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CHAPTER 2

DISCURSIVELY CONSTRUCTING THE GREAT LAKES FRESHWATER

Theresa R. Castor

Freshwater resources and the protection of freshwater are becoming recognized as increasingly important as various parts of the world, including the U.S. Southwest, are experiencing drought conditions. The Great Lakes area of the United States provides an alternative picture given the abundance of freshwater in this area. The aforementioned drought conditions illustrate the significance of freshwater, and have called public attention to the delicate environmental and human-usage issues involved with the sustainable management of water resources (see Annin, 2009).

The Great Lakes of North America (hereafter, Great Lakes) consist of five lakes that are bordered by eight U.S. states and one Canadian province (Ontario). The Great Lakes Basin has an impressive set of freshwater statistics as the largest surface area of freshwater in the world, containing 90% of the U.S. supply and 18% of the world's supply of freshwater by volume, providing drinking water for 40 million people (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, n.d.). To

manage Great Lakes freshwater and to protect it from water diversions, in 2008 the U.S. Congress passed a piece of legislation known as the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact or, more informally, the Great Lakes Compact.¹ The Compact is an interstate, federally approved agreement that outlines regulations to prevent the diversion of water from the Great Lakes Basin area. The Compact is significant for protecting the Great Lakes, especially in light of current global concerns regarding freshwater availability and access.

Given the importance of the Compact as federally sanctioned law for Great Lakes freshwater management, the purpose of this project is to analyze congressional discourse related to the approval of the Compact. In doing so, I seek to analyze how, within this significant context, Great Lakes freshwater was discursively constructed as an exigency. In some ways, the approval of the Great Lakes Compact can be viewed as an example of *prospective sensemaking*, or making sense of a problem before it has actually occurred. In examining the Compact, I seek to provide insight into the proactive construction of or anticipation of a problem. In taking this lens, this analysis can aid in the understanding of how social actors may “see” (i.e., anticipate) a problem before it has occurred in order to take actions to avert rather than react to the problem.

The data for this project consist of transcripts from C-SPAN on the congressional discussions related to the Great Lakes and water diversion. This project utilizes a discourse analytic approach to examine how particular accounts discursively construct the Great Lakes and protection of their waters (see Buttny, 2004). This project is also based generally on a social construction perspective (see Bartesaghi & Castor, 2009; Galanes & Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009), and builds on the following assumptions:

1. Problems are discursively and socially constructed.
2. When speakers account for their choices, those accounts present particular constructions of problems, causes, and/or solutions.
3. Sensemaking about problems occurs in the process of accounting for a decision.

In the following sections, contextual information will be provided on the Great Lakes Compact and related legislation. Then, the aforementioned assumptions will be expanded upon and the specific research questions for this project presented. This will be followed by a description of the research methods and then presentation of the results of the project analysis.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

The five Great Lakes of North America are Lakes Michigan, Superior, Erie, Huron, and Ontario, and are bordered by eight U.S. states and one Canadian province. Containing approximately 21% of the world's surface freshwater and 84% of North America's surface freshwater (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2015), they are an important source of water and an economic engine for the Great Lakes area. The Great Lakes are so vast that they are technically considered seas. The example of the Aral Sea disaster has been used as a cautionary tale to show what could happen if a water resource such as an inland sea is not carefully managed (Annin, 2009). Due to the diversion of water from the rivers that fed the Aral Sea, parts of this inland sea have been permanently transformed into desert.

The history of water management policy in North America is long, dating back to the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty and the creation of the International Joint Commission to manage water disputes between the U.S. and Canada (Annin, 2009). Throughout the 20th century, a number of proposals were developed that involved diverting water from the Great Lakes; most of these were not successful, but nonetheless, were of significant concern for governors and residents in the Great Lakes area. While various water management policies were proposed to prevent diversion, "most of those measures have proven awkward and dysfunctional" (Annin, 2009, p. 19). Some functioned as agreements among the Great Lakes states and provinces with no ramifications for violation; others were rejected because they were viewed to not go far enough in protecting the Great Lakes (Annin, 2009).

The Great Lakes Compact, approved in 2008, is a legally binding interstate compact with regulations and guidelines on water management and water diversions from the Great Lakes. As an interstate compact, it is an agreement across specific states that allows for implementation and management at the state and regional levels rather than through a federal agency. However, it is enforced as federal law. The Compact was spurred in part in 1998 when a Canada-based company proposed to divert water from Lake Superior by bottling and shipping it to Asia (Schaper, 2008). The Compact prohibits diversions of Great Lakes water from the Great Lakes Basin.² As a compact, this policy document was initially approved by the state governments of each of the eight Great Lakes states and then introduced into Congress, where it went through relatively swiftly for final approval as public law by President George W. Bush on October 3, 2008.

DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF PROBLEMS

Rittel and Webber (1973) described two general types of problems: tame and wicked. A tame problem is one that can be easily analyzed and whose solution is easy to determine and implement. In contrast, a wicked problem is messy: it is difficult to analyze and the solution or solutions are not easy to determine and implement. Grint (2005) expanded on Rittel and Webber's typology by adding critical problems that appear as self-evident and call for quick decision making, such as a train crash or a fire emergency. Grint's key point was that problems are socially constructed in that the nature of a problem can shift. For example, a tame problem could become a wicked problem and vice versa. The Hurricane Katrina disaster illustrates this latter point: what initially was defined as a problem of a hurricane transformed into a wicked problem in the days, weeks, and months afterward as Hurricane Katrina exposed socioeconomic disparities and flaws in governmental coordination and municipal planning. In making this point, Grint highlighted the nature of problems as social constructions.

Focusing on a range of problems that include interpersonal as well as institutional interactions, Buttny (2004) illustrated how problems are interactively defined and discursively negotiated. Similarly, Scott and Trethewey (2008) analyzed discourse related to risk management and occupational hazards in a firefighting department. They found that risks, rather than being external, were discursively constructed.

Describing problems as socially constructed is not meant to imply that they are disconnected from material circumstances. For example, as Grint (2005) noted in considering the role of the environment in problem construction:

As to the role of the environment in determining what leaders should do, we only have to consider the differing positions taken by leaders on the issue of global warming to know that, once again, the environment is not some objective variable that determines a response but rather an "issue" to be constituted into a whole variety of "problems" or "irrelevances." (p. 1470)

Grint's description of problem construction and the environment can be related to the Great Lakes. For example, water usage may be intended to solve one problem such as providing freshwater, but can cause other problems such

as biosystem damage. How an event or situation is defined as a problem or not is part of a dynamic interplay of social, material, and discursive circumstances (see Murphy, 2004; Tracy & Muller, 2001).

ACCOUNTS AND PROBLEM CONSTRUCTION

Scott and Lyman (1968) defined an account as a linguistic device used by speakers when they are accused of wrongdoing. Other descriptions of accounts describe them more generally in terms of making actions intelligible to others (see Buttny & Morris, 2001). Common across these conceptualizations is the notion that accounts are utilized when an action, event, or situation is called into, or anticipated to be called into, question. The response to that questioning is an account. Within a congressional debate, speakers provide explanations for their choices and positions, and in this process, they provide accounts for their stance on a particular issue.

Accounts implicate agency in that they function to craft particular notions of who or what was responsible for an action; accounts also implicate social accountability in shaping notions of wrongdoing or morality (see Buttny, 1993; Shotter, 1984). Accounts are related to problem construction in that in the process of identifying a problem, one is essentially asking “what is going on here that should not be going on here?” The response to that inquiry is an account where a speaker could, among many possibilities, accept responsibility for the action, blame someone or something else, or deny that the event in question is problematic (Scott & Lyman, 1968).

Mills (1940) presented the concept of vocabulary of motives as relevant for understanding notions of causality and accounts. Mills recognized the significance of examining accounts beyond structure identification and in describing the content or substance of the account and how this mattered for a given group. Hence, he identified these as vocabulary of motives or key terms or phrases that interlocutors may invoke in the course of providing an account.

Accounts and social accountability are interrelated in that for an account to be accepted by a given community, the speaker must present the account in a way that appeals to the values and ideals of a given group (Buttny, 1993; Shotter, 1984). Shotter (1993) also highlighted how speakers must be

rhetorically responsive to a given situation. Accounts are not a sole matter of logic, but of tapping into a community's sense of ethics as well as into the expectations of how to act and interact within a specific circumstance.

In a project that ties together these various themes of problem construction, accounts, and social accountability, Castor and Cooren (2006) described problem formulation as the process of selecting an agent in a chain of agencies, within the context of a university faculty governance meeting on a past crisis. They described how a problem is defined will depend on which agent is emphasized by interlocutors as more acting/active rather than acted upon. In other words, for a given problem, a matrix of influencing and influenced agents may be identified that act upon each other.

In applying an accounts analysis perspective to a discussion of Great Lakes water policy, I seek to examine how speakers present their stances on Great Lakes water. Speaker accounts can provide insight into issues such as how speakers define problems to be solved in association with Great Lakes water, who or what was responsible for these problems, who or what has the capacity to solve such problems. In addition, as noted above, accounts implicate social accountability and the ethics of a given community. Speaker accounts on the Great Lakes can provide insight regarding what actions are considered to be ethical in human actions toward the Great Lakes.

PROSPECTIVE SENSEMAKING AND ACCOUNTING

Sensemaking in its most basic definition refers to giving or making meaning of experience. This concept has been studied in many different areas such as organizational sensemaking (e.g., Weick, 1995), communication and information processing (e.g., Dervin, 1999), and sociology (e.g., Garfinkel, 1967). This project draws primarily from Weick's work on sensemaking given the close intersection of Weick's sensemaking approach with crisis sensemaking.

Weick (1995) described sensemaking as occurring through a three-stage process: enactment, selection, and retention. In the enactment phase, organizational members attend to particular cues in the environment as a means of making sense of and understanding what is occurring in the environment. Weick emphasized that the environment is not something that is necessarily premade, but rather, it is enacted or constructed through the

process of sensemaking. In the selection phase, organizational members attend to specific cues that were identified through the enactment phase. These cues are made sense of in ways that in turn prompt specific actions. Those actions may be selected to be used in future circumstances in the phase of retention.

Research on organizational sensemaking has been robust (see Maitlis & Christianson, 2014), with a strong focus on crisis sensemaking (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). Weick and others have described how sensemaking occurs during crisis situations, with attention to how people have made sense of crises and possibly may even create a crisis in overlooking certain cues as a crisis was emerging.

Weick (1995) emphasized that sensemaking is retrospective, and the concept of sensemaking has been conceptualized and described by other scholars as retrospective, thereby confining sensemaking to looking toward the past. In addition, Weick even argued that making sense of the future is not possible because it has not yet happened. He did allow for an exception to this in what he termed “future perfect” thinking, where one imagines that the future has already occurred and reflects back on what has occurred (Weick, 1979).

However, other scholars, notably, Gioia, Corley, and Fabbri (2002) have put forth the notion of prospective sensemaking where the process of looking ahead and making sense of the future, although still challenging, is not as problematic as Weick explained it to be. Indeed, in thinking of organizational actions from a metapragmatic sense, there are several terms that are readily available that point toward prospective sensemaking: strategic planning, foresight, and forecasting.

In developing a model of prospective sensemaking, Stigliani and Ravasi (2012) relate future-oriented sensemaking with accounts:

Our model describes prospective collective sensemaking as based on three interrelated cycles of retrospective cognitive work occurring as members of groups go back and forth between the tentative organization of selected material cues and the refinement of corresponding categories, embody provisional interpretations in material form, and engage in retrospective reflection to establish the plausibility of emerging accounts. (p. 1233)

Of note in Stigliani and Ravasi's model and of significance for this project is the relevance of materiality in the development of accounts and future-oriented sense-making. The Great Lakes have a material form, and human activity in relation to the Great Lakes can have a material impact in affecting water levels and biosystems.

Policy development can be considered a form of prospective sensemaking in that one function of policies is to affect the future and to avert potential problems. The discussion of the Great Lakes Compact can be viewed as a prospective-sensemaking activity in that the Compact addresses future actions towards the Great Lakes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the preceding literature review, the following research questions (RQs) are addressed through this project:

RQ1: What account vocabularies were prominent in the congressional discourse associated with the Great Lakes Compact?

RQ2: How were the problems associated with Great Lakes discursively constructed?

RQ3: How does the discourse associated with the Great Lakes Compact reflect prospective sensemaking?

DATA GATHERING AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The C-SPAN Video Library was used as the primary source of data. This was supplemented by the use of Congress.gov and the Library of Congress THOMAS website to locate transcripts and bill background not available through the C-SPAN Video Library. The C-SPAN Video Library provided the timelines for the courses of action on the House and Senate bills on the Compact and video recordings of the introductions, congressional actions, and House debate on the Compact. The THOMAS website³ provided committee reports on the bills. Hearing statements and video recordings from the Senate Committee on the Judiciary website were also obtained.

The initial design of the project was intended to focus on the discourse related to two bills (the Great Lakes Compact and H.R. 2973); however, there was not a debate associated with H.R. 2973. While I would like to have presented a methodological approach that progressed in a linear fashion that was carried out as initially conceptualized, that narrative would not have been appropriate for the actual track of the research process, which shifted as data was gathered and more information learned from the C-SPAN Video Library on the course of approval for the Compact.⁴ I acknowledge this unexpected turn of my research plan as it is also a key finding related to what can be learned from using the C-SPAN Video Library and in documenting the legislative approval process.

For the data analysis procedures, I read through the available transcripts and viewed video recordings at the floor level and committee level. Across these, I identified account vocabularies, approximately following guidelines described in Buttny (1993) for conducting a conversation analytic constructionist perspective on accounts. Buttny's description emphasized the importance of paying attention to specific utterances, including words used, actions performed, and interactional structuring, in order to understand how accounts and social accountability are constructed by interlocutors. A key issue that Buttny noted is to identify "what accounts make relevant": "the *nature, magnitude, and consequences* of the problematic event are themselves *interactional constructions* [emphasis in original] which are made relevant by the actor in the course of the accounts talk" (p. 61). Through this process, a goal of the researcher in interpreting the discourse is to "make the implicit explicit" (p. 63) by using contextual information to aid in the analysis and in developing interpretations of the data.

ANALYSIS

The Great Lakes Compact

Before being considered in Congress, the Compact went through an eight-state approval process such that it already had the status of an interstate agreement, with the wording and language worked out over a 4-year period among the Great Lakes states and the Canadian province of Ontario, resulting in a

19-page document (Council of Great Lakes Governors, n.d.). The main task for Congress was to enact (or not) the Compact into public law in order to make the agreement legally binding.

In the House of Representatives, the Compact was introduced as H.R. 6577, with lead sponsor James Oberstar (D-MN) and 47 cosponsors that constituted bipartisan support from representatives of the Great Lakes states. It was introduced to the House on July 23, 2008, referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary, reported and approved by that committee; it received no further action in the House. Although H.R. 6577 did not pass the House, it is nearly identical to Senate Joint Resolution 45 (S.J. Res. 45), which was eventually approved by both the House and Senate as the Great Lakes Compact.

In the Senate, the Compact was introduced as S.J. Res. 45, with lead sponsor Carl Levin (D-MI), and 15 cosponsors that constituted bipartisan support from all senators from the Great Lakes states and included well-known names such as then-Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton. The Compact was classified within the C-SPAN Video Library as dealing with water resources development. It was introduced on July 23, 2008, read twice, and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, where hearings were held on July 30, and it was discharged and laid before the Senate on August 1, 2008, where it was amended (S. Amdt. [Amendment] 5263) and passed in the Senate by unanimous consent.

On September 8, it was received in the House as a Senate Joint Resolution. On September 22, Betty Sutton (D-OH) moved to “suspend the rules and pass the resolution.” Also on September 22, the first and only congressional debate occurred on the Great Lakes Compact. The C-SPAN Video Library reported that there were 4 speakers in the debate, and that as a suspension of the rules, a debate of 40 minutes was allocated. One speaker made a procedural motion. There were 3 speakers on the substance of the resolution (Betty Sutton, D-OH; Bart Stupak, D-MI; and, Howard Coble, R-NC), plus the Speaker Pro Tempore. The debate lasted for approximately 15 minutes.

In the *Congressional Record*, there were additional “speakers” with comments that were added to the official record (Vernon Ehlers, R-MI; James Oberstar, D-MN; Sander Levin, D-MI). The three additional remarks were all in favor of the Compact. Although written and spoken discourse are different in character, because the comments of the additional speakers are part

of official record, they are also included in this analysis. On September 23, the Compact was approved in the House and passed on to the White House, where the President signed it into law on October 3.

The primary analysis includes the Compact-related oral statements and debate made on the congressional floor. Statements by representatives intended for inclusion in the public record are included to provide additional background context. These also contribute to the congressional discourse on the approval of the Compact. Statements that were added after the floor debate are indicated by “(written statement)” following the speaker’s name. The closed-captioned transcript was used as the primary transcript. These transcripts were compared with the spoken discourse, and either corrected or modified to reflect what was said, including capturing nonverbal disfluencies and word emphasis (indicated through either ALL CAP for emphasis through increased volume or underlining for stressed words). Bold indicates words and phrases highlighted for analysis purposes.

The following were identified as key account vocabularies: natural resource, economic development, stewardship, and diversion. This analysis is divided into three sections by describing the prodrome, or key triggering event; describing how the account vocabularies were used within the accounts in favor of the Compact; and then discussing how these account vocabularies were also addressed in the opposition to the Compact.

The Prodrome

The main threat to the Great Lakes and key impetus for the passage of the Great Lakes compact was fear of diversion of the freshwater out of the Great Lakes. *Diversion*, *diversions*, or *divert* were mentioned nine times during the debate. Of note isn’t just the fact that diversion is mentioned, but how it is discursively built up as a threat.

Background context regarding the threat of diversions can be gleaned from the written record. In written statements, two representatives spoke of how a private Canadian company had made an agreement in 1998 to export 160 million gallons of water from Lake Superior to Asia. This event prompted an immediate response and protest from the eight neighboring U.S. states and was credited with leading to the development of the Great Lakes Compact. This event constituted a prodrome, or early warning of a threat, to the Great Lakes in the form of the diversion of water away from the Great Lakes region:

Mr. Ehlers (written statement): The catalyst for the creation of a Great Lakes Compact came in 1998 when the government of Ontario granted a permit to a private Canadian company to ship up to 160 million gallons of water per year to Asia.

In the above excerpt, Representative Ehlers (R-MI) outlined the sequence of events that led to the development of the Great Lakes Compact. He noted that the catalyst was specifically the possibility of water being shipped out of the Great Lakes to a different part of the globe.

However, what is crucial to examine about this prodrome is how social actors made sense of this event as a threat to the Great Lakes:

Mr. Ehlers (written statement): The Great Lakes comprise the largest source of freshwater in the world—20 percent of the Earth's total and 95 percent of the surface freshwater in the United States—and they provide drinking water, transportation and recreation to tens of millions of people in the United States and Canada. Although the Great Lakes contain copious amounts of fresh water, less than one percent of the water in the Great Lakes is renewed every year through rain, snow melt, and groundwater recharge, with the remaining ninety-nine percent remaining in the lakes each year. In other words, the Great Lakes are a non-renewable resource that is **currently at jeopardy from large-scale water diversions** outside the Great Lakes Basin.

Diversion is a key account-vocabulary term in connection to its relationship to other aspects of Great Lakes ecology. Specifically, the Great Lakes are a large freshwater resource, but that water is nonrenewable due to limitations in the rain, snowmelt, and groundwater recharge cycle. Diversion is discursively worked up as a key concern in relation to ecology, freshwater, and conservation. This is significant in that diversion could have been developed as a threat in other ways such as a lost economic opportunity for the region. However, this would call for a particular crafting of a chain of agencies (Castor & Cooren, 2006) that would link freshwater diversion to economic resource. What trumps the preference of this chain of agencies is an alternative network of agencies that traces back to how Great Lakes freshwater is a resource

with a limited cycle of replenishment. Linking diversion as threat to a limited resource establishes the overall framework of the Compact in functioning to protect Great Lakes freshwater as a natural (regional) resource.

House Debate

There were multiple account vocabularies that were used to describe and define the Great Lakes including: natural resource to be protected, freshwater resource of finite quantity, and economic resource. These multiple vocabularies were not treated as being in conflict with each other or contradictory, but rather as different aspects of the Great Lakes. What is notable in the remarks of the speakers who inserted statements and spoke in favor of the Great Lakes Compact is the diversity of account vocabularies that they utilized, which included national interests, impact and scope of Great Lakes, economic impact, and local control.

The Great Lakes as a natural resource was highlighted with *natural* being mentioned 3 times during the debate and 22 times in written statements. However, when *natural* was mentioned, it was usually as a part of a phrase: *natural resources*, *natural resource*, or *natural asset*. As a natural resource, it is something that should be protected:

Ms. Sutton: The Great Lakes Compact will help preserve and improve this important natural resource, our Great Lakes, for years to come. The Great Lakes are one of our greatest treasures, an important **natural asset** that we must never take for granted and that we must always **protect**.

Representative Sutton's comment highlights the nature of the Great Lakes as a natural resource—it must be preserved, and its preservation is vital when projecting into the future and considering the needs of future generations. In this respect, the vocabulary of Great Lakes as natural resource is a prospective-sensemaking tool in anticipating a specific need in the future.

The value of the Great Lakes as a natural resource however is in relation to its uses:

Ms. Sutton: Mr. Speaker, the Great Lakes are not only a source of drinking water, but they are also essential for **recreation, jobs, and the overall health of our economy**. Lake Erie alone supports 240,000

jobs and \$5.8 billion in wages. The Great Lakes **are also highways, moving goods, people and services** throughout the region. In addition, the Great Lakes support **a multi-billion dollar a year sport fishing and recreational boating industries** [*sic*], and also support **travel and tourism** throughout the region.

The Great Lakes are an economic driver through recreation, transportation, sport fishing, recreational boating, travel, and tourism. Ms. Sutton also invoked what I describe as freshwater statistics, which highlight the scope and impact of Great Lakes freshwater: “With one-fifth of the world’s fresh water, the Great Lakes attracted the early settlers to the region, and today nearly 33 million people live and work within the basin, spanning eight States . . .” Coupled with the freshwater statistics were statistics that emphasized the importance of the Great Lakes to the economy of the area. This framing emphasizes the Great Lakes as important because of what they provide to improve human and economic quality of life. In other words, the Great Lakes are important because of their relationship to society.

In addition to building up the importance of the Great Lakes to the area as a freshwater resource and as an economic engine, Ms. Sutton also discursively developed a case for a problem that the Compact would help solve:

However, the Great Lakes are **vulnerable to depletion**. Each year, rainfall- rainfall and snowmelt replenish only about 1 percent of the water in the basin. **Uncontrolled and careless diversions of water** could thus be HIGHLY detrimental to the health of the Great Lakes. This compact will bring an end to **destructive diversions** of water from the basin.

The development of problems or threats to the Great Lakes is twofold: first, focusing on the nonrenewable and therefore, potentially, fleeting nature of Great Lakes water, and second, highlighting the threat of diversions. What is notable in her descriptions of diversions is that whenever water diversion is mentioned, it is accompanied with an adjective (e.g., *uncontrolled*, *careless*, *destructive*), which allows for other types of diversions that are not uncontrolled, careless, or destructive.

Another account vocabulary that she utilized to support the Compact dealt with prioritizing local control:

The purpose of this compact is to formalize cooperation among the Great Lakes States, to develop and implement **regional** goals and objectives for water conservation while **preserving the States' flexibility** regarding their water management programs.

In addition, she emphasized how “**the people of the eight States** have worked diligently to craft this compact to preserve this vital resource, and it is urgent that we approve it **now** to ensure that our Great Lakes are here for **future generations**.”

In the final comments of her introductory remarks (see the previous paragraph), Ms. Sutton again emphasized two terms related to time and timing: “now” and “future generations.” These two terms are key to understanding how prospective sensemaking is framed in terms of future potential problems of the Great Lakes. In other words, the future is viewed in terms of what is happening in the here and now. This point will be elaborated on later, in the Discussion section.

The other speaker who spoke in favor of the Compact was Mr. Howard Coble (R-NC). His comments were brief (lasting approximately 1 minute and 17 seconds), where he expressed agreement with Ms. Sutton's remarks (“Mr. Speaker, the gentledady from Ohio pretty THOROUGHLY covered this already”). Mr. Coble also highlighted the work involved in the development of the Compact (“the compact we are called upon to approve today caps off years of effort”).

In terms of accounts and agency, Mr. Coble also highlighted the role of “the States, users of these waters in the United States, and Canadian authorities” as agents and stakeholders in the management of Great Lakes waters. Therefore, without highlighting a specific problem per se, Mr. Coble focused on the role of particular agents (individual states, the U.S. and Canadian authorities) in implementing a solution that would prevent problems with the Great Lakes. In terms of how the Great Lakes are discursively constructed, they are treated as a resource to be managed.

The Great Lakes are part of a network not of agents, but of activity (see Czarniawska, 2009). The account vocabularies of natural resource, limited freshwater resource, and economic resource functioned as devices to make sense of the Great Lakes in a definitional way by describing their present relationship with human needs and activities. These vocabularies also were utilized as prospective-sensemaking devices in how they were connected with other activities.

Opposing the Compact to Support the Lakes

There was only one representative (Mr. Stupak, D-MI) who spoke out against the Great Lakes Compact. His opposition ultimately was in favor of measures to protect the Great Lakes, and so he expressed concerns about gaps in the Compact in its ability to effectively protect the Great Lakes in the long term, especially given other unknown contingencies. Mr. Stupak had a total of seven speaking turns. Unlike other segments of the debate where utterances were more akin to minispeeches with no specific responses, the segment of the debate that involved Mr. Stupak's comments were more obviously interactional, with his turns relatively short in duration followed by responses from Ms. Sutton that were explicitly directed toward Mr. Stupak's comments.

Mr. Stupak opened his remarks and opposition by expressing his "deep concern" that "this compact would allow Great Lakes water to be defined as a product." In addition, Mr. Stupak claimed that there was "no language in the compact that recognizes the Great Lakes waters held in trust. The public owns the water of the Great Lakes, and anything we pass should preserve this." Mr. Stupak's comment here can be taken as calling into question how the Compact functions to discursively construct the Great Lakes as a water resource (and by extension, economic resource) rather than as a public resource.

As with the views expressed to support the Compact, Mr. Stupak also expressed a concern about water diversion. However, instead of equating the Compact as a mechanism to prevent diversion, Stupak claimed that the Compact "may have unintentionally have the opposite effect and set a precedent that would open the DOOR to diversions." Another vocabulary that Stupak utilized in his objections to the Compact dealt with process: he cited how Congress did not have enough time to consider the Compact, was "rushing" it through, and that there were several unanswered questions regarding the Compact and its future implications.

Mr. Stupak posed a series of questions based on his concerns. Of note is the use of the common vocabulary of diversion in the pro and con sides to the Compact, and the framing of diversion as undesirable:

While the original intent of the Great Lakes Compact was to **protect** our water from **diversions**, the compact that the States have sent to Congress may have unintentionally have the opposite effect and set a precedent that would **open the DOOR to diversions**.

What is under dispute with regard to the vocabulary of diversion is how the Great Lakes Compact connects to diversion prevention or diversion facilitation. Mr. Stupak's "action net" (see Czarniawska, 2009) with respect to the Compact and diversion differs from that of the Compact supporters because of the relationship he crafts between the Compact and diversion. Mr. Stupak's comments highlight how the Compact does not ban diversions altogether but rather places a limitation on what kind of diversions may occur, a position that is resonant with Ms. Sutton's earlier description of diversions modified by adjectives such as *uncontrolled*, *careless*, and *destructive*.

The way Mr. Stupak discursively builds the relationship between the Compact and diversions is by posing questions to be answered. Mr. Stupak stated that he posed several questions to various agencies such as the International Joint Commission, U.S. Trade Representative, and Department of State, but that while the request was acknowledged, "they were unable to provide me with any substantive responses." In the response to the several concerns that Stupak raised, Ms. Sutton addressed some of them in stating:

We have specifically retained the right to amend and alter the compact. And I would um just also mention that we have worked to effectively address the gentleman's concerns ah in the committee report.

Of note in this response is its brevity, which is accomplished in part by not addressing each of the specific issues raised by Mr. Stupak and by referring to another organizational text ("the committee report") that purportedly addresses each of the concerns raised by Mr. Stupak. The prospective-sensemaking issues raised by Mr. Stupak are not treated as new issues or items, but rather are encompassed as part of an ongoing conversation. Thus, future possible problems associated with the Great Lakes or possibly caused by the Compact itself, are intertwined with other organizational conversations and an organizational text ("the committee report"). Mr. Stupak's comments are oriented toward the future and projected into a future chain of agencies. His projections into the future are resisted through invoking an alternative, competing chain of agencies vis-à-vis prior organizational conversations and texts.

Ms. Sutton addressed Mr. Stupak's concerns and questions in turn. In her last set of comments in response to Mr. Stupak, she explicitly addressed the problem that the Compact was intended to solve:

Our Great Lakes' water is **CURRENTLY, at PRESENT, at risk to be carelessly diverted** from our basin, and that is why action is so important here today. If we allow that to happen, this water will never return.

The problem as Ms. Sutton has defined it is “present.” Therefore, from a sensemaking perspective, the Compact addresses a present or current problem, rather than a future problem.

The debate ended after approximately 15 minutes, 25 minutes short of the 40 minutes allocated for the debate. Ms. Sutton moved to suspend the rules and pass the resolution, effectively ending Mr. Stupak's floor questions and challenges to the resolution. This move can be viewed as a negative sanctioning of Mr. Stupak's objections.

As the Speaker Pro Tempore was initiating the voting process, Mr. Stupak objected based on the grounds that a quorum was not present. The vote was subsequently postponed until September 23. When it was taken up as unfinished business, there was immediately a motion to suspend the rules and pass the resolution. After a 5-minute period where electronic votes were being cast and much conversation and activity was observed on the House floor, the bill was approved with 390 yeas and 25 nays. Two days later, it was presented to the president, who subsequently signed the Great Lakes Compact into Public Law No. 110-342 on October 3, 2008.

DISCUSSION

By the time that the Great Lakes Compact was introduced in Congress, it had undergone a great deal of discussion and debate at the state level such that it already had the status of state authorization and, by extension, support of the constituents who in turn supported the politicians at the federal level. Therefore, in many ways the Compact seemed destined for approval prior to its introduction in Congress. The limited number of speakers also illustrates the noncontroversial nature of the Compact. This project's research questions address how this lack of controversy can be understood in terms of political discourse.

RQ1: What account vocabularies were prominent in the congressional discourse associated with the Great Lakes Compact?

Despite the limited amount of actual talk associated with the Great Lakes Compact, there were actually quite a few account vocabularies that were utilized within the debate: national interests, natural resource of freshwater, economic resource, water diversions, and local/state control of Great Lakes water. As I noted elsewhere (Castor, 2005), in governance debates similar account vocabularies may be used by opposing sides, but differences may occur in how they relate those vocabularies to the issue at hand. In addition, this project highlights how, while there may be similar account vocabularies being utilized, they may be emphasized in different ways. For example, the arguments in favor of the Compact tended to focus on the economic relevance of the Great Lakes, whereas the arguments against the Compact were expressly critical of an economic perspective. The opposition arguments instead emphasized the Great Lakes as a public trust.

RQ2: How were the problems associated with Great Lakes discursively constructed?

The key issue that speakers in favor of and against the proposal acknowledged was the problem of water diversions from the Great Lakes. This was viewed as a problem in part because of the limitations on how Great Lakes water is replenished. However, why this is a problem can be construed in a variety of ways. For instance, without Great Lakes water, the region is without an important source of freshwater. However, also without Great Lakes water, the region is without an important economic engine that supports jobs, tourism, fishing, sporting, and transportation. It is this latter set of framings that were emphasized.

Grint (2005) and Castor and Cooren (2006) noted that the framing of a problem can be shifted. Rather than casting it as a solution to a problem, the opposition attempted to frame the Compact as a potential cause of problems by opening the door to future diversions. Part of this framing relates to defining the Great Lakes as economic resource rather than natural resource.

RQ3: How does the discourse associated with the Great Lakes Compact reflect prospective sensemaking?

The Compact was intended to deal with the issue or potential problems associated with water diversions. As noted in the supplemental written statements, the supporters of the Compact focused on water diversions as a current threat as exemplified by a Canadian company attempting to divert water from the Great Lakes. In this respect, the sensemaking that occurred regarding the need for the Compact was retrospective in orientation by focusing on a past incident as the basis for future actions.

The opposition to the Compact also engaged in sensemaking regarding problems and the Compact, but in this case, the sensemaking was future oriented in attempting to project ahead to potential problems that in turn are not tangible and therefore are relegated to vague and ambiguous risks. Indeed, the only way to determine if the concerns of the opposition are valid would be to approve the Compact and see what happens.

A key implication of this project regarding prospective sensemaking involves the challenges involved in attempting to make sense of possible, projected future problems. In some ways, Weick's caution about prospective sensemaking can be seen in that it is hard to make sense of the future without reference to the past. In addition, this project illustrates some factors that enable prospective sensemaking, such as when a threat is specific, tangible, and grounded in a concrete past action.

CONCLUSION

This particular dataset addresses the congressional approval process for the Great Lakes Compact. The video record is valuable for analysis of public discourse related to approval of the Compact. There was an emphasis on discourse that was in favor of the Compact, as indicated through the number of speakers and written statements in support of the Compact in comparison to the one speaker against the Compact. What this also shows is that the Compact was already at least informally approved and any further discussion could be considered ceremonial rather than critical.

From a political perspective, this project is relevant in highlighting some of the circumstances related to approval. Perhaps because of the diverse vocabularies, there was something for everyone in terms of bipartisan approval. Plus, there was the support of the states that would be most affected by the Great Lakes Compact.

The goal of this project was to bring together several important areas of study and research: using the unique and valuable resource of the C-SPAN Video Library; addressing freshwater policy issues; problem construction, and making sense of future, projected problems. The focal points for bringing together these areas were the Great Lakes and Great Lakes Compact. In analyzing discourse associated with the discussions of the Great Lakes, this project identified how there were varying account vocabularies that were used to describe the Great Lakes, with an economic resource vocabulary being prevalent.

Because so little documented congressional discussion exists regarding the similar water bills that did not pass, it's difficult to tell from a discursive analysis what was different about the Compact as compared to the other ones. However, this analysis was able to identify and analyze explicit public discourse relating to the Great Lakes Compact. In doing so, several account vocabularies for discussing support of the Great Lakes were identified.

One purpose in analyzing the Compact was to examine the debate and discourse to determine what factors may have contributed to the success of this piece of freshwater protection legislation. Some key aspects related to its success were its response to a past circumstance (the threat of foreign water diversion), economic connections, and local/regional support from the Great Lakes states. While in some ways the Compact was approved swiftly by Congress, in other ways it was slow moving in that the initial water diversion threat that prompted the Compact occurred in 1999 (nearly a decade before the actual congressional approval of the Compact). However, the Compact went through approval in each of the eight Great Lakes states before arriving in Washington, D.C.

Reflections on the Use of C-SPAN Library

An important backdrop has been the availability of the C-SPAN Video Library as a tool for analysis. In this section, I wish to reflect on the use of the C-SPAN Video Library in order to highlight its utilities and to provide some

caveats. First, in many ways the C-SPAN Video Library provided a remarkably accurate picture of what actually occurred on the House floor, as opposed to the official record which also includes comments and remarks that have been added after the fact. In addition, written records may not be accurate in capturing what occurred. However, congressionally controlled cameras are also limited in what they capture. So, for example, in the final House vote on the Compact, there was much talk and movement occurring on the House floor, but specific conversations could not be captured on camera, thus losing out on some of the interactional dynamics involved with the approval of the Compact.

Second, in focusing on what was available through the C-SPAN video, there were other aspects of the Compact that I did not explore in this particular chapter, including factors external to the congressional discourse. For example, some unanswered questions are: How did the overall political dynamics of the House and Senate contribute to how the Compact was received and voted upon? What occurred at the state level leading up to the introduction of the Compact? How did the external societal awareness of the importance of freshwater and dangers of water diversions, as exemplified in Peter Annin's 2009 book, *The Great Lakes Water Wars*, contribute to the reception of the Compact as compared to other water legislation proposed at different points in time?

NOTES

1. For brevity, *the Compact* will be used interchangeably with the Great Lakes Compact.

2. Exceptions may be granted in the case of communities in "straddling counties." Such requests for exceptions must go through a rigorous review process.

3. The THOMAS website is now retired. The same content can be found at congress.gov.

4. See Tracy, Eger, Huffman, Redden, and Scarduzio (2014) for a discussion of how qualitative research can take unexpected turns.

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