility with the proposed pipeline" (Kastning 2016). Kastning also argues that “steep slopes underlain by weak soils may become unstable and lead to soil creep and landslides” (Kastning 2016). Both the geology and the topography of the region create significant risks, as any potential leak could lead to explosion and local water contamination (Kastning 2016). Kastning’s report demonstrates a lack of expert consensus with FERC’s conclusions. With lives, livelihoods and ecosystems on the line, the stakes are high for those living within the blast zone, the approximately 1115 foot zone on either side of the pipeline that will be most directly affected (Bell et al 2022). Furthermore, many MVP opponents are concerned that expanding pipeline infrastructure commits the US to fossil fuel use, makes fracking more profitable, and undermines progress on the climate crisis (Chilukuri 2022). The environmental impacts of the pipeline are both local and global in nature.

The Resistance

The MVP has faced significant resistance from surrounding communities (Christopulos 2021). This resistance, among other setbacks, has delayed the pipeline by several years and has caused it to go significantly over budget (Christopulos 2021). One of the primary grievances expressed by pipeline opponents about the MVP is the use of eminent domain to seize land from property owners against their will (Christopulos 2021). The issue of land theft, as well as the very significant potential health and safety impacts from the pipeline including risks of explosion and water contamination, are a major part of what has inspired impacted communities to fight back (Christopulos 2021). The Mountain Valley Pipeline resistance movement is a strong case to study radical flank effects because the fight has involved a diversity of tactics, ranging from moderate tactics that work within the system to more radical acts of civil disobedience, such as tree sits and lockdowns to pipeline equipment. The movement is also diverse in terms of age of activists and political identity. Moreover, this resistance movement is on the frontline of one of the most important social movements of this century: the climate movement (Parkin 2020). There are likely to be many fossil fuel infrastructure battles in the coming years, and more research into the within-movement dynamics will be essential.

As mentioned above, The MVP resistance is diverse and covers a range of actors from across the political spectrum (Christopulos 2021). Actions span from 2014 until present day. It is well beyond the scope of the project to account for every tactic employed by the resistance movement, but a general overview of who makes up the resistance is informative. Christopulos (2021) developed a list of some of the opponents of the pipeline, who make up the bulk of the resistance, the list below is inspired by Chistopulos' list:

- Landowners and their neighbors
- Members of local, regional, and national conservation, preservation and outdoor groups

- Lawyers from environmental and other organizations
- Activists with experience fighting other pipelines
- Downstream communities impacted by MVP
- County boards of supervisors, many of which are Republican-dominated
- Gubernatorial primary candidates from both parties
- On procedural issues, both Democratic and Republican members of the U.S. Congress

Christopulos argues that it is especially important, for understanding the dynamics of the MVP resistance movement, to take into account the political diversity of the opposition. The resistance includes libertarians, conservatives, as well as environmentalists and liberals (Christopulos 2021).

Civil Disobedience in the MVP resistance movement

As described through Christopulos' activist's history of the MVP resistance movement, resistance started in 2014 with the many members of the public lodging their opposition to the project during the initial public comment periods. Activists worked with local, state and federal officials, as well as the Sierra Club, to challenge the pipeline company's claims and try to stop the pipeline legally and procedurally (Christopulos 2021). Several lawsuits have been filed and thousands of comments have been submitted to regulatory agencies, such as FERC and state resource control boards (Christopulos 2021).

Eventually, working within the system was not enough for certain factions of the resistance movement, however. A wide variety of civil disobedience tactics have been employed by those in the MVP resistance movement (Christopulos 2021). Early civil disobedience actions included disrupting State resource control board meetings or other public meetings. The primary

genre of civil disobedience used after the beginning of construction was blockade tactics. These tactics generally have sought to stop construction in one way or another (Sovacool and Dunlap 2022). Sovacool and Dunlap described these blockade tactics in their survey of the types of direct action. As they explain, “chaining oneself to vehicles, equipment or lying on the road with “lock-ons” is a foundational ecological civil disobedience practice, which extends to climbing on equipment, “tree-sitting” (e.g. chaining yourself to trees) and blocking access roads to create a situation in which protesters face high personal risk if construction or work proceeds” (Sovacool and Dunlap 2022) Sovacool and Dunlap give several examples of organizations who have used these tactics including Earth First!, Ende Gelande and Code Rood as well as pipeline fighters opposing Line 3 from Alberta to Minnesota”(Sovacool and Dunlap 2022). These examples and more exist as contemporaries to the MVP resistance movement.

In the MVP resistance movement, some of these blockade tactics have included “soft blockades” which usually involved only bodies, linked together, in the way of construction. One example of this was a walk-on, picnic, prayer, and flash mob near Cove Hollow Road in Montgomery County, VA, in July 2019. Other “harder” blockades were also employed. Some of these included locking down to construction equipment, which required heavy machinery to extract the pipeline fighter(s) (Christopulos 2021). Emily Satterwhite, a professor at Virginia Tech, participated in one such high-profile action of this variety, locking herself to an excavator for the majority of a day (Johnson 2018). Another high-profile hard blockade, which involved three elders who dubbed their action “Old Hills, Old Folks Resist,” entailed occupying a car and rocking chairs in the way of the pipeline (Smith 2021). And the most high-profile actions of the movement were undoubtedly the tree sits, which happened over the course of several years throughout the movement. The first was in West Virginia on Peter’s Mountain along the Appalachian Trail (Shugerman 2018). A monopod was also constructed on Peter’s Mountain in Giles County, VA (Ridder 2018). Other tree sits were in Franklin County, VA (Jones 2018), as

well as the high profile tree sit on Bent Mountain in Roanoke County, VA, where a mother and her daughter occupied trees on their own land (Schneider 2018). The tree sit on Bent Mountain was one of the best examples of directly affected landowners taking action to protect their home. The Yellow Finch tree sits in Montgomery County, VA, were by far the longest running of the tree sits (Dhillon 2021). This blockade included 3 tree sits and lasted 932 days from 2018 to 2021 (Dhillon 2021).

There were some civil disobedience actions associated with resistance to the MVP which did not involve blockades intended to stop construction. These actions often involved staging protests or sit-ins at banks which finance the MVP or in the Virginia state capitol. Others involved taking actions directed at federal lawmakers in Washington D.C. More than one MVP pipeline fighter was arrested in D.C. as a part of actions in solidarity with the broader climate justice movement.Their participation involved acting as a representative from the MVP resistance in coalition with other fights across the country so, for the purposes of the study, I consider these actions as a part of the MVP fight, even if indirectly.

Some tactics were in more of a gray area of civil disobedience. One of these is called a slow roll, where pipeline fighters would drive or ride a bicycle slowly in front of commuting pipeline workers or a piece of construction equipment to slow the pace of construction. Others include trespassing onto the easement to observe a high-risk action. These actions are illegal because they include potential traffic violations or trespassing charges, but according to my participants, the risk of arrest for these actions was incredibly low. In most cases, the repercussions for these lower-risk actions were also more limited. Finally, as far as I am aware, property destruction or other eco-sabotage tactics have not been employed in this movement. This brings up a question by Malm of whether this movement actually has a radical flank if there is not any property destruction (Malm 2021). At least one of my participants also posed this question. I argue that the rich use by activists of civil disobedience in this movement through

blockades and other arrestable actions can be understood as the radical flank of the movement in at least a relative sense, if perhaps not in an absolute one.

Definitions: Who is part of the radical flank and what tactics should be included in their repertoire?

An important question when considering radical flank effects is understanding what it means to be radical, or how the radical flank is defined (Schifeling and Hoffman 2017, Malm 2021). It is important to understand this definition contextually in the literature and, to what extent possible, in the context of the climate movement. As mentioned above, Schifeling and Hoffman view Bill McKibben and the divestment movement as representing the radical flank of the climate movement (Schifeling and Hoffman 2017). They explain that "the term 'radical' is not meant as a descriptor of violent tactics per se, but rather that the discursive issues that the actors present are on the extreme end of the debate spectrum, hence radical" (Schifeling and Hoffman 2017). Contrary to Schifeling and Hoffman, Malm argues that Bill McKibben in some ways represents the moderates of the movement, specifically because he advocates a sort of strategic pacifism limited in its tactical diversity by excluding property destruction or sabotage of fossil fuel infrastructure (Malm 2021). In this context, Malm poses an important question for the climate movement, asking: "does this movement possess a radical flank?" (Malm 2021).

For the purpose of this article, the radical flank includes any individual that participated in at least one act of civil disobedience. I initially define "civil disobedience" as intentionally breaking the law in order to resist a perceived injustice. To a limited degree, I use the terms "civil disobedience" and "direct action" interchangeably. This is primarily because my participants often move between these and other related terms, like "arrestable action," to describe the kinds of tactics that this study focuses on. It is also because these terms generally do have overlapping definitions (Smith 2018). However, following a distinction laid out by Smith (2018), I

primarily use the term “civil disobedience” to describe the tactics used by the radical flank in the MVP resistance movement. Smith explains that

> [D]irect action… has not received the same degree of philosophical analysis as the similar but distinct practice of civil disobedience… Civil disobedience can be a means of exerting pressure, but primarily in the sense that it mobilizes the power of public opinion… This communicative rationale supports the adoption of constrained tactics on the part of civil disobedients, in that protesters have a reason to avoid behaviour – such as property destruction or violent confrontation – that might obscure their message and undermine their moral credibility in the public sphere. The rationale for such constraints are less apparent in relation to direct action, because activists… are much less concerned about reaching out to an audience in this fashion… which means that they might employ militant forms of conduct that are often seen as incompatible with civil disobedience. (Smith 2018, 13-14)

The MVP resistance movement has both exhibited a priority of establishing moral credibility and also practiced the kind of tactical restraint Smith alludes to by not using property destruction or violent tactics. Therefore, I see civil disobedience as the best term to describe the radical tactics used by the MVP resistance movement.

I also follow Scheuerman in treating civil disobedience as a “necessarily contestable concept”(Çıdam et al 2020). He writes that

> [C]ivil disobedience will remain unavoidably contestable… However, by taking the concept’s contestability seriously, we need not succumb to relativism or a crude historicism. By tracing civil disobedience’s messy and complex conceptual history, we can see how progress has been made – and perhaps still can be made – if those

> arguing about it see their efforts as contributions to the still-incomplete story of a necessarily contestable concept. (Çıdam et al 2020)

My conception of civil disobedience is in no way an attempt to provide a final definition of the term or end any theoretical debates on what should count as civil disobedience. I try to define the term contextually and can only hope that my intervention might hold some weight in this "still-incomplete story" of civil disobedience.

The decision to use civil disobedience was also intended to distance my conception of the radical flank from lower risk tactics like bringing supplies to the tree sits or participating in a "slow roll," which, as noted above, involves slowing down in front of construction vehicles to delay construction. These actions arguably fall under the bigger umbrella of direct action, but I want to exclude them from my conception of civil disobedience in the radical flank for a couple reasons. First, these actions usually do not hold significant risk of arrest. Hundreds of people came through the Yellow Finch tree sits, and while trespassing on the pipeline easement is illegal, relatively few people were arrested for trespassing alone. Similarly, a "slow roll" might risk a traffic violation, but it is unlikely to result in arrest. Additionally, many of the more moderate activists involved in primarily legal/regulatory strategies also occasionally participated in these low risk actions. However, participation in a low risk action does not necessarily make one a part of the movement's radical flank. With these points in mind, it may be more appropriate to redefine "civil disobedience" in the context of the "radical flank" of the movement as: "intentionally putting oneself at significant risk of legal consequences in order to resist a perceived injustice."

Research Questions

With these definitions in mind, I use the Mountain Valley Pipeline resistance movement as a case study to ask:

- How can the radical flank of a movement affect within-movement dynamics, including trust, unity, and the function and structure of interpersonal relationships within the movement?
- How can the use of civil disobedience by pipeline fighters, as a radical flank, create risks and benefits for a pipeline resistance movement, especially in terms of within-movement dynamics?
- How can lessons learned from the use of civil disobedience, as a radical flank, in this movement inform how future pipeline resistance movements use civil disobedience?

Methods

Data Collection

To answer these questions, I conducted 15 semi-structured interviews over the course of four months from October 2022 to January 2023 with people involved in the resistance movement against the Mountain Valley Pipeline. My interviews were a mix of in-person and Zoom interviews. The interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, with the average interview lasting about an hour. Blee and Taylor (2002) advocate for the use of semi-structured interviews in social movement research. They present several reasons for the use of semi-structured interviews arguing, for example, “in semi-structured interviewing… It is not only information, but also themes and categories of analysis that are generated from the responses of diverse movement participants” (Blee and Taylor 2002). They also argue that semi-structured interviewing enables better scrutiny of context and meanings within a social movement (Blee and Taylor 2002).

My interview participants have all been actively involved in the fight against the Mountain Valley Pipeline at some point since the proposal of the project in 2014. My participants were

divided into 2 subgroups: (1) those who had participated in acts of civil disobedience, which I define as an action which intentionally risks arrest in order to protest a perceived injustice, and (2) those who had not participated in any acts of civil disobedience. The intention behind this division was to gain perspectives from across the diversity of tactics within the movement. It is important to note that those in the second group were not necessarily opposed to the use of civil disobedience, and in some cases, they actively supported acts of civil disobedience. However, they had not participated in these acts themselves. In fact, virtually everyone I spoke to acknowledged some value of civil disobedience in this movement, even if they had some reservations or concerns.

After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval, participants were recruited through a snowball sampling methodology (Goodman 1961). Drs. Shannon Bell and Emily Satterwhite served as initial contact points. They introduced me to several people at anti-pipeline events as well as through email. I asked these initial contacts to connect me to additional potential participants. Interview questions were formulated with six initial themes in mind and, due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, many more questions were asked as unscheduled probing questions, based on responses to questions in my interview guide. In addition to the questions focused on the pipeline resistance and civil disobedience, demographic questions were asked, and at the end of the interview, respondents were asked to complete a short online survey about the tactics in which each participant engaged. These survey questions were used to cross-check the subgrouping of participants. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in full. Please see Appendix for my interview guide.

Data Analysis

I relied on thematic analysis as a data analysis methodology (Braun and Clarke 2006). I started with the themes that were developed prior to starting the interviews and synthesized

them with themes that emerged during the interview process. I narrowed down to key themes before the coding process and then coded the interviews according to those themes as well as with themes that emerged during the coding process itself. I tried to incorporate as much data into the results as possible, focusing on showcasing the quotes which most clearly presented the themes that emerged through the interview and coding process.

Themes can be grouped into 3 general categories:

(1) The different ways that civil disobedience has benefitted the movement. These themes can generally be understood as positive radical flank effects.

(2) The different ways that civil disobedience has introduced risk, tension, and/or conflict into the movement. These themes can generally be understood as negative radical flank effects.

(3) How the movement is composed in terms of how different parts of the movement fit together, or don't. This category connects to the theory of movement dynamism discussed in the literature review.

These three categories together create a holistic picture of the effect that civil disobedience has had on the social dynamics of the Mountain Valley Pipeline resistance movement.

Ethics

As noted above, this research was approved by Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board. I obtained informed consent from all participants prior to the interview. I also briefed all participants on the fact that they could end the interview at any time, and could also choose not to answer any question, if they wanted. Multiple participants exercised this right when asked questions about acts of civil disobedience. I also avoided probing questions which might have pressured any participant to expose sensitive information.

I assigned pseudonyms to all participants to keep their responses confidential. These pseudonyms were divided according to the sample subgroup the participant fell under. For those who have participated in civil disobedience, a pseudonym which begins with the letter “R” was assigned to denote that they have participated in a more *radical* tactic. For those who have not participated in civil disobedience, a pseudonym which begins with the letter “M” was assigned to denote that they have only participated in more *moderate* tactics. This method of assigning pseudonyms was inspired by how Bell assigned pseudonyms in her book, *Fighting King Coal* (Bell 2016). She assigned pseudonyms according to the geographic subgroup her participants fell under. I also scrubbed some identifying information and details about specific actions in order to keep my participants’ identities as confidential as possible.

Participant Demographics

My participants were more diverse in some ways than others. In terms of the sub-groups that I divided my sample into, seven of my 15 interviewees had participated in at least one act of civil disobedience while eight of my 15 interviewees had not. Thirteen participants identified as white (87%) while only two participants identified as non-white or mixed (13%). While this lack of diversity is certainly a deficit of my study, this racial composition reflects the demographics of many of the rural Appalachian counties in Virginia and West Virginia through which the pipeline is being constructed. Three participants identified as male, 11 identified as female and one identified as non-binary. The range of ages of the people I interviewed spanned from 25 to 80 with a mean age of 53.8 and a median age of 62. My participants were quite divided in terms of age. Four participants were 30 or younger while eight participants were 61 or older, leaving only three participants between the ages of 31 and 60. The pipeline only passed directly through the land owned by two of my participants, but eight of my participants lived within the blast zone of the pipeline, so more than half my participants are directly affected by the pipeline. Ten of my participants live in Montgomery County, Virginia (67%) while only 5 live in other counties (33%).

I see this as a major limitation of my study, as the pipeline path is 303 miles long, but most of my participants were geographically concentrated in the county where I live. Politically, my participants ranged from one participant who identified as moderate/independent, voting for both Democrats and Republicans, all the way to a few other participants who identified as Anarchist or Anarcho-Communist. There were several participants in between, identifying as Democrats, Progressive or Radical Left, but by and large my participants fell somewhere on the left of a traditional political spectrum with those who had participated in civil disobedience most often identifying with the more radical left, and those who hadn't participated in civil disobedience identifying most often as liberal or with the Democratic party. Finally, in terms of education, all of my participants had some college experience. Two had some college, but no degree, six had a Bachelor's degree, two had a Master's degree, and five had a doctorate. This composition suggests, as some participants pointed out, that the MVP resistance movement includes many highly educated people, at least in the New River Valley area, where there are multiple universities in the area, including Virginia Tech and Radford University.

Author Positionality

I am not directly impacted by the Mountain Valley Pipeline. I am from Michigan and thus, I am also not a local person. I came to the Blacksburg area for a combined Master's/PhD program in Sociology at Virginia Tech. As a geographic outsider, I have had to rely on my participants to understand the culture of the area, and how that informs the movement, its identity and its decision-making. I am relatively young, 26 at the time of writing this, and there was a clear generational divide in my research. This informs my research because I am probably holding onto some biases or perspectives which may align more closely with my younger participants. This experience was certainly a learning process in terms of how different generations think about civil disobedience. Furthermore, I am white, which places me in the same racial category as most, but not all, of my participants. This limits my ability to fully

understand the experience of my participants of color who have a unique experience as a minority, not just in the region, but also in this movement.

I am also not an active participant in the movement. My participation in the movement was largely as I was conducting this research and I do consider myself somewhat of an outsider looking in on this movement. That being said, I have participated in anti-pipeline activism. From 2016-2018, initially through an Environmental Justice class with Dr. Shannon Bell at the University of Kentucky and later working with the Kentucky Student Environmental Coalition, I spearheaded a campaign at the University-level in Kentucky to educate and empower students to fight Kinder Morgan's proposed repurposing of the Tennessee Gas Pipeline. I have also been involved in other fights against fossil fuels, including working for Food and Water Watch on the 2018 Safer Setbacks ballot initiative which sought to restrict fracking in Colorado and leading a campus-wide fossil fuel divestment campaign at the University of Kentucky. This is relevant because while I am embedded in the larger climate justice movement, I have not been a direct or active participant in this specific movement to stop the MVP. In one sense, this may give me some space that could provide a level of clarity about the movement, but at the same time, my distance means that my knowledge of the movement is mostly secondhand, and not intimate or personal.

This study focuses on civil disobedience, with a particular emphasis on risking arrest. In my experience with activism, I have not been arrested. I have participated in sit-ins and disrupted events to the point where I have been escorted out by police, but my actions have never risen to the level of what I would define as civil disobedience in this study. This is not from a lack of will or desire to participate in that way, but more from a lack of opportunity and from being in communities of resistance which did not necessarily see that avenue as a necessary escalation at the moments I was participating in those movements. This limits my analysis of

civil disobedience in many ways because I have not been through the process of arrest, court hearings, and more, which accompany civil obedience.

Results/Discussion

Positive Radical Flank Effects

My interviews revealed there were a number of perceived positive radical flank effects resulting from civil disobedience within the MVP resistance movement. These positive radical flank effects can be grouped into 5 categories: energizing effects, connecting effects, engaging effects, uniting effects, and, lastly, movement outcome effects. The first four of these benefits are related to the intangible effects of the radical flank on social dynamics of the movement, while the last deals with more concrete/tangible effects of the radical flank on movement outcomes.

Energizing Effects

Participants noted the positive effect of civil disobedience on energizing, motivating, and inspiring people to join or increase their involvement in the movement. Interviewees contrasted the energizing power of civil disobedience with the legal/regulatory strategy, which was presented as slow, boring, or simply unable to capture the attention of potential supporters. Rose emphasized this contrast, explaining:

> [Civil disobedience] really contributes to people's involvement, people feeling hope around fighting the Pipeline, that they can actually do something. I think it really builds that people-power that you can't really get necessarily in the courtroom. (Interview 5)

Here, Rose highlights that the courtroom actions are often confined to a few lawyers making arguments on behalf of movement participants. For Rose, legal processes fail to involve

people in the same way that civil disobedience does. For Rose, civil disobedience builds power in a way that the courtroom does not. Rebecca echoes this sentiment, explaining how Yellow Finch inspired her and drew her in:

> I probably am more involved because of the direct action... So much of my time was spent at Yellow Finch… that sucked me in way more, just having that space… it definitely made me more aware… versus just riding around and taking pictures [as evidence for legal actions]... I definitely think most of the relationships I met were from there—Yellow Finch. (Interview 12)

Rebecca contrasts some of the more moderate tactics, in this case watchdog tactics like taking pictures of pipeline construction, with direct action. She argues that the space created by the Yellow Finch tree sits drew her in more than taking pictures of the pipeline ever could. Many participants expressed the ways that civil disobedience drew people in and energized them. More moderate tactics did not necessarily seem to engage or inspire people in the same way. The tree sits, in particular, energized people. Meredith voiced this, saying:

> The Peters Mountain tree sits galvanized people. So, they took what had been a smoldering fire and turned it into a blaze… it galvanized me, like I hadn't been that involved. Then the tree sits happened and all of a sudden, I was drawn in… the tree sits did something. They added a level of energy and hope… I see the tree sits as galvanizing the local movement, drawing people in. (Interview 6)

Meredith did not participate in civil disobedience herself, but she was an active supporter of the tree sits, often taking food and/or supplies to pipeline fighters. She makes it clear that the tree sits were a powerful force in motivating people to take action. They turned the fight into a "blaze," empowering her and those around her to become more involved and injecting the fight

with hope. Meredith further explained how the involvement of young people in civil disobedience was particularly inspiring for her:

> It gave me hope to see all these young people who were sitting in the trees doing activism stuff, because it had been a long time since I had seen young people really taking the lead. Usually it was us old folks organizing stuff locally... so there was something, for me, very exciting about seeing every generation of people really taking the lead in this. (Interview 6)

In the Southwest Virginia region that Meredith lives in, she expressed a feeling that older folks primarily had taken the lead on organizing for local issues, but in this fight, Meredith was inspired by the action taken by a younger generation who were committed to stopping this pipeline. Ruth echoed Meredith's point about the involvement of young adults being an inspiration. She said:

> I just think people felt really, really moved… It bolstered people's faith in young people… that the young people understand what's going on and what's at stake, and that they were willing to take action. I saw a lot of older people be really emotionally moved by that… I think the civil disobedience kind of struck a raw nerve of making it real that people are willing to put themselves on the line to stop things like this from happening. (Interview 11)

Ruth explains how young people not only being involved, but putting their bodies on the line, really resonated with a lot of the older generations in the movement. Younger adults showing up for the movement in that way thus contributing to the inspiration and hope that civil disobedience injected into the movement. This suggests that identity, and particularly age, can be really important in terms of how civil disobedience inspires its base.

Meredith went even further, arguing that civil disobedience not only inspired people to get involved in that part of the movement, she said "[civil disobedience] brought a level of energy that then spilled over into the other parts of the campaign" (Interview 6). In this sense, the other parts of the campaign were beneficiaries of the energy, hope and inspiration that the civil disobedience brought, and the other aspects of the fight saw increased energy as a side effect of the direct action. Meredith wasn't the only respondent who was inspired by the tree sits. As Rachel describes:

> [I] saw on Facebook that a tree sit had gone up on the top of Peters Mountain... And it just was electrifying. It was like, 'Hell, yeah, that's what I'm talking about…' I know how hard people have been working since 2014 with the regulatory stuff. I admire that and I appreciate that. But this is exciting. We said, no. We mean no. And it just really spoke to me. (Interview 8)

Rachel here also contrasts the tree sits on Peters Mountain with the regulatory work. Recognizing its importance, she also acknowledges that the tree sits, in their absolute defiance of the pipeline, were exciting in a way that the regulatory work isn't. This was clearly a common theme, where people participate in and respect the more moderate strategies, but acknowledge that they do not and cannot inspire the kind of energy and hope that civil disobedience can bring to the campaign. Speaking of a landowner's decision to start a tree sit on her own land, Rachel argued: "I don't think we would ever have seen the cross-state support that we got if Red Terry hadn't climbed in her own tree. There's just no way. That spoke to people, and people wanted to know how they could support her" (Interview 8). Rachel describes an important moment, when Red Terry climbed in her own tree, and emphasizes that this moment brought cross-state support like nothing else could. If other tree sits inspired energy, hope and action, Red climbing in her own tree did so to an even greater degree because she was protecting her own home.

Rachel went even further, saying “I think that direct action has been indispensable to the success of the MVP fight, to the spirit of it, to the energy of it, to the fortitude, to the endurance of it” (Interview 8). For Rachel, the tree sits not only inspired hope and energy, but they also contributed to the strength of the movement, the longevity of the movement, and the overall power of the movement. This is significant to the question of how civil disobedience might affect within-movement dynamics and radical flank effects. My participants were stark in their language. The resistance to the MVP would not have been what it was without the civil disobedience component, especially in terms of the energy, hope and strength it injected into the movement. Explaining why she believes tree sits were so electrifying, Ruth noted:

> I think that in terms of movement building… to know that there's people who feel strongly enough about this to take on a tremendous amount of personal risk… I think that's extremely powerful for people, and it has a lasting impact and a legendary status… I can just attest having come on to the fight later, watching the effect that that had on people in the communities impacted by the Pipeline, and I think it's very profound in terms of stopping the Pipeline. (Interview 11)

The takeaway here is that civil disobedience, and the tree sits in particular, were an effective recruitment and retention tool for the movement because of how they inspired people into action and gave the movement a sense of hope, but also because of how they demonstrated to the local community that people were willing to put their bodies on the line in order to stop the pipeline. Civil disobedience had a meaningful positive radical flank effect by inspiring hope, gratitude and respect. Moreover, it brought energy and fire into the movement.

Connecting Effects

Civil disobedience also benefited the movement by creating connections among activists within the movement, as well as between other movements. Riley explains:

> [I]n order to do direct action, it does take a lot of hours and it does take a lot of labor, and that means that people have to get fed throughout it. And I think that that point of connection around food is actually really incredibly important, like bringing food to the tree sits felt-- I know that people there felt a lot of love from those meals. (Interview 3)

This quote from Riley introduces a couple important points about connection in the movement. First, the time and labor that is required means that people have to spend a lot of time together, working on civil disobedience. Second, and more explicitly, Riley emphasizes how making, sharing and eating food became an important point of connection around civil disobedience because of the time and labor required. As Riley later articulated, “There's a lot in this fight to make you feel powerless,” but “just making chicken noodle soup and putting it in a bunch of thermoses and sending it off to some friends” was a way for people to feel powerful and feel that they were contributing to the movement in an important way (Interview 3). Riley here describes a point of connection both through the hours that are spent working on direct action, but also the need for food and how people often connect through meals or cooking for one another. Food was a common theme, especially among those who were active in civil disobedience. It was relevant both as a point of engagement and as a point of connection. Riley is also making a point about how making food can fight against feelings of helplessness and enable those involved to feel more powerful.

Another important point of connection created by civil disobedience is through the space that was created by the tree sits. It became a physical place to gather, share meals, and ultimately connect. Rose vocalizes this, explaining “I feel like generally, direct action also brought a lot of people together who were separately dealing with this pipeline on their own, just because direct action all of a sudden made a space for people who wanted to resist the Pipeline to gather to” (Interview 5). There is something important about the physical connector through a gathering space which is powerful in bringing people together. The tree sits created a place to

go and share space, stories, food and more. Having this common gathering space brought people together in a way that submitting comments to FERC or filing lawsuits could not. Rose continues, discussing the first tree sits, which were on Peters Mountain:

> The tree sits on Peters Mountain brought so many people together. . . I can probably list off almost ten people who . . . heard about the tree sits on Peters Mountain and was like, 'I'm gonna go check it out.' They didn't know anyone else… and they just showed up there, and are now members of this community of resistance. (Interview 5)

Peters Mountain was a space to show up and become a part of the resistance community that had formed. These points of connection would not have been possible without the tree sits. In creating an ongoing physical place and space to show up, the tree sits became like a kind of home for many who were committed to fighting this pipeline. They also became an accessible place to plug in to the fight, where new people could just show up with supplies and connect with the existing efforts of the movement. Rose follows this conversation up, mentioning how the Yellow Finch tree sits carried on the legacy of the Peters Mountain tree sits: "Yellow Finch obviously was that, but much longer, and over many years, and was more accessible too… So it kind of brought a new height to these spaces where people could meet and connect" (Interview 5). These points about longevity and accessibility are important. My interviews revealed that the Peters Mountain tree sits were located on a steep hill that many couldn't necessarily hike up to, while one could access Yellow Finch from the road, and so this difference in accessibility was important. Further, the existence of the Peters Mountain tree sits could be measured in days or months, but the existence of the Yellow Finch tree sits could be measured in years, so this longevity was significant in terms of a continuity of place and people feeling like they had a (somewhat) stable place to gather over an extended period of time. For Rose, and others, Yellow Finch was a special space because it both had longevity and was a more accessible space than Peters Mountain. Rose explains these factors clearly, saying that

“Yellow Finch, because of its ease of access and its continuity, was a fantastic example of a space where people really took time to be together” (Interview 5). Yellow Finch, and other tree sits, created a long term space for connection which brought more people into the movement and enabled community building that may not have otherwise been possible.

Another space created because of civil disobedience, which produced opportunities for community building, was at the courthouse during the hearings for those who had been arrested. Rose explains:

> Court dates are a great time for people to come and meet each other… a court day is during the day, people get to hang out outside, and show that they care about each other… I think it was just another opportunity for people to gather and build relationships, which I think is the most important part of fighting this Pipeline is building community. (Interview 5)

Here, Rose articulates the ways in which court dates can create a space for connection and community building, and how important that is for the movement. Court dates are opportunities for people to talk, hang out, and build relationships. It is a relatively low risk thing to participate in because you are just showing up outside the court in solidarity with another member of the community of resistance. Rose also mentions how important community building and connection can be to fighting this pipeline, even going so far as to call it the “most important part” of resistance. Michelle also mentioned court dates, explaining that “one of the things I did do was go to several court hearings when they went to trial. I was so happy that there were people that were willing to do that” (Interview 10). Michelle is an example of one of the people who came to the court dates and connected through them. She never participated directly in any civil disobedience, but she was plugged into a community of resistance indirectly through these court dates. If civil disobedience hadn’t happened, these spaces for connection wouldn’t exist.

More importantly, perhaps, is the possibility that if the movement didn't organize people to show up for these court dates, it would have been a missed opportunity for community building.

Finally, an important takeaway was how civil disobedience has created opportunities for connection not only within the movement, but also across different movements. Ruth discussed this in terms of an act of civil disobedience she participated in in Washington DC:

> I saw it as an opportunity for the MVP fighting community to sort of furrow down with the other communities and show solidarity with what the Indigenous folks present were asking… also packaged in that was asking Biden to stop the MVP… I saw it as an opportunity for me to physically be present as a connector between MVP and everything else that was going on… It was more like solidarity with all the other fights. (Interview 11)

Ruth is making an important point here about how participating in civil disobedience across movements can be a "physical connector" between bodies as you share in the solidarity of direct action together. Ruth used civil disobedience as a way to show solidarity and bridge the MVP fight with other fights for climate justice. In doing so, civil disobedience is a way to make the whole coalition for climate justice stronger. Maeve also mentioned how direct action has bridged movements, saying "direct activism has… allowed us to hook into other organizations, such as the Sioux" (Interview 15). Both Ruth and Maeve emphasized building connections with Indigenous communities through civil disobedience. This echoed multiple other participants who emphasized the history and legacy of Indigenous people leading the way when it comes to civil disobedience. The quotes from Ruth and Maeve demonstrate how much connection is possible, how many bridges can be built, especially with frontline Indigenous communities, when civil disobedience is introduced into a movement. Between developing gathering spaces around longer term blockades, leveraging opportunities for connection like the court dates, and showing solidarity across movements through participating in cross-movement

civil disobedience, there are multiple ways that civil disobedience can be a unique connecting force for community building.

Engaging Effects

Civil disobedience also enables movement building through engaging people in different ways depending on their different skills and capacities. The legal/regulatory approach can sometimes require dense reading and writing and in many cases, a law degree, to participate. Riley explains that:

> Direct action is for everybody. You don't need to be like, 'I can get arrested' to do it. We've had so many people who have cooked us so many meals… literally anyone can find some way to support… It brings people together because anyone can join, it's not like you need specific skills or a specific amount of time or a certain job to make you feel like you're a part of things. (Interview 3)

Riley introduces some important points. There are a lot of different ways to support, so anyone can plug in regardless of skills or capacities. Riley says explicitly that you do not need to risk arrest to support civil disobedience, which makes it much more accessible for those who cannot risk arrest. Also, there is no strong expectation of time commitment, so people who have jobs or are otherwise committed can find places to plug in that work with their schedule and responsibilities. I think this sentiment was shared across many of my interviews. Rachel said:

> I think it's really important to understand how many people brought rhubarb pie or eggs to the tree sits. People who had never climbed in a tree or risked arrest themselves, but they showed up in-person, whatever concerns or fears or uncertainties about what it might look like when they got there… For two-and-a-half years, hundreds of people came through Yellow Finch. (Interview 8)

Rachel echoed Riley's points about people being able to engage and participate in different ways, and especially the point that not everyone needs to risk arrest to show up and be helpful. It is an important point that hundreds of people came to the Yellow Finch tree sits, which suggests that the community of resistance was able to make people feel comfortable enough to come to the site of the tree sits and support in whatever way they could. For Rachel, this was a special thing that enabled the MVP resistance to succeed. She said:

> It's not always like this. The amount of community support we get here is amazing. People are coming all the time and bringing gifts… And I think the MVP fight has been an important locus for crossover between radical climate and environmental organizers who are cast as radical anyway, and everyday people who never saw themselves as activists.... I think it's been unprecedented. (Interview 8)

Rachel is emphasizing that this crossover does not always happen in fights for environmental justice, which means the MVP resistance was doing something right in bringing radical environmentalists and everyday people together for a common cause. The engagement enabled by civil disobedience in this movement has created many opportunities for people to plug in who would not have otherwise been able to. It was, in part, the longer term nature of civil disobedience, as well as the creativity of activists who found ways to plug people into different roles, which enabled deeper engagement in this movement.

Rachel played a key role in facilitating this engagement for years. She explains:

> I think that's one of my top roles, to facilitate people's engagement with the movement… what I believe about social movements is that… greater participation is desirable. And greater participation from a wide variety of people and a huge number of people is what is the most important piece of a successful social movement. (Interview 8)

Rachel prioritized facilitating engagement as one of her primary roles in the movement because she believes that participation is one of the most important factors in the success of a movement. For Rachel, diverse participation is the most important part of success for a movement, so she emphasizes that in her work. She explains:

> I just enjoyed putting the puzzle pieces together… It turns out, people with 9-5 jobs, [it's] really hard for them to take food up on a Tuesday. So that's one role that I've played... is how to welcome new people, and give them something to do, and a way to feel connected… And I guess that's a little bit emblematic in a way of my role more broadly, which is to try to be someone who knows who's doing what, where. (Interview 8)

Rachel played the role of facilitating people's engagement in the movement. She took responsibility for putting the puzzle together and connecting the dots of who can do what and where everyone fits in the movement. It is through people like Rachel, that hundreds of people came to Yellow Finch and were plugged in to the movement. Without leaders like Rachel, who know who is doing what and where, the movement can become disorganized and recruitment/retention in the movement can falter. Rachel also shared with me another important element of engagement:

> We have a lingo in direct action if it's a red action… yellow action or a green action, which means, red:... someone will be arrested, and yellow: it's possible, and green: it's a very low probability… one piece… is not expecting everyone to go straight to a red action. To try to have green places… or yellow places for people to land. (Interview 8)

Rachel gave some examples of green actions, like contributing a quilt that might be a part of an action and yellow actions, like showing up to a rally where others are risking arrests (Interview 8). These distinctions are important to name because if you can provide people with a diversity of ways to engage with civil disobedience, you can engage more people in the

movement. Having red, yellow and green actions was one way that the MVP resistance movement chose to create a diversity of options for engagement in the movement. Civil disobedience ultimately provided activists and community members with a variety of ways to engage with the movement, so that anyone could plug in based on their time, skills, and risk perceptions.

Uniting Effects

Civil disobedience helped to unify the movement and form of bonds of trust within it. As Riley explained:

> Breaking the law with someone inherently requires trust... and also inherently fosters trust… being arrested is usually pretty traumatizing, and you're scared. You're risking physical harm, you're risking emotional harm… And you do really want to, and need to, have each other's backs in it. So it does forge a special bond. (Interview 3)

Riley is describing how both the shared experience of trauma and the reliance on one another fosters strong bonds of trust. Being there for one another in times of fear and danger both relies on and builds trust, and as Riley says, it forms a “special bond.” Riley continues, explaining that “having to have each other's backs and wanting to have each other's back, and then having each other's backs is a really strong glue. Strong connecting force” (Interview 3). As a strong glue, the experience of civil disobedience is able to bring people together, unite them, and form relationships that last well beyond the action itself. This is an effect that is primarily located within the radical flank itself, but to the extent that activists move between radical and moderate flanks, this trust-building can be beneficial across the movement.

Rhett expressed a similar sentiment to Riley, saying that: “ it builds a little bit more trust among certain people within the movement to say, ‘Okay, this person is willing to put their body on the line’” (Interview 4). In this sense, the risk of arrest or other harm plays deeply into the

element of trust. Other actions with less risk wouldn't build trust in the same way because people don't have to risk as much as they do with civil disobedience. Risk is thus important to the trust-building process in civil disobedience, in addition to fear and having each other's backs. Rhett also explained one more piece of how trust is built, in the preparation for an act of civil disobedience:

> They train… and they make sure people are safe, and it doesn't always go exactly how people want it to go, and they talk through that.... That's an incredible trust-building experience, to have somebody come in and tell you what you might expect, what could go sideways and how to react. (Interview 4)

For Rhett, the practice of preparing for an act of civil disobedience itself is a trust-builder because going through the scenarios and making sure that everyone knows about all the possibilities makes people feel safe and cared for. Rhett continues, explaining: "to know that people are really preparing, as opposed to say, just rushing into something... there's a high level of preparation there that builds that trust" (Interview 4). This is an important point from Rhett because it emphasizes the role that preparation can play in building trust. The more comprehensive the preparation, the more activists can trust that the people around them have their backs.

Rose also expressed the same kind of sentiment as Riley and Rhett: "I think when people are all working together, doing direct action, and some of it's the physical stuff like, you might be cooking for someone else or just actually doing things together I think brings people together in a way that's really special." (Interview 5) Rose takes it a step further when she says: "I trust these people with my life" (Interview 5). Civil disobedience does more than just build trust, it can form bonds of trust that extend to life threatening situations and can lead someone to be willing to place their life in another activist's hands. Ruth felt a similar way, explaining: "I

think there was a sense between us that if something went awry or if there were an escalating State response that we would support each other…I did feel that my co-participants had my back and would come to my aid if something were to go wrong. So I felt that our bonds were strengthened" (Interview 11). All the above sentiments show a clear pattern: when you participate in civil disobedience, you form a tighter and stronger relationship with those around you, your co-conspirators, your support people, and that has significant implications in terms of the social dynamics of the movement and building trust and strengthening bonds. These bonds ultimately are located primarily within the radical flank, but to the extent that movement actors overlap between radical and moderate flanks, there are effects for trust and unity throughout the movement.

The above sentiments all come from those who have participated in civil disobedience. However, Molly, who has not participated in civil disobedience, felt a little differently, saying:

> I feel a unity with everybody across the Pipeline. But that doesn't mean I feel a unity with the people that are in the trees… If the landowners are in trees, yes, there's unity, but I do not feel any unity, like with Yellow Finch... I don't feel the same unity with people that are like, 'Yeah, I'm from Vermont, and we're going on an Elders Walk, and we're going to sit in our chairs in front of Wells Fargo.' I feel, they're trying to help us, but I feel, they're in another circle out from my main circle of [people who are] directly affected by the Pipeline. (Interview 7)

Unity can sometimes be fractured when there is a perception that someone is an outsider. The fact that Molly had not participated in civil disobedience means she doesn't necessarily have the perspective of going through an act of civil disobedience with someone else, but her perspective on feeling more distant from outsiders is important when we think through unity and civil disobedience in the MVP resistance movement. It was a common thread

in some of my interviews that people sometimes had more respect and admiration for local people who participated in civil disobedience than outsiders who come into the region to do the same. This supports the findings by Bell mentioned in the literature review.

Movement Outcome Effects

An important piece of the puzzle when it comes to civil disobedience in this movement is how these tactics had tangible benefits to the outcomes in the fight. In this sense, the positive radical flank effects went beyond the performative or internal social dynamics to actually affecting key goals of the movement. This could be one factor in why civil disobedience had fewer disruptive effects on within-movement dynamics, compared to what Bell and other scholars have found in other movements. Several interviewees cited general support for civil disobedience within and across the movement because of some of these tangible benefits, so these movement outcome effects ultimately fit into the conversation of how civil disobedience affects within-movement dynamics. In this case of resistance to the MVP, virtually everyone I spoke to agreed that the civil disobedience has been materially beneficial in one way or another. Riley explained why this is so important, arguing,

> I think because those tactics… have been proven to be effective, I see a lot less of that natural inclination to be like, 'Oh, those rowdy people over there. No, no, no. I don't agree with them. I just want my backyard to be safe.' I feel like I see a lot less of that now, and I think that is because those actions have been proven to be effective. (Interview 3)

In this sense, the broader movement and the public have been less likely to be dismissive or otherwise reject civil disobedience because it has been effective, or at least has been perceived that way. If the community of resistance believes that the tactics have been materially effective, they will be more receptive to these tactics and similar escalations. Rose

put it another way, saying “I genuinely feel like people have seen direct action work in this campaign. And so they're supportive of that, and you can't hide from that factor now” (Interview 5). Rose echoes what Riley said, emphasizing the fact that you can’t hide from the benefits that civil disobedience has brought. Rhett explained the two main ways that the civil disobedience component has helped the movement, stating:

> Nobody gives a shit about the comment that you filed at FERC. It's not newsworthy... What the blockades were doing was telling everybody what was happening… was wrong… and needed to be stopped. And it turns out they were correct… So these blockades call that out in a way that letters to the editor doesn't really effectively do… Somebody living in a pine tree for 932 days will put a brighter spotlight on a movement than all of that other ground-level organizing could… [W]hen Red and Minor Terry got themselves arrested on their own land, all the media wanted to be there…. And when that tree sit at Yellow Finch stayed up for as long as it did, it just became this epic story. (Interview 4)

What Rhett is describing here is the way that civil disobedience introduces a newsworthiness to the actions in a way that can bring more publicity and share the story to a much wider audience than comments to FERC or letters to the editors. He was clear to me that these actions are important and that he participates in those moderate actions (Interview 4). However, he is making a distinction between the high-profile nature of civil disobedience and how it can elevate the media-worthy status of the fight to new heights. Rhett also explains another key component to how civil disobedience has benefitted the fight:

> It does take the courts a long time to catch up with the arguments… That pipeline could have been built by the time the Fourth Circuit got around to ruling in our favor. That's

how bad it is. And then what happens? 'Ah, well, you were right, but the thing is already built.' (Interview 4)

Rhett is speaking generally here about a series of court decisions by the Fourth Circuit Court which happened on a relatively slow timeline. In the meantime, construction was underway and so the pipeline company could have made much more significant progress than they did, and by the time a friendly court decision came through, the pipeline might have already been built in the relevant locations. For Rhett, the efforts of the radical flank in this movement actually worked to slow the construction process enough for the court decisions to make a meaningful difference. Rhett continues, arguing: "Direct confrontation of the project… and trying to slow down the machinery, serves another purpose, and that is letting the process kind of catch up and maybe give us time to be heard" (Interview 4). Rhett is reiterating his point that civil disobedience is able to slow down the construction process and allow the court system to make decisions. The fact that many of these decisions ultimately ruled in favor of the pipeline fighters makes a huge difference because it changed the perception of how civil disobedience helped in the fight. It was the radical flank and the lawyers, unknowingly working together, which produced this positive outcome. This novel benefit may be unique to pipeline fights, but it is an important finding nonetheless, as blockades can have a meaningful effect on legal outcomes in terms of slowing down construction and preventing the pipeline company from making too much progress while the court system functions. It is difficult to say with certainty how powerful this effect has been, but it is a dynamic which merits further investigation.

Multiple other interviewees acknowledge the benefits that Rhett outlined. Meredith, when asked about what civil disobedience did for the movement, said: "Just the publicity. Just getting the Mountain Valley Pipeline on the news, and then getting people aware of it because of the tree sits. So, people who are fighting eminent domain fights, all of a sudden they had all these people who knew about them, who stand in solidarity with them" (Interview 6). Meredith is

echoing Rhett here in terms of newsworthiness of civil disobedience and how it can elevate the media status of the pipeline fight. Meredith is going further to argue that this elevated media status actually enabled the movement to connect with other pipeline fights and draw more people into the fight. Madison vocalized a similar feeling, explaining: “I think by people fighting it still, that's why it has to stay alive through that way. Nobody's going to know what's going on in the courts. It's quiet up until a ruling comes out. It's the people that are on the ground that are making it still a discussion” (Interview 13). So civil disobedience is not just good for publicity, but generally keeping the movement in the conversation and making sure that people don’t forget about it while things are working through the courts. Madison makes an important comparison, like Rhett, with the more moderate tactics attracting relatively little media and public attention. Civil disobedience was beneficial in bringing this attention to the fight in a more consistent and sustained way.

Several other interviewees also shared Rhett’s analysis of how the tree sitters and other civil disobedience benefitted the legal strategy. Malcolm explained, “without the tree sitters and Peter's mountain… Mountain Valley Pipeline would be very far ahead of where they are right now. They slowed down this out-of-control locomotive to allow the court system to function” (Interview 1). Again, this theme of slowing down the process comes up, with Malcolm seeing the civil disobedience and legal process as interacting in the same way that Rhett identified. Meredith agreed with this assessment, saying:

> The tree sits… slowed down the construction… so that the legal fight could actually make a difference… if the tree sits hadn't been there, they would have just plowed through, because it would've happened before the legal challenges… it was actually materially effective. It hasn't stopped the pipeline, but it's slowed it down so that the people who were working purely on the legal front, could actually have rulings that

matter. Because, otherwise the rulings would have been moot points, because the Pipeline would have already done all that stuff. (Interview 6)

The timing is actually quite important because Meredith is explaining how the MVP would have already built the pipeline in key places which would later become the focus of legal challenges. If the tree sits and other civil disobedience hadn't slowed down the construction process then by the time the courts were able to work through the process, the pipeline company would have already finished construction in those areas. For Meredith, while the civil disobedience alone hasn't stopped the pipeline, it has been tangibly beneficial. Rachel shared an analysis of direct action benefitting the legal strategy, framing the benefits in a different way:

> I am well aware that wins in the courts have been the thing that has actually stopped construction for more than six hours at a time, compared to even 92 days at a time. I don't think those legal wins would be possible without the direct action… direct action helps with fundraising. I think it helps with impressing upon the lawyers… that they're doing something important and needed. I think it matters to the judges… if the judges thought it was just these two environmental groups and not a whole movement. (Interview 8)

The takeaway here is that, in a pipeline fight, civil disobedience can have significant positive radical flank effects in terms of both publicity and benefitting the legal strategy through slowing construction down and allowing the courts to catch up. Rachel introduces additional important considerations in terms of tangible benefits. First, direct action can help with fundraising. Rachel didn't elaborate much on this point but it seems civil disobedience would help with fundraising in terms of making the fight more visible and making it a more exciting option to support. Second, Rachel emphasizes an additional benefit to the legal strategy in terms of civil disobedience empowering or motivating their lawyers by showing them that there

are people who really care about what they are doing. The impact of this is hard to measure, but it is an important effect nonetheless. Finally, civil disobedience shows to the judges that the community really cares about this issue and it's not just a few environmentalists making a lot of noise in the courts. These additional benefits showcase the diverse ways that civil disobedience can help in the fight. Taken together, these tangible benefits are important radical flank effects which also play into the within-movement dynamics through creating a perception throughout the movement that the civil disobedience is doing good work for the movement.

Potential Risks and the Radical Flank

This second section of the results focuses on potential risks related to the radical flank in the MVP resistance movement. These potential risks could arguably be called negative radical flank effects. I identify them as potential risks primarily because they have some very promising mitigating factors which limit their impact on the movement, but there are still important reasons for concern, especially as these potential risks might show up in future pipeline movements.

Conflict and Alienation

Some conflict arose in terms of the tactics and tone that were associated with civil disobedience in the MVP resistance movement. There was also a sense of alienation for some because of the civil disobedience in the movement. Rhett said, speaking about responses to civil disobedience: "I've seen it on social media where people are like, 'I supported y'all against this pipeline before, but, like, this shit has got to stop, and you just make us all look bad'" (Interview 4). Rhett is referring to people who see the tree sitters and other law-breakers as making the movement look bad. Multiple interviewees said that they felt some people may have left the movement because of civil disobedience. When I followed up with Rhett, asking if he felt these posts on social media were a couple of bad apples, or something more, he said:

> It's a couple of resentful people… they have neighbors… and social pressure is a huge influence. 'Oh, I see my next door neighbor who actually has the Pipeline going across the property saying they don't like what these environmental terrorists are doing by living in a tree, and now I'm going to agree with them and be quiet about it, but I'm not going to participate at the level that I was anymore because I've been turned off by this movement'... to me, it feels like it could have contributed to some of the attrition over the years. (Interview 4)

Rhett is describing how some supporters of the movement could slowly leave the movement because of the backlash of a few loud neighbors. The social pressure introduced from one resentful person could ripple throughout a neighborhood and have a chilling effect on involvement and participation. While this effect is hard to measure quantitatively, it is important to register as a risk qualitatively, as turning people away from the movement is a serious concern for the longevity and ultimately success of the movement.

Some pipeline fighters have had to work hard to mediate some of this conflict over the years. Madison shared her experience mediating conflict in the movement, saying:

> I'm more of a mediator. My more logical friends get really pissed off at some of the civil disobedience that happens. They feel like it slows down their progress and stuff, and I don't think that's necessarily the case so much now. I think they've balanced it out, but I remember having conversations like, 'We have to have everybody doing whatever they can.' I said, 'And you can be doing your own thing.' (Interview 13)

Madison thus served in a key role in facilitating a certain understanding of different tactics working together. She impressed upon her "more logical friends" the importance of having many activists doing many different things and being able to do that without too much conflict. Madison also expressed a sense that there was more conflict early on in the fight, as

compared to later, saying things have “balanced out”. Other interviewees expressed the same feeling of more conflict happening over tactics earlier on in the fight, as opposed to later. Riley shared this feeling when they said:

> There has been tension around tactics. And I remember that being more present earlier on in the fight. The stuff that feels like it's been really difficult to navigate has honestly been tone more than tactic. (Interview 3)

Riley makes a couple important points. First, reiterating what Madison said about conflict being more present earlier in the fight. Second, Riley explained that not all the conflict over civil disobedience focuses directly on tactics. Much of the conflict revolves around what she calls “tone.” Tone refers to the language and rhetoric activists chose to use around each other, around pipeline workers and around police, as well as how different approaches can come into conflict when, for example, some activists want a certain level of respect or decorum while others see these as restrictions on their expression. Riley continues, explaining how difficult it is to navigate conflict over tone:

> We tried to navigate understandings in which… we don't tell people what to say at the tree sits… But we do talk about if it crosses a line… someone told a worker to kill themselves, or something, and it was a very heightened moment. (Interview 3)

Interviewees discussed the challenges in navigating these tensions because many of the folks involved in direct action are confronting workers and police on almost a daily basis, but sometimes their anger comes up against other people’s boundaries, in terms of appropriate tone and respect/respectability. Riley describes this “heightened moment,” which was a flashpoint in the conflict over tones because people in the movement have very different notions of what is appropriate and respectful in these complex situations.

Rachel explains some of her personal concern over tone as someone heavily involved in recruitment for the movement: “there's been plenty of times like people have yelled at cops in ways that I thought wouldn't help recruit new movement people” (Interview 8). For Rachel, who is heavily involved in recruitment/engagement, certain tones can be unhelpful from a strategic sense. This is different from conflict over respectability, which hinges on morals or what is right. The conflict over tones that my participants described spanned both moral and strategic concerns. Maeve shares some of these concerns: “There's a few of them I think are too extreme for me there, too much like the January 6th crowd, but on the flip side. And like I said, I want nonviolence. I feel like being violet from time to time, but we can't do that” (Interview 15). When I asked Maeve if the violence was acted upon or just in terms of discourse, she said: “just discourse, because I'm not close enough to hear it, but, okay. But when you start yelling and screaming, you know, ‘fuck the bastards,’ and that kind of thing, ’Let's go after them.’ No, I'm not for that” (Interview 15). Maeve's concerns fall more into the moral side of tone. For Rebecca, this conflict over tone has to do with fundamental ideological disagreements, explaining:

> Some of us are abolitionists… I know it was hard for people to hear when other folks would yell ‘All Cops Are Bastards’. People don't want to hear that sometimes… So uniting around everybody's cause I don't think is always going to happen. But just having a respect for other people's autonomy. I think that's been a learning experience. (Interview 12)

The point Rebecca is making here is an important one, and it’s a conversation about tone, autonomy, and respect that was vital to the strength of this movement. Even if you cannot fundamentally agree on tone, you can respect one another’s autonomy enough to let everyone express themselves in ways that work for them. At the same time, there is a sense that certain tones can be more strategic than others, and that has a material impact on the success of a pipeline resistance.

A major sub-theme that emerged in my interviews was the idea that most of the people who would feel alienated or turned away by civil disobedience aren't the people who would have ever been activated anyway. This is a mitigating factor in terms of the impact that alienation and conflict had on the organizing effort to stop the pipeline. Rose expresses this sentiment, saying that:

> Because this fight's been going on so long, and because direct action has been such an integral part of it, most people who don't believe in direct action… aren't really involved… Anyone who's pretty fairly involved… has a general support of direct action even if they would never do it. (Interview 5)

After speaking to 15 people in the movement, I did not find one person who was involved in the fight and actively *against* civil disobedience, which supports Rose's argument. This might mean that everyone who opposed direct action has been forced out by this point, but I think it also suggests that those who are truly against this pipeline wouldn't let concerns about direct action prevent them from actively participating in whatever way works best for them. Rachel emphasized this as well, arguing that many of the people alienated by direct action are not the ones who would have been heavily engaged anyway. She gave the examples of some of her co-workers who did not support her own action, and explained how none of those people would have ever done anything to meaningfully support the fight anyway. She said: "I don't think they ever would have been activated to be contributors to the fight" (Interview 8). Rachel makes clear that from her perspective, those who are opposed to civil disobedience are generally people who would not have taken an active role in the fight anyway. Madison, who did not participate in civil disobedience, explained:

> There's enough places for people to go that if they didn't feel comfortable doing civil disobedience, that they would go to another place. I don't know that people stopped

> being against the Mountain Valley Pipeline because of civil disobedience. I think some people would say… "Why would they do that? That's stupid. Why would they waste their time?" I've heard that. But I didn't hear them say it made them support the Mountain Valley Pipeline. (Interview 13)

Madison is saying that many of the people who weren't engaged before never would have been engaged anyway, and those who were already engaged could find other places within the movement where they could fight the pipeline in ways that fit best for them. Madison concludes then that not many people changed their views on the pipeline because of civil disobedience. Finally, Rose introduced an important argument about conflict in the movement that I thought was valuable to highlight. She said:

> There's always going to be conflict… Genuinely, that's okay. It means that we're all trying, and the fact that we're gonna go through conflict together means that people want to figure it out so we can keep fighting the Pipeline… conflict isn't necessarily a bad thing in that situation, because generally it's like, we're all here… to fight the Pipeline. (Interview 5)

So, while civil disobedience does introduce some conflict into the movement, there are reasons that that conflict is generative, positive or constructive. It's important not to uniformly vilify any conflict that might be introduced into the movement because sometimes that conflict can bring people together and make the movement stronger. This affirms arguments mentioned in the literature review, originally made by Barbara Epstein and others, which emphasize that conflict is inevitable and not necessarily the problem. It is how a movement manages tensions and handles conflict that ultimately determines the effect that these tensions and conflicts will have on the movement.

Fear of Consequences

Potential consequences of civil disobedience in terms of legal repercussions or bodily harm are significant. Several people I interviewed mentioned concerns and fears with civil disobedience because of these risks. Rhett explained:

> [Civil disobedience] has brought tension into the movement in different ways, because… of anti-protest laws… they are completely designed to stop movements like ours. That means it opens the door to powerful, flush-with-cash corporations… to target grassroots organizations who may not even be participating in that tactic. I think that makes people nervous, and that is what creates the tension…. where I think the resentment potentially comes in is, do they actually put other people at risk… by rolling them up in a conspiracy charge?…That is going to create a certain amount of tension… from the anxiety of knowing that you're up against very powerful adversaries. (Interview 4)

Rhett is making several important points. People are scared. Rhett refers to anti-protest laws, which make participating in an act of civil disobedience a more serious infraction and put activists in a position of having to go to jail for a much longer length of time or pay much higher fines. Powerful corporations have a lot of resources to be able to throw lawsuits out there, and so pipeline fighting communities introduce a lot of risk into their circles when they choose to break the law and stop construction. Furthermore, Rhett makes the argument that those who weren't even involved could get a conspiracy charge for their actions, even if they never actually participated in civil disobedience. These factors together make civil disobedience really scary in terms of the consequences and the powerful forces who seek to squash their movement. Ruth also shared these sentiments, saying:

> This is a topic that has really frightening consequences. If a company or whatever entity decides to go after people about this… emotionally for me, it's nerve wracking because

> of the potential for consequences and harm. And fossil fuel companies want people to be shut up and they want them to be scared… they have so much more money and so many more lawyers and… extra punishments of people who are involved in this in order to scare people out of doing it… it's really frightening because it has such severe consequences. (Interview 11)

The consequences for even being connected at all to some of these actions can be quite severe, and so as Rhett and Ruth explain, there is a certain level of fear and tension that is introduced into the movement because of these consequences. Both of them mention the powerful corporations going after activists to scare them, stop them, and basically deter them from even fighting this project at all. These lawsuits and anti-protest laws thus have a chilling effect on activism for people who cannot risk fines or prison time. Rachel told a story about where some of these tensions bubbled up, explaining:

> It was a picnic, singing, prayer, dance, laughing. Just uproarious rebellion… and it had unintended consequences. We were close enough to the tree sits that the police, who were really itching to beat on someone… they didn't arrest people at the flashmob picnic. They negotiated people's departure… And then they drove back to Yellow Finch… and brutally arrested multiple people... So, I'll always feel a whole lot of ways about that day, because the one action felt successful. And yet, I feel responsible for the people who weren't protected that day. (Interview 8)

This is an interesting case because it shows how the risks of arrest put pressure on the movement and can create feelings of blame that can be really hard on everyone involved. Rachel just wanted to organize a fun and powerful event, but their action angered the police in some ways, and it came down on some activists who weren't even at that action. These are the fears and concerns that these activists have had to negotiate, and it is difficult because at any

moment, the police can decide to be violent. Robert further emphasized how frustrating this can be, especially with the new anti-protests laws, which label activists as terrorists: “some people thought, ‘Well, the government is trying to label people like that terrorists’… So people are scared to death to be labeled a terrorist, and understandably so. And yet, all these people are doing this trying to protect the land for all of us” (Interview 9). Ultimately, this is important because it is a dynamic that resistance movements are going to have to increasingly grapple with. The key with managing these fears, in my view, is creating different kinds of opportunities for people to engage, so that people can plug in at various levels depending on their comfort level and fears surrounding the risks. As mentioned in the section on engagement, creating opportunities for green or yellow actions, for example, or introducing more opportunities for people to cook food or bring supplies, can be a way to keep the movement strong while not necessarily putting everyone at such high levels of risk. These sorts of risks are inevitable at some level when you have civil disobedience in a movement. Having open conversations about these risks and creating space for anyone to enter at whatever level of risk is best for them is incredibly important.

Organizational Risks

Many of my interviewees were concerned with civil disobedience because of the risks it can pose to nonprofit organizations’ funding and/or status. Maya explained that

> [Nonprofits] all have different readings of how much they'll go into the direct action world. And so it is always a conversation of, like, if we're organizing a rally with certain more conventional older groups, there are many things that they won't do that younger, less conventional groups will do. (Interview 2)

Maya gave the example of comparing the People Versus Fossil Fuels campaign and the Stop MVP coalition to describe how different coalitions have different analyses of direct action.

She explains that “some groups… are supportive of direct action… but other groups are much more cautious” (Interview 2). Maya is describing the fears that different organizations have about getting involved in civil disobedience and what repercussions that might have for their organizations. Different coalitions had to negotiate these fears in figuring out how involved in civil disobedience to be and when to incorporate those tactics into coalitional actions. Rhett agreed with Maya, saying:

> Because we're affiliated with a… non-profit… if they were to get rolled up in something because somebody within that structure decided to just do direct action/civil disobedience, they could put all of those other programs at risk… So as a sort of general policy, none of the work that we do can be illegal… And that's true for a lot of nonprofits. (Interview 4)

Rhett is describing the constraints that these risks and fears place on his organization and ones like it. There is a serious fear that if members are too involved in the civil disobedience world, especially in an official capacity, that might threaten the other work the organization is doing. It becomes important to keep those tactics separate in order to protect all the different kinds of organizing that is going on. Ruth explained how this sort of danger creates tension within the movement:

> So I have a great deal of anxiety about talking about [civil disobedience] because you can bring upon tremendous risk onto a non-profit organization to the point where the organization could lose its non-profit tax status… So I think for organizations, it's a fine line of remaining with the tools to have infrastructure to operate as an organization.... But unfortunately it kind of hampers our ability to have free speech about these things… some people are willing to take more risks than others. So it creates some tension. (Interview 11)

Ruth is describing the cost/benefit analysis that organizations have to do in order to decide whether having the tools that non-profit status provides are worth the limits that are placed on the organization with regard to tactics and free speech. Ruth argues that there is tension because some people might want to push the boundaries more than others, and there are understandable disagreements about how much risk to introduce onto the organization. Rhett had a similar perspective as Ruth, but was willing to go into a little more detail about how some of those tensions play out:

> I think within our organization, there's been some disagreement about whether or not to even talk about direct action or to host [direct action] trainings... But that's deeply frustrating for me because hosting a training… is not fucking illegal, right?... Some of our member groups might disagree with that and say, 'We're not going anywhere near that, and we don't think we should'… Not even hosting trainings. Because we did in 2017. But then when the Pipeline started getting built, people actually started putting their bodies in the way, for some reason… the anxiety and tension went up a lot… That raises the risk factor… and has led to some disagreement. (Interview 4)

Rhett's frustration is evident in his comment. He wants to push the boundaries and have conversations and training about civil disobedience. At the same time, however, other people in his organization are afraid and resistant to even talking about these kinds of actions. Rhett makes it clear that these tensions grew once construction of the pipeline began in 2018 and people actually began participating in these kinds of tactics. The fears are so strong for some members of these nonprofits that they are sometimes unwilling to even discuss civil disobedience in any official capacity. However, it is not always the case that these fears prevent individuals in these organizations from participating in civil disobedience. As Malcolm explains, some of the people involved with a moderate coalition that connects local groups in Virginia and West Virginia have participated in civil disobedience:

> That's not to say that some [coalition] people… haven't gotten arrested for something, but they're outside of their [coalition] role. Last year in DC, [name redacted] got arrested five times. In front of the White House, [name redacted] got arrested a few times. But they weren't under their [coalition] hat at the time… we had a little bit of a controversy [at an action] because… they wanted to make sure that [the coalition] wasn't encouraging unlawful activities. And we had quite a kerfuffle about that to make sure that we didn't risk losing our affiliations and stuff. (Interview 1)

What Malcolm is describing here is the delicate balance between individuals doing civil disobedience as individuals, and the organizations they are involved with being implicated. This comes into effect largely in the planning of actions where all the organizations involved need to set boundaries and have clear communication about keeping affiliations and the status of organizations protected. Multiple participants identified this kind of boundary setting as important to protecting organizations. Ruth described her experience walking this organizational tight rope as well. When I asked her about this tension and how she has navigated it, she said:

> It's not perfect, but one way to work around it is to personally support. So, to remove all of the affiliations and clearly delineate that you yourself are participating in this as a human being, and not as a member of X organization. So that's personally the work-around that I've used. (Interview 11)

Ruth is describing a similar dynamic as Malcolm, who used the metaphor of hats. Ruth is saying she distanced herself from her organization in order to participate in civil disobedience. When I asked if that has worked for her, Ruth said:

> I would say it's worked. I think people are going to associate you with whatever organization that you're a part of… But I think it works to keep up social cohesion so that

> it doesn't seem like these efforts are just getting roundly shut down by all the people and… organizations… involved in the fight officially. (Interview 11)

Ruth is saying it is sometimes hard to separate the individual and organization, but that it is important to try in order to show solidarity with those regularly doing civil disobedience and make it clear that the people in more moderate organizations still support civil disobedience and are willing to participate when it doesn't threaten their organizations.

Movement Composition

Different conceptions of movement composition/structure emerged in the interviews. This section will get at the heart of questions introduced in the literature, including the relationship between radical and moderate flanks of the movement.

Ecosystem of Tactics

Early on in my interviews, a common theme emerged of there being an ecosystem of tactics, which I will define as: diverse tactics working together, not necessarily in complete unity, but in a productive way grounded in the solidarity of a common goal. The "ecosystem of tactics" as a theoretical concept is not without its alternatives. The concept of a "diversity of tactics" is much more established in the social movements literature, but I use the term "ecosystem of tactics" for several reasons. First, a diversity of tactics implies that different people are doing different things, but it does not necessarily imply any sort of coherence, collective identity or common goal that those diverse tactics fall under. An ecosystem of tactics implies a certain level of coordination and coherence, which I found was more reflective of the diverse parts of this movement. Second, and relatedly, the ecosystem of tactics better reflects the idea of movement dynamism introduced by Rowe and Carroll. Finally, the diversity of tactics concept has historically been associated with the idea of both violent and nonviolent tactics being used in a movement. In this case, as far as I know, there were no violent tactics employed, so I use

the ecosystem of tactics concept to represent a diversity of tactics without the legacy of the concept's association with the use of violent tactics.

Meredith explained the dynamic of an ecosystem of tactics fairly well, saying,

> I feel like not everybody completely agrees on tactics. . . [T]here are different dimensions that are all acting in solidarity with each other, and often overlap quite a bit. But, to say that everybody is in absolute unity would not be true, at least from my perspective. I think there's solidarity. I want to clarify that. I think there's solidarity in groups, but working together on different approaches. (Interview 6)

In this sense, the ecosystem is defined more by solidarity than unity. While people don't necessarily agree on every tactic, activists recognize that both radical and moderate flanks are working towards a common goal, which forms the foundation for solidarity. Activists are working on different approaches, but they are still working together collaboratively to stop this pipeline. This ecosystem of tactics was first brought up by Riley, an activist that has engaged in civil disobedience, who explained,

> I'm so in favor of a whole ecosystem of tactics… strategies… tones and conversations. I want it all… I have learned a ton from this experience, of how to play the games that you want to play in respectability politics, without shitting on, or abandoning, the more radical aspects. And it is a skill… if I'm thinking about the next pipeline fight that I want to work in, I want to be having those conversations… from the start. (Interview 3)

Riley is explaining how an essential piece of the ecosystem of tactics is being able to move strategically between an ethos of civil disobedience and playing the game of public image and cooperation with folks in the legal/regulatory arenas. Riley argues that having an ecosystem of tactics, but also strategies, tone and conversations is important as well as building the skill of

knowing how to be respectable when it's strategic without throwing the radical flank under the bus. Riley continues:

> If you do build that skill of holding those two narratives together, and just not throwing anyone else under the bus, but pulling from the collective power that comes from such a diverse movement… What I would want other people in other pipeline fights to know is that that's a skill and it's a skill that it's really valuable to build from the start. (Interview 3)

Building an ecosystem of tactics thus involves respecting those who participate in a different part of the movement than you and learning to make the diversity of the movement a strength, rather than a liability. Riley emphasizes that these are skills that must be developed and that future pipeline movements ought to start building these skills and having these conversations from the beginning. Riley further argues:

> Sometimes, people really just do have fundamentally different views... Part of it is just building the channel so that you can see the humanity of… both. And then part of it is having those frank conversations that are like, "Hey, this actually only hurts both of us when either of us dismisses the other. What we really have to build together here is strength and power. And if we can take that, then that's only good for us. (Interview 3)

Riley further describes two key aspects of making an ecosystem of tactics work: finding humanity in one another and having frank conversations. These practices are fundamental to building the kind of inter-movement communication and solidarity that made the Mountain Valley Pipeline movement so much stronger over time. Finding humanity is one another entails recognizing that everyone in the movement is human and ultimately wants to stop the pipeline, so seeing the common humanity and recognizing one another’s flaws is important, for Riley. Having frank conversations requires being bold and bringing up sensitive topics in order to bring the whole movement closer together.

The ecosystem hasn't always operated entirely smoothly, however. Although Riley articulated that the movement strives to embrace "an ecosystem of tactics and tones," so that "anyone who wants to help fight the pipeline [can] plug in," they described the challenges the movement has faced achieving that goal. Riley recalled one example when a movement participant organized an action at the Yellow Finch tree sits that was supposed to be family friendly. As Riley explained, "They wanted to create a space where people could…bring their kids onto the easement, and then go home safe…they had been explicit about this, about how they wanted this to be a family-friendly thing." However, others in the movement felt this was not a reasonable expectation, as they were in the midst of a "very difficult summer in which the cops had been really fucking violent and outrageous in how they targeted people living there" (Interview 3). Emotions, and anger in particular, were high at that time, so some activists felt it was unfair for their tone to be policed to create a "family friendly" atmosphere. This conflict over tones, as much as tactics, where in trying to create a "family friendly" environment some activists felt like their tones were being policed by people from within the movement. I got the sense that this was especially frustrating because many activists felt like they got enough policing from the actual cops, and didn't need more from their fellow activists. Tone and respectability were common themes throughout the interviews, with multiple interviewees discussing how conflict over tone or language emerged as anger and respectability came head to head. We saw this earlier in the section on conflict and alienation. Madison also recognized that the ecosystem did not always function smoothly. She explained:

> I think that both sides have to have respect for where they are now. I think before it was this muddled, we're all pissed off… Then it starts kind of separating out of, 'I'm doing this… and I'm doing this'… it's just really important for there to be a clear understanding that everybody's work is important, and that everybody's space… needs to be respected. And that's what I tried to tell the folks that were so uptight about it. (Interview 13)

Boundaries, communication and respect for what one another is doing can be so vital and important to making sure that this ecosystem of tactics is healthy. Madison is describing how respect and understanding are necessary for building strong movements. Another aspect of boundaries, communication and respect come in when we think about the different levels of engagement that different people have. The red, yellow and green action options discussed in the Engage section are an important part of how the ecosystem of tactics functions because they provide options for different levels of engagement based on comfort, knowledge and skill. Providing safe ways for people to plug in depending on how they are feeling is one way that this movement tried to create a healthy ecosystem of tactics where anybody could find their tactical niche.

I asked Maeve what she thought about the ecosystem metaphor, and whether the ecosystem in this movement is a healthy one, and this is what she had to say: “Oh, jeez, healthy means adaptive… homo sapiens is a maladaptive species in general. We keep fighting and doing things, destroying the planet, doing whatever... the point being that in this ecosystem model, the question is, you have to look at what's adaptive and what is not adaptive. And that would be how I look at it in terms of what's working. It's not just what's working and not working. It's over the long haul” (Interview 15). Maeve makes the point that an ecosystem alone does not imply health, and that health in an ecosystem requires adaptivity. In order to understand the health of a movement, as an ecosystem, it is important to think about its adaptivity. One goal of this paper is to understand and share what was healthy about this movement and what could have been done differently.

Separate Lanes

There was a strong emphasis that the civil disobedience strategy and the legal/regulatory strategy operate largely in separate lanes. Rhett explains one reason for this separation, saying that:

> By threatening lawsuits, even without even necessarily filing them… [the pipeline company] can intimidate a lot of people into a state of inaction… It's hard to blend those tactics together when one part of the group purely wants to confront this at the regulatory level, or within the courts… we want to make sure that there's enough separation between those various tactics to not do harm to another tactic that is working, right? (Interview 4)

Rhett is describing how the pipeline company uses lawsuits as a form of deterrence and fear to stop activists from crossing certain lines of civil disobedience. Further, Rhett is explaining how the regulatory/legal strategies of the activists are vulnerable to these kinds of lawsuits or otherwise getting grouped in with the civil disobedience crowd. In these ways, it becomes important to keep the legal/regulatory and civil disobedience tactics very separate. Molly explains how the separate lanes work for the local organization she is a part of. As she explained, their organization “is far away from civil disobedience. We don't do it. Okay? If anybody wants to do something on their own, they do that. There are some people within the group that might do that. I don't. I keep… the lines very clear” (Interview 7). The lines are kept very clear, but at the same time individuals are free to cross those lines as they see fit. This is a common theme, where at the organizational level, there are very clear lines, but at the individual level, particular activists are also free to cross those lines to a certain extent. Rachel explains this, with an example, saying:

> I have been at support rallies with individual members of [the local community] groups. It's largely true that they stay in their own lane. But I know one who did jail support for… a slow roll… We had a really long slow funeral procession… And then we held a funeral… there were some [local community group] people at the funeral. And one of the [members of a local community group] did jail support, just in case there were any arrests. (Interview 8)

So sometimes the strong divisions need to happen at the organizational level, while some individuals cross over between legal/regulatory and civil disobedience work. Rachel is describing a specific example of this, where a member of the local legal/regulatory group played an important role in supporting a civil disobedience action. Rachel admits that they do largely "stay in their own lane" but there is also a sense in which they cross over these organizational divisions. Riley explains how this separation is maintained:

> There are people who keep pretty separate… the agreement is sort of like, you know, just don't publicly bad-mouth. Whatever critiques you have for the tactics that people are using within the movement, just don't publicly bad mouth them. And that's enough for cohesion, and enough for collaboration, in some ways. (Interview 3)

This is an important part of how these concepts of the ecosystem and separate lanes are maintained, where cohesion and collaboration can be founded on a simple agreement not to bad mouth one another publicly. At the same time, it is okay that people are keeping pretty separate so long as they are respecting these agreements and not putting down anyone else in the movement.

Respondents discussed benefits to operating in these separate lanes, for organizational and personal safety, among others, but Matilda expressed some regret for how separated the approaches are, saying, "I wish we weren't so much in our own lanes because I think the more

groups that can unite with each other the better it's going to be in terms of publicity and power" (Interview 14). There were differing opinions on just how united these groups were, but it is clear that there is a dance that needs to be done to protect organizations and people while at the same time retaining unity in the movement. For many, the balance struck was right for keeping different organizations safe, as we saw in the section on Organizational Risks, but at the same time, there was a desire from some in the movement for more overlap and deeper collaboration.

Bridging Lanes

Some activists crossed over and even bridged these separate lanes. Riley explains that:

> People on the outside… see these very different-looking things happen… and they're like, 'Oh, those are, those are a bunch of different people…' And the truth is, there's actually a ton of overlap, like a ton of the people. It makes strategic sense to keep those things separate, because they benefit from different narratives. But there's a ton of overlap in terms of the actual people who put time and energy into those things. And, I think that that helps a lot. (Interview 3)

The concept of separate lanes describes the ways that narratives, organizations and strategies are strategically kept separate for the media and the public in order to benefit both approaches. However, Riley is describing how there is a lot of overlap in terms of the people who actually participate in both narratives, organizations and strategies. Riley says that this overlap helps a lot for creating a movement identity and keeping the people within the movement connected while the narratives remain separate. Some people in particular have emerged as leaders in the movement, straddling lines of tactical difference. Madison explains that:

> There seems to be a lot more cross conversation between the groups and a better understanding. I know with [name redacted], he's so great on all accounts, and so I feel

like he's a great mediator in all, and he knows what's going on at all places. And he straddles that line really well. So I think he's a good person that's helped the more uptight people who are making sure shit is getting done in Washington, relax a little bit. (Interview 13)

While I have removed his name for confidentiality, this individual is on a short list of specific people who have consistently been mentioned by both those in the civil disobedience world and those in the legal/regulatory world. He is described by Madison as being in both worlds and by knowing what's going on in both moderate and radical flanks, he becomes a bridge between both flanks and empowers greater overlap and connection between the separate lanes. Specifically, Madison emphasizes that by straddling the line, this movement leader has been able to calm the lawyers and other activists working in Washington who may be concerned about the public image of the movement relative to some of the civil disobedience. Matilda mentioned another key movement leader, saying "I think that a lot of us respect the kinds of things that [name redacted] is trying to do in both lanes. And yeah, I think it has helped" (Interview 14). The movement leader that Matilda mentioned has been able to facilitate engagement in both the legal/regulatory sphere and the civil disobedience sphere, and connect people across those lines. One theme that became clear to me is how important it is to have these key people bridging the gap between different strategies and bringing the whole movement together. Key movement players close the gap between these separate lanes and make the whole movement more cohesive and connected. This suggests that these key players generate a healthy movement dynamism.

This finding is similar to the finding of Nicolosi et al, which suggested that overlapping membership can play an important role in movement dynamism (Nicolosi et al 2021). This finding goes slightly further, however, in arguing for the power of "overlapping members" to become movement leaders who can bridge the separate lanes in which the radical and more

moderate flanks operate. In general, I would argue that the relationship between the radical and moderate flanks in this movement are more reflective of the movement dynamism discussed by Rowe and Caroll and Nicolosi et al, than the approach of condemnation proposed by Malm and others. This likely has to do with the fact that, to my knowledge, more radical tactics like property destruction, sabotage and violence were avoided, and so the more moderate flank didn't necessarily think that condemnation was necessary, especially given the potential costs of condemnation to movement cohesion. Moreover, as previously discussed, many of the moderate movement actors saw real, tangible benefits to civil disobedience that had slowed pipeline construction, as it gave the regulatory and legal realms time. The approach of separate lanes seemed, in many ways, to be enough to distance groups working in the civil disobedience world and groups working in the legal/regulatory world. There is a delicate balance here, as there is in any ecosystem, between collaboration and separation, but for the most part, those most directly involved avoided explicit critique or condemnation of others' choice of actions.

Conclusion

This study identified several positive radical flank effects from civil disobedience in the MVP resistance movement:

(1) Civil disobedience energized and inspired hope among my interviewees. They cited that the participation of young people especially inspired hope for the movement. This energy became an effective recruitment and retention tool, with several participants stating that many new people joined the movement because of the tree sits and other acts of civil disobedience.

(2) Civil disobedience connected people within and between movements. The tree sits created a physical gathering space which brought the movement together. Court dates for those arrested were another opportunity to gather, which enabled community building. Additionally, civil disobedience acted as a connector between the MVP resistance movement and other

climate justice movements. These radical tactics thus brought the movement closer together and built coalitions with other movements.

(3) Civil disobedience created opportunities for engagement with the movement, both through supportive actions like bringing supplies to the tree sits and through creating the framework of red/yellow/green actions to break up the risks and enable people to plug in where they felt the most comfortable. An important lesson emerged from my conversation with Rachel, who demonstrated the importance of having key movement leaders whose responsibility it is to figure out the engagement puzzle of who can do what work and who fits where in the movement.

(4) Civil disobedience created special bonds of trust and unity in the movement. Going through traumatic experiences together bonded activists with a strong glue. An extensive preparation process to get activists ready for actions was identified as one way that this trust is built. Building on Bell (2016), who found local/outsider differences created tension in the Mountaintop Removal Mining resistance movement, some participants registered some skepticism of outsiders in the radical flank, which undermined senses of unity in the movement to some degree.

(5) Civil disobedience had some tangible benefits, including through uplifting the message of the movement by attracting increased publicity and through slowing down the construction process and allowing the legal strategy to catch up. These findings are preliminary and more research is needed to understand how civil disobedience materially benefitted this movement, especially with regards to this somewhat novel argument about the direct benefits of civil disobedience to the timeline of the legal strategy. This finding is exciting, and presents new insight into dynamism in pipeline movements.

These positive radical flanks are significant in terms of the diverse ways the civil disobedience benefitted the social dynamics of the movement. In terms of negative radical flank effects from civil disobedience in this movement, several potential risks were identified. While these risks were real, there were also mitigating factors of each which limited their negative impact in this particular case:

(1) Civil disobedience introduced conflict over tactics and tones into the movement and alienated some who disagreed with its use. There was both conflict and alienation identified in this study. Conflict was more abundant when it came to tone than tactics, but both were sources of tension within the movement. None of the conflicts that I discussed with my participants led to the sort of mass exodus from the movement that Epstein (1991) describes in the Clamshell movement. This was likely because of an emphasis on open communication, respect of boundaries, and because of the key movement leaders who bridged the gap between these two flanks of the movement. One participant emphasized the fact that conflict in the movement is not always destructive, but can sometimes be productive. To this point, I heard about more productive conflict in my interviews than any destructive conflict. In terms of those alienated by the use of civil disobedience, there were several participants who mentioned concerns to this effect. It is likely that some people left and/or avoided joining this movement because they were turned off by the use of civil disobedience. It is impossible, with the data collected in this study, to make any definitive conclusions on this question. However, there was also a common theme where participants argued that those who were alienated by civil disobedience would probably not have been active movement participants anyway. This mitigated the risk that alienation affected the community's participation in this movement. There is, however, no reliable way to measure how many people the movement did or did not lose.

(2) Civil disobedience introduced significant risks of legal and other consequences into the movement. This was especially true given the increasing use of lawsuits by corporations

and the advance of anti-protest laws throughout the United States. Fear of consequences is a significant risk, which is unfortunately inevitable (to some degree) in any movement that involves civil disobedience. Fortunately, these fears were mitigated by the creation of diverse opportunities for engagement. As mentioned above, opportunities for supportive actions and the framework of red/yellow/green actions played a key role in engaging movement actors. In this same sense, creating these diverse engagement opportunities allows people to plug in where they feel safe and not feel like they need to take on extreme risk. It is possible that some people avoided joining the movement because of these fears, but, for the most part, my participants identified feelings that they could plug in to whatever action they felt comfortable with.

(3) Civil disobedience can be dangerous for non-profit organizations who need to worry about their funding and status. Several participants registered significant concerns about risks that civil disobedience might impose on their organizations. By acting as individuals, not in their organizational role, many participants were able to protect their organizations and still participate in civil disobedience. The separate lanes concept played a key role in keeping organizations and their work safe by keeping the radical and moderate flanks from overlapping in ways that could prove dangerous for the organizations.

A primary consideration involves how the radical flank of this movement organized itself relative to the more moderate flank. In this study, I found evidence to support the conception of an “ecosystem of tactics” in the Mountain Valley Pipeline movement with the radical and moderate flanks respecting different tactics as a form of solidarity towards a common goal. This finding dovetails with research by Rowe and Carroll as well as Nicolosi et al, who find evidence for movement dynamism in other social movements. I would argue that the ecosystem of tactics is a complementary concept to movement dynamism. This finding also questions Malm’s argument that the radical flank must be condemned by the moderates for a positive radical flank effect to occur.

The ecosystem of tactics in this movement was grounded in finding common humanity and having frank internal movement conversations about how to work together. Participants emphasized their desire to have these conversations about a movement ecosystem from the very beginning. This is a key lesson that future pipeline movements can take from the MVP fight. I also found a parallel conception of the MVP resistance movement, which emphasized radical and moderate flanks operating in separate lanes. This conception of the movement is complementary, not contradictory, to the ecosystem of tactics concept. While the ecosystem of tactics is grounded in a common respect for each other and a common goal to end the pipeline, the separate lanes concept emphasizes how radical and moderate flanks keep their strategies from publicly overlapping in ways that might be dangerous to the moderate flank. Movement actors thus found ways to keep their work separate enough so as to not jeopardize anyone else's work, but were able to retain a common movement identity and avoid the outright condemnation described by Malm and others. Future movements can learn from this movement structure as they try to find ways to both respect boundaries and encourage cohesion of the movement. An important part of the separate lanes concept includes the bridging lanes thesis, which emerged from multiple interviews. It suggests that key movement leaders transcend these separate lanes by operating in both lanes and, in doing so, bridge the separate lanes in ways that retain unity, cohesion and a common identity in the movement.

These conclusions taken together provide significant insight into the benefits and risks of civil disobedience in this case study, the MVP resistance movement. Other movements should look at the lessons learned in this movement in order to craft a strategy for how to get the most benefit out of radical tactics with the least risk for the movement. In many cases, this starts with open, honest communication, respect for boundaries, and key movement leaders who can engage and connect people across the movement. In movements where tactics are radical, but do not rise to the level of property destruction or violence, it seems that condemnation from

moderate factions is not a necessary ingredient for positive radical flank effects. Future research should examine radical flank effects in different contexts and seek to verify some of these findings through studying other pipeline resistance movements. It should also seek to build on the movement dynamism concept to understand how radical and moderate flanks can empower one another.

Bibliography

Bell, Shannon Elizabeth. 2016. *Fighting King Coal: The Challenges to Micromobilization in Central Appalachia*.

Bell, Shannon Elizabeth, Stephen Gerus, Danielle R. Mullins, and Michael Hughes. 2023. “Resistance, Acceptance, and Quiescence: The Role of Social Networks in Predicting Responses to a New Natural Gas Pipeline.” *Environmental Justice* 16(1):29–35. doi: 10.1089/env.2021.0112.

Blee, Kathleen, and Verta Taylor. 2002. “Semi-Structured Interviewing in Social Movement Research.” in *Methods of Social Movement Research*. U of Minnesota Press.

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology.” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2):77–101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Chilukuri, Siri. 2022. “How Youth Are Stepping up Against the Mountain Valley Pipeline.” *Atmos*. Retrieved February 26, 2023 (https://atmos.earth/mountain-valley-pipeline-protests-manchin/).

Christopulos, Diana. 2021. “Mountain Valley Pipeline: A Case Study in Local Resistance and Mobilization.” Pp. 107–39 in *Pipeline Pedagogy: Teaching About Energy and Environmental Justice Contestations*, *AESS Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies and Sciences Series*, edited by V. Banschbach and J. L. Rich. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Çıdam, Çiğdem, William E. Scheuerman, Candice Delmas, Erin R. Pineda, Robin Celikates, and Alexander Livingston. 2020. “Theorizing the Politics of Protest: Contemporary Debates on Civil Disobedience.” *Contemporary Political Theory* 19(3):513–46. doi: 10.1057/s41296-020-00392-7.

Cloud, Dana L. 2020. “The Significance of the Radical Flank: The Role of GetEQUAL in the Marriage Equality Movement.” in *The Rhetoric of Social Movements*. Routledge.

Dhillon, Matt. 2021. “Last Tree-Sitters Removed from Path of Mountain Valley Pipeline.” Retrieved February 26, 2023 (https://appvoices.org/2021/04/16/tree-sitters-removed-mvp/).

Epstein, Barbara. 1993. *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s*. University of California Press.

FERC. 2017. “Final Environmental Impact Statement.”

Goodman, Leo A. 1961. “Snowball Sampling.” *The Annals of Mathematical Statistics* 32(1):148–70.

Haines, Herbert H. 1984. “Black Radicalization and the Funding of Civil Rights: 1957-1970.” *Social Problems* 32(1):31–43. doi: 10.2307/800260.

Johnson, Taylor. 2018. “Virginian Tech Professor Arrested after Locking Herself to MVP Construction Equipment.” *WSET*. Retrieved February 26, 2023 (https://wset.com/news/local/virginian-tech-professor-arrested-after-locking-herself-to-mvp-construction-equipment).

Jones, Irisha. 2018. “Tree Sitters Expand to Franklin County to Protest MVP.” *WSLS*. Retrieved February 26, 2023 (https://www.wsls.com/news/2018/04/24/tree-sitters-expand-to-franklin-county-to-protest-mvp/).

Kastning, Ernst. 2016. *An Expert Report on Geologic Hazards in the Karst Regions of Virginia and West Virginia*. Protect Our Water Heritage Rights (POWHR).

Malm, Andreas. 2021. *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*. Verso Books.

McCammon, Holly J., Erin M. Bergner, and Sandra C. Arch. 2015. "'Are You One of Those Women?' Within-Movement Conflict, Radical Flank Effects, and Social Movement Political Outcomes*." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 20(2):157–78. doi: 10.17813/1086-671X-20-2-157.

Mollin, Marian. 2006. *Radical Pacifism in Modern America: Egalitarianism and Protest*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Morris, Aldon D. 1986. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. Simon and Schuster.

Nicolosi, Emily, G. Feola, and R. Pleune. 2021. "Varieties of Environmental Movements, Political Strategies and Movement Dynamism." *The Social Science Journal* 0(0):1–16. doi: 10.1080/03623319.2021.1900672.

Parkin, Scott. 2020. "Resistance Is Fertile: Direct Action vs. Fossil Fuels across North America." in *Climate Justice and Community Renewal: Resistance and Grassroots Solutions*. Routledge.

Ridder, Kevin. 2018. "Pipeline Resistance Grows on Multiple Fronts." Retrieved February 26, 2023 (https://appvoices.org/2018/06/07/pipeline-resistance-grows-on-multiple-fronts/).

Rowe, James K., and Myles Carroll. 2014. "Reform or Radicalism: Left Social Movements from the Battle of Seattle to Occupy Wall Street." *New Political Science* 36(2):149–71. doi: 10.1080/07393148.2014.894683.

Schifeling, Todd, and Andrew J. Hoffman. 2017. *Bill McKibben's Influence on U.S. Climate Change Discourse: Shifting Field-Level Debates Through Radical Flank Effects*. *Working Paper*.

Schneider, Gregory S. 2018. “Perched on a Platform High in a Tree, a 61-Year-Old Woman Fights a Gas Pipeline.” *Washington Post*, April 22.

Shugerman, Emily. 2018. “‘Frustration, Anger, Helplessness’: Virginia Pipeline Protesters on What Drove Them to Live in the Trees.” *The Independent*. Retrieved February 26, 2023 (https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/tree-sit-mountain-valley-pipeline-west-virginia-red-terry-franklin-county-protest-a8337311.html).

Simpson, Brent, Robb Willer, and Matthew Feinberg. 2022. “Radical Flanks of Social Movements Can Increase Support for Moderate Factions.” *PNAS Nexus* 1(3):pgac110. doi: 10.1093/pnasnexus/pgac110.

Smith, Samantha. 2021. “Two Pipeline Protestors Arrested after Locking Themselves to Broken-down Car in Roanoke County.” *WSLS*. Retrieved February 26, 2023 (https://www.wsls.com/news/local/2021/06/30/three-mountain-valley-pipeline-protesters-locked-to-broken-down-car-in-roanoke-county/).

Smith, WIlliam. 2018. “Disruptive Democracy: The Ethics of Direct Action | Cairn.Info.” Retrieved February 25, 2023 (https://www.cairn.info/revue-raisons-politiques-2018-1-page-13.htm).

Sovacool, Benjamin K., and Alexander Dunlap. 2022. “Anarchy, War, or Revolt? Radical Perspectives for Climate Protection, Insurgency and Civil Disobedience in a Low-Carbon Era.” *Energy Research & Social Science* 86:102416. doi: 10.1016/j.erss.2021.102416.

Stockemer, Daniel. 2012. “The Importance of Group Identity Processes in Involvement in Social Movement Organizations: The Case of Attac France and Germany.” *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 25(3):268–82. doi: 10.1080/13511610.2012.703830.

Appendix A

Interview Guide

General Questions

1. Can you tell me the story of how you came to be involved with the movement to stop the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP)?
    a. Probe: How long ago was that?
2. Can you describe how you've been involved in the movement?
3. Can you list the tactics that you have participated in?
    a. Some people who have been involved in the movement to stop the MVP have engaged in public acts of civil disobedience, which can be understood as disobeying a law in order to stop a perceived injustice. Acts of civil disobedience are typically non-violent. Have you participated in any acts of civil disobedience?
        i. If yes, could you please describe the acts of civil disobedience in which you participated?
    b. [Even if you yourself have not participated in any acts of civil disobedience], have you been involved in planning or decision-making about civil disobedience actions?
        i. If yes, Can you tell me a little bit about that?
    c. [Even if you yourself have not participated in any acts of civil disobedience], have you been involved in supporting civil disobedience actions?
        i. Can you tell me a little bit about that?
4. Would you call yourself an activist, or is there another word you prefer?
5. Do you have any friends or family members involved in the movement?
    a. Have friendships/family relationships influenced your involvement with the movement?

Moderate Questions

1. How do you generally feel about the use of civil disobedience in activist movements?
2. How do you feel about the use of civil disobedience to stop the MVP specifically? Why?
3. What emotions (if any) does the use of these tactics bring up? Why? [6]
4. How united do you feel with your fellow activists across the movement?
    a. Has the use of civil disobedience tactics affected your sense of unity or lack thereof? [2]
5. Have any of your personal relationships with any other activists changed, either positively or negatively, because civil disobedience was used to resist MVP? [4]
    a. Probe: How so?
6. Has the decision to use civil disobedience tactics generated any tension among people involved in the movement to stop the MVP? [4]
    a. If yes: How so?
7. Has the use of these tactics affected your trust in fellow activists? [1]
    a. If yes: How so?
8. Have coalitions (or the relationships between groups) changed as a result of the decision to use civil disobedience? [3]
    a. If yes: How so?
9. Has the movement lost any activists as a result of the decisions to use civil disobedience? [5]

    a. If yes, can you elaborate?
10. Has the movement gained any activists as a result of the decisions to use civil disobedience? [5]
    a. If yes, can you elaborate?
11. Did the introduction of civil disobedience tactics change the dynamics/relationships within the movement in any other way?
12. Are there any other thoughts or feelings you want to express?

Radical Questions

1. How do you generally feel about the use of civil disobedience in activist movements?
2. How do you feel about the use of civil disobedience to stop the MVP specifically? [6]
    a. Probe: can you tell me why you believe these tactics are important? [6]
3. How united do you feel with your fellow activists across the movement?
    a. Has the decision to use civil disobedience tactics affected your sense of unity or lack thereof? [2]
    b. If yes: How so?
4. Have any of your personal relationships with any other activists changed, either positively or negatively, because you participated in civil disobedience? [4]
    a. If yes: How so?
5. Has the decision to use these tactics generated any tension among people involved in the movement to stop the MVP? [4]
    a. If yes: How so?
6. Did your participation in these tactics change your level of trust in any fellow activists? [1]
    a. If yes: How so?
7. Have coalitions (or the relationships between groups) changed as a result of the decision to use civil disobedience? [3]
    a. If yes: How so?
8. Has the movement lost any activists as a result of the decisions to use civil disobedience? [5]
    a. If yes, can you elaborate?
9. Has the movement gained any activists as a result of the decisions to use civil disobedience? [5]
    a. If yes, can you elaborate?
10. Did the introduction of civil disobedience tactics change dynamics or relationships within the movement in any other way?
11. Are there any other thoughts or feelings you want to express?

Demographics

1. Age?
2. Gender?
3. Race?
4. Is the pipeline being constructed through land you own?
    a. If no: Do you live in the blast zone?
    b. If no: Do you have family or friends who live in the blast zone?
5. County?

6. How would you describe your political views?
7. Highest level of education?