

The Case for Critical Media Literacy: A Comparison of Climate Discourses in Canadian
Mainstream and Alternative Media

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By

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Abstract

CO₂ emissions have been rising and the Earth's atmosphere is warming to perilous temperatures, making it urgent to address the climate crisis. The climate crisis has been exacerbated by neoliberalism, which is sometimes referred to as the corporate agenda. This research examines the discourses related to the climate crisis in one mainstream media outlet and two alternative media outlets. The main research question for the study was: What are the main discourses about the climate crisis and the Green New Deal in Canadian mainstream text-based media compared to alternative text-based media from September 1, 2019, to December 31, 2020?

Mainstream media is media that is funded by corporations and is mass produced and distributed. Another type of media is alternative media, which is structurally different from mainstream media and is less influenced by corporate sponsorship. This research questioned how these media outlets the *National Post*, *The Tyee*, and *Rabble* report on the climate crisis. It studied whether they are hegemonic devices that promote the neoliberal agenda, particularly pertaining to the fossil fuel industries? How the Green New Deal is presented to the masses in the media is also analyzed.

The study analyzed the discourses used by the three media outlets in various categories pertaining to this existential problem, namely, the climate crisis. It used critical discourse analysis to analyze and interpret the media coverage about the climate crisis and the Green New Deal in Canadian mainstream and alternative media. The *National Post* mostly used neoliberal discourses in its articles about the climate crisis, often supporting corporate interests over environmental concerns, including those posed by Indigenous protestors attempting to protect the land. By comparison, *The Tyee* and *Rabble* used counterhegemonic discourses in virtually all the categories in every article in the data.

The study demonstrates the need for critical media literacy in classrooms to help understand the seriousness of the climate crisis. Critical media literacy interrogates how power is connected to language and helps students develop critical thinking skills. These skills can help students identify and interpret hegemonic discourses that may hinder climate action. This type of literacy can help students become informed citizens, which in turn could help them demand climate action. This research demonstrates where power and ideology are in media discourses and how hegemonic discourses are a barrier to climate action. Critical media literacy is necessary as a counter-hegemonic strategy, especially in high school classrooms. This research is rooted in social and ecological justice.

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Table of Contents

Permission to Use	ii
Disclaimer	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements	i
Table of Contents	i
List of Tables	iv
List of Abbreviations	v
List of Definitions.....	vi
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Research Question:.....	4
1.1.1 Secondary Research Questions.....	4
1.2 Context - Canada.....	5
1.2.1 Neoliberalism.....	6
1.2.2 Neoliberalism and the Climate Crisis.....	8
1.3 The Green New Deal.....	9
1.4 Situating Myself	13
1.5 Summary	19
1.6 Overview of the Chapters.....	19
Chapter 2 Literature Review	20
2.1 Introduction	20
2.2 Theoretical Framework	21
2.3 The Role of the Media.....	27
2.4 Neoliberalism and the Media	29
2.5 Ideology, Power, and the Concentration of Media Ownership	30
2.6 Democracy and the Media.....	35
2.7 Framing	38
2.8 Why Critical Media Literacy is Needed in Schools.....	43
2.9 Studies that Add to the Discussion.....	46
2.10 Relevant Studies in Education.....	47
2.11 Summary	48
Chapter 3 Methodology.....	50

3.1 Introduction	50
3.2 Research Sample	53
3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis	56
3.3.1 Definition of discourse/s	59
3.3.2 CDA and Power	60
3.3.3 CDA and Ideology	61
3.4 Thematic Analysis	62
3.5 Summary	65
Chapter 4 Data Results	66
4.1 Introduction	66
4.2 <i>Rabble</i>	67
4.3 The Tyee	70
4.4 <i>National Post</i>	73
4.5 Summary	82
Chapter 5 Data Analysis	85
5.1 Introduction	85
5.2 CDA In Action	87
5.2.1 Rabble	88
5.2.2 The Tyee	89
5.2.3 National Post	90
5.3 Theme – Effects of the Climate Crisis	92
5.3.1 Alternative Media	92
5.3.2 Mainstream Media	94
5.3.3 Sub-Theme – Climate Science	97
5.4 Theme – Corporate/ Bank Investments	98
5.4.1 Alternative media	98
5.4.2 Mainstream Media	99
5.4.3 Sub-Theme – Fossil Fuels	100
5.4.3.1 Alternative Media	101
5.4.3.2 Mainstream Media	101
5.5 Theme – Environmental Racism and the Wet’suwet’en Protests	104
5.5.1 Alternative Media	105

5.5.2 Mainstream Media	106
5.6 Theme – Politicians and the Climate Crisis	110
5.6.1 Alternative Media	110
5.6.2 Mainstream Media	112
5.7 Theme – Carbon Tax	115
5.7.1 Alternative Media	115
5.7.2 Mainstream Media	115
5.8 Theme – Climate Action and Youth and Climate Action	117
5.8.1 Alternative Media	117
5.8.2 Mainstream Media	118
5.9 Theme – Green New Deal including Renewable and Alternative Energy	119
5.9.1 Alternative Media	120
5.9.2 Mainstream Media	121
5.10 Theme – Covid-19 and the Climate Crisis	122
5.10.1 Alternative Media	122
5.10.2 Mainstream Media	123
5.11 Revisiting Habermas	124
5.12 Summary	125
Chapter 6 Conclusions: Wrapping Up the Study	128
6.1 Primary Research Question	128
6.2 Secondary Research Questions	130
6.3 Implications for this Study	134
6.4 Limitations	135
6.5 Future Areas of Study	136
6.6 Summative Reflections	137
References	140
Appendix A – <i>The Tyee</i> Data.....	162
Appendix B – <i>Rabble</i> Data	169
Appendix C – <i>National Post</i> Data	178

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Themes from the Three Media Outlets	64
Table 4.1 <i>Rabble</i> Data.....	70
Table 4.2 <i>The Tyee</i> Data	72
Table 4.3 <i>National Post</i> Data - all articles.....	73
Table 4.4 <i>National Post</i> Data-by Outlet	74
Table 4.5 Full Data Results.....	82

List of Abbreviations

GND: Green New Deal

GHG: Greenhouse Gas

NDP: New Democratic Party

IPCC: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

LNG: Liquefied natural gas

List of Definitions

Progressive – In this thesis, the term “progressive” refers to “progressive politics” as informed by progressive values and principles. Progressive values are rooted in caring for one each other, and a creating a socially and economically equal world (Lakoff, 2014). Examples of progressive principles are equity, equality, democracy, and, but not limited to, ethical business (Lakoff, 2014). Progressives view the role of the government as providing public resources for all and taxing equitably (Lakoff, 2014).

Neoliberalism – Neoliberalism is an economic rationale based on a free market theory (Orlowski, 2012). The main tenets of neoliberalism are privatizing the commons, deregulating the corporate sector, tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, and weakening collective bargaining rights for workers (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018).

Climate science – The information from a near consensus of scientists that the climate is changing at a rate that is leading rapidly to a crisis for all of humanity and most of the other living species. The science behind the climate crisis indicates that human activity is the cause of the climate crisis.

Climate action – Those actions taken by governments or corporations that respond to mitigate the climate crisis. Examples of climate action demands are the global climate strikes, and the extinction rebellion protests. Examples of climate action would include policy supporting the move toward renewable energy while relying less on fossil fuels, building public transportation systems, and incentivizing consumer purchases of electric vehicles,

Chapter 1 Introduction

The Earth is reaching warming temperatures, from which there may be no return.

Temperatures are rising because of human activity and temperatures appear to be on a continual rise. All life forms and ecosystems will suffer as a result. The worst effects of the climate crisis will be experienced in the future (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2018). As such, climate scientists stress that global temperatures must not increase past 1.5 degrees Celsius. Despite this warning, temperatures have already risen by 1.2 degrees Celsius since the Paris Accord of 2015 (IPCC, 2018). The climate scientists behind the IPCC (2018) report warn that we must take drastic action to greatly reduce carbon emissions by 2030 to negate the potentially catastrophic effects of rising atmospheric temperatures. This rise in temperature has been variously termed global warming, climate change, and the climate crisis. The term “climate crisis” is used for this research because “climate change” does not accurately reflect the severity of the situation (Zeldin-O’Neil, 2019).

The climate crisis has intensified partially because of neoliberalism, which loosely refers to growing deregulated corporate power in many important sectors of society. Neoliberalism has weakened environmental regulations that have been put in place to protect the Earth, making it much easier for corporations to extract resources. It is difficult to rein in corporate power and its neoliberal agenda, however. To radically change the path society must act now (N. Klein, 2019).

Since the fall of 2018, thousands of youth have rallied behind Swedish youth activist Greta Thunberg to protest government and corporate inaction on the climate crisis. The movement she created, including the now famous climate school strikes, brought attention to the climate crisis and garnered disdain from some politicians and fossil fuel companies. Thunberg brought the climate strikes to Canada in the fall of 2019 during the federal election. In that time,

she received considerable media attention, and amplified the discussion on the climate crisis. Thunberg's leadership earned her TIME Magazines 2019 Person of the Year. Not only is Thunberg an advocate for climate action, but she is also a reminder that youth today are living in a world mediated by a warming atmosphere and who will be experiencing the effects of the climate crisis for their adult lives (N. Klein, 2019). Her generation, and those that follow, will be responsible for the stewardship of the Earth, and many are active in protesting government inaction to lessen rising global temperatures. In Western nations, the environmental movement began to gain momentum in the 1960s, but a new sense of urgency over the warming atmosphere has led to a massive increase of concern, especially among young people.

The climate strikes are evidence that many youth are concerned for the environment and their future. A recent study of adolescents in rural British Columbia found that almost all of them are much more concerned about the climate crisis than they are about the state of the economy (Orlowski, 2020). Their generation and the ones that follow will experience the frightening consequences of the rising atmospheric temperatures for their entire adult lives. According to the UN's IPCC report (2018), the worst consequences of the climate crisis will be experienced in the not-so-distant future. Unfortunately, many of the teenagers who participated in the climate strikes are not yet able to vote, and as such, some argue for the voting age to be lowered (S. Klein, 2020). One study found a decline in youth interest in politics (Corner et al., 2015), but this was prior to Greta Thunberg's appearance as the face of the youth climate action movement. Indeed, the youth who participated in the climate strikes have demonstrated some understanding of the science behind the climate crisis (Mackay, 2019). These youth will likely vote for politicians who champion climate action policies.

While an understanding of the science behind the climate crisis (shortened to ‘climate science’ for the rest of the thesis) is important, it must be paired with media literacy education so students can recognize and interpret the messages in media about climate change (Cooper, 2011). Therefore, critical media literacy is a type of pedagogy that educators should use to support the next generation in combating the climate crisis. Critical media literacy will teach students a process, a language, and a way of thinking so that they can read between the lines, learn what ideology is represented in news articles, and question what is included or omitted. Although there are many different forms of media, and I am specifically interested in text-based, news media.

One proposal to address the climate crisis and unfettered capitalism, which is another name for neoliberalism, is the Green New Deal (GND), part of which calls for a just transition to renewables. The GND needs support from the masses in order for politicians to pass it into legislation. However, the climate crisis and GND may be receiving biased news coverage because the corporate media is influenced by shareholders and tends to promote pro-business content (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; McChesney, 2001, 2015). In other words, corporate media have corporate interests. This bias could impact public support of the GND and lead people to be confused about the severity of the climate crisis. The GND and climate crisis are also reported on in alternative media, of course. In contrast to mainstream media, alternative media challenges the status quo (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018).¹ Alternative media have agendas, as well. The two outlets used in this research are left leaning, but some alternative media come from the right, like *Rebel News*.

¹ All media have a standpoint. Objectivity is an ideal to strive towards but is difficult to reach as we all are influenced by our social values and interests (Harding, 2004). We all have a standpoint, or social location, from which we view the world (Harding, 2004).

This research will analyze how the media report on the climate crisis. The corporate media outlet that will be analyzed is *National Post*. The alternative media outlets which that will be analyzed are *The Tyee* and *Rabble*. This research will study the extent of the differences in discourses about climate crisis and the GND in corporate and alternative media in Canada. It will focus on how the *National Post*, *Rabble* and *The Tyee* address this major environmental problem for humanity and for all life on Earth.

1.1 Research Question:

This thesis will examine the discourses used in mainstream and alternative media outlets regarding the climate crisis and GND in Canada. This will demonstrate the importance of critical media literacy in Canadian secondary schools in the climate crisis era. My primary research question is:

What are the main discourses about the climate crisis and the Green New Deal in Canadian mainstream text-based media compared to alternative text-based media from September 1, 2019, to December 31, 2020?

The media outlets under scrutiny include the Postmedia newspaper chain, the *National Post*, as well as two alternative news outlets – *The Tyee* and *Rabble.ca*. Only one mainstream media was chosen because of the volume of articles that the *National Post* produces. Postmedia owns over 120 brands of print, online, and mobile news platforms (*Postmedia*, n.d). Many articles and editorials are the same in all of them.

1.1.1 Secondary Research Questions

The climate crisis itself is a topic that provides a massive area for research. The number of articles in the three media outlets over the 16-month timeline of this study was also almost unmanageable. Therefore, I narrowed this down by focusing on the following sub questions:

- Has the Coronavirus-related economic downturn affected media discourses on the climate crisis and the GND?
- In what ways have the mainstream and alternative text-based media taken up the term “Green New Deal”?
- How do these mainstream and alternative media outlets treat climate crisis side effects such as environmental racism?
- In what ways do the mainstream and alternative media promote a neoliberal agenda, particularly regarding the fossil fuel industries?

Two ideas have drawn attention towards the climate crisis and potential solutions over the last two years. One is the GND, a recent policy innovation created by United States Congress Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey in response to pressure from a group of youth called the Sunshine Movement, who demanded climate action (N. Klein, 2019). More information on the GND will be provided later in this chapter. Secondly, the climate crisis has received more media attention in 2019 since the calls to action from Greta Thunberg and the global climate strike movement.

1.2 Context - Canada

Canada, like most Western nations, has a neoliberal economy and has greatly contributed to the climate crisis. It is one of the highest greenhouse gas (GHG) emitting nations in the world (S. Klein, 2020). Prime Minister Trudeau asserts that Canada can have climate action and fossil fuel extraction simultaneously. Despite claims of commitment to meet climate targets, the federal government and many provincial governments have recently approved new fossil fuel projects (S. Klein, 2020). To meet the climate targets set in the Paris Agreement (2015) and IPCC (2018), Canada must significantly wind down fossil fuel production (S. Klein, 2020; Lee, 2017). To stay

below 1.5 degrees of warming, 86% of Canada's proven fossil fuel reserves need to stay in the ground (Lee, 2017). Many Canadian institutions are deeply tied to the fossil fuel sector. For example, CIBC, RBC, the Bank of Nova Scotia, BMO, TD, and The Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board are ranked in the top 50 most powerful players in the fossil fuel sector (Corporate Mapping Project, nd). The Corporate Mapping Project identifies these organizations as enablers for the industry. Canadian institutions must divest from the fossil fuel industry and change our economy to meet the climate targets set by the scientists in the IPCC Report (2018).

1.2.1 Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is an economic rationale based on a free-market theory that, in its extreme, eschews government involvement in the economies of countries (Orlowski, 2012). Many national economies are now structured upon neoliberal principles, including Canada's. Neoliberalism calls for national and international policies that enable corporate business influences in almost all areas of society. According to adherents of neoliberalism, the most important role of governments is to enact legislation that benefits corporate interests, including the creation of markets, by privatizing the public sector (McChesney, 2001, 2015; Orlowski, 2012). The main tenets of neoliberalism are privatizing the commons, deregulating the corporate sector, implementing corporate tax cuts, and weakening collective bargaining rights for workers (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Taken together, these concepts result in increased corporate power in political decisions pertaining to the economy, including those affecting civil society and the environment.

Since the 1980s, global GHG emissions have been soaring, and corporations have been making massive profits from unregulated industries (N. Klein, 2015, 2019). As a result of such unchecked growth, neoliberalism exacerbates both the climate crisis and extreme inequalities. Neoliberalism has gained power and popularity amongst world leaders since the first

implementation of it in Chile in the 1970s (Harvey, 2007; N. Klein, 2007). In essence neoliberalism is unregulated capitalism. The impact of neoliberalism on the media will be further explored in the literature review of this thesis. Leaders who implement neoliberal economics are successful in receiving support from the public because of the utilization of discourses designed to highlight fear over economic uncertainty caused by climate action and by focusing on the positive aspects that have resulted from the fossil fuel economy in communities reliant on resource extraction. Understandably, many people in these communities are afraid of losing their ability to raise their families with a decent standard of living.

Neoliberalism has proven to be a barrier to climate action. Many political leaders follow neoliberal economics and deny the climate crisis because addressing it would mean changes to corporate profits (N. Klein, 2015). For the past three decades, this economic theory has been adopted by right-wing and even some centre-left governments in many countries. In Canada, Conservative governments, Liberal governments, and New Democratic Party (NDP) governments have all implemented some neoliberal policies. Neoliberalism underlies extraction projects that create massive wealth inequalities (N. Klein, 2015, 2019). These projects create conditions for mass extraction, in part, because unregulated capitalism is driven by the belief of "a nonreciprocal, dominance-based relationship with Earth, one purely of taking... it is the reduction of life into objects for the use of others" (N. Klein, 2015, p. 169). This view has existed since the European Empire Building Era and has resulted in environmental destruction in Canada, the U.S., and other parts of the world (Dhillon & Young, 2010; N. Klein, 2015, 2019). Nonetheless, from the neoliberal perspective, climate action is not a priority.

Not only does unregulated capitalism harm the environment, but it also weakens democracy. Neoliberalism makes citizens virtually powerless in economic decisions and

emphasizes the individual as separate from the collective (Orlowski, 2012). The ideal neoliberal citizen strives for their own needs, wants, and ambitions, and is bound to the goals of capitalism (Orlowski, 2012). This individualistic form of citizenship is most akin to conservative ideology (Orlowski, 2012). These hegemonic narratives are transmitted through educational institutions and the mainstream media (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; McChesney, 2001; Orlowski, 2012). The ideals of unregulated capitalism are detrimental to achieving a GND. Under neoliberal policies and hegemonic discourses people may become apathetic, cynical, and feel powerless, all of which results in lower voter turnout (Orlowski, 2012). By corollary, if people believe they are powerless, it will hinder climate action and public support to drive the GND.

1.2.2 Neoliberalism and the Climate Crisis

Unfettered capitalism results in some communities and peoples being considered expendable (N. Klein, 2019). This perception of expendability creates environmental racism through the construction of sacrifice zones, where some places can be "poisoned, drained, or otherwise destroyed" for what neoliberal adherents consider to be the economic good (N. Klein, 2015, p. 169). Environmental racism is "the deliberate or intentional siting of hazardous waste sites, landfills, incinerators, and polluting industries in communities inhabited by minorities and/or the poor" (Dhillon & Young, 2010, p. 24). Theories of superiority such as the Doctrine of Christian Discovery, Manifest Destiny, terra nullius, Orientalism, and othering, have been used to justify extraction and pollution (N. Klein, 2019). N. Klein (2015) argues that extractivism, which harms the land, people, and cultures, is "another wave of colonial violence" (p. 341). Many Indigenous communities have been impacted by environmental racism. For example, N. Klein (2015) explains that the Fort Chipewyan Cree experience high cancer rates due to the proximity of the Alberta tar sands because the community is situated downstream from mines. Another example of environmental racism is climate barbarism, which N. Klein (2019) defines

as brutality towards migrants and the "discarding of huge swaths of humanity" (p. 50). How, and if, the media covers environmental racism is explored in this research.

Neoliberalism encourages acts of environmental racism and climate barbarism, and promotes climate "solutions", such as geoengineering. Geoengineering is "the deliberate manipulation of our environment" (Mortillaro, 2020, para. 2). Some examples of geoengineering dreams are dimming the sun, brightening the clouds, inventing machines that suck carbon out of the air, and cloud brightening (N. Klein, 2015; Mortillaro, 2020). These technologically driven schemes are touted as solutions to the climate crisis, but geoengineering requires sacrifice zones of people and ecosystems to allow the economically privileged to maintain their lifestyles and wealth (N. Klein, 2015). Geoengineering is not a viable solution, as it has the potential to do more harm than good. Some risks could be the creation of a permanent haze over Earth, and warmer ocean waters that would affect marine life (Klein, 2015). It is a neoliberal approach to climate action and is not a viable option to dealing with the climate crisis. In contrast, the GND plan is a challenge to the wealth gap, holds polluters accountable, creates new jobs in alternative energy, and pushes a change in lifestyles (N. Klein, 2019). In sum, the GND does not include geoengineering solutions for the climate crisis.

1.3 The Green New Deal

Prior to the GND, The Leap Manifesto was created in Canada in 2015 and was a sort of "prequel" to the GND (N. Klein, 2019). The Leap was developed by Naomi Klein and David Suzuki and included a coalition of 60 organizers and theorists (N. Klein, 2019). The Leap challenges the binary that there can either be a strong economy or a healthy environment by arguing that there can be both (N. Klein, 2019). The Leap is a comprehensive approach to changing the economy with investments in renewable energy resources (N. Klein, 2019). When the Leap Manifesto was released, it was well received by some people, but some economic elites

and workers in the oil and gas industry took issue with it (N. Klein, 2019). Unifor president Jerry Dias and then-Alberta premier Rachel Notley took issue with the Leap's no new pipelines stance and the impact that could have on jobs and the economy (Engler, 2016). Although the Leap was received with mixed reviews, it foreshadowed the GND discussions in the United States.

The GND was developed in 2019 by progressives in the United States. It was born out of demands for climate action by the Sunrise Movement, a group of youth activists in the United States (N. Klein, 2019). In response, United States Congress Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey developed the GND. The GND became a key component of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders' campaign to become the Democratic candidate in the 2020 presidential election. In 2019 the UK Labour Party, with Jeremy Corbyn as leader, voted to adopt a GND in 2019 (Gabert-Doyon, 2019). However, neither the electorate in the United Kingdom nor the United States chose these men to lead their governments. The United States' GND is currently at the resolution stage and has not yet been put into legislation. Many political parties, however, are beginning to adopt elements of the GND as part of their platform. There are some climate action discourses in Canadian politics and many coalitions are calling for a Canadian GND (S. Klein, 2020).

The GND aims to reduce emissions by reining in corporate power and eventually abolishing the fossil fuel sector while creating new jobs in renewables (N. Klein, 2019). The name is a nod to Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s (N. Klein, 2019). Similar to the original New Deal, the GND is based on Keynesian economics, with public projects being the focus for employment (Stillwell, 2021). The plan proposes to create well-paying jobs in restoring and protecting ecosystems, cleaning up hazardous waste and abandoned fossil fuel sites such as old oil wells (N. Klein, 2019). There is much speculation that a Canadian GND would create

more jobs than what would be lost, and those jobs will be meaningful, well- paid, and more secure (S. Klein, 2020). As some communities currently benefit from fossil fuel industries, there are some serious concerns about the GND because many people are understandably afraid of job losses and increased unemployment.

Abolishing the fossil fuel sector would mean a loss of jobs in that sector but could and likely would mean the creation of others. The United States, Canada, and some nations in the EU have developing green energy sectors. For example, in the United States, the fastest growing job sectors are wind and solar energy (Marcacci, 2019). Similarly, a study in the EU found that the green employment sector accounts for upwards of 3.4 million jobs, more than car manufacturing or pharmaceuticals industries (UK Energy Research Centre, 2014). Societal benefits of a transition to renewable energy go beyond job creation. For example, the United States could replace jobs in the coal industry by transitioning to clean energy which would also cut customer costs (Marcacci, 2019). In Canada, Clean Energy Canada (2019) found that 50,000 jobs in the fossil fuel sector could be lost, but over “160,000 will be created in clean energy—a net increase of 110,000 new jobs” (p. 3). The clean energy sector could employ 559,400 Canadians by 2030 (Clean Energy Canada, 2019). Another study by Mark Jacobson a Stanford environmental professor, found that a transition to various renewable energy sources in Canada by 2050 would create 315,138 construction jobs, and 367,889 operations jobs (S. Klein, 2020). Jacobson also found that in Canada, the transition to renewable energy would equal energy savings of \$539.20 per person (The Solutions Project, 2021). Ultimately there is potential for a transition plan, such as the GND, to have a positive impact on employment, the economy, and the environment.

The GND has several other targets aside from job creation. The resolution calls to transition away from fossil fuels in 10 years, not by 2050 (N. Klein, 2019). Moreover, the GND

contains a job guarantee that ensures a living wage, union jobs, benefits, and ensures wage parity for workers that are impacted by the transition to renewable energy (Tcherneva, 2020). The GND is reminiscent of Roosevelt's New Deal, which led to the creation of the United States' social welfare state (Smith, 2007).

The GND promises to reverse neoliberal policies that have been in place for decades and to improve the quality of life for many people, and possibly for all life forms on Earth. The deregulation aspect of the neoliberal project has allowed GHG emissions to soar and has brought atmospheric temperatures close to the point of no return (N. Klein, 2015). The GND poses a major challenge to unregulated capitalism (i.e., neoliberalism) with its primary goal being the transformation to a more sustainable and fair social and economic system.

There are criticisms of the GND, too. It is possible that large corporations could come to dominate the renewable energy sector and seek monopolistic conditions. Ajl (2021) cautions that a new type of space race could take over for monopoly control of green transition technology. Some labour groups are concerned about the prospect of the GND because the renewable sector is currently not as unionized as the fossil fuel sector in the United States, and the average worker's salary is lower in the renewables sector (Irfan, 2019). Another criticism is that the GND is a Euro-centric solution to the climate crisis (Ajl, 2021). Moreover, it is argued that for the GND to work, it must be decolonial and reshape people's relationship to the land, labour, and development (Kolinjivadi, 2019). A decolonial GND also means overhauling agricultural practices (Kolinjivadi, 2019). Teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg has also criticized the GND as a business opportunity for green jobs and green economic growth, and thereby resulting in more consumerism, and has argued that the GND does not address the climate crisis as an emergency (MacMahon, 2019). Labour unions in the United States are also cautious about

welcoming the GND because they are skeptical about the promise of green jobs (Volcovici, 2019). These are valid critiques of the GND and its promise to transform society.

Currently, the global economy is in an economic downturn due to the coronavirus pandemic. The coronavirus had initially shut down many factories and businesses. In the past, during recessions there have been declines in emissions, but in the post-recession period, these emissions increase again (N. Klein, 2015). People such as Naomi Klein (2019) believe that the GND will reduce carbon emissions while allowing the economy to recover. In my opinion, the climate crisis has reached the point that the public deserves a healthy debate around the GND in the media and throughout all sectors of society.

1.4 Situating Myself

I have been an elementary school teacher in Saskatchewan, Canada for the past six years. I am the first person in my family to acquire post-secondary education. I consider myself to be very politically aware and with some degree of media literacy. Having a healthy critique of the media as a youth has helped me develop an astute understanding of corporate bias in the media. I am a progressive, millennial, who votes for both the federal NDP and the Saskatchewan wings of the NDP, even though neither party has outright opposed pipelines. I am concerned about the climate crisis as each year the warmer temperatures and extreme weather events are more obvious. I worry about what the future will look like for myself and for children who are growing up now. I do not have children of my own and whether to have children is a topic of conversation among my friends because of the climate crisis. I know a few young people who are choosing not to have children because of concerns over the future of the planet, including the warming atmosphere. I think a GND has the potential to avert more catastrophic damage from the climate crisis.

I have lived in various rural towns in Saskatchewan and one in Alberta before ending up in Saskatoon, where I now reside. Like many in the region, I have family members whose livelihood is reliant on the oil industry. The bust and boom cycles of the industry are tumultuous. I have seen the prosperity that can come from the boom cycles and the ramifications of busts. It is emotionally and financially distressing on workers and their families when the industry goes bust. Many generations have lived the bust and boom cycles in Saskatchewan and Alberta. And this does not even address the warming of the Earth's atmosphere which is caused by the burning and mining of fossil fuels, among other reasons.

I lived in Estevan, Saskatchewan for 8 years of my childhood. Estevan is a city in southern Saskatchewan and is known for its energy production. The coal and oil found in the region are key parts of the local and provincial economy through jobs, and donations towards community amenities and services (Stewart, 2018). Estevan has two power stations, Boundary Dam and Shand, both owned and operated by SaskPower. At one time, almost half of the province's base load power was created by these two power stations (City of Estevan, n.d.). I can remember swimming with my family in the Boundary Dam reservoir and seeing the power station in the distance. Many people in the community are employed in the fossil fuel sector, and the corporations donate a significant amount of money to the community. Stewart (2018) explains that oil companies in southeastern Saskatchewan contribute to employment, and make donations for things such as hospital and firefighting equipment.

Unfortunately, Estevan has suffered many boom and bust cycles because of the economic ties to the oil industry. My parents did not work in the coal or oil industries – my father managed a local grocery store, and my mother had a day-care. Although we were not directly tied to the fossil fuel industry, we were impacted by a bust. When we were going to move away, oil prices

dropped, and the real-estate market became stagnant. My father had to move nine hours away to Vegreville, Alberta to start his new job without my mother, my sister, and me. The three of us stayed in Estevan for over a year, waiting for our house to sell. While we waited, we watched many of our neighbours, friends, and fellow community members experience job loss from the economic downturn caused by plummeting oil prices. When the oil industry goes through a bust, the whole community is affected (Reid, 2016). Currently, Estevan is suffering economic losses from the wind-down of the coal industry (Ellis, 2020). Estevan and other communities in southern Saskatchewan are also dealing with a bust cycle because of the Covid-19 crisis and plummeting oil prices (Olive et al., 2020). Situations such as these go a long way toward explaining why people in some communities are nervous about discussion around transitioning from a fossil fuel economy.

Estevan calls itself the energy capital of the province. It also boasts being The Sunshine Capital of Canada, getting about 3,536.6 hours of sunlight each year (City of Estevan, n.d.). The amount of sunshine Estevan gets is significant. Although Saskatoon is one of the sunniest cities in Canada (Olive, et al., 2020), when we moved north, my family was surprised by how cloudy it is in the central part of the province. Southern Saskatchewan has exciting potential for wind and solar energy, but solar energy only makes up 3% of energy used in the province and wind creates 5% of energy used (Olive et al., 2020). Considering the sun and wind potential in southern Saskatchewan, Estevan could be a community that would benefit from a GND. A GND would transition workers out of employment in the volatile fossil fuel sector to the clean energy sector. If oil does not recover after the pandemic, it could be catastrophic for many members of the community. When I lived in Estevan, there were two things proudly on display as you drove into the city. A sign that proclaimed the location as the sunshine capital of Canada. The other was a

massive oil derrick with a sign that read ‘The Energy Capital of Saskatchewan.’ To my knowledge these signs still exist. Perhaps one day ‘the energy capital of Saskatchewan’ could take on a new meaning, one connected to the first sign: the sunshine capital of Canada.

I moved away from Estevan when I was twelve. Although I was younger when I lived there, I do not recall ever hearing environmental concerns about the power stations or GHG emissions. This is consistent with what Stewart (2018) found, namely, that many people in southern Saskatchewan have doubts about the climate crisis, despite experiencing extreme weather such as flooding, and moderate to extreme droughts. Stewart (2018) explains that these doubts reflect the economic realities of the communities because they are deeply connected to the fossil fuel sector. I do still follow the news of the community somewhat, specifically the politics, and how the region votes in elections. Typically, in federal elections, a substantial percentage of Saskatchewan votes for the Conservative Party of Canada, and a smaller percentage vote for the NDP (New Democratic Party). Generally speaking, the Liberal government led by Justin Trudeau is not well liked by most people in the province, as evidenced by the federal voting results. Many people in Saskatchewan blame former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, the current Prime Minister’s late father, for the oil market crash in the 1980s (Stewart, 2018). In the region of Souris-Moose Mountain (which includes Estevan) Stewart (2018) found that the region “elected conservative representatives in all but one election since the riding was formed in 1988” (p. 28). Addressing the climate crisis may be seen as a threat to their livelihood and communities. Ignoring the climate crisis, however, very well may pose a much bigger threat to the livelihood of people living in southern Saskatchewan and beyond. There are tensions between the short-term and long-term considerations, and many individuals and political parties cater to short-term considerations.

In the fall of 2019, the federal NDP leader Jagmeet Singh came to Saskatoon while on the campaign trail. Singh addressed the boom and bust cycle of many communities in the province, arguing that Canada needs to support communities reliant on fossil fuels in transition to a more sustainable economy (Warick, 2019). The NDP assert that “the federal government needs to step up to provide training and re-training for the next boom – making sure that public investments are directed to clean energy, sustainable infrastructure, and boosting energy efficiency in communities” (NDP, n.d.). This is similar to calls made by advocates of the GND. This commitment could support boom and bust communities. In the 2019 election, the federal NDP had a plan to transition economies and meet climate targets. However, the federal NDP received only 7% of the vote in the Souris-Moose Mountain region while the Conservative Party of Canada got 84.4% of the vote. The Conservative Party of Canada did not have a plan for supporting boom and bust economies or meeting climate targets in their platform (Boutillier & Ballingall, 2019). It is evident that the voters in the Souris-Moose Mountain region did not see the NDP plan as a viable option. I cannot help but wonder about the influence of hegemonic media discourses regarding the GND and the climate crisis during the 2019 federal election campaign? Could the media discourses be inhibiting voters' from seeing the possibilities of a transition to renewable energy in Canada?² This is an important question and is a major reason I undertook this study in the first place.

The climate crisis and climate action are highly politicized topics in Saskatchewan. The province is a producer and consumer of non-renewable energy and has the highest GHG emissions per capita in Canada (Olive, et al., 2020). The Saskatchewan provincial government

² The media is not the only influence in the mind of voters. The positioning/messaging of political parties is also important. Other influences include familial history of voting, the role of the church, the community, and in general false political consciousness (Frank, 2005).

maintains that we need oil investments in the province and has fiercely rejected the federal carbon tax. In provincial politics, neither the conservative SaskParty nor the provincial SK NDP have acknowledged the need to wind down fossil fuel production to meet climate targets (Olive, et al., 2020). Criticism of the fossil fuel industry is highly discouraged. For example, in the winter of 2019, when a rural school performed a Christmas play called ‘Santa Goes Green’ there was public backlash and the school division apologized for it (Modjeski, 2019). The chair of the school division's Board of Trustees assured the media that the division is “‘very supportive’ of the oil and gas industry, noting the division appreciates the work being done by the industry in the province” (Modjeski, 2019). Sentiments such as these are common. When a Greta Thunberg-inspired school strike was held in the province in September 2019, a large urban school division told their administrators not to send any classes to the rally, with the division stating student safety as the priority (Markewich, 2019). By discrediting the ‘Green Santa’ play and discouraging participation in the school climate strike, the fossil fuel industry interests were protected. By protecting these interests, children and youth do not usually get adequate information about the climate crisis because teachers are discouraged from engaging in the work. As a result, students are receiving the message that they cannot be part of a collective global movement fighting for climate action.

Critical media literacy can be a support for achieving climate action. It is difficult to fight the climate emergency when citizens have a false political consciousness. Critical media literacy could prevent citizens from mistakenly voting against their best interests (Orlowski, 2012). It is my perspective that citizens need to understand the effects of neoliberalism, such as the climate crisis, environmental racism, and the grotesque wealth gap. Understanding these issues may help foster a citizenry that supports the need for a GND to make the Canadian economy fair and

equitable. To combat elite class interests and hegemonic narratives, alternative media, progressive politicians, and passionate collective social movements are needed. The GND includes many of these elements and has the potential to rein in neoliberalism while addressing the climate crisis.

1.5 Summary

Neoliberalism has intensified the climate crisis. Earth's atmospheric temperatures are warming to catastrophic levels and youth today are going to experience the worst effects of the climate crisis. For the climate crisis to get the attention it needs, the media must be reporting on it accurately. This research will investigate the discourses on the climate crisis in one mainstream media outlet and two alternative media outlets. The GND is one possible solution to address the climate crisis. The GND has some positive elements, yet there are valid criticisms of the plan too. For the GND to be considered by the public, it needs to receive a healthy, fact-based debate in the media.

1.6 Overview of the Chapters

This thesis will be structured six chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the current research on the media and critical media literacy and identifies how my study will contribute to the field. Next, Chapter 3 details the methodology for the research and the methods to carry out this research. Chapter 4 presents the results of the data collected from the *National Post*, *Rabble*, and *The Tyee*. In Chapter 5, I provide a detailed analysis of the discourses on the climate crisis and GND in these online mainstream and alternative media outlets. This analysis will engage a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the articles while connecting scholarship in the literature review to the data. Lastly, Chapter 6 provides includes the responses to the research questions, limitations to the study, and future areas of research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The media plays a vital role in communicating events and information. Due to their prominent role in society, many scholars critically analyze the way the media are structured, produce discourses, and promote certain interests (Bagdikian, 2004; Buckingham, 2003; Cottle, 2003; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; McChesney, 2015; Masterman, 1985; Winter, 2007). The way media outlets operate is important as the climate crisis escalates because they could be helping or hindering climate action. The media can be sites of progressive ideas, or sites of hegemonic discourses (Hackett et al., 2017; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Research has found that mainstream media ownership encourage the re-production of hegemonic discourse (Bagdikian, 2004; Edge, 2017; Herman & Chomsky, 2002). As the climate crisis advances, today's youth will face the severe consequences. There is potential for educators to develop a pedagogy that uses critical media literacy to help students understand and interpret the discourses pertaining to the climate crisis.

In this section I will provide an overview of the relevant scholarship on the media. First, this literature review includes a brief discussion of critical theory. My research is grounded in critical theory, which originated at the Frankfurt School. The Frankfurt School was created by a group of scholars who developed social theories about facets of capitalist society. In particular, the kind of critical theory I draw on in particular is grounded in the work of Jurgen Habermas. The literature in this chapter comes from the fields of communication studies and critical media literacy. Though there is diversity in the literature, common themes are clear. These themes also appear in Habermas's theories relating to the media. These include consensus on the role of the media, corporate influence on the media, and how democracy and the media intersect. The

purpose of this literature review is to review work that will aid in a critical media analysis, which in turn will potentially help educators develop pedagogy using critical media literacy techniques that can help students understand the gravity of the climate crisis.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Before delving into critical theory, I will define hegemony and false consciousness as these two terms are important to this research. The concepts of false consciousness and hegemony originated with Marx and Engels (Meyerson, 2011), and are integral to critical theory. The work of Antonio Gramsci is important to understanding hegemony. Gramsci clearly described what hegemony means, noting that it refers to the subordination of people and groups by the dominant class through particular social practices, symbols, and representations, all identified as ‘common sense’, while hiding the power relations that underlie social, political, and economic relations in the dominant culture (Orlowski, 2012). Hegemony is regularly challenged through class struggle and counter-hegemonic initiatives aimed at destabilizing dominant discourses and the status quo (Morton, 2007; Orlowski, 2012). False consciousness refers to an extension of hegemony in which some people consider themselves to be politically informed but vote against their own best interests (Orlowski, 2014). A clear example of this occurs when working-class people support political parties that call for corporate tax cuts resulting in a weakening of public institutions such as in education and healthcare. One neoliberal hegemonic discourse is that the extra money corporations garner will trickle down to the public, but in reality, this does not occur (Hungerford, 2012; Standford, 2011). What most often results from the tax cuts is a weaker public sector, and by extension, privatization of the commons. These terms are important to media analysis because hegemony may be evident in the mainstream and alternative media discourses and false consciousness may be a result of media discourses (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018).

As mentioned above, this research is grounded in critical theory. Critical theory attempts to deconstruct power structures in society through assumptions that social and economic inequities are created more by social structures and cultural narratives than by natural abilities and processes (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). Capitalism is the dominant power structure within North American society. Critical theory establishes a critique of all social formations under capitalism, with the end goal of preventing any one group from taking control in an undemocratic, exploitive, unjust, or oppressive way (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). There can be critical theory in any field, not just the economy, such as critical gender theory, critical race theory, etc. All critical theories are interrelated since they are about breaking down 'unnatural' hierarchies that were created through power. Intersectionality is a critical theory that examines the ways in which characteristics like race, class, and gender intersect.

Critical theory assumes the social construction of knowledge. Its goal is to uncover hidden power in society through the ideological critique of people's roles and experiences, and by critiquing how this knowledge has created oppressive systems (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). What is included in the school curriculum and in media outlets is biased, and as such both have the potential to be hegemonic or counter-hegemonic devices. Critical theory provides a lens to critique the media and uncover how power operates in media structure and discourses, often giving rise to social and economic inequities (Habermas, 1989). Critical theory has emancipatory potential and advocates for a stronger democracy (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). Critical theorists acknowledge that re-education is often required because the oppressed internalize the values, beliefs, and world view of the oppressors (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). This is a major reason why false political consciousness is prevalent throughout many oppressed social groups in Canada and the United States.

As mentioned above, my research draws specifically on the work of critical theorist Jurgen Habermas. A sizable portion of Habermas's work focuses on the media. When Habermas refers to the media, he is referring to mass media, more specifically newspapers (Wessler, 2018). Habermas's contribution to critical theory is his explanation of how modern societies came to be. He is highly critical of modern capitalism, and his work is often invoked for media analyses (Braaten, 1991). His works that are specifically useful for media analysis are his theories of the public sphere, communicative action, and deliberative democracy (Wessler, 2018). Habermas theorizes about media ownership, advertising in the media, journalism, and the manipulation of discourses. Even as recently as 2006, he has been a vocal critic of media moguls Rupert Murdoch and Silvio Berlusconi (Habermas, 2006). The elements of media ownership, advertising in the media, journalism, and manipulation of discourses are considered in this analysis of Canadian media, specifically focusing on newspapers.

Habermas's theory of the public sphere is among his most influential (Brunkhorst et al., 2009). The public sphere is a discursive arena where people discuss matters of common concern and which exists in between the state and the private sphere of economic reproduction and family life (Wessler, 2018). It includes coffee houses, salons, newspapers, debate circles, etc. (Wessler, 2018). In these spaces people can critique the actions of state officials and private powers (Brunkhorst et al., 2009). It is worth noting that although this theory was very influential, it came under criticism for theorizing a public sphere which excluded women and the working class (Wessler, 2018). For example, Fraser (1990) criticized Habermas's singular vision of the public sphere arguing that women, people of colour, workers, and queer people have important subaltern counter-publics where they invent and circulate counter discourses. Such criticisms prompted Habermas to revisit this theory and further develop it (Brunkhorst et al., 2009). Despite

criticisms of exclusion in Habermas's public sphere, the theory provides many important claims about media structure, how debate in media can be limited by elites, and the role of advertising. Habermas's theory of the public sphere is still particularly useful for media analyses and by corollary, this study.

In the theory of the public sphere, Habermas contends that the mass media became commercialized and the lines between the public sphere and the private sphere became blurred (Habermas, 1989). Habermas argues that the media had come to rely on financing from advertisers, through selling advertising space, and embedding advertisements in the editorial section (Wessler, 2018). At this time in Habermas's theory of how the world came to be, the competition between classes entered the public realm (Habermas, 1989). Habermas believes that the mass media moving into the private sphere hinders critical discussions between citizens and the media inserts the "interests of producers and consumers of commercial goods and services, thus distracting participants from focusing on the issues important to all" hinders critical discussions between citizens in the private sphere (Wessler, 2018, p. 7). As such, this situation leads to the end of public debate (Braaten, 1991).

In addition to advertising, the media manage their affairs, through their public relations departments, so as to create the impression that they are unbiased. Thus, the public sphere is also taken over by public relations (Habermas, 1989). Habermas (1989) contends that public relations invades public opinion by creating news or exploiting events. Further, for Habermas (1989), public relations is a type of advertisement, but "must not be recognizable as the self-presentation of private interest" (p. 194). In doing so, the illusion of public interest is created, thus creating a false consciousness (Habermas, 1989). As a result of the manipulation of the media by private interests, Habermas theorizes that the public sphere has been re-feudalized (Brunkhorst et al.,

2009; Wessler, 2018). The re-feudalization of the public sphere means private institutions take power and “intervene in the political process” (Petley, 2012, p. 142). As such, the public no longer takes part in public communication, instead the public merely consumes what has been manufactured (Brunkhorst et al., 2009; Wessler, 2018).

Habermas’s theory of communicative action is also important for the framework of this research. This theory includes important points about communication and connections can be made to the media. It is a theory that explains the dichotomy of lifeworld and system, while recognizing the communication and interactions that influence the norms people live by (Pensky, 2014). Communicative action is defined as the process of getting others “to accept that (a) what we think is true; our utterance (b) is in line with generally acceptable social norms, that is norms that in principle everybody involved could agree to; and (c) our words reflect what we really think” (Wessler, 2018, p. 9). However, “the potential for communicatively achieved agreement” is blocked by principles of capitalism, because under these economic arrangements communication is geared to the interests of elites and thus becomes one-sided (Pusey, 1987, p. 84). Thus, communicative action examines the way people communicate. This theory is important for understanding the process of communication which is relevant to evaluating the discursive formations in media.

The third of Habermas’s concepts that is relevant to media analyses is his theory of deliberative democracy (Wessler, 2018). In his more recent work, Habermas focuses on the political consequences of a commodified and monopolized media (Brunkhorst et al., 2009). Habermas (2006) argues for deliberative democracy, contending that there must be regulation of the power structure of the public sphere to ensure diversity in and inclusive access to the mass media. Habermas (2006) states that the current political public sphere lacks participation and

collective decision making, and a lack of reciprocating claims and opinions. In contemporary society media are situated at the center of society and democracy, and can manufacture public opinions (Wessler, 2018). Habermas (2006) states that media have the power “to select, and shape the presentation of, messages and by the strategic use of political and social power to influence the agendas as well as the triggering and framing of public issues” (p. 415). In Habermas’s view, the media have a gatekeeping role and this power is not currently being used to benefit democracy (Wessler, 2018). Habermas thus frames the role of journalists and politicians as trying to shape public opinion without critical questions, resulting in public opinions that are cycled (Wessler, 2018). The mass media manufactures opinions from

the supply of opinions offered by politicians, lobbyists, and pressure groups as well as civil society actors and experts. Published opinions are absorbed by the dispersed public and fed back into the media system as aggregated individual preferences in the form of opinion polls (Wessler, 2018, p. 63)

This is exactly why some people consider the mainstream media to be a hegemonic device (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; Orlowski, 2012, 2014).

In his theory of deliberative democracy, Habermas briefly comments on the role of the internet. Habermas (2006) argues that the internet has recharged the egalitarian public of writers and readers, but online debates between internet users has led to the promotion of political communication and the focal point is national newspapers and political magazines. Habermas argues that online communication has a “‘parasitical’ role to play in the public sphere, largely due to the way in which Internet-based discourse communities have fragmented the public” (Geiger, 2009, p. 2). This view has been criticized with some saying that Habermas does not

understand the internet (Geiger, 2009). It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the role of the internet in the public sphere.

2.3 The Role of the Media

The media are instrumental in providing and withholding information on the climate crisis and the GND. The media have always played an essential role in transmitting information (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; Masterman, 1985; McChesney, 2015; Orlowski, 2014;). In fact, Winter (2007) argues that even if we are not directly exposed to the media, we are indirectly exposed to its values and beliefs in the news through the people around us. The media's influence is far reaching and has the potential to garner support for climate action. The media can and should play an important role for the public good by scrutinizing and questioning things for the public good (Winter, 2007). However, McChesney (2001, 2015) found that the mainstream media have operated as a channel for unfettered capitalism by manufacturing a social and political world based on neoliberal principles (Bagdikian, 2004).

Some people understand that all media outlets are biased, but they misunderstand what biases are present (Foster & McChesney, 2003). Foster and McChesney (2003) found that the mainstream media have mostly neoliberal biases on economic issues rather than left-leaning biases. If progressive views are absent from the media, then the GND may not be supported in media discourses as the fundamental principles of the GND challenge the capitalist system. Progressive politicians and collective movements need media support to advance the GND from a resolution to a reality. For the GND to move forward, counter-hegemonic discourses need to become more popular. Alternative media outlets can be one source of support.

Mainstream media are structured in a way that often suppresses progressive discourses. One way this suppression occurs is through mainstream media ownership which places constraints on employees by focusing on profits (Foster & McChesney, 2003; Herman &

Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 2001, 2015). Herman and Chomsky (2002) explain that the mainstream media are integrated into the market and the “pressures of stockholders, directors, and bankers to focus on the bottom line are powerful” (p. 5). Profit margins are important in a competitive media market and therefore corporations set the tone for what perspectives and stories will match the corporate agenda (Foster & McChesney, 2003). Winter (2007) explains that journalists do not find the news, rather, they “seek out people who will confirm their perspective — or, in the event that they differ— management’s perspective on events” (p. 47). Moreover, Herman and Chomsky (2002) explain that bias could be structured into the media through the supply of experts as some are put “on the payroll as consultants, funding their research, and organizing think tanks that will hire them directly and help disseminate their messages” (p. 23). Considering corporate influence in mainstream media, this research evaluates the role Canadian mainstream and alternative media outlets play in producing discourses on the climate crisis and GND.

Responding to the climate crisis requires citizens to have information free of corporate bias. Climate action requires undermining the neoliberal project with counter-hegemonic devices like alternative media (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Alternative media could and should be an ally to the GND. Alternative media can include views that differ from those of the dominant class because they are non-profit entities (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Unfortunately, alternative media outlets do not reach the number of people that mainstream media outlets do. Media free from the influence of shareholders is critical because it could prevent media outlets from being influenced to assert pro-carbon news. This research will analyze how alternative media reports on the climate crisis and the GND, and if it is actually a counter-hegemonic device in Canada.

2.4 Neoliberalism and the Media

Neoliberalism affects the role of the media in society. Hallin (2008) explains that the media are one of the most important social institutions that have been subjected to “the logic of the market” (p. 43). Hallin (2008) contends that the neoliberal shift in media resulted in the media losing their function in the public sphere and becoming beholden to commerce and advertising. Furthermore, Harvey (2007) states that because of neoliberalism, the media has become controlled by only a few owners and thus much of the news becomes propaganda that support their political perspectives. A central piece of neoliberalism is the deregulation of commercial media (McChesney, 2001). To justify deregulating the media, neoliberal pundits claimed that regulations inhibit nations from developing competitive media (McChesney, 2001). An aspect of this deregulation has led to the global concentration of media ownership, and NAFTA and the WTO aided in creating the trade conditions for multinational corporations (McChesney, 2015). In other words, the opposite happened: deregulation led to less competition. One example of neoliberalism in Canada occurred in 2012 when the Harper Conservative government introduced Bill C-45, which weakened Canada’s environmental regulations, allowing corporations to extract from the environment more easily. The Senate passed Bill C-45 into law that year. Another example in the Canadian context occurred when Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau used tax dollars to purchase the Kinder-Morgan pipeline to protect private investors’ money (Ballingall et al., 2018).

Without regulations the media have been able to promote the “virtues of neoliberalism” (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018, p. 54). Moreover, Hallin (2008) explains that neoliberalism is effective in taking over and “incorporating rhetorics of empowerment and liberation and popular critiques of authority into legitimations of the market” (p. 52). The impact of neoliberalism may

have an affect on discourses pertaining to the GND and the climate crisis. In other words, the media may not accurately report on climate change or the GND because of neoliberal values.

Critical media literacy can be a strategy for combating neoliberal discourses. However, Buckingham (2018) argues that media literacy cannot be a substitute for media reform and regulations. Hallin (2008) explains that an unregulated media may not serve its democratic role in the public sphere. Without reform or regulation, neoliberalism's impact on the media will continue to create challenges for democratic and progressive policies (Kellner & Share, 2007a). At least in the context of the United States, the neoliberal media is anti-democratic, and to address climate action a democratic media is needed (McChesney, 2015). The media may not be able to report fairly on issues such as the climate crisis without regulations to prevent corporate influences. However, it is unknown when, or if, neoliberal projects around the world will end. In the meantime, critical media literacy is crucial.

2.5 Ideology, Power, and the Concentration of Media Ownership

To be media literate, it is important to understand the power structures that may influence the production of discourses (Buckingham, 2003). Some of the discursive formations produced by the media may hinder climate action and prevent initiatives that would slow, or stop, the Earth's atmospheric temperatures from rising. Through discourses, the media can protect elites' lifestyles because the media market has become extremely concentrated to a few wealthy owners (McChesney, 2001, 2015; Orłowski, 2006). As a result, there has been a lack of diversity in voices in the news and a lack of consumer choice (Edge, 2017). Herman and Chomsky (2002) explain the concentration of ownership, the focus on the bottom line, the domination of elite sources and the influence of advertisers creates a propaganda approach to the media. The concentration of media ownership is a growing trend around the world (McChesney, 2015;

Winter, 2002). In the United States between 1983 and 2003, media ownership shrank from 50 mass corporations to five corporations (Bagdikian, 2004).

Canada is no exception to this increased concentration of ownership. Since the 1970s, Canada's media ownership has become incredibly concentrated (Orlowski, 2006). However, since the media ownership in Canada is still changing, some of the research is already out of date. For example, Winter (2002, 2007) reviews Canadian media ownership, but the ownership of *The National Post* has since changed from the CanWest Global Communications Corporation to the Postmedia Network. Similarly, McChesney (2015) found that Conrad Black once owned over half of Canada's newspapers in circulation. However, Black no longer owns the papers, which are now owned by Postmedia Network, although he continues to write for their flagship newspaper, the *National Post*. Recent research done by Edge (2017) explains that the concentration of newspaper ownership in Canada is one of the highest in the world, with Postmedia Network owning most newspapers in circulation (Edge, 2017). In fact, Edge (2017) found that Postmedia Network "owned eight out of nine leading dailies in B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan and published 75.4 percent of paid daily circulation" (p. 853). Postmedia Network is now owned by U.S. Hedge Funds that exceed the limits on foreign ownership of a Canadian company but because of a structure where "the shares were held in limited voting stock exchange" Canadian shareholders technically control the company (Edge, 2017).

Media ownership has an impact on the ideology of the newspapers, because the media outlets are sites of discursive power where they can influence and manufacture representations of the news (Cottle, 2003). The result is that the interests of a few owners and shareholders are prioritized by the corporate media (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; McChesney, 2015; Orlowski, 2012). As such, the corporate media have been criticized for protecting industries and wealth

(Foster & McChesney, 2003; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; McChesney, 2001, 2015). Herman and Chomsky (2002) explain that the media giants are closely connected to the corporate community through boards of directors that are dominated by corporate and banking executives. Additionally, media owners and managers are part of the same social circles as the major shareholders and executives (McChesney, 2015). The closeness of owners and the business community affects journalism as well. Management can dictate what is newsworthy (Herman & Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 2015; Winter 2007). Management can also determine the framing of a story and suggest certain sources (Winter, 2007). Often these sources are those who have easy access to the media and hold positions of power in society (Cottle, 2003). Cottle (2003) explains that politicians, military, and other dominant institutions seek to manipulate the news for their own agendas. However, Bagdikian (2003) contends that the news needs more than assertions from officials. Recognizing whose voices are heard and whose are missing is a key part of critical media literacy (Buckingham, 2003). Bagdikian (2004) found that the lack of diverse sources results in some of the most urgent issues being omitted from the media.

Although journalism has been criticized for its short comings, it must also be acknowledged that mergers have resulted in many layoffs of journalists (Winter, 2007). Additionally, the internet has also impacted the readership of newspapers and has resulted in major newspapers shutting down in the United States (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). The decrease in revenues from lower readerships also results in smaller newsroom staffs and a reliance on wire services from organizations such as *Reuters*, or *The Canadian Press* (Dewland, 2010; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). The focus on profits also results in journalists being discouraged from doing investigative reporting because it is more costly, and journalism has

become a source of profit (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; McChesney, 2015). Journalists often have to demonstrate that they can increase profits for their employers. Another hindrance to striving for objectivity is that some corporate media owners keep their journalism holdings not only for profit, but also “to promote their probusiness, antilabor view of the world” (McChesney, 2015, p. 62). The profit focus of mainstream media ownership negatively impacts journalism. As mentioned a few times already, the media serve the powerful interests that finance and manage them (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). Due to the power of media, media ownership is a vital part in understanding the production of ideologies in the media.

Much of the literature on media shows that advertising plays a major factor in the structure of mass media. Herman and Chomsky (2002) explain that advertising has been a powerful tool for “weakening the working-class press” (p. 14). The wire service, *Reuters*, also incorporates advertising into their news articles (Dewland, 2010). These advertisers reach a global audience as *Reuters* provides its services to many countries around the world (Dewland, 2010). In Canadian media, Edge (2017) found that the bulk of media revenue come from advertisers, not audiences. Further, Edge (2017) found that the Canadian Competition Bureau approved Postmedia Network’s purchase of 175 Sun Media titles because the bureau determined the merger would not affect competition as newspapers competed in two markets for revenue—readers and advertisers. This merger reduced media ownership and consumer choice, which has a negative impact for consumers. For instance, McChesney (2015) argues that the dependence on advertising revenue influences media content and the media system is now “commercialized newsfare” which “tends to promote depoliticization” resulting in discourses that are related to political and business elites (p. 271). Further, Winter (2007) contends that the media sells audiences to advertisers, rather than selling news to audiences. The audiences the mainstream

media are trying to attract must be affluent and have buying power (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). Additionally, advertisers are careful to support papers that will not damage their interests or affect the public's buying mood (Herman & Chomsky; Winter, 2007). Unfortunately, Herman and Chomsky (2002) contend that advertisers do not like the public sphere where healthy debates can occur because it is not good for selling their products. It is clear that the mainstream media relies on advertising. Considering the importance of advertising to the structure of mainstream media, could this be affecting healthy debates about the potential of a GND?

It is problematic that the corporate media outlets are linked to industries through ownership and advertising (McChesney, 2015). When corporate profits influence the media, democracy is weakened. Kozolanka and Orlowski (2018) argue that a commercialized media are careful not to upset the hegemonic narratives or they would risk losing advertisers. This cautious approach becomes a conflict of interest, for example, when the advertisers are connected to the fossil fuel industry. The media should be separate from the industry for less biased reporting of the climate crisis. For example, the corporate media in the United States have been found to omit climate-related stories, include disinformation, and engage in censorship (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). The number of climate-related stories in the United States' mainstream media shrank significantly in 2011 compared to 2007 (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Similarly, Winter (2007) found the Canadian mainstream media omitted information on the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on climate. By reducing the number of climate stories, or omitting them, the United States' and Canada's mainstream media allowed for the fossil fuel industry to prosper with limited questioning. This strategy has led to a sizeable number of uninformed citizens who do not believe in climate science (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Additionally, the mainstream media outlets have argued that they have been presenting both sides of the issue by reporting on climate

change deniers as well as climate scientists that provide evidence for the human-caused climate change (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004).

Despite an overwhelming majority of climate scientists confirming that the climate crisis is real, the climate denial movement gets a lot of coverage (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018) and there it is not a balanced argument (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004). This will be discussed in more details later in the literature review. As well as media bias, large numbers of citizens who do not believe climate science or ignore it because of their jobs in the fossil fuel industry. This is a barrier in advancing legislation for climate action, such as the GND, because they do not see the need for reducing GHG emissions. They may not want these policy changes because of the fear of losing their employment or the fear of the impacts on their community.

Due to media ownership, the influence of advertisers, and shareholders, discourses on the climate crisis and the GND may have been marginalized in Canada. The media can easily ignore counter-hegemonic discourses that promote alternative energy sources and a green economy because of the corporate ownership (Orlowski, 2006). The influence of owners and shareholders could be preventing progressive journalism on the climate crisis and the GND. These links and discourses need to be investigated.

2.6 Democracy and the Media

Media influences our perceptions and ideas, which is concerning considering the views of the wealthy are privileged throughout the media. The media and education are the two most significant sources of information in society (Orlowski, 2014). Unfortunately, media outlets have become an anti-democratic force because they are being used to protect the wealth of the economic elites (McChesney, 2015; Orlowski, 2006). Taken collectively, the media are not fulfilling their democratic role because the corporate media limits the perspectives they publish (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). For example, Bagdikian (2004) found that in the United States,

the five conglomerates “offered only a limited spectrum of the political information and commentary appropriate for a nation of widely differing regions and need” (p. 132). Not only are perspectives limited, but also the mainstream news and business news have blended, “as the news is increasingly pitched to the richest one-half or one-third of the population” (McChesney, 2015, p. 20). The news is skewed by how a journalist frames a question or in how certain topics, people, and groups are omitted (Winter, 2007). In these situations, omission is used as a hegemonic strategy to protect the wealth of the wealthy. Not only is the mainstream media business-centred, they also have political power (Bagdikian, 2004). Bagdikian found that the five major media conglomerates in the United States have political power which allows them to “enhance the values preferred by the corporate world which they are a part of” (p. 24). It is detrimental that the corporate media is presenting perspectives that only benefit elites, when working class and Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour are most likely to face the devastation caused by the climate crisis. When political issues are barely covered or are presented to fit into the confines of the elite’s preferred discourses, it prevents average citizens from getting the information they need to be active participants in a democracy (McChesney, 2015). These narrow perspectives can lead to false political consciousness (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; Orlowski, 2012). Having a false political consciousness occurs when working-class citizens believe their circumstances match those of the upper classes (Masterman, 1985). These perspectives are skewing the information citizens require in order to vote for a stronger civil society. Therefore, we must question how the media reports on the climate crisis and the GND.

The effects of the domination of mainstream views in media is the constructions of a subsequent hegemony. Hegemony refers to the representations of the interests of the most

privileged group as if they are universal interests, which then become accepted as natural (Orlowski, 2014). The privileging of some groups in the media occurs because mainstream media are structured with a board of directors, shareholders and, most importantly, corporate advertisers to answer to (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; McChesney, 2001). To strengthen democracy, it is critical to understand that the mainstream media can be a hegemonic device transmitting the neoliberal agenda.

Hegemony explains how power is kept within capitalist societies (Orlowski, 2014). Hegemonic devices such as mainstream newspapers can hide the connections in the production of news and mask the full potential of some ideas (Masterman, 1985). The result has been that the corporate media in the United States delivers hegemonic propaganda to convince citizens to accept the interests of the elites as universal interests (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Hegemony may limit the information citizens receive about the climate crisis and the GND. By reproducing the narratives of neoliberalism, the mainstream media protects the fossil fuel industry. For example, hegemonic narratives in the corporate media often promote the idea that renewable energy sources are unreliable (N. Klein, 2019). If fossil fuel industries are being promoted, it becomes much more difficult for citizens to see an alternative to these polluting industries if renewables and the GND are omitted or vilified in the media.

The corporate media may be having a negative impact on democracy and climate action. The literature shows that the mainstream media leads to depoliticized citizens (Foster & McChesney, 2003; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; McChesney, 2001, 2015; Orlowski, 2006). McChesney (2015) argues that the entire mainstream media system plays a key role in supporting the neoliberal system. Neoliberalism requires a depoliticized citizenry to keep the status quo in terms of political and economic power, so it has become the role of the corporate

media to either incorporate dominant ideas into its discourses, or to depoliticize or delegitimize ideas that are contradictory to them (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Mainstream media outlets are used to obfuscate and prevent citizens from getting the information they need to participate in a democracy that will address their needs (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; McChesney, 2015).

Educators can play a role in strengthening democracy and advancing climate action. A healthy democracy requires citizens to be well informed, and able to critique the mainstream media when they discern their own interests are not being supported, and most importantly, motivate them to become active (Buckingham, 2019; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; Orlowski, 2012). Critical media literacy is connected to the powerful version of democracy known as radical democracy that aims to “develop skills that will enhance democratization and civic participation” (Kellner & Share, 2007a, p. 4). Radical democracy is democracy that is politically daring, uses unrestricted exercises of collective democratic will, and aims at leveling wealth with the focus on “ ‘the people’ in their collective identity” (Turner, 2015, p. 554). For radical democracy to take place, educators must develop critical media literacy to teach for this more robust type of democracy (Orlowski, 2012). Through critical media literacy, educators can teach students to deconstruct the hegemonic messages in the corporate media. Critical media literacy is a way to build an understanding of social issues and the importance of collective action to build a less oppressive society (Kellner & Share, 2007b). Through this pedagogy, educators can challenge the ideological power structures that maintain our society (Garcia et al., 2013). Similarly, there must be an engaged and informed citizenry for the climate crisis to be meaningfully addressed.

2.7 Framing

The media decide how to represent news to readers. Framing is instrumental to how people understand the world (Lakoff, 2010). Lakoff (2010) explains that people think in terms of

frames, or schemas, to make connections and to make sense of words. Frames are “the conceptual structure evoked when a topic is introduced for interpretation” (Dickson et al., 2013, p. 145). Through frames, certain emotional responses can be activated (Lakoff, 2014). Regarding the news, media framing is as a selective process and an exercise in using political power (Hackett et al., 2017). The media produces discursive formations on a myriad of social and economic issues. For example, the mainstream media produces discourses that the wealthy deserve their wealth because they work hard, whereas the poor are lazy, and cutting taxes on the wealthy would lead to more jobs for everyone because they could afford to hire more people and pay higher salaries, and so the wealth would trickle down. These discourses lead to working-class people not wanting taxes raised for the mega-wealthy. These discursive formations may be biased because of the power structures within the media.

The media frames the climate crisis in several ways, and because of this it shapes people’s awareness and concern for the growing crisis (Carvalho, 2010; Good, 2008; Hackett et al., 2017). Lakoff (2010) explains how the framing “climate change” implies that the climate changed on its own, with “no one to blame” and implies no sense of urgency (p. 3). As such, some are now using the framing of climate crisis and climate emergency instead of climate change. Hackett et al. (2017) explain that environmental issues do not always fit well in the frames of the mainstream media. As Good (2008) explains, responding to the climate crisis is fundamentally challenging to the interests of elites. Media outlets can obscure the crisis and related issues “that are so easily framed, or ignored as something else (e.g., ‘naturally occurring’ weather)” (Good, 2008, p. 234). The media must connect weather-related events with the rising GHG emissions to help citizens understand the severity and causes of the climate crisis (S. Klein, 2020). Media discourses can fundamentally shape our understanding of the climate crisis.

The scholarly literature on media framing demonstrates that the mainstream media does not indicate that the climate crisis needs immediate action (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004; Gelbspan, 2005; Good, 2008; Hackett et al., 2017; S. Klein, 2020). As mentioned above, the climate crisis has received supposedly balanced news coverage in which journalists attempt to show both sides of the issue. The media equally present the perspectives of scientists who contend that the climate crisis is occurring and those who do not, even though it is a tiny minority who claim that the climate crisis is not occurring, or that it is occurring, it is not caused by humans (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004; Gelbspan, 2005; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). It is an unbalanced situation because an overwhelming majority of scientists contend that the climate crisis is happening (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004). Boykoff and Boykoff (2004) explain that this so-called balanced journalism on the climate crisis has resulted in bias and “a small group of global warming skeptics to have their views amplified” (p. 127). Many skeptics of the climate crisis have been paid off by fossil fuel companies and right-wing think tanks (N. Klein, 2015). A result of this style of journalism is a skeptical public (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018).

Aside from the issue of framing for balance, there are other mediated frames for the climate crisis. Carvalho (2010) discussed key frames the media uses for climate crisis content. First, the media leaves citizens out of the discourses, which relays the message that citizens are not worthy speakers on the topic (Carvalho, 2010). The second frame Carvalho (2010) noted was around the descriptions of social movements. The frames used for environmental social movements include that they are antagonistic, they are violent protests, or that they are examples of ecoterrorism (Carvalho, 2010). However, Carvalho (2010) suggests there is some evidence that the frames used for environmental social movements are becoming more progressive and

civic action oriented.³ Lastly, Carvalho (2010) contends that the climate crisis is often framed in the context of high-profile, intergovernmental meetings in the global arena rather than in local communities. Similarly, Hackett et al. (2017) argue that the climate crisis is often framed as international news with no local context. As such, Carvalho (2010) argues the climate crisis has been perceived as distant and unobtrusive. Framing the climate crisis without local relevance gives the impression that the effects of the climate crisis are not felt in Canada. Dickinson et al. (2013) add another theme to framing on the climate crisis—the fear appeal which Dickinson et al. (2013) caution can have an unintended effect. Their study found that positive framing is not always better at getting interest to act against the climate crisis (Dickinson et al., 2013). These frames may be prevalent in both mainstream and alternative media.

Another commonly used frame in the media pertaining to the environment is the dichotomy between the environment and the economy. Winter (2007) contends that one of the lies the media tells is that the climate crisis cannot be addressed without ruining the economy.⁴ N. Klein (2019) argues that it is neoliberal pundits who have misinformed the public that there can either be a healthy economy or environment, but not both. This frame has become a dominant one in mainstream media (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). There may be winners and losers at various local levels if the GND is implemented, but it will be better for future of humanity and the planet itself. An offshoot of this discourse is “new climate denialism” in which the mainstream media promote is “new climate denialism” in which “we don’t have to choose between strong climate policy and fossil fuel extraction” (S. Klein, 2020, p. 86). In sum, the

³ Greta Thunberg’s climate strikes occurred almost a decade after Carvalho’s (2010) work was published.

⁴ Communities such as those in southern Saskatchewan that have fossil fuel-based economies may have the potential to transition to a green economy. For example, Olive et al. (2020) found that southern Saskatchewan has serious potential to develop wind and solar energy industries.

frames found in the scholarly literature are not conveying a need for systemic change, such as what would occur with the GND.

The media can shape the public's attitudes and actions towards the climate crisis. As Carvalho (2010) demonstrates, the mainstream media has not always played a progressive role in informing citizens about the climate crisis and potential solutions. In fact, Hackett et al. (2017) argue that the mainstream media is "deeply implicated in promoting carbon intensive social norms which are a key driver in emissions growth" (p. 70). However alternative media provides new possibilities for discourses on the climate crisis (Carvalho, 2010; Hackett et al., 2017). Alternative media outlets are usually more participatory and focus on public action and engagement (Hackett et al., 2017). Due to the progressive social values of many alternative media outlets, progressive and solution-based framing of the climate crisis are more likely to appear in alternative media (Hackett et al., 2017). For example, Hackett et al. (2017) found that *The Tyee* prioritized solutions-focused journalism, where instead of focusing on scandals, conflict, disaster, this alternative online newspaper focused on solutions to problems, therefore presenting a positive alternative. As such, alternative media may very well be a support for solving the climate crisis and for creating policy such as the GND.

Political ideology will always be a factor in how the climate crisis and GND are represented in the media. To pass the GND into policy, people must elect governments whose values align with this type of legislation. Various federal and provincial governments (both right and left) have implemented neoliberal policies (Orlowski, 2015). In terms of political theory, people with liberal views believe in individual freedom, citizenship, and democratic rights, and support some state-intervention in the economy (Orlowski, 2012). In general terms, liberals are left wing on social issues, and right wing on economic issues. Left wing ideology is focused on

“equality, egalitarianism, and social justice” (Orlowski, 2012, p. 32). Right wing ideology in general encourages individuals to advance economically and socially without government support, and it dismisses claims from minorities pertaining to the notion of privilege in an unfair system (Orlowski, 2012). Conservatism is a right-wing political ideology that places importance on tradition and the past, and thus views social progress as a threat to the status quo (Orlowski, 2012). Conservatism conflicts with feminism, LGBTQ2S+ peoples, and people of Black, Indigenous and other racialized backgrounds. The political ideology most aligned with the GND is progressive. Lakoff (2014) explains progressives believe in community, equity, and improving life in the future. The GND matches progressive ideology because progressives believe in an economy that creates good-paying jobs that will allow people to do well, with a sustainable economy that does not harm the environment (Lakoff, 2014). Additionally, progressives believe that the government should regulate the private sector, especially large corporations (Sirota, 2005). Progressives call for less social and economic inequality. It is these values and ideals that align the GND with progressive politics.

2.8 Why Critical Media Literacy is Needed in Schools

Critical media literacy is a pedagogy that engages students in media analysis. Many scholars agree that media reform is seriously required to deal with the manipulation of the public through media discourses (Buckingham, 2003; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 2015). In addition to media reform, critical media literacy scholars advocate for students to interpret and deconstruct the hegemonic discourses prominent in mass media (Buckingham, 2003; Cottle, 2003; Orlowski, 2012). As explained by Kellner and Share (2007a) critical media literacy is about fostering literacy skills for the understanding of media frames, values, and ideologies. Critical media literacy has different terms around the globe. In Britain it is called media education, in the United States and Canada it is referred to as media literacy or critical media

literacy. The term *critical media literacy* will be used for this research because Garcia et al. (2013) contend that the interrogation of power and ideology is central to critical media literacy and without this part, media literacy is not critical. Therefore, this research uses the term critical media literacy to emphasize the role of critiquing power and ideology.

Critical media literacy is an extension of critical theory (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018), and it emanates out of cultural studies. Share and Kellner (2007a) define critical media literacy as expanding “literacy to include different forms of mass communication, popular culture, and new technologies... It deepens the potential of literacy education to critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, information, and power” (p. 4). Similarly, Buckingham (2003), who is a British scholar, explains that media education is a critical understanding of how the media communicates and represents the world. Within the realm of critical media there are three types of critical media literacy — representation in the media, representation delivering the news, and the influence of outside powers (Buckingham, 2003; Cottle, 2003; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; Orlowski, 2006). This research will analyze the relationship between outside powers on media and ideology. Orlowski (2014) calls this type of critical media literacy “sorely lacking” in Canadian social studies classrooms (p. 336). Incorporating critical media literacy into classroom pedagogy could lead to informed students that could, in turn, lead to engaged citizens.

The research on critical media literacy shows that critical media literacy educators must address how power and information are connected (Garcia et al., 2013; Kellner & Share, 2007a; Masterman, 1985). For example, Buckingham (2019) identifies production, ownership, and how the media makes financial profit as key components to critical media literacy. Similarly, Orlowski (2014) asserts that the purpose of critical media literacy is to “help students interpret

the news rather than simply absorb it without reflection” (p. 350). As explained in the section on framing, the climate crisis discourses can be manipulated in the mainstream media (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2003; Carvalho, 2010; Hackett et al., 2017; Lakoff, 2010, 2014). Critical media literacy will inform students on how and why those discourses are produced. Cottle (2003) explains that through critical media literacy students need to understand the influence of elites and their use of power through mainstream media for *their* advantages in public discourses (Cottle, 2003). In this respect, mainstream media is considered to be a hegemonic device.

In the context of the climate crisis, educators will need to address how the media and corporations hinder climate action. In their explanation of critical media literacy, Garcia et al. (2013) state that media literacy helps youth develop a critical lens for interpreting ideologies in the world. For youth, developing critical media literacy becomes a lifelong asset. Masterman (1985) argues that critical media literacy education is needed “to meet demands of the future” (p. 2). This research acknowledges critical media literacy as a necessary skill specifically for citizenship and addressing the advancing climate crisis. Addressing how the climate crisis is presented in the media will require educators to teach from a critical lens. This will require that in order to engage in critical media literacy, educators will need to drop apolitical notions (Kellner & Share, 2007b; Garcia et al., 2013). This thesis will demonstrate the importance of critical media literacy, so that students are able to think critically about the discourses they consume about the climate crisis.

Understanding how discourses on the climate crisis are shaped by power and ideology will help create informed citizens. In a study by Cooper (2011), research showed that understanding science is insufficient to understanding the climate crisis. Dickinson, et al. (2013) agree that knowledge of climate science does not necessarily lead to taking climate action. In

addition to climate science education, Cooper (2011) contends that students need to have media literacy skills to recognize “the barrage of media messages constructed to mislead, confuse, or predispose individuals to apathy or denial” (p. 235). Cooper (2011) defines a media literate person as one who knows how to interpret bias in the media, as well as identify misinformation and propaganda. This understanding will in turn create an informed citizenry who can decipher media discourses in order to better understand the severity of the climate crisis and therefore demand climate action.

Indeed, citizens will more likely take part in our democracy if they are not blinded by false political consciousness. As mentioned earlier, critical media literacy attempts to deconstruct false political consciousness (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). As mentioned above, one way critical media literacy addresses false political consciousness is through challenging hegemonic discourses. There is therefore a key role for alternative media in critical media literacy. Masterman (1985) contends that critical media literacy must include alternative sources of information. Thus, alternative media could show a different perspective from mainstream corporate media on various important topics. Examining how the media deal with common-sense notions about the economy, climate crisis, and different energy sources are important steps that will be undertaken in this research. This will be accomplished by scrutinizing mainstream and alternative media for hegemonic ideologies. To educate about the climate crisis, the common discourses about the climate crisis will first need to be identified.

2.9 Studies that Add to the Discussion

Two studies have been conducted on discourses related to the climate crisis in Canadian media. In one, Gunster (2010) analyzed discourses on the 2008 British Columbia carbon tax in British Columbia media outlets. Gunster (2010) argues that the framing of the carbon tax in mainstream media was a major reason for the hostile reaction the provincial tax received. He

found the frame using a hardship discourse was a central component in the British Columbia mainstream media push back to the carbon tax (Gunster, 2010). Through the hardship frame, the mainstream media argued consumers had no choice but to pay the tax and environmental benefits were left out of the discussion (Gunster, 2010).

One theme analyzed in my study was the framing of the federal carbon tax in one mainstream media outlet and two alternative media outlets. It is worth noting the framing Gunster (2010) found in the British Columbia media, as it also may have been used in the national media when the federal carbon tax was implemented in 2019. Additionally, Gunster (2011) analyzed the media discourses on the 2009 Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change. Gunster (2011) focuses on how the mainstream and alternative media outlets in British Columbia covered this conference. Some aspects of Gunster (2011) are similar to my study. For example, I am also analyzing mainstream and alternative media coverage. However, Gunter's (2011) work was focused on British Columbia media and was specific to the Copenhagen conference whereas the scope of my study includes one national mainstream media outlet, and *The Tyee* which is a British Columbia based alternative media outlet, and *Rabble* which is a national alternative media outlet. My study was also conducted during a different timeframe. Another difference is that Gunster's studies were not intended for educators. Many of the studies analyzing the discourses on the climate crisis did not include implications for educators.

2.10 Relevant Studies in Education

Pedagogy related to the climate crisis is a growing field of educational scholarship. Three notable Canadian studies were published on the climate crisis that pertained to education. One recent study examined the influence of the fossil fuel industry on pedagogy in Saskatchewan classrooms (Eaton & Day, 2020). This study is relevant to my research as it recognizes the role of education in addressing the climate crisis. In this study, Eaton and Day (2020), reviewed the

role of neoliberalism on teachers' discourses of the climate crisis. This study shows the connection between neoliberalism, education, and climate action (Eaton & Day, 2020). Eaton and Day (2020) call for a critical pedagogy that prepares students to deal with major problems such as the climate crisis. They argue that "teachers and scholars need to investigate and develop a pedagogy that can prepare students to deal with scale of the problems in front of us" but do not name a specific pedagogy (Eaton & Day, 2020, p. 470). I conducted a media analysis on Canadian media and identify critical media literacy as a specific pedagogy that teachers can use.

My research will contribute to the field of critical media literacy in Canada. My study agrees with Cooper (2011) in strongly suggesting that critical media literacy is a crucial in the fostering of a citizenry that understands the implications of the climate crisis. Unlike Cooper (2011), however, my research conducted CDA on Canadian online news media. Another study, by Colston and Thomas (2019) conducted CDA on the effects of climate crisis denial in the media and the impact on school science in the United States. Colston and Thomas (2019) acknowledge media bias and the role fossil fuel companies have in media discourses. Their analysis, however, examined children's books written by climate crisis skeptics and their implications for use in the elementary school classroom.

2.11 Summary

The media plays an important role in communicating information about the climate crisis and policy such as the GND. The scholarly literature on mainstream media indicates that their representation of social and economic issues is contingent on media ownership and advertising. Thus, the structure of mainstream media limits the debate on some issues. My study gives a comparative analysis between alternative media outlets in Canada and a major mainstream media outlet. The literature shows that alternative media has potential for offering different perspectives than mainstream media. Lastly, critical media literacy could be a useful pedagogy for the reality

of the growing environmental crisis. Chapter 3 will explain the methodology for undertaking this research.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The goal of this research is to determine the range of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses about the climate crisis and GND in Canadian mainstream and alternative media. Mainstream media and alternative media differ vastly in structure, and thus differences in their discourses on the climate crisis are expected. This study explores the differences that exist between how mainstream and alternative text-based media report on the climate crisis. The national mainstream newspaper chosen for the study is the *National Post*, and the alternative media outlets are *Rabble* and *The Tyee*. These news outlets will be examined in terms of how they may be overtly or covertly protecting power in society, namely, the fossil fuel industries, or how they may be sites of progressive discourses and analysis around the climate crisis and the GND.

The articles that comprise the data for this study were published between September 1, 2019, and December 31, 2020. This range was not chosen randomly; rather, the beginning and end points had much to do with global events. The youth climate strikes and the coronavirus pandemic and, by corollary, the subsequent global economic downturn, are major events that I consider to be extremely important in the data I collected in order to address the research questions for this study.

As mentioned in the introduction, Swedish teenager and activist Greta Thunberg has been a powerful force on the global stage in criticizing neoliberalism and the fossil fuel industry while demanding climate action. As such, this research will analyze the discourses of the media from September 1, 2019, to December 31, 2020 which includes the timeframe when Thunberg

travelled to Canada (i.e. Fall 2019) and sometime after. It is quite possible that Thunberg's activism may have influenced media discourses on the climate crisis.

The timeline for the data collection for this study also includes the time before and during the coronavirus pandemic. This pandemic has caused a global shutdown of many factories as well as other types of large and small businesses. The loss of thousands of jobs in Canada and across the world has resulted in a major economic downturn, and possibly a depression (Kirby, 2020). The coronavirus pandemic may have an impact on media discourses focused on the climate crisis and GND. Three media outlets provided the data for analysis of the discourses used to discuss the climate crisis and the GND. A CDA approach will be used to examine online news articles as sites of politics, power, and hegemony.

Mainstream media refers to media outlets that dominate the media market and have a top-down structure (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). The *National Post* was chosen because of the outlet's corporate structure, national readership numbers, corporate advertisers, and mass distribution across Canada. In Canada, the *CBC* is a publicly funded media group that is part of the dominant media group, it also has corporate advertisers (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). The *CBC* does not always present alternative views, but often supports mainstream and hegemonic discourses. I use the terms corporate media and mainstream media interchangeably because the mainstream media is corporate media with the *CBC* included. That said, the *CBC* was not one of the outlets examined in this study because it would have been too unwieldy to analyze articles in both the *CBC* and the *National Post* for the purposes of this study.

On the other hand, *alternative media* refers to media outlets that challenge the perspectives most commonly found in the mainstream media (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Kozolanka and Orlowski (2018) define alternative media as having three characteristics that

make them different from mainstream media. They have a different working structure, a focus on activism, and are much more inclusive of reader participation (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018).

The discourses in these two news media structures were compared to see the differences in how they position and discuss the climate crisis and GND.

Alternative media are structurally different than mainstream media. Kozolanka and Orlowski (2018) provide a definition for alternative media which includes three components: alternative media are usually non-profit and therefore free from the influence of shareholders, are usually social- and ecological-justice oriented, and usually have a non-hierarchical employment structure. Alternative media are typically free from corporate structure and are not as concerned with shareholders, profits, and profit margins (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). To maintain their organization, alternative media may sell their own products or operate by donation from readers (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Alternative media does not have the same readership numbers as the corporate media (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). For example, in 2016, the *National Post* had 4.5 million readers weekly (*Financial Post* staff, 2016). Comparatively, *Rabble* has over 450,000 readers each month (*Rabble*, n.d.a). *The Tyee* has between 500,000 to one million readers each month (*The Tyee* n.d.a).

Rabble and *The Tyee* match the criteria of alternative media as defined by Kozolanka and Orlowski (2018). Both *Rabble* and *The Tyee* are media that are different structurally, are activist oriented, and are participatory. *Rabble* and *The Tyee* are free for the public to access. *Rabble* is a progressive media site that came to be from the efforts “of progressive journalists, writers, artists and activists across the country” (*Rabble*, n.d.a). *Rabble* is not-for-profit and relies on donations from readers, organizations, and its sustaining partners (*Rabble*, n.d.a). *Rabble* does invite advertisers but clearly states “Your advertising dollars will also help support the news,

community coverage, and progressive independent journalism that *Rabble.ca* offers everyday” (*Rabble*, n.d.b). *Rabble* identifies their sustaining and supporting partners on the home page. Some examples of their partners are CUPE, Unifor, and Ontario Catholic Teachers Association, all of which financially support *Rabble* (*Rabble*, n.d.c). *The Tyee* is a British Columbia-based online news magazine that does not make a profit and the money they get is invested into journalism (*The Tyee*. n.d.b). *The Tyee* receives funding through charity, but those who run the charity “exert zero influence on editorial decision-making” (*The Tyee*. n.d.b). *The Tyee* states a small portion of their funding comes from advertisers who must pass a values filter (*The Tyee*. n.d.b). Some examples of advertisers have been UBC, CUPE BC, and Vancouver Folk Music Festival (*The Tyee*. n.d.a). *The Tyee* has five guiding principles: readers come first, facts are primary, to strengthen democracy, to seek a sustainable planet, and to operate ethically (*The Tyee*. n.d.b).

3.2 Research Sample

The Tyee delivers its content in an online news format only and its website is easy to navigate. To collect data from *The Tyee*, I reviewed all articles under the environment page that fit within the timeline for this study. I used an inclusion and exclusion criteria to decide if an article would be included in this study. The exclusion criteria cut out articles on countries other than those focused on Canada. It also excluded articles focused on celebrities, food frugality/sustainability, forestry, building codes, and nuclear energy. I included articles on climate change and politicians, fossil fuels, youth and climate action, climate action, the climate crisis and the economy, GHG emissions, green energy, and Covid-19 economic recovery. These comprised many of the categories I used to analyze the data. In total, I collected 152 articles from *The Tyee* (See Appendix A).

Similar to *The Tyee*, *Rabble* is found in an online format only. I attempted to use the same search process with both *The Tyee* and *Rabble*, but *Rabble*'s website works slightly differently than *The Tyee*. To search on *Rabble*, I used keywords in binaries "environment" and "2020" and "environment" and "2019". *Rabble*'s website has blogs, podcasts, columns, and discussion forums. I excluded discussion forums and I included blogs and columns. My reasoning was as follows: although blogs are opinion pieces, all news articles also contain the opinions of the writer or the editor, including what to include and exclude. It is difficult, if not impossible, for journalists to be objective, because as mentioned in footnote 1, we all have a standpoint, or social location, from which we view the world (Harding, 2004). Further, opinions are constructed in the news through what editors determine is news and who is to be interviewed and who is to be ignored. The mainstream media include opinion pieces as well, and readers of the mainstream media likely do not separate columnists and the news. In total, I collected 152 articles from *Rabble* (see Appendix B). I understand that there are limitations to this method of gathering articles as some may not have appeared under this search method.

The *National Post* produces more news content than *Rabble* and *The Tyee*. A sample was needed to analyze their media effectively and efficiently. The University of Saskatchewan possesses a license for the *National Post*. Using the *ProQuest* search engine, I could narrow the search results using the terms "climate crisis", "climate crisis and environmental racism", etc. *ProQuest* has a more sophisticated search engine than the *National Post* website. However, the search results on *ProQuest* brought up articles that were only written by the *National Post* staff. This method provides an incomplete picture of the *National Post* articles related to the climate crisis because the company purchases a significant portion of articles from wire services such as

Reuters and *The Canadian Press*. Therefore, the *ProQuest* search method was not used because it would exclude a lot of articles that the *National Post* readers can access.

The *National Post* website search engine is much more difficult to navigate, but using it gives a more complete representation of the articles their readers can view. Since the *National Post* is mass-produced, there were thousands of articles that came up under the search term “climate crisis”. This term actually brought up over 45,000 articles! The results were so broad because articles contained content on the climate crisis, but also on topics such as the opioid crisis, and many other articles with crisis in the headline. Unfortunately, their website search engine does not work the same as academic search engines do, so it was not possible to narrow the results more specifically to the keywords. That said, it was possible to filter results by timeline, which turned out to be very helpful for my research. These filters were “past 24 hours”, “seven days”, “30 days”, “past year”, “since 2011”, “most relevant”, and “since 2001”. Additionally, one can choose to set the filter from the newest to the oldest articles first in the filtered timeline or vice versa. By using the *National Post* site, using the keyword “climate crisis”, and a timeline filter was the best way to gather a sample of the company's articles.

To get articles that fit my timeline for the term “climate crisis” I had to select the filter “since 2011”. First, I filtered the results “since 2011”, with the newest articles first. I went through the articles from newest to oldest that fit the dates of my timeline. There was a problem once I got to the 1000th page of results; I could not advance through any more pages of articles. The 1000th page refreshed the top stories for the current day. The *National Post* website either has a glitch, or they are not letting people view all their articles. Using this strategy, however, I was able to go through the dates December 31, 2020, back to April 23, 2020. These dates cover articles for half of my timeline. Next, I changed the settings to ‘past year’ and ‘oldest first’. This

enabled me to collect articles from February to April 23, 2020. I had added three more months of data to my timeline. However, I was still missing 5 months of data. To gather articles for the remaining months, I changed the settings to most relevant and collected data only for the dates starting September 2019 to January 2020.

For the *National Post* I collected a sample of 445 articles (see Appendix C) because it was insurmountable to use every article on their website. Between both alternative media outlets there were about 304 articles in total. (It is noteworthy that the *National Post* is owned by Postmedia, a US-based hedge fund company that owns more than 120 media platforms in Canada. Many articles that appear in the *National Post* also appear in their other media platforms). Similar to what I used for the two alternative media outlets, the exclusion criteria omitted articles that were about countries other than Canada, as well as those about celebrities, food frugality/sustainability, forestry, building codes, and nuclear energy. I excluded articles that linked to the Financial Times website, which is also owned by Postmedia, and were not directly posted to the *National Post* website. Again, similar to what I collected for *The Tyee* and *Rabble*, I included articles on “politicians and the climate crisis”, “fossil fuels”, “climate action”, “youth and climate action”, “corporate/bank investments”, “GHG emissions”, “renewable and alternative energy”, and “Covid-19 recovery”. This research sample is a significant portion of the *National Post*’s articles related to the climate crisis, but this method of creating a sample has limitations. I reviewed the articles that came up under the search for “climate crisis” and that fit my criteria. Another keyword and a different criteria might yield different results, but I had to make decisions that made the size of the data manageable for the study.

3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is a useful methodology to investigate whether or not the media is protecting the interests of elites and limiting discussion and debate about the climate crisis. CDA is a

methodology of analysis in which the process of how meaning is created and communicated becomes apparent (Fairclough, 2001). As part of critical theory, the purpose of this methodology is to critically investigate social inequalities that are legitimized by language in discourses (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Van Dijk (2001) explains that CDA aims to “understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality” (p. 352). This methodology analyzes social issues through an interdisciplinary and multi-method approach (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). When using CDA, researchers select different data, and provide definitions of power, ideology, discourse, and other related terms relevant to their research projects (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA scholars agree with critical theorist Jurgen Habermas who claims that “language is also a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power. In so far as the legitimizations of power relations ...are not articulated ...language is also ideological” (Habermas, 1977, p. 259, as cited in Wodak, 2001, p. 2). CDA is useful for media analyses because the media plays a role in the construction of knowledge and in shaping our interpretation of the world through text (van Dijk, 1993). van Dijk (1993) argues that we need to understand “how specific discourse structures determine specific mental processes, or facilitate the formation of specific social representation” (p. 259).

As mentioned above, CDA emanated out of critical theory. Similar to critical theory, CDA has emancipatory intentions (Fairclough, 2001). van Dijk (1993) cautions that CDA may not make a difference unless “we are able to contribute to stimulating a critical perspective among our students” (p. 280). As such, CDA works well for this research as the intention is for educators to engage students in CDA of the media pertaining to its representation of the climate crisis and the GND.

CDA focuses on discovering the implicit meanings in texts by finding their underlying assumptions (Orlowski, 2012). This methodology is a means of analyzing covert and overt structural “relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 10). CDA requires examining text, speech, social practices, and interactions in a variety of contexts. This method tends to focus on how elites use discursive strategies to maintain their power (van Dijk, 1993). This means that CDA examines how language is utilized or manipulated to help maintain power. Van Dijk (1993) explains that persuasion is used to make dominance in society be perceived as natural or legitimate. In this manner, CDA is useful for analyzing how hegemony is created and maintained.

In CDA the language of the media is understood to be a site of power struggle as media outlets usually lay claim to neutrality in their use of discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Wodak and Meyer (2009) identified a rise in research focused on politics due to rising right-wing rhetoric and hegemony through indirect strategies. These analyses of politics include data collected of newspaper articles (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). I consider CDA to be a powerful method for scrutinizing the media, and by corollary, to be well suited for my research.

There are a variety of approaches within CDA (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The tenets of CDA include addressing social problems and acknowledging that power relations are discursive. When engaging in CDA, the analyst must take an explicit position, focused on addressing a social inequality (van Dijk, 2001). For my research, I will be paying attention to the core features that are in all CDA approaches such as: power, ideology, and ideology critique through discourse. To engage in CDA, both macro and micro forms of discourse analysis must be utilized (van Dijk, 2001). The micro level refers to language use, and verbal communication, while the macro level refers to power, dominance, and inequality (van Dijk, 2001).

3.3.1 Definition of discourse/s

It is necessary to define the term *discourse* for this research because it is central to all areas of the project. Discourse is a way of representing parts of both the material and social worlds (Fairclough, 2003). In using discourse as different ways of representing, “we are implying a degree of repetition, commonality in the sense that they are shared by groups of people” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124). Discourse is the words, terms, phrasing, and use of power in talk and text. Further, discourse involves the ideologies, identities, and relationships between people and groups represented in the news media (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Discourse helps sustain and reproduce the status quo, but it also has the potential to transform it (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The former is hegemonic, while the latter is counter-hegemonic. Ideologies are presented to people through discourse (Orlowski, 2012). Discourses can create narratives, or stories that many of us come to live by and lenses by which people see the world. Those narratives and ideologies that are represented and repeated most frequently that support the interests of the most economically powerful become the dominant, or hegemonic, discourses. Discourse can produce unequal power relations between social classes, genders, and races through the ways things are represented and people are positioned (Fairclough & Wodak, as cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Elites become elites through the help of discourses, and, by corollary, they can further exercise power through these discourses (van Dijk, 2001). Further, through text, power can be produced and reproduced (van Dijk, 2001).

Discourses must be understood in context (space and time) (Gee, 2004). Discourses are presented in frames. Framing is the ideological perspective in which discourse is presented in. Gee (2004) explains that understanding the frame is a tool to see what information and values are being omitted. By extension, Orlowski (2012) contends that omission is a frequently used hegemonic strategy. For example, a media outlet that never mentions the fact that nearly every

climate scientist believes that human activity is a root cause of climate change is utilizing this strategy. Habermas argues there are two forms of media discourses: practical discourses and theoretical discourses (Wessler, 2018). Theoretical discourses are discourses where one tries to resolve problematic truth claims (Wessler, 2018). Practical discourses are discourses in which “rightness claims are resolved” (Wessler, 2018, p. 27). My focus is on theoretical discourses. For this research, CDA was used to examine discourse in text through words and phrasing, to examine the relationships pertaining to power between the media, elites, and corporations.

3.3.2 CDA and Power

Analyzing power is central to CDA. As part of critical theory, this method aims to transmit critical knowledge that allows emancipation from domination (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Power is recognized as control by the dominant group over suppressed groups. Moreover, dominant groups have social power which is control over the acts and minds of other groups (van Dijk, 2001). The dominant group can exercise social power, and can abuse that power, through privileged access to public discourse and communication (van Dijk, 2001). Media owners, such as Rupert Murdoch, can sway editors and journalists to present stories in particular ways, and exclude other stories. Additionally, journalists may use persuasive power or editors may exclude certain people’s views on a particular issue (van Dijk, 2001).

The covert domination of elite ideologies in discourses is called *hegemony*. Power and hegemony work in tandem to maintain the status quo. In this manner, the media shapes our understanding of experiences, knowledge, and values by using hegemonic discourses. The media is a power resource and power is exercised through control of content, and structures of discourse (Van Dijk, 2001). Van Dijk (2001) explains that those with more control over public discourse are more powerful and much more influential. Further, the manipulation of mass media legitimizes power (Van Dijk, 1993). Having more control over public discourse means certain

powerful groups can influence the minds of the public (van Dijk, 2001). There are two ways discourse is involved in power relations; through restricting access to discourses, and through emphasizing whose views dominate the discussion on various issues (van Dijk, 1993). CDA can initiate potential resistance to unequal power relations that appear to be the norm (Wodak, 2001).

3.3.3 CDA and Ideology

Ideology and ideology critique play an important part in CDA. Ideology is “a coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs and values” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 8). CDA concerns itself with the ideologies that are hidden in discourses (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). For example, beliefs may be communicated implicitly in discourse through persuasion or manipulation, so there is less chance of them being challenged (van Dijk, 2001). Through discursive strategies, domination is understood as natural and legitimate (van Dijk, 1993). Ideology is a crucial component to “establishing and maintaining unequal power relations” (Wodak, 2001, p. 10). Ideology critique employs a critical analysis of the relationships between discourse, power, and ideology. According to Orlowski (2012) CDA aims to “demystify discourses by deciphering ideologies” (p. 10). CDA provides the opportunity to discover how power, ideology, and hegemony are connected in text. This understanding is crucial in negotiating a progressive future for the world.

To implement a CDA, I examined how language was used in news stories to influence readers, as language is connected to hegemonic power. Both the mainstream media outlet and the alternative media outlets use language to persuade their readers. I examined each article for the discourses and ideology. First, I read the headline and the full article. Then, I read it a second time and identified sentences and words that were evidence of a particular framing or perspective and attitude toward the theme of that article. Examples of the words and phrases that indicated a particular framing will be provided in Chapter 5. I made notes on each article and identified key

words, phrases, and sources in the article. I paid attention to the positionality, and inclusion, of the dominant group and elites in the media texts. While engaging in CDA of the articles, I was mindful to note the omission of the perspectives of marginalized people which results in unequal power relations. In the data analysis chapter, (i.e., Chapter 5), I offer a detailed example of how I utilized CDA in this research by examining how all three media outlets covered the Wet'suwet'en protests of a proposed pipeline in northwestern British Columbia.

3.4 Thematic Analysis

As stated, I used CDA to analyze the language, framing, and power in articles about the climate crisis. CDA was used to determine the position of the article, whether overtly or covertly, that a media outlet takes regarding the climate crisis and GND. Thematic analysis was used to organize and code the data gathered from mainstream and alternative media in Canada. In a qualitative analysis, the researcher is the instrument for analyzing the data (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Thematic analysis is an approach used in qualitative studies to help in the search for themes or patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) state that this method is accessible for beginner researchers. As a new researcher, this method helped me become familiar with organizing qualitative data.

Thematic analysis has six steps and must be reflexive and fluid (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The first phase is “familiarizing yourself with your data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). In this step, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue it is crucial to immerse oneself in the data and engage with it by repeated readings and searching for meanings and patterns. The second phase begins once one is familiar with the data and therefore it is “generating initial codes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). In this phase it can be helpful to engage in reflexive journaling, which can aid in establishing the trustworthiness of the study (Nowell et al., 2017). I used reflexive journaling in this phase as recommended and I found it very helpful for generating

the initial codes. I also found reflexive journaling helpful for familiarizing myself with the writing style of each of the three media outlets. I was able to make notes on each of the articles and become acquainted with the 749 articles. The third phase is “searching for themes” in which the researcher moves from coded data and “re-focuses the analysis at the broader level of themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). In this phase, some codes may become themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The fourth phase is “reviewing themes” and has two levels (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Level one involves reviewing coded data for patterns aligned with the candidate themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Level two involves reviewing the entire data set to consider the validity of individual themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phase five is “defining and naming themes” in which themes are “defined and refined” and sub-themes are identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). Initially, I had 20 themes, but then I amalgamated some into other closely related themes. For example, at the beginning of analyzing the data I had two categories called “fossil fuel industry” and “workers in the fossil fuel industry”. The category “workers in the fossil fuel industry” was merged into the “fossil fuel industry” theme. I established themes based on common articles in the data sample. For example, there were many articles on both “climate action” and also “youth and climate action”, so “youth and climate action” became a sub-theme of “climate action”. During this phase, I sent my data and themes to my supervisor, Dr. Paul Orłowski, and after he read all of the articles, he supported my decision to organize the articles into the 13 themes and sub-themes. I collected articles and stored them in a OneNote document. OneNote operates as a digital binder. In this digital binder, each media group had its own tab. As I went through the various media websites, I collected articles and placed them under the appropriate theme. Some articles fit under multiple themes. See Table 3.1. The final phase is “producing the report” in

which the final analysis is given (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this study, the final analysis is found in Chapter 5.

Through the process of thematic analysis, the qualitative data was sorted into themes and sub-themes. I opted to use a deductive approach through theoretical thematic analysis, which Braun & Clarke (2006) define as “driven by the researcher’s theoretical or analytic interest in the area and is thus more explicitly analyst driven” (p. 83). I used a latent thematic analysis because it goes deeper into the data to identify underlying ideas, assumptions, and ideologies that inform the content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). This increased depth makes a latent approach to thematic analysis complementary to CDA. The data collection consisted of close readings of articles in the *National Post*, *Rabble*, and *The Tyee*.

Table 3.1

Themes from the Three Media Outlets

Themes	Media Outlets		
	<i>Rabble</i>	<i>The Tyee</i>	<i>National Post</i>
Effects of the climate crisis			
Subcategory: Climate science			
Corporate/ Bank Investments			
Subcategory: Fossil Fuels			
Environmental Racism			
Subcategory: Wet’suwet’en Protests			
Politicians and the Climate Crisis			
Carbon Tax			
Climate Action			

Subcategory: Youth and Climate Action

Renewables/alternative energy

Green New Deal

Climate Crisis and Covid-19

3.5 Summary

The data for this research comes from one mainstream text-based media outlet and two alternative text-based media outlets. Mainstream media is the dominant media that is mass produced and has a top-down structure (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). The mainstream media outlet used for this research is the *National Post*. Alternative media is different structurally from mainstream media and is usually non-hierarchical (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Alternative media is also usually non-profit and is social and ecological justice oriented (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). The alternative media outlets used for this research are *Rabble* and *The Tyee*. In total, 152 articles were collected from each *Rabble* and *The Tyee* for a total of 304 alternative media articles. Another 445 articles were collected from the *National Post*. In total, 749 articles comprised this data set. The data was organized in themes and CDA was applied to uncover power hidden in the media discourses. CDA can identify hegemonic discourses that protect the status quo and hinder climate action, and other counter-hegemonic discourses that challenge the status quo. This research illuminates where power is hidden in hegemonic discourses and how counter-hegemonic discourses are crucial to understanding the implications of the climate crisis and the potential of the GND.

Chapter 4 Data Results

4.1 Introduction

The media can have a significant influence on how people understand social issues, such as the climate crisis. As explained in the previous chapters, this research will determine the differences in discourses on the climate crisis employed by the mainstream and alternative print media. This study analyzed 749 articles — 304 were from alternative media and 445 were from the mainstream media outlet. More articles were collected from the mainstream media outlet (*National Post*), which can be expected because the mainstream media often mass produces daily content whereas alternative media outlets operate on a much smaller scale. The articles were analyzed to see how the media outlets address the climate crisis, and if they report on the potential of the GND.

The articles were sorted into the following themes: “effects of the climate crisis”, “climate science” (sub-theme of “effects of the climate crisis”), “corporate/bank investments”, “fossil fuels” (sub theme of “corporate/bank investments”), “environmental racism”, “Wet’suwet’en protests” (sub-theme of “environmental racism”), “politicians and climate crisis”, “carbon tax”, “climate action”, “youth and climate action” (sub-theme of “climate action”), “renewable/alternative energy”, “Green New Deal”, and “Covid-19 and the climate crisis”. Some articles fit in more than one of the themes. For example, an article might fit in “the effects of the climate crisis”, “climate action”, and “youth and climate action”, thus it would be placed under all four themes. Notably, some themes have fewer articles than others. This will be part of the analysis.

As discussed in Chapter 3, a thematic analysis was used to code and organize the data. Thematic analysis is useful to search for themes or patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The process of analyzing data consisted of close readings of articles from the *National Post*, *Rabble*, and *The Tyee*. This qualitative data was coded into themes and sub-themes (see Table 4.1). The process followed the six steps of thematic analysis and was both reflexive and fluid (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). As previously discussed, I used a deductive approach, which entails themes being selected prior to data collection, based on my (the researcher's) prior knowledge in the area (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes in this study were based on topics related to the climate crisis, GND, and climate action. As recommended by Nowell et al. (2017), I used reflexive journaling during this process, which helped in the creation of sub themes. Next, I re-read the articles and identified them as being aligned with climate action, the GND, addressing the climate crisis, or as promoting corporate interests, climate denialism, anti-climate action, or as ambiguous if the stance of the article was unclear. This chapter will present the data on how media outlets are addressing the climate. Chapter 5 will interrogate the discourses in the media outlets through CDA.

4.2 *Rabble*

As discussed in Chapter 3, *Rabble* is an alternative media outlet— these outlets have different goals than mainstream media outlets. For example, alternative media outlets are usually activist oriented (Kozolanaka & Orlowski, 2018). The characteristics of alternative media were evident in the 152 articles collected from *Rabble* as the outlet aligns itself with progressive principles. Some notable contributors to *Rabble* are David Suzuki, Linda McQuaig, Robert Hackett, and David Climenhaga. All of these contributors advocate for addressing the climate crisis through their columns in *Rabble*.

From the data, *Rabble* consistently supported protecting the environment, climate action, and the GND. This alternative media outlet was also critical of the fossil fuel industry for its role in rising GHG emissions. None of the articles were ambiguous in their stance. There were 15

articles related to addressing the effects of the climate crisis and 100% supported addressing the climate crisis. Of those articles, ten referenced climate scientists or climate science reports. In all the articles found in the search for “climate science” in *Rabble* 100% of their articles supported climate science. *Rabble* had 43 articles related to “corporate/bank investments” and 100% of those articles were critical of corporate investments in fossil fuel industries. There were 42 articles on the “fossil fuel industry” and 100% of those articles were critical of the industry’s role regarding the climate crisis. The articles also included calls to green our economy. This refers to developing a sustainable economy where the health of the planet is taken into account.

Environmental racism is a consequence of the Canadian economy. There were 34 articles in *Rabble* on environmental racism, and 100% of the articles were addressing environmental racism and calling for change by implementing Indigenous ecological practices and upholding human rights for everyone. Of those articles, seven were on the Wet’suwet’en pipeline blockades that began in 2019. The Wet’suwet’en blockades started in northwestern British Columbia, in the traditional territory of the Wet’suwet’en peoples. A group of Wet’suwet’en people set up a railroad blockade protesting the liquified natural gas (LNG) line that would go through their territory. Wet’suwet’en hereditary chiefs suggested an alternative route, but their proposal was rejected, and solidarity blockades spread across Canada, impacting railroads throughout the country. Eventually, an agreement was reached.⁵ The articles from *Rabble* on the blockades were 100% in support of the hereditary chiefs and the Wet’suwet’en people who opposed the pipeline. This demonstrates an anti-colonial perspective in the articles as *Rabble* is supporting the

⁵ Among the Wet’suwet’en people, there were differing opinions on the LNG pipeline. The Wet’suwet’en hereditary chiefs opposed of the planned location of the LNG pipeline, but the elected band council approved of the pipeline. It is noteworthy that traditional Indigenous governance was disrupted by the Indian Act and the elected band council system was imposed on the Wet’suwet’en people through colonization. The hereditary chiefs represent the traditional form of governance.

Indigenous governance system, rather than supporting the elected band council that the Canadian government imposed on the Wet'suwet'en people soon after British Columbia became a province in 1871.

Politicians play a leading role in addressing the climate crisis, and therefore, this was a theme of the study. There were 77 articles related to the theme “politicians and the climate crisis” and 100% of the articles supported protecting the environment and addressing the climate crisis through government policies. One federal government policy that was reported in the media during this research timeline was the carbon tax. A total of five articles were related to the carbon tax in *Rabble*, and all of them were in favor of the carbon tax. As mentioned in the introduction, Swedish teenage activist Greta Thunberg was a central figure in the timeline of this research. As such, *Rabble* reported on climate action 29 times, and 100% of those times they supported climate action. Of those articles, 19 were written specifically on “youth and climate action” and 100% of the articles supported “youth and climate action”. David Suzuki (2020a) wrote one article in *Rabble* that supports “renewable/alternative energy”, in which the renowned environmentalist argued that society and the planet itself would benefit by electrifying public transit by using renewable energy. The GND, or elements of the GND was referenced in 18 articles, and 100% of those articles supported it. *Rabble* wrote 22 articles relating to the climate crisis and Covid-19. There were many progressive discourses on this theme. As such, 100% of the *Rabble* articles were in support of addressing the climate crisis through a Covid-19 economic recovery plan or promoted climate action to prevent future pandemics.

In conclusion, the data suggests that *Rabble* supports addressing the climate crisis in their content and promotes the potential of the GND.

Table 4.1

Rabble Data

Themes	Results			
	<i>N</i>	Pro	Con	Ambiguous
Effects of the climate crisis	15			
Subcategory: Climate science	10	100%		
Corporate/bank investments	43	100%		
Sub-theme: Fossil fuels	42	100%		
Environmental racism	34	100%		
Sub-theme: Wet'suwet'en protests	7	100%		
Politicians and the climate crisis	77	100%		
Carbon tax	5	100%		
Climate action	29	100%		
Youth and climate action	19	100%		
Renewable/alternative energy	1	100%		
Green New Deal	18	100%		
Covid-19 and the climate crisis	22	100%		

Note. *N* = number of articles from September 1, 2019, to December 31, 2020.

4.3 The Tyee

The Tyee, a Vancouver-based alternative media outlet, was also analyzed for this research. *The Tyee* is a Vancouver-based alternative media outlet. The findings from *The Tyee* data are similar to *Rabble* and, as mentioned earlier, 152 articles were collected from this source. In the articles analyzed, *The Tyee* consistently took a stance for protecting the environment,

supported climate action, and called for implementation of the GND. It clearly aligned itself with a progressive political perspective and values. None of the articles were ambiguous on this front. One notable difference between *Rabble* and *The Tyee* is that the sample of *The Tyee* did not garner any articles on the carbon tax in the timeline of September 1, 2019, to December 31, 2020. This may be because British Columbia implemented a provincial carbon tax much earlier than the federal government did, and *The Tyee* had reported on the provincial carbon tax over a decade earlier (Gunster, 2011). There were 19 articles in *The Tyee* on the effects of the climate crisis and 100% were about addressing the crisis and protecting the environment. Of those articles, five were written on climate science, with each one supporting climate science. There were 48 articles related to the theme “corporate/bank investments”, and 100% of those articles were critical of the current plethora of corporate investments and called for diversifying our economy. In total, 39 of *The Tyee*’s articles were focused on the fossil fuel industry and 100% were critical of those industries. There were 11 articles related to environmental racism and all those articles were on the Wet’suwet’en pipeline blockades. Every single one of those articles were in support of the Wet’suwet’en hereditary chiefs and the Wet’suwet’en people who opposed the pipeline. Like *Rabble*, *The Tyee* also demonstrated an anti-colonial perspective.

The Tyee had 59 articles relating to the theme “politicians and the climate crisis” and 100% supported protecting the environment and addressing the climate crisis through government policies. There were 17 articles related to climate action and 100% supported climate action. Of those articles, 14 were specifically about “youth and climate action” and each one of these articles supported the youth who demand climate action. *The Tyee* had four articles on renewable and alternative energy, with 100% supporting this sector for energy and job creation. There were 15 articles related to the GND, or elements of the GND and 100%

supported the potential of a GND in Canada. Lastly, there were nine articles connected to the climate crisis and Covid-19, and 100% supported addressing the climate crisis through a Covid-19 economic recovery plan, or they were focused on climate action in order to prevent future pandemics. These results demonstrate that *The Tyee* is a progressive media outlet aligned with addressing the climate crisis and the outlet strongly promotes the potential of the GND.

Table 4.2

The Tyee Data

Themes	Results			
	<i>N</i>	Pro	Con	Ambiguous
Effects of the climate crisis	19	100%		
Subcategory: Climate science	5	100%		
Corporate/bank investments	48	100%		
Sub-theme: Fossil fuels	39	100%		
Environmental racism	11	100%		
Sub-theme: Wet'suwet'en protests	11	100%		
Politicians and the climate crisis	59	100%		
Carbon tax	0	n/a		
Climate action	17	100%		
Youth and climate action	14	100%		
Renewable/alternative energy	4	100%		
Green New Deal	15	100%		
Covid-19 and the climate crisis	9	100%		

Note. *N* = number of articles from September 1, 2019, to December 31, 2020.

4.4 *National Post*

The *National Post* is the mainstream media outlet in this study. As mentioned in previous chapters, the *National Post* is the flagship newspaper of Postmedia, a United States hedge fund mega-corporation that owns over 120 news sources across Canada. Many of the articles that appear in the *National Post* also appear in many of Postmedia's other newspapers such as the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* and the *Regina LeaderPost*. The *National Post* purchases a substantial portion of their articles from wire services. Most of their purchased articles are from *The Canadian Press* or *Reuters*, but a few are from *The New York Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Washington Post*, and *Bloomberg News*. Within the *National Post* there was a noticeable difference in the discourses between articles that were purchased from other outlets compared to what was written by the *National Post* staff. So, when coding and organizing the data, the articles purchased from the wire services and other outlets were coded and organized separate from the articles written by the *National Post* staff. Some of the differences in the discourses within the *National Post* articles will be discussed in this chapter, but a more in-depth analysis will be provided in Chapter 5.

Table 4.3

National Post Data - all articles

Themes	<i>N</i>	Results		
		Pro	Con	Ambiguous
Effects of the climate crisis	83	89%	6%	4%
Subcategory: Climate science	64	89%	6%	5%
Corporate/bank investments	76	30%	62%	8%
Sub-theme: Fossil Fuels	52	25%	73%	8%

Environmental racism	53	11%	83%	6%
Sub-theme: Wet'suwet'en protests	43	2%	91%	7%
Politicians and the climate crisis	218	35%	55%	10%
Carbon tax	30	13%	63%	23%
Climate action	148	77%	16%	7%
Youth and climate action	73	88%	7%	5%
Renewable/alternative energy	2	100%		
Green New Deal	22	50%	50%	
Covid-19 and the climate crisis	46	80%	17%	2%

Note. N = number of articles from September 1, 2019, to December 31, 2020.

Table 4.4

National Post Data-by Outlet

Themes	Media Outlet												
	<i>National Post Staff</i>				<i>Reuters</i>		<i>The Canadian Press</i>			<i>Other Media Outlets (The Telegraph, Bloomberg News, New York Times, Washington Post)</i>			
	<i>N</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>A</i>
Effects of the climate crisis	83	20%	80%		100%			89%	4%	7%	100%		
Sub-theme: Climate science	64	25%	75%		97%		3%	87%	4%	9%	100%		
Corporate/ bank investments	76		100%		86%	14%		41%	49%	13%	33%	33%	33%
Sub-theme: Fossil fuels	52		100%		43%	43%	14%	47%	41%	12%	67%		33%

Environmental racism	54		92%	4%	83%	17%			91%	9%		
Sub-theme: Wet'suwet'en Protests	43	4%	92%	4%		100%			100%			
Politicians and the climate crisis	218	1%	94%	5%	89%	6%	6%	43%	41%	16%	50%	50%
Carbon Tax	30		91%					21%	47%	32%		
Climate Action	148	5%	81%	14%	100%			78%	11%	11%	100%	
Sub-theme: Youth and climate action	73		100%		98%		2%	81%	27%	11%	2%	
Renewable/alternative energy	2	N/A			100%			100%				
Green New Deal	22		100%		89%		11%	43%	29%			
Climate Crisis and Covid-19	46		100%		93%	3%	3%	89%	11%			

Note. N = Number of articles. P= Pro, C= Con, A= Ambiguous.

A total of 445 articles were collected from the *National Post*. In the *National Post*, 83 articles related to the theme “effects of the climate crisis”. Of those, 44 articles were from *Reuters*, with 98% that were in support of addressing the effects of the climate crisis and only 2% were ambiguous. *The Canadian Press* accounted for 28 of these articles. Of those articles, 89% supported addressing the effects of the climate crisis, 7% of the articles were ambiguous and 4% were climate change denialism. All of the articles purchased from other media outlets were supportive of addressing the effects of the climate crisis. The *National Post* staff wrote five articles that related to the theme “effects of the climate crisis”. Four of the five articles were denying climate change while only one article supported addressing the effects of the climate crisis. The authors of some of these articles even denied the legitimacy of the science proving the

climate crisis is happening, and other times they were engaging in “new climate denialism”. As previously mentioned, “new climate denialism” is the belief in climate science while also supporting continued fossil fuel extraction (S. Klein, 2020). In total, there were 64 articles focused on the theme effects of the climate crisis that included references to climate science. *Reuters* supported climate science in 97% of their articles, while 3% were ambiguous. *The Canadian Press* supported climate science in 87% of their articles, 7% were ambiguous, and 4% were denying climate science. Other media outlets supported climate science in 100% of their news stories. The *National Post* journalists wrote four articles referencing climate science. Of these four articles, three were dismissive of climate science. In these articles, the *National Post* journalists attempted to reinterpret the IPCC Report to make climate science look inaccurate, and to make research on the climate crisis look useless. One of the four articles supported climate science, which equates to 25%.

The Canadian corporate sector and bank investments are inextricably connected to industries that worsen the climate crisis. In the *National Post*, there were 76 articles related to “corporate/bank investments”, 23 were critical of corporate investments and in support of green investments, and 47 were not concerned about the climate crisis, or were against green investments. When examining those numbers by media outlet within the *National Post*, a clearer picture of the biases in the *National Post* appears. For example, *Reuters* supported green investments and addressed the economic toll of the climate crisis in 86% of their articles relating to “corporate/bank investments” but ignored the climate crisis in 14% (one article). *The Canadian Press* wrote 40 articles relating to “corporate/bank investments” with 40% in favor of green investments, 48% that did not support green investments, and 12% that were ambiguous. Other media outlets accounted for three of the total articles in this theme and one third were

critical of corporate/bank investments, one third were ambiguous, and one third were against. As for articles written by the *National Post* staff, every single one was either against green investments, or outright ignored the climate crisis.

Alternative media was critical of the fossil fuel industry's role in the climate crisis as seen in the data. The mainstream media did not take such a clear stance. For example, 47% of *The Canadian Press* articles were critical of the fossil fuel industries, 41% were not critical of the industries and supported the fossil fuel sector, while 12% were ambiguous. *Reuters'* articles were more balanced: 43% of their articles criticized the fossil fuel industries, 43% were in support of the industries, and 14% (one article) was ambiguous. Two of the articles from other media outlets were critical of the fossil fuel industries, while one article was ambiguous. In stark contrast, the articles that were written by the *National Post* staff were explicitly clear in their support of the fossil fuel sector.

"Environmental racism" is a harsh consequence of a neoliberal economy. Unfortunately, the *National Post* was not supportive of addressing environmental racism. In the *National Post* there were 53 articles relating to the theme "environmental racism". *Reuters* had six articles published in the *National Post* relevant to this theme. Of these articles, 83% acknowledged environmental racism as problematic and 17% (one article) did not acknowledge it as a problem. *The Canadian Press* wrote 22 articles related to this theme and 91% did not find it to be problematic and 9% were ambiguous. The *National Post* staff wrote 25 articles relating to "environmental racism" and while 4% (i.e. one article) acknowledged environmental racism as problematic, 92% did not view it as problematic, and the remaining 4% were ambiguous. As the timeline of this study is at the same time as the Wet'suwet'en pipeline blockades occurred, many of the articles on this theme were focused on the blockades from a negative perspective.

Of the articles on “environmental racism”, 43 were on the Wet’suwet’en pipeline blockades. Neither *Reuters* (1) nor *The Canadian Press* (18) articles supported the Wet’suwet’en people, Indigenous rights, or the blockades. *Reuters* wrote one article condemning the Wet’suwet’en people and the blockades. As for *The Canadian Press* articles, 89% condemned the Wet’suwet’en people and the blockades and 11% were ambiguous. The *National Post* journalists wrote 24 articles about the Wet’suwet’en people and the pipeline blockades, 4% were in support of the blockades, 4% were ambiguous. The other 92% were condemning the Wet’suwet’en people who opposed the LNG pipeline, or were condemning the blockades themselves, or were undermining traditional systems of Indigenous governance. There is an obvious lack of support for Indigenous peoples in mainstream corporate media outlets owned by Postmedia. These discourses will be explored further in Chapter 5.

There were many articles on “politicians and the climate crisis” in the *National Post*. In all three media outlets, this category had the most related articles. In the *National Post*, there were 218 articles related to this theme. *The Canadian Press* wrote 100 articles on “politicians and the climate crisis”, 43% supporting politicians addressing the climate crisis and taking climate action, 41% against, and 16% ambiguous. *Reuters* wrote 35 articles on this theme, 89% of which supported politicians addressing the climate crisis and taking climate action, 6% against, and 6% that were ambiguous. Other media outlets wrote 50% in favor, and 50% against. As seen in the data from the wire services, they do support politicians addressing the climate crisis more than they are against it. However, the *National Post*’s own journalists do not support politicians addressing the climate crisis and the data from the *National Post*’s own articles is quite different. The *National Post* wrote 81 articles on this theme and only one, or 1%, was in favor of politicians addressing the climate crisis. A whopping 94% were against politicians

addressing the climate crisis, and 5% were ambiguous. It was almost always the case that the *National Post* wrote pro-corporate pieces in this theme.

The *National Post* had significantly fewer articles related to the “carbon tax” than most of the other themes. *Reuters* and other non-Canadian media outlets did not have any articles related to this theme. This is likely because the carbon tax is a Canadian policy and *Reuters* writes articles with a global perspective. Any articles on carbon tax policies in other countries would have been excluded from the sample for this research based on the exclusion criteria. As such, the *National Post* had a total of 30 articles related to the carbon tax. *The Canadian Press* is attributed to 19 of those articles and the other 11 are from the *National Post*’s staff. As for *The Canadian Press*, 21% of their articles were in favor of the carbon tax, 47% were against, and 32% were ambiguous. By comparison, the *National Post* staff, had no articles in support of the carbon tax, with 91% against, and 9% (one article) ambiguous. Combining the two, *National Post* staff articles and *The Canadian Press* articles, the *National Post* published 30 articles related to the carbon tax 63% were against it, and only 13% were in support of it. The *National Post* did not put forward any suggestions for alternatives to reducing emissions. This is in stark contrast to the alternative media outlet, *Rabble*, in which 100% of their articles were in favor of a carbon tax for reducing emissions.

Based on how the carbon tax was presented to the public, a hypothesis can be made that the *National Post* staff is against climate action, at least when one examines what their journalists wrote. The data indicates that the *National Post* staff did not support climate action, such as the extinction rebellion protests⁶ or the global youth climate strikes during the time from

⁶ Extinction Rebellion is a global environmental movement that began in the United Kingdom. It engages in nonviolent protests to draw attention to the climate crisis and biodiversity loss. The Extinction Rebellion movement argues that unless serious climate action is undertaken immediately, the Earth is on the verge of social and ecological collapse.

September 1, 2019, to December 31, 2020. In total there were 148 articles related to “climate action”. The *National Post* staff wrote 21 articles related to climate action: 81% were not in support of climate action, 14% were ambiguous, and a meagre 5% were in support of climate action. Of the articles on climate action, from all three sources in the *National Post* 73 were on “youth and climate action”. The *National Post* staff wrote three articles about the sub theme “youth and climate action”. Every article written by the *National Post*’s staff articles opposed the demands of youth climate activists such as those put forward by youth activists Greta Thunberg and Autumn Pelletier.

However, the wire services that the *National Post* purchases from proved to be more supportive of climate action, especially youth and climate action. *The Canadian Press* contributed 76 articles related to “climate action” and the wire service supported climate action in 78% of their related articles, with 11% against, and 11% ambiguous. Of these articles 27 were about youth and climate action with 81% of these articles supporting the position of youth protesting, 7% were against, while 11% were ambiguous. Lastly, *Reuters* and other wire services, supported “climate action”, and “youth and climate action” in 98% of their articles while 2% were ambiguous. So, unlike alternative media, the mainstream media does not always support climate action. Overall, however, there was significant support for climate action in the mainstream media from September 1, 2019, to December 31, 2020.

The final three themes assessed in this study were “renewable and alternative energy”, the “GND”, and “the climate crisis and Covid-19”. Renewable and alternative energy was the category that had the least articles in both alternative and mainstream media. Alternative media wrote about renewable and alternative energy in five articles between the two outlets, while the mainstream media wrote about it twice. *The Canadian Press* and *Reuters* each had one article

that supported renewable and alternative energy. The *National Post* staff did not write about renewable and alternative energy at all. Omission of issues and strategies to reduce emissions further reinforces the hegemonic position that fossil fuels are the best energy source for the Canadian economy. As mentioned above, omission is a hegemonic strategy that is often used to reinforce the status quo (Orlowski, 2012). As such, the potential of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power is under-reported in this mainstream media outlet.

The next theme is the “GND”. The *National Post* had 22 related articles from all sources. They published four related articles from *The Canadian Press* which supported the GND in 75% and against in 25%. Eight of the 22 articles were from *Reuters* and all of these were in favor of the GND. Unlike these two wire services, the *National Post* staff wrote 10 articles relating to the GND and 100% were against it. The data suggests that *The Canadian Press* and *Reuters* see positive potential in the GND. However, the *National Post* staff either does not see this potential of the GND or are unwilling to write about it.

The final theme is “the climate crisis and Covid-19”. The *National Post* made connections between the climate crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic in 46 articles. *The Canadian Press* made the connections in 9 articles, 89% of these articles supported the Covid-19 economic recovery addressing the climate crisis and 11% were against it. Similarly, *Reuters* agreed that the Covid-19 economic recovery is an opportunity to address the climate crisis in 93% of their 30 articles, were ambiguous in 3%, and were against it in 3%. Other media outlets, such as *The Telegraph*, *Bloomberg News*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* contributed two articles on this theme and were split 50% for and 50% against. Lastly, the *National Post* staff wrote five articles that related to this theme and all five were against it.

4.5 Summary

Table 4.5

Full Data Results

Themes	<i>Rabble</i>			<i>The Tyee</i>			<i>National Post</i>		
	Pro	Con	Ambig	Pro	Con	Ambig.	Pro	Con	Ambig.
Effects of the climate crisis	100%			100%			89%	6%	4%
Sub-theme: Climate science	100%			100%			89%	6%	5%
Corporate/Bank Investment	100%			100%			30%	62%	8%
Sub-theme: Fossil Fuels	100%			100%			25%	73%	8%
Environmental Racism	100%			100%			11%	83%	6%
Sub-theme: Wet'suwet'en Protests	100%			100%			2%	91%	7%
Politicians and the climate crisis	100%			100%			35%	55%	10%
Carbon Tax	100%			N/A			13%	63%	23%
Climate Action	100%			100%			77%	16%	7%
Sub-theme: Youth and Climate Action	100%			100%			88%	7%	5%
Climate Crisis and Covid-19	100%			100%			80%	17%	2%

Renewables/alternative energy	100%	100%	100%	
Green New Deal	100%	100%	50%	50%

Note. Ambig. Means ambiguous.

This chapter presented the actual counted articles of the data for each theme. As seen in the set of tables throughout the chapter, the results show that both *Rabble* and *The Tyee* are sources of information that highlight the climate crisis and the need to do something about it. The results indicated that the *National Post* does provides some content that addresses the climate crisis and promotes the GND, but readers are also often presented with climate denialism from the *National Post* staff. The wire services, *Reuters* and *The Canadian Press* often addressed the climate crisis and often supported climate action in the *National Post*. The next chapter will provide the results of CDA on each of the themes in the three media outlets. This will demonstrate the range of discourses on the climate crisis and GND in more depth.

Although the *National Post* may be purchasing articles that address the climate crisis, many of the articles that the outlet's staff create are pro-corporate, anti-climate action, climate change denial pieces. It is odd that they are willing to purchase and run progressive news pieces, but internally, the journalists work to dispel progressive discourses most of the time. By purchasing progressive pieces, it may be an attempt for the *National Post* to look balanced in their news coverage, as they do have some stories on the climate crisis. To the average reader it appears that the paper does cover the climate crisis. When a deeper analysis is done, the values and beliefs of the media outlet are evident in what their own journalists produce. These pieces promote the corporate agenda and serve as a hegemonic device for the fossil fuel industry.

The fossil fuel sector continues to be an important source of employment in several parts of Canada. These companies are deeply connected to various Canadian institutions and likely advertise with the *National Post*, although it is difficult to find who advertises with the media outlet because, unlike *Rabble* and *The Tyee*, the *National Post* does not have a list of their corporate advertisers. One can only speculate who the *National Post*'s corporate advertisers might be. Alternative media is willing to criticize the industries and call for a winding down of the fossil fuel sector. The mainstream media does not call for a winding down of the fossil fuel sector. The wire services' articles, published in the *National Post*, were sometimes critical of the fossil fuel sector. However, the journalists working directly for the *National Post* do not connect the climate crisis with the fossil fuel industry, nor do they address winding down the fossil fuel industry. It is also notable that there were 50% more articles on the "GND" in the alternative media outlets than in the mainstream media outlet. The alternative media outlets wrote about the GND, or elements of the GND, in 33 articles, whereas the *National Post* wrote about it in 22 articles even though there were a lot more articles from the *National Post*. It is worth mentioning again, that criticism of renewable energy sources is under-reported in both the alternative media outlets and the *National Post*.

Chapter 5 Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the discourses surrounding the climate crisis and GND in the data that was collected from *Rabble*, *The Tyee*, and the *National Post*. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the timeline for the data collection for this research is from September 1, 2019, to December 31, 2020. A lot happened in those 16 months, such as the global climate strikes, the 2019 Canadian federal election, and the Coronavirus pandemic. As such, there were a range of discourses on the climate crisis and GND. As mentioned in the methodology of this research, CDA was implemented to examine the discourses in the selected media outlets.

As a reminder, the primary research question for this study is:

What are the main discourses about the climate crisis and the Green New Deal in Canadian mainstream text-based media compared to alternative text-based media from September 1, 2019, to December 31, 2020?

The secondary research questions are:

- Has the Coronavirus-related economic downturn affected media discourses on the climate crisis and the GND?
- In what ways have the mainstream and alternative text-based media taken up the term “Green New Deal”?
- How do these mainstream and alternative media outlets treat climate crisis side effects such as environmental racism?
- In what ways do the mainstream and alternative media promote a neoliberal agenda, particularly regarding the fossil fuel industries?

The data from Chapter 4 provides some information on how the media outlets are presenting the climate crisis, but the discourses need to be scrutinized. The results in Chapter 4 indicate that *Rabble* and *The Tyee* have articles that confirm that the climate crisis is real, but what were the specific discourses on the climate crisis and GND? The results also show that the *National Post* has content addressing the climate crisis, but the media outlet also has articles that do not support governments taking action regarding the climate crisis. The presentation of data in Chapter 4 indicated that the alternative media had many articles on the climate crisis, as did the *National Post*. However, the perspectives in the two types of media were different. In this chapter, I will show a more detailed analysis of the information presented in the articles.

The media outlets used in this study demonstrate a variety of discourses on the climate crisis and GND because they are vastly different in their structures. As mentioned in previous chapters, *Rabble* and *The Tyee* are alternative media outlets and the *National Post* is a mainstream media outlet. As described in chapter three, alternative media are usually non-profit, free from the influence of shareholders, and have a non-hierarchical structure (Kozolanka & Orłowski, 2018); both *Rabble* and *The Tyee* have these qualities. Alternative media has much lower readership compared to mainstream media. For the outlets in this study, the *National Post* has far greater readership and reach than *Rabble* and *The Tyee* combined. The *National Post* is owned by a hedge fund in the United States called Postmedia (Edge, 2017). Postmedia owns over 120 news sources in Canada, and as a result, there is a lack of competition in Canadian media and a lack of consumer choice in media (Edge, 2017). As explained in the literature on media ownership, Edge (2017) found that Postmedia “owned eight out of nine leading dailies in B.C., Alberta, and Saskatchewan” (p. 853). Media monopolies are dangerous and result in a propaganda model of the media (Herman & Chomsky, 2002).

The *National Post* purchases a substantial portion of their articles from wire services with a seemingly smaller number of articles being written by the outlet's own staff. Content from the *National Post* runs in Postmedia's news outlets nation-wide, with over 120 news platforms, including newspapers such as the *National Post*, the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, and the *Vancouver Sun*. The power structures of the media outlets in this study may influence their production of discourses on the climate crisis and GND (Buckingham, 2003). Alternative media outlets have some controls over their journalists. For example, *The Tyee* has a commitment to "Publish credible, fact-based journalism, fairly reported and rigorously edited" (*The Tyee*, n.d.b, para. 29). Similarly, *Rabble* has a commitment to "media democracy and factual journalism" (*Rabble*, n.d.a, para. 7). CDA will reveal the discourses that many Canadians are consuming about the climate crisis and GND in mainstream media, and what discourses exist in the alternative media outlets used in this study. This chapter will present the analysis by theme. The chapter will discuss how the three media outlets engage with each theme.

5.2 CDA In Action

At this time, it is prudent to demonstrate how CDA was used on the data. As discussed in Chapter 3, language is connected to power, so each of the articles was scrutinized for how certain perspectives were articulated. The first step in utilizing CDA was to examine the language used in both the heading and the body of the article. This was followed by identifying sentences and key words that the author used to influence readers. In this subsection, I will include samples of text from each of the media outlets on the topic of the Wet'suwet'en protests and show how the media outlets used language to influence their readers to a particular viewpoint. This example will demonstrate the process that I followed for all the articles in the data sample.

5.2.1 *Rabble*

The headline for the article is “Rail blockades are proving to be an effective non-violent response to state violence” (Patterson, 2020). This article was published on February 15th, 2020.

Here are the first three paragraphs:

In the early hours of February 6, militarized Canadian police began a five-day long assault on the unceded and sovereign territory of the Wet’suwet’en people in northern British Columbia to facilitate the construction of a fracked gas pipeline that lacks that nation’s consent.

Nine days later, Wet’suwet’en land defender Dinize Ste ohn tsiy tweeted that a heavy RCMP presence on Wet’suwet’en territory continues.

In response to this violation of the rule of law (notably the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), Indigenous peoples and allies took to the rails to demand that the RCMP and TC Energy Coastal GasLink, the company behind the controversial pipeline, remove themselves from Wet’suwet’en territory (Patterson, 2020, para. 1-3)

From the headline of this article, the author’s intention is apparent; Patterson’s (2020) perspective is that the Wet’suwet’en protests are effective, and that Canada is engaging in state violence. The first sentence informs readers that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has been “militarized” and is engaging in an “assault” (Patterson, 2020). Photos indicate that the RCMP are using military equipment such as tanks. Usage of the word “heavy” as an adjective describing the RCMP presence in the second paragraph is also noteworthy. These words are likely meant inform the reader that the police response was heavy-handed. The author also makes it clear that the land the RCMP is policing is “the unceded and sovereign territory of the Wet’suwet’en people” (Patterson, 2020). This conveys the notion that the RCMP do not have a

right to be on that land. A key word at the end of the first paragraph is “consent” as it tells the reader that the company building the LNG pipeline does not have the Wet’suwet’en people’s permission to do so and implies that the company must get consent. As such, Patterson (2020) is aligning this perspective with the hereditary chiefs who oppose the LNG pipeline. In paragraph three, Patterson (2020) informs readers that the RCMP are violating the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which shows the author’s solidarity with the hereditary chiefs.

5.2.2 *The Tyee*

The following excerpt comes from an article in *The Tyee* that was published on February 6th, 2020. This article is titled “Wet’suwet’en Raids: Canada chooses colonialism again”. The first two paragraphs read as follows:

Whenever Canada has a chance to depart from its brutal colonial past with First Nations, it automatically lapses into bad habits. On Thursday, the RCMP and the Canadian state came to a moral crossroads on a snowy country road and looked briefly down a pathway to reconciliation. Then it said, “Fuck it.”

A highly militarized police presence once again used force against Wet’suwet’en protestors blocking the construction of a \$6.6-billion methane pipeline needed to feed a grossly uneconomic \$40-billion liquefied natural gas project (Nikiforuk, 2020, para. 1-2)

Similar to the *Rabble* article, the intention of the article is apparent in the headline as it states, “Canada chooses colonialism again”. From a progressive perspective, to insinuate that the Canadian government is continuing to utilize colonial strategies is to clearly attempt to influence the reader not to support the federal government in this conflict. In the first paragraph of the article, Nikiforuk (2020) uses language to demonstrate how Canada eschews any “moral”

conviction as it chooses to repeat injustices against Indigenous peoples. Nikiforuk (2020) also writes that the RCMP is “highly militarized” and “used force”. These descriptors are not friendly to the RCMP and, in this article, Nikiforuk is being critical of both the government and the RCMP. Nikiforuk (2020) also calls the LNG pipeline “grossly uneconomic”. Later in the article he backs that description up with facts about the natural gas market and the negative economic prospect of the LNG pipeline. This article is in support of the Wet’suwet’en hereditary chiefs.

5.2.3 National Post

The following excerpt is from a *National Post* article written by a staff journalist, John Ivison, (2020a). This article was published on February 14th, 2020 and is entitled, “John Ivison: Trudeau's failure to reform First Nations politics is the root cause of #shutdowncanada”.

What most citizens want to hear, one suspects, is less equivocation and more fortitude.

They want their prime minister to come home and show some leadership.

In the short term, that means meeting with premiers and coordinating a response that keeps food, propane, airplane de-icing fluid and other essentials flowing across the country. Canada is particularly vulnerable to these kinds of extortion efforts, given the choke points on its rail networks. While no-one wants another Oka, there are limits on the right to protest (Ivison, 2020a, para. 5-7)

The headline links the name of Canada’s Prime Minister to the pejorative word “failure.” Moreover, the headline makes a further connection between this failure as the cause of the entire country shutting down. Even using the hashtag “#shutdowncanada” is an example of hyperbole. By no means was Canada shutdown because of the struggle over the pipeline in northwestern British Columbia.

In this excerpt of the article, the author suggests that Justin Trudeau is weak and perhaps even ill-suited to be the leader of the country. Ivison (2020a) states “one suspects” so it is not his opinion, but some unknown being, and implies there are many of these anonymous people. This is not a statement grounded in facts. Further, Ivison (2020a) calls the blockades “extortion efforts” which makes it seem that the blockades are about extorting Canada, a contention that can be viewed as intending to increase racial tensions between the Indigenous protestors and the rest of Canada; Ivison is able to make this absurd claim because he refuses to offer details about why the struggle occurred in the first place. This is an example of omission as a hegemonic strategy. In the last sentence, Ivison (2020a) contends that there are “limits on the right to protest” which implies that the Wet’suwet’en blockades and the solidarity blockades are beyond what he considers to be reasonable. Ivison (2020a) omits any critique of the LNG pipeline specifically; indeed, he only references the economic impact of the blockades. Similarly, Ivison omits discussing the RCMP involvement on the unceded Wet’suwet’en territory. This journalist aligns himself with the stance of the LNG corporation in this article, although it could be argued that he is not as overt as he could have been. He suggests that the Indian Act has had a negative impact on Indigenous governance, which is true.⁷ He indicated that the government needs to abolish the Indian Act and push forward on Indigenous self-governance. Ivison (2020a), argues for a governance structure “[t]hat would not give First Nations a veto on economic development” (para. 20). Ivison is implying that Canada should have rights to economic development on all

⁷ The Indian Act imposed a system of governance on First Nations communities that required the communities to abandon their traditional forms of governance (Poucette, 2018). The new system implemented elected band councils. Many Indigenous people argue that elected band councils have reduced democracy in their communities as the people have less influence in this system than in their traditional system (Poucette, 2018). Some First Nations communities, like the Wet’suwet’en, have retained their hereditary system along side the elected band council system.

land in Canada and on unceded territory. This statement ignores the fact that the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs oppose a pipeline being built on unceded territory.

In sum, this example of how I utilized CDA demonstrates how language is connected to political ideology. The hegemonic discourses used in the *National Post* clearly support the construction of the pipeline on unceded Wet'suwet'en territory. The counter-hegemonic discourses used in both alternative media outlets oppose corporate power, and state power, including police actions. The *Rabble* and *The Tyee* articles also tacitly supports the Canadian state recognizing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As shown in this example, CDA enables the researcher to make connections between language and power.

5.3 Theme – Effects of the Climate Crisis

As discussed in Chapter 1, the climate crisis is getting worse, and the effects are being experienced more intensely in Canada and around the world. There should be no controversy about the fact that climate change is happening and that humans are the cause (N. Klein, 2015). Climate scientists contend that the worst effects are still to come (IPCC, 2018). The media has a role in transmitting this information (Masterman, 1985; McChesney, 2015). In fact, the media can shape people's awareness and concern for the climate crisis (Carvalho, 2010; Good, 2008, Hackett et al., 2017). The results from the data indicate that all three media outlets address the effects of the climate crisis to varying degrees.

5.3.1 Alternative Media

The data from Chapter 4 shows that *Rabble* often addressed the climate crisis. A few of the 15 articles in this category were written by David Suzuki, who is a Canadian scientist and environmental activist. Many of the writers in *Rabble* and *The Tyee* are activists which is a characteristic of alternative media (Kozolanka & Orłowski, 2018). Suzuki (2020b) wrote an

article titled “What do we do when our home is on fire?” In this article, Suzuki details the effects of the climate crisis that are being experienced around the world, including Canada, such as the fires in Australia and Brazil and the influx of invasive species in Canada’s boreal forests (Suzuki, 2020b). Suzuki (2020b) concludes the article by criticizing the pending Teck Frontier project in Northern Alberta. The last point is important because Suzuki (2020b) points out that Canada is implicit in global rising emissions and the growing environmental crisis. In sum, the article clearly states that the climate crisis is human caused, and explains the effects of the climate crisis, as it critiques continued investment in fossil fuel projects.

Rabble journalists also criticize the mainstream media for their reporting of the climate crisis. In two of the 15 articles, the journalists call for better climate crisis coverage and climate crisis literacy. In one article, Lee (2019) argues that mass media and local media have a key role to play in Canada’s collective climate literacy. In another article, Suzuki (2020c) asserts that the mainstream media has done a poor job of reporting on the climate crisis. In these two articles, *Rabble* is producing discourses that criticize the corporate media. Further, after the analysis, all 15 articles discuss equity, community, and improving the future for people and the environment. Similar to *Rabble*, *The Tyee* produced progressive discourses on the climate crisis. The articles in the theme “effects of the climate crisis” advocate for improving the future in a sustainable way. Improving the environment in a sustainable way is a progressive value that is identified by Lakoff (2014). These articles are examples of the alternative media outlets’ progressive content on the effects of the climate crisis.

Both alternative media outlets write about the effects of the climate crisis in the local context. The literature noted that, in general, the corporate media often framed the climate crisis in a global context rather than local (Carvalho, 2010; Hackett et al., 2017). While this is true for

some articles from the alternative media outlets, the framing is more often local than global. In *The Tyee*, 39% of the framing of “the effects of the climate crisis” is global and 61% is local. One article reported the health impacts of the climate crisis for Canadians (Wyton, 2020). Another discusses the looming wildfire seasons in western Canada, explaining that “Since 2003, wildfires have been burning bigger, more often and in increasingly unpredictable ways” (Struzik, 2020, para. 20). Struzik (2020) advocates for addressing possible solutions to the climate crisis to prevent the catastrophic fires (Struzik, 2020).

Rabble also wrote about the climate crisis with local framing. Of their articles, 93% were about the effects of the climate crisis relating to Canada, and 7% were presented in a global frame. One article explains, “people in Canada face a range of health risks, including the many effects of increasing wildfires and pollution, such as asthma and other respiratory illnesses” (Suzuki, 2019, para. 5). The local framing helps Canadians understand that the climate crisis is being felt here, too, not just internationally, and may influence people’s understanding of the crisis (Carvalho, 2010). The *Rabble* articles in this theme address the ramifications from the growing crisis such as fires and floods in Canada, to the impact on women in Canada. Local framing of “effects of the climate crisis” is one of the main discourses for this theme in alternative media. Alternative media articles for the theme “effects of the climate crisis” are informative for readers on the reality of the climate crisis in Canada.

5.3.2 Mainstream Media

The mainstream media outlet, the *National Post*, provided a lot of data to analyze. As evident in Chapter 4, the *National Post* writes about some themes more often than others. The theme “effects of the climate crisis” was a dominant one among the articles analyzed. Most of the articles related to this theme were purchased, and the *National Post* staff only contributed five articles. On the surface it appears that the *National Post* is reporting on the “effects of the

climate crisis”. However, an analysis of the articles reveals a different reality. The media can influence Canadians’ perceptions of the climate crisis, but the information in these articles is insufficient because of a lack of local relevance (Carvalho, 2010; Good, 2008; Hackett et al., 2017). The articles are more global than local, giving Canadians the impression that the climate crisis is removed from our daily lives. Analyzing all the articles from the *National Post* collectively, 64% of the articles related to “effects of the climate crisis” are presented within a global frame including 100% of *Reuters* articles on this particular theme. As for *The Canadian Press*, 13% are framed in the global context and 87% are framed locally. The *National Post* staff used local framing in 40% of articles, and 60% were framed globally. Lastly, 100% of the articles from other media outlets were not about the climate crisis in Canada. As such, the findings in the mainstream media align with those of Carvalho (2010) and Hackett et al. (2017) in that the climate crisis is often presented globally, not locally. This hegemonic messaging tells Canadians they are far from the effects of the climate crisis, and this messaging protects the interests of the fossil fuel industry in Canada. This is a discourse that teachers should unravel with their students through critical media literacy.

The data from the *National Post* demonstrates that the media outlet does not consistently publish articles that support addressing the climate crisis. Readers of the *National Post* have myriad of discourses to interpret. However, even though there were discourses in the *National Post* supporting addressing the “effects of the climate crisis”, these articles lacked a sense of urgency regarding the climate crisis. For example, one article from *The Canadian Press* discusses increases in wildfires in Australia and Canada, yet it did not explicitly connect the fires to the climate crisis. Instead, the article states, “The role of climate change in the fires remains a subject of debate in Australia” (Weber, 2020a, para. 10). The article also quotes a firefighter

from Alberta who was on his way to help fight the massive fires in Australia. The quote in the article states,

‘The climate is what it is. We may not be getting as much precipitation, or the average temperatures may be increasing. Whatever it is that’s contributing to the increasing risk, how do we mitigate that with the way we interact ... How do we build?’ (Weber, 2020a, para. 11)

The article is alluding to the climate crisis, but the reader is left to make the inference on their own. The article also fails to mention health risks that will come from the fires, as Suzuki (2019) did in his *Rabble* piece on the increasing wildfires. In fact, in the 16 months of data gathered from the *National Post*, very few articles discussed the health implications of the climate crisis. Readers did not get much information on how the climate crisis will affect them.

A key discourse in the *National Post* is that the climate crisis does not need immediate action. This is similar to the findings of Boykoff and Boykoff (2004), Gelspan (2005), and Hackett et al. (2017), all who determined that the mainstream media does not signal that the climate crisis needs urgent attention. In the example of the Weber (2020) article from the *National Post*, it does relate to the “effects of the climate crisis” and informs the reader that wildfires are going to worsen as global temperatures increase. The article quotes the firefighter who states “whatever it is” that is increasing the risk of forest fires gives some readers the impression the cause is unknown. The article does not indicate that the climate crisis can be prevented. This article did not use words like “climate crisis” or “climate emergency” to indicate a sense of urgency.

In addition to the lack of urgency strategy, 80% of the articles written by the *National Post* journalists were actual climate denial pieces. Many of these climate denial pieces fell under

the sub-theme “climate science”. In total there were five articles relating to “effects of the climate crisis” and four of those articles also related to climate science. In one article, convicted felon and former media baron, Conrad Black (2019) calls concern for the climate crisis “green terror”. Black’s use of the word terror implies that it is a fear, or worse that it implies “terrorist”. He uses this phrase in more than one article. This particular article was written after the climate strike movement erupted across Canada. The data shows that in 16 months, the *National Post* journalists wrote five articles relating to the “effects of the climate crisis” and “climate science” and 80% of articles were promoting climate denialism. This demonstrates that the *National Post* staff is more concerned with discrediting climate science and the climate crisis than they are about reporting the truth to their readers.

5.3.3 Sub-Theme – Climate Science

This sub-theme was included because climate science has been questioned in the media, and by extension, throughout significant segments of society. In the alternative media outlets, *Rabble* and *The Tyee*, “climate science” was supported 100% of the time. This was not the case for the mainstream media outlet, the *National Post*. Support for climate science wavered depending on whether an article was written by *Reuters*, *The Canadian Press*, another outlet, or *National Post* staff. *Reuters* and *The Canadian Press* do support climate science most of the time, but often the articles lack a sense of urgency. There is evidence in the literature that fossil fuel companies pay skeptics to mislead the public about climate science (N. Klein, 2015; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Not only have skeptics used the media to mislead the public, but Boykoff and Boykoff (2004) assert that journalists aspire for balanced reporting on the climate crisis, which results in climate skeptics having their views magnified to something resembling equal coverage. Boykoff and Boykoff (2004) contend that the climate crisis is not a balanced issue and balanced reporting on it is a disservice. For this thesis, balanced reporting is viewed as

being against showing the climate crisis is real because it is not presenting the reality. In the *National Post*, “balanced” reporting of climate science was not evident in a single article but was evident across the spectrum of the content. Climate science denial did get a platform in the *National Post*. The authors of some of these articles discredited the legitimacy of the science proving the climate crisis is happening, and other times they position the economy against the environment, as though a healthy economy and a healthy environment are mutually exclusive. Overall, the *National Post* writers did not support climate science. However, *Reuters* and *The Canadian Press* do support climate science most of the time, but neither demonstrate urgency in their framing of the issue.

5.4 Theme – Corporate/ Bank Investments

All three media outlets published a significant number of articles relating to the theme “corporate/ bank investments”. McChesney (2015) contends that the news is continuously pitched to the richest one third of people. Many of the people who are not in the richest one third buy in to the political perspectives of these discourses. Good (2008) explains that this is problematic because addressing the climate crisis would be fundamentally challenging to the economic interests of elites. Similarly, the GND challenges the capitalist system itself (N. Klein, 2019). The sub-theme for ‘corporate/ bank investments’ is “fossil fuels”.

5.4.1 Alternative media

Alternative media often published articles about corporate/bank investments; however, the discourses they used are significantly different than what is read in the *National Post*. Hackett et al. (2017) explains that alternative media is more likely to use progressive solution-based framing in their articles. For instance, the alternative media outlets criticized continued investments in and subsidies for the fossil fuel industry and encouraged diversification of the economy. For example, in *Rabble*, Cameron (2020) states, “Canada desperately needs an

economic strategy based on more than natural resource exploitation and North American integration poorly disguised as free trade. Greening the economy is the obvious way to go” (para. 25). Similarly, *The Tyee* heavily criticized corporate investments in the fossil fuel industry. For example, Price (2020a) criticized Canadian banks for making green declarations while investing in fossil fuel projects. Price (2020a) concludes the article by encouraging readers “with one of the big five [banks], write to your branch manager and tell them you’ll move your business to a credit union unless they stop financing billions of fossil fuel projects” (para. 14). This article demonstrates solution-based journalism that encourages public action, both of which are characteristics of alternative media (Hackett et al., 2017; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). In conclusion, the discourses on “corporate/ bank investments” in the alternative media outlets are solution focused, critical of investments that hinder climate action, and encourage citizen participation. Thus, the news in alternative media is not pandering to the business class.

5.4.2 Mainstream Media

The discourses about “corporate/ bank investments” in mainstream media differ from alternative media. Similar to the *National Post*’s articles on “climate science”, the perspective on “corporate/ bank investments” depended on which outlet the article came from. *Reuters* wrote more progressively, such as calling for an economy that does not impact the environment. However, *The Canadian Press* used mixed discourses. Sometimes, *The Canadian Press* demonstrated concern for the climate crisis, like writing about the impact the crisis will have on Canada’s GDP (Weber, 2020c). Other times, *The Canadian Press* wrote about the value of pipeline investments in Canada’s economy and how climate action affects the return on the investment (Press, 2020). This is an example of how the *National Post* publishes conflicting discourses from wire services. One discourse conveys the impact of the climate crisis on the Canadian economy, the other worries about the impact of climate action on the fossil fuel

economy. This article is an example of how the environment is pitted against the economy and it implies that there cannot be both a healthy environment and economy. In sum, there were inconsistencies in discourses relating to “corporate/ bank investments” from wire services.

As a corporate media outlet, the structure of the *National Post* affects the discourses used on “corporate/ bank investments”. Kozolanka and Orlowski (2018) explain that the perspectives in mainstream media have a lot to do with ownership. Consequently, the discourses on “corporate/ bank investments” from the *National Post* staff did not affirm climate science, nor did they support green investments or diversifying the Canadian economy. The main narrative was that climate policy threatens oil and gas investments. For example, Snyder (2020) wrote that “The federal government could end up losing money on the Trans Mountain pipeline if it further tightens its climate policy” (para. 1). Snyder (2020) conveniently omits the effects of the climate crisis from the article. This article is unmistakable evidence of the mainstream media acting as a hegemonic device for the fossil fuel industry. Both *The Canadian Press* and the *National Post* used discourses that suggest climate policy is a threat to oil and gas investments. A sub-theme of “corporate/ bank investments” is “fossil fuels” and the discourses relating to the fossil fuel industry will be explored next.

5.4.3 Sub-Theme – Fossil Fuels

Here is a secondary research question for this study: “In what ways do the mainstream and alternative media promote a neoliberal agenda, particularly the fossil fuel industry?” Articles on the fossil fuel industry appeared organically through the various search methods discussed in Chapter 3. Some articles made connections between the climate crisis and the industry, but others omitted any mention of the climate crisis.

5.4.3.1 Alternative Media

Alternative media was critical of investments in the fossil fuel industry in 100% of their articles relating to “fossil fuels”. For example, one article from *The Tyee* states that Alberta’s investment in the Keystone XL is out of touch with what is happening in the world and is an “idiotic waste of capital” as fossil fuel investors have been losing money over the last 10 years (Dembicki, 2020a, para. 2). Similarly, in a *Rabble* article, Climenhaga (2020a) reports that the TMX Pipeline will result in a loss of money and will increase Canada’s GHG emissions. These are examples of discourses that convey fossil fuels constitute a sunset industry.

Alternative media encouraged the wind down of the fossil fuel industry in Canada, thus aligning their articles with climate science. For example, in *Rabble*, Kome (2020b) explains that Canada needs to begin winding down fossil fuel extraction, “Otherwise, we can expect wildfires and superstorms regularly” (para. 17). One factor in the alternative media outlets promoting this perspective has to do with how they are funded. Buckingham (2003) explains that power structures can influence the production of discourse. So, the structure of alternative media gives journalists considerable freedoms in producing discourses that are critical of the fossil fuel industry. Alternative media have the freedom to research and write pieces based on scientific facts because they do not take money from corporate advertisers (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018).

5.4.3.2 Mainstream Media

Fossil fuels are a major industry in Canada and corporations connected to the industry may be advertising with the *National Post*. Unfortunately, the *National Post* is not transparent about who their advertisers are, so one can only speculate. As indicated in the literature on corporate media, advertising has considerable influence on the discourses a media outlet produces (Herman & Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 2015; Winter, 2007). Criticism of the fossil

fuel industry was not as clear in the *National Post* as it was in the alternative media outlets. In the *National Post*, 24% of their articles were critical of the fossil fuel industry and made connections between the industry and the growing climate emergency. In contrast, 69% supported continued investment in the fossil fuel industry. As seen in the data presented in Chapter 4, the wire services were more often critical of the fossil fuel industry as a factor in exacerbating the climate crisis. The *National Post* staff, by contrast, wrote 100% in favor of continued fossil fuel investments without any concern for the climate crisis. When it comes to “fossil fuels”, the *National Post* staff do not inform Canadians on the realities of the climate crisis and use omission as a hegemonic strategy by failing to mention that fossil fuels are a major cause of the climate crisis.

Several of the *National Post* staff articles that related to the theme “fossil fuels” were written by Rex Murphy. Murphy was a CBC broadcaster when he became embroiled in scandal. Murphy was found to have deep ties to the oil and gas industry and, for his support of fossil fuel industries operating in Canada, he collected large speaking fees from events sponsored by various oil and gas companies (Broadbent Institute, 2014). After the information became public, he became no longer connected with the CBC. These connections to the oil and gas industry are concerning because the media can be used to protect elite interests (N. Klein, 2015; McChesney, 2001, 2015; Orlowski, 2006). Murphy currently uses his *National Post* platform to champion the fossil fuel industry and discredit climate science and climate action. For example, in one article Murphy (2020a) writes, “The energy industry has been made a pariah, and mining next to energy, absent both of which the world cannot function. The fact that the bountiful resources of a whole province are landlocked is and has been a true national scandal.” He further argues that:

global warming zealots are aligning the pandemic with their obsessional cause, suggesting outright that the shutdown of the world's economies, ('degrowth' is now a catchword in their bulletins) should be seen as a model for fighting, as they term it, dreaded climate change (para. 4)

Murphy (2020a) does not give the reader any information in this paragraph. He uses language such as "zealots", "obsessional cause", and "dreaded" to convey his meaning. Thus, he conveys emotion, sarcasm, and no facts. Murphy (2020a) implies that climate action itself is a threat to the world's economies. These ideas align with conservative framing such as perceiving progressive change as a serious threat to the status quo (Lakoff, 2014). This is an example of a long-standing conservative discourse —the idea that the world is ours to take from (N. Klein, 2015). These discourses go against what climate scientists have warned for the future of the Earth (IPCC, 2018). The *National Post*'s employment of Murphy and his false narratives may lead to uninformed citizens who do not believe in climate science (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Murphy is a prolific journalist, with a lot of influence, therefore his discourses on the climate crisis are dangerous.

Another discourse that was clear in this theme was that of industry saving the planet from the climate crisis. For example, Weber (2020b) uses this discourse by contending that government regulations are not needed to ensure that the oil industry is clean, rather we can simply trust "industry do the work". In another industry-saves-the-day article, Weber (2019) asserts that a carbon dioxide sucking machine is going to address the climate crisis. However, N. Klein (2015) argues that there is a fixation with finding a miracle technology that will save the planet from the climate emergency and that is in line with corporate interests. N. Klein (2015) contends that this obsession with finding a "techno-fix" is a strategy used to avoid changing the

economy and people's lifestyles. However, leaving it up to the corporate sector to find a solution has not worked, and will not work because they will prioritize resource extraction, deregulation, and, obviously, corporate profits (N. Klein, 2015). This discourse is aligned with a tenet of neoliberalism that private industry is best, and the role of the government should be minimized (Orlowski, 2012).

5.5 Theme – Environmental Racism and the Wet'suwet'en Protests

As the climate crisis worsens, so does environmental racism. The media covers environmental racism to some extent; however, as noted in Chapter 4, the mainstream media writes very little that supports addressing environmental racism. A sub-theme of "environmental racism" is the struggles experienced by the Wet'suwet'en coastal people of northern British Columbia. The results of the sub-theme were similar to the main theme. Most of the *National Post* articles relating to "environmental racism" were about the Wet'suwet'en blockades. A brief summary of the situation is that the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs were opposed to a planned pipeline owned and to be built by the Canadian company Enbridge. The hereditary chiefs asked that the pipeline be built on a different route just north of the company's preferred route. This led to intense struggles between the hereditary chiefs, the other Wet'suwet'en people who opposed the pipeline, and their allies on one side, and the elected band council, Enbridge employees, and the RCMP on the other side (Brown & Bracken, 2020).

Due to lack of diversity in the *National Post* articles relating to "environmental racism", these two themes will be analyzed together. Articles related to this theme will be analyzed for presence and absence, bias and objectivity, and stereotyping, all of which are key aspects of critical media literacy (Buckingham, 2003). The sources will also be analyzed because a lack of perspectives results in the omission of critical issues (Bagdikian, 2004). Analyzing whose stories are told in the news and whose are omitted is a key part of critical media literacy (Buckingham,

2003). It is crucial that educators engage in this process with their students as some groups of people are considered as expendable in the service of corporate profits during this climate crisis period (N. Klein, 2019). Clearly, environmental racism should be unacceptable to people in a liberal democracy like Canada.

5.5.1 Alternative Media

Rabble and *The Tyee* wrote in support of addressing environmental racism and in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and the Wet'suwet'en people who opposed the LNG pipeline in all their articles in this category. *The Tyee* articles on "environmental racism" were also on the Wet'suwet'en rail blockades. Both *The Tyee* and *Rabble* demonstrate a bias for the perspectives of the hereditary Wet'suwet'en chiefs who opposed the LNG pipeline on their territory. As mentioned earlier, this demonstrates an anti-colonial perspective as the media outlets are in solidarity with the traditional governance system rather than the form of governance that came from the Indian Act. *Rabble* had a substantial number of articles relating to "Wet'suwet'en protests" but also had more diverse topics relating to "environmental racism". *The Tyee* devoted much coverage of the Wet'suwet'en blockades but this might have been because both the outlet and the Wet'suwet'en territory are located in British Columbia. Hackett et al. (2017) explain that alternative media is not intended to address mass audiences; rather, it is focused on communities. This helps explain *The Tyee's* focus on the Wet'suwet'en rail blockades. On the other hand, *Rabble* operates across Canada, and thus their content related to "environmental racism" is slightly broader. *Rabble* still has a great deal of content related to the conflict in the traditional lands of the Wet'suwet'en people. If this study had been conducted at a different time, the results from *The Tyee* may have been different.

A characteristic of alternative media is activist content that supports social movements such as the Wet'suwet'en blockades (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Both *Rabble* and *The Tyee* journalists explained the environmental consequences of the LNG line, and repeatedly criticized the RCMP for protecting the fossil fuel industry's interests through force against Indigenous people. These alternative media outlets constructed stories that included Wet'suwet'en people as sources and clearly represented what the hereditary chiefs and some other Wet'suwet'en people were demanding. For example, Nikiforuk (2020) explains, "The hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en Nation are not asking for much: they want Indigenous rights and title respected and acknowledged by the B.C. and Canadian governments" (para. 12). Pro-Indigenous rights was the main perspective in both alternative media outlets. *Rabble* represented more accurately what the hereditary chiefs and some Wet'suwet'en people were asking for. For example, Suzuki (2020d) explained, "The hereditary chiefs suggested an alternative route, but the pipeline company nixed it as too costly" (para. 3). In another powerful *Rabble* article, Miller (2020) explained, "the Wet'suwet'en hold title to the land, and it is the RCMP and the Canadian courts that are acting illegally, or at least contrary to traditional Aboriginal rights" (para. 10). The discourses in alternative media show the Wet'suwet'en people who oppose the pipeline in a protagonist way and the government and RCMP as the antagonists (Carvalho, 2010). The main discourses on "environmental racism" and "Wet'suwet'en protests" involved solidarity with the Indigenous people in the struggle. This discourse demonstrates that alternative media is a counter-hegemonic device.

5.5.2 Mainstream Media

The majority of articles from the *National Post* relating to "environmental racism" also related to the sub-theme 'Wet'suwet'en protests'. As mentioned in Chapter 4, there were 53 articles relating to environmental racism and 43 of those related to the Wet'suwet'en protests. Of

the articles in these themes, 22 came from *The Canadian Press*, six were from *Reuters*, and 25 were from the *National Post* staff.

The *National Post* uses hegemonic discourses in their articles relating to the “Wet’suwet’en protests”. One way this national newspaper did this was by limiting the perspective of the Wet’suwet’en people. Wet’suwet’en people are only sources in only two of the 43 articles on the Wet’suwet’en protests. Both of those articles are ambiguous on their stance. Other frequently quoted people were Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe and Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Chief, Perry Bellegarde, who became National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). It is worth noting that the AFN is an organization that represents elected First Nations governments, not hereditary leadership. Perry Bellegarde was often the only Indigenous person quoted in articles, and perhaps inappropriately it appeared the mainstream media expected him to speak on behalf of the Wet’suwet’en people. In one of *The Canadian Press* articles Perry Bellegarde stated, “We say we want to de-escalate and we want dialogue” (*The Canadian Press*, 2020, para. 12). While Perry Bellegarde did offer some perspective on the blockades, the addition of Wet’suwet’en voices could have created a more robust conversation. This example shows a demonstration of what Bagdikian (2004) and Cottle (2003) describe as the corporate media using the views of people who are in positions of power. Further, these powerful people have easy access to the media as their sources. The lack of Wet’suwet’en perspectives in the *National Post* articles reveals a preference for elite perspectives and the omission of Indigenous perspectives.

Stereotypes were another hegemonic strategy used by the *National Post*. Many of the articles relating to “Wet’suwet’en protests” reference the Mohawk blockades in Quebec, which occurred in solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en people. All of the articles that reference the

Mohawk blockades are against these protests. Throughout the history of Canada the mainstream media have used harmful stereotypes in their representation of Indigenous peoples as means of controlling them (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). This also turned out to be the case with the *National Post*'s coverage of the "Wet'suwet'en protests". For example, Ivison (2020a) states, "There is a lot of bombast about First Nations being sovereign and self-sufficient. The reality is too many are dependent on Canadian taxpayers" (para. 31). In this instance, Ivison (2020a) is stereotyping Indigenous people not only as troublemakers, but also as welfare dependents. Ivison (2020a) is deliberate in stating "taxpayers" meaning he is talking to you and your tax dollars. The *National Post*'s usage of Indigenous stereotypes is problematic because these stereotypes magnify the social, economic, and political divisions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). The *National Post* used stereotypes as a hegemonic strategy to protect corporate interests. Stereotyping was another tool to delegitimize the blockades so the public would support the construction of the Enbridge pipeline.

Another prominent *National Post* strategy to delegitimize the Wet'suwet'en blockades was portraying the movement as illegitimate based on a complex web of government policies. The newspaper would also tout that some Wet'suwet'en people would benefit from the project through employment. For example, Selley (2020) states, "This isn't Indigenous people battling the Rest of Canada. It's not even the Wet'suwet'en people battling the Rest of Canada. Rather, it's a few hereditary chiefs who hold a position on a pipeline that's perfectly aligned with Canada's protest-industrial complex" (para. 9). Articles such as this one question the legitimacy of the hereditary chiefs and omit the fact that Indigenous governance has been disrupted by the Indian Act. Selley's use of the word "few" also implies that not many agree with the position of the hereditary chiefs. The discourse used by Selley (2020) and other *National Post* reporters was

to discredit the legitimacy of the Wet'suwet'en blockades by depicting leaders as troublemakers, one of the common stereotypes used in Canadian media (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018).

The *National Post* also used omission as a strategy in their coverage of the "Wet'suwet'en protests". This is quite similar to the media coverage of the Idle No More protests. The important reasons for the protests, namely, to protest the Harper Government's deregulation of Canada's fresh waterways, were completely ignored by the mainstream media (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). Instead, the *National Post* focused on the drumming, and dancing of the Idle No More protestors and how the blockades were nuisances to hard-working Canadians (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). In a similar fashion, not only did the *National Post* omit the reasons that some Wet'suwet'en people were protesting in all their articles, but their reporters also had the audacity to say, "We need to know what the Wet'suwet'en actually want" (Spear, 2020). This sentence implies that the demands of the hereditary chiefs were unclear.

This anti-Indigenous perspective is very different from the articles in *Rabble* and *The Tyee*. Both alternative media outlets clearly explained that the We'suwet'en people wanted their Indigenous rights upheld and an alternative route for the LNG pipeline. The *National Post* dedicated significant resources to attacking the Wet'suwet'en rail blockades. Their coverage made Enbridge, the company who proposed to build the pipeline, look innocent, while the Wet'suwet'en people and the blockades were framed as antagonistic (Caravahlo, 2010).

Antagonistic framing of environmental movements is a common strategy, as stated in the scholarly literature (Carvalho, 2010). Through the coverage of these protests, the *National Post* is using discourses that support state control of unceded Indigenous land and resources (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). The hegemonic strategies by the *National Post* utilized stereotypes, undermined Indigenous governance, delegitimized the demands of the hereditary

chiefs, and supported RCMP force to end the peaceful blockades in order to protect corporate interests.

The contrast in the discourses on environmental racism in the alternative media outlets and the mainstream media outlet is stark. Alternative media consisted of counter-hegemonic discourses and shared perspectives of the hereditary chiefs and other Wet'suwet'en people who opposed the pipeline. The majority of the time, the mainstream media vilified Indigenous peoples and undermined Indigenous governance. The *National Post* utilized strategies that smacked of racism in their coverage of the Wet'suwet'en protests of 2019-2020.

5.6 Theme – Politicians and the Climate Crisis

It is noteworthy that this theme had the most articles of any of the themes in this research. The timeline of this study included a federal election in which the climate crisis was a topic of contention among the parties. The 2019 election campaign was underway just after Swedish teenage activist Greta Thunberg toured Canada and the global climate strike movement swept across the nation. Some have argued that the climate crisis was a top issue during the election (Brooks, 2019). The media can be quite influential in developing certain perspectives in the minds of Canadians on the climate crisis and GND. Government policy and regulations are necessary to address the climate crisis and implement a GND in Canada (N. Klein, 2019). This is likely why this theme appeared so often in the data.

5.6.1 Alternative Media

The two alternative media outlets published many articles on “politicians and the climate crisis”. Both *Rabble* and *The Tyee* took clear stances that were in favor of politicians who seriously addressed the climate crisis; by corollary, both were critical of the politicians who ignored or who do not advocate for addressing the crisis. Hackett et al. (2017) explain that alternative media can give a critical perspective on political structures. This is evident in both

Rabble and *The Tyee*. For example, Alberta’s premier Jason Kenney was criticized frequently by both *Rabble* and *The Tyee*. *Rabble* reported that Kenney called the carbon tax economically harmful. Kenney was criticized for pitting the environment against the economy stating, “an economy solely dependent on a dying industry and subject to the whims of an international market over which Alberta has little control is not sustainable” (Climenhaga, 2020b). The main narrative used in the alternative media outlets put forth the perspective that because of the climate crisis, fossil fuel extraction needs to wind down (S. Klein, 2020). These discourses differ from the commonly used economy versus environment binary; rather, they support a strong environment in combination with a sustainable economy. The alternative media discourses always supported immediate protection of the environment while transitioning to a fairer economy. This perspective suggests support for the GND— this will be taken up in a subsequent section in this chapter.

Alternative media also criticized those politicians who promote “new climate denialism”. This refers to speaking about climate action as they simultaneously invest in major fossil fuel projects (S. Klein, 2020). For example, in a critique of Alberta premier Jason Kenney, Climenhaga (2020c) stated in *Rabble*, “that governments like his are going to have to be seen to be taking action on the environment if they expect bankers to loan any money to the oil and gas industry to build new projects” (para. 5). Similarly, *The Tyee* criticized a British Columbia provincial Liberal MLA who is pro fossil fuels yet whose political portfolio included environment and climate change (MacLeod, 2020). British Columbia’s NDP Premier John Horgan was also often criticized by *The Tyee* and *Rabble* for being a defender of the LNG pipeline. This critique of “new climate denialism” discredits the idea that there can be serious

climate action and fossil fuel extraction simultaneously. In sum, the prominent discussion in the alternative media is that the fossil fuel industry must wind down to address the climate crisis.

5.6.2 Mainstream Media

“Politicians and the climate crisis” was also the theme that had the most articles from the mainstream media outlet. The discourses used in the mainstream media for this theme were narrow and focused on the federal Conservative and Liberal parties. There are three parties that have a significant share of popular vote: the federal NDP, the Liberal Party of Canada, and the Conservative Party of Canada, but not all parties appeared in articles in this research sample. There were several articles discussing provincial premiers Jason Kenney, Scott Moe, Doug Ford, all of whom support fossil fuel industries. John Horgan, the NDP premier of British Columbia is a strong proponent of the LNG pipeline yet he was hardly mentioned in the *National Post* articles in this research sample. Of significance for this study, during the 16-month timeline of data collection there were no articles about the federal NDP, any provincial NDP parties, or Green parties that related to the climate crisis or the GND. Recall from Chapter 2 that the literature highlighted how corporate media limits the perspectives and the spectrum of political information (Bagdikian, 2004; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). The lack of differing perspectives in political coverage in the *National Post* is worrisome because this could be preventing the public from getting the information they need (McChesney, 2015), specifically related to the climate crisis and the GND in this context. In a healthy democracy, it is clear that the mainstream media should report on all major political parties, including those that have realistic climate action policies.

There is evidence that the *National Post* prefers conservative political parties (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). As evident in the data collected for this research, conservative premiers were most often given a supportive platform for their grievances about climate action, rather than any

efforts to lower emissions. For example, in 2019, the *National Post* published an article about Andrew Scheer (the former leader of the Conservative Party of Canada) criticizing Trudeau's use of two jets during the election and the carbon ramifications of them (Blanchfield, 2019). In 2020, in another pro-Conservative piece, a *Canadian Press* journalist explores whether a climate action policy would help or hinder voter support for the Conservative Party in an election (Levitz, 2020). In this article climate action is presented as a tool that could potentially help win an election, not as something that will help save humanity. It is not surprising to see right-leaning biases in the *National Post* as Foster and McChesney (2003) found that in general corporate media have conservative biases, not left-leaning biases.

The theme "politicians and the climate crisis" also brought out the environment versus economy binary. The corporate media is known to pit the environment against the economy, often arguing that there cannot be both a healthy environment and a healthy economy (Winter, 2007; Klein, 2019; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). The *National Post* repeats this discourse frequently, especially columnist Rex Murphy. For instance, Murphy (2019) writes

"Let me revise the famous McKenna chant — the environment and the economy go hand in hand. No they don't. You can only have an environmental policy when you have an economy that can support its imperatives. I've written before: you can choose Paris, or you can choose Calgary" (Murphy, 2019, para. 11)

This statement "you can choose Paris, or Calgary" is meant to undermine climate action and protect corporate interests, specifically the oil and gas industry. Murphy writes this in more than one article. To further demonstrate this narrative, another *National Post* journalist, Dawson (2020), wrote that hitting Paris climate targets would mean a hit to both jobs and investments. Discourses such as these give the reader the impressions that there is nothing that can be done

about the climate crisis without ruining the economy (Winter, 2007). While there would be a loss of jobs in some sectors, there is also the potential for job growth in other sectors.

In the *National Post*, 55% of the perspectives in their articles were against politicians taking climate action and 35% were for politicians addressing the climate crisis. The articles that supported politicians who want to address the climate crisis came from *The Canadian Press* and *Reuters*, with only one from the *National Post* staff. The *Reuters* articles found in the *National Post* rarely referenced Canada and had a global frame which is similar to their articles in the theme “effects of the climate”.

Sometimes, *The Canadian Press* articles supported politicians addressing the climate crisis. For example, in one article *The Canadian Press* reported a lack of climate action from all four federal government parties. One article stated that the “environmental group Stand.earth has analyzed the climate plans of four Canadian political parties and has determined none do enough to avert the worst impacts of climate change” (*The Canadian Press*, 2019, para. 1). This journalist uses well-known environmental activist Tzeporah Berman as a source in the article. Berman is referenced in the article saying, “the expansion of oil and gas production in Canada makes the fight against climate change harder every day” (*The Canadian Press*, 2019, para. 7). This article takes a progressive stance as it discusses the climate emergency and calls for better climate action policies. In another *The Canadian Press* article, the focus is about cancelling the Trans Mountain Pipeline due to costs and environmental impacts (Levesque, 2020). Similar arguments were found in *Reuters* as well. Thus, the wire services does have some articles that support climate action policies; however, these discourses are not as frequent, as those in the alternative media. As a result, the *National Post* readers are only sometimes getting the information they need relating to the climate crisis.

5.7 Theme – Carbon Tax

The federal carbon tax policy was implemented in 2019 by the Liberal Government. Prior to the federal carbon tax policy, the provincial British Columbia Liberals implemented a carbon tax in 2008. The federal carbon tax faced resistance from Conservative premiers in Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Alberta. Carbon taxes can be a good step in addressing the climate crisis however, N. Klein (2019) contends that a carbon tax is not enough to keep warming below 1.5°C. S. Klein (2020) argues that much of the debate on climate action policies has been limited to carbon taxes and rebates. The articles on the federal carbon tax could have been categorized under “politicians and the climate crisis” or “climate action”. Although it is a climate action policy, it is likely not going to lower GHG emissions enough (N. Klein, 2019; S. Klein, 2020). As this theme connects to both “politicians and the climate crisis” and “climate action” I placed it in between both themes for the analysis.

5.7.1 *Alternative Media*

There were few articles written on the carbon tax in both alternative and mainstream media. As discussed in Chapter 4, *The Tyee* did not have any articles on the carbon tax during the timeline of this study. *Rabble*, however, did have five articles on this topic. *Rabble*’s articles were always in support of the carbon tax, offering minor criticism that it should not be the only climate policy implemented (Suzuki, 2020e). One *Rabble* article also reported that in Alberta “the NDP’s carbon tax had no meaningful negative impact on Alberta’s economy” (Climenhaga, 2019, para. 1). The framing of the carbon tax in *Rabble* is that it is a benefit to some individual consumers and can help the environment by getting major polluters to pay.

5.7.2 *Mainstream Media*

The *National Post* wrote almost exclusively against the carbon tax, while offering no other solutions. The articles that supported the carbon tax came from *The Canadian Press*, and

there were only four in the 16-month data collection period. There were clearly not enough positive articles about the carbon tax and the *National Post* readers consumed more content claiming a carbon tax will weaken the economy. During the timeline of this study, there were 19 articles against the carbon tax in the *National Post*. The *National Post* ran an article that quoted Premier Jason Kenney claiming that the carbon tax hurts the economy (Rabson, 2019). In the 16-month timeline only four articles in the *National Post* discuss the benefits of the carbon tax and Canada's contribution to the climate crisis. As such, the benefits of the carbon tax was far from a common perspective in this major Canadian newspaper. The omission of both the benefits of the carbon tax and of the effects of the climate crisis was a common strategy. The *National Post* frequently used corporate sources to limit the debate on the carbon tax, an approach that left citizen uninformed about how the carbon tax was set up (Carvalho, 2010). The *National Post* frequently relied on perspectives from Jason Kenney, Scott Moe, or other conservative politicians and government officials who were against the carbon tax. Citizens are merely to observe, while climate policy and debate are presented as political spectacle (Hackett et al., 2017).

The articles under this theme also include evidence of climate denialism. For example, *National Post* writer John Ivison (2020b) wrote "If you accept that man-made climate change is real, revenue neutral carbon pricing is the worst policy, except all the others that have been tried" (para. 9). This statement questions the validity of the near consensus among climate scientists regarding the warming of the Earth's atmosphere. Here, Ivison (2020b) indicates that all carbon pricing policies are bad. Further, in this article, Ivison (2020b) frames the carbon tax with personal hardship (Gunster, 2010). Ivison (2020b) does so by arguing that the carbon tax will inevitably make the cost of living go up for farmers and therefore consumers, but he fails to

mention that the effects of the climate crisis, such as droughts, fires, and flooding, would also make life much harder for farmers. Indeed, the overheating atmosphere could potentially destroy the industry in various places across Canada. Framing the carbon tax as a burden that makes Canadians' lives harder, but not explaining the serious ramifications of the climate crisis, is a massive disservice to *National Post* readers.

5.8 Theme – Climate Action and Youth and Climate Action

The number of people demanding climate action is growing globally as the climate crisis intensifies. The timeline of this study encompasses the global climate strike movement, which was driven by youth. There were other calls for climate action too, such as the Extinction Rebellion protests, and demands for better ecological stewardship. The sub-theme of climate action is “youth and climate action” as the media gave considerable attention to youth advocacy since the influence of young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg. Youth are playing an increasingly significant role in advocating for the future of the planet. Most articles in climate action were about youth so these two themes will be analyzed together.

5.8.1 Alternative Media

Alternative media frames “climate action” and “youth and climate” action in progressive ways. In alternative media, citizens are represented as instrumental in fighting the construction of new pipelines (Hackett et al., 2017). As such, the discourses promote civic action, a necessary component of a functioning democracy (Carvalho, 2010). Citizens demanding climate action through collective protest movements was a main stay in the articles collected from the two alternative media outlets. The focus of these articles is important because they bring in more and more citizens and the role the protests have in the climate crisis conflicts (Carvalho, 2010). In the articles on climate action, alternative media is clearly an ally to collective progressive social and ecological protest movements.

Regarding the “youth and climate action” theme the alternative media outlets adamantly supported Greta Thunberg and the multitudes of youth who rallied in the global climate strikes in 2019. The articles commend the youth leaders, such as Greta Thunberg and Autumn Pelletier, both who advocate for immediate action to combat the growing climate crisis. The alternative media outlets did not have any articles that even remotely supported climate denialism or the perspectives of major fossil fuel corporations. In fact, one article in *Rabble* supported the climate strike movements but argued that the protests should have been directed at the corporations responsible for the climate crisis, not the government (Finn, 2019). This article is evidence of *Rabble* opposing corporate behaviour that is detrimental to the environment. This supports the notion that alternative media is news for people, not corporations (Kozolanka & Orłowski, 2018). Youth were championed in the alternative media articles for advocating for the future of a healthy Earth. As such, alternative media portrays people who participate in climate action protests, such as the global climate strikes, as protagonists and corporations and the government as the antagonist (Carvalho, 2010). In sum, the main narrative of “youth and climate action” portrayed the protestors as heroes in the battle over the climate crisis.

5.8.2 Mainstream Media

The articles in the mainstream media, specifically the *National Post* and presumably all Postmedia newspapers in Canada, often supported the themes of “climate action” and “youth and climate action” as well. However, the *National Post* is inconsistent with the perspectives they promote. The climate strikes were mostly framed progressively (Carvalho, 2010). Wire services supported climate action almost 100% of the time, but in the articles written by the *National Post* staff only once was climate action supported. The framing of these *National Post* articles was antagonistic (Carvalho, 2010). For example, the *National Post* staff argued that we are hurting children by teaching them about the climate crisis (Corcoran, 2019). On another occasion, the

National Post staff attempted to represent Greta Thunberg as a hypocrite for how she would travel home to Sweden from North America (Dubé, 2019). These are conservative discourses that undermine youth as leaders and imply youth should stick to their traditional apolitical roles (Lakoff, 2014). Overall, the *National Post* staff write as though they are against climate action. The antagonistic representation of “youth and climate action” ignores the fact that youth will be seriously impacted by the climate crisis and for a long time. This perspective implies that business should continue as usual.

By isolating the articles on “climate action” it appears that the *National Post* is often supportive of it but a deeper analysis of all the content suggests that this support is nebulous. Some themes, such as this one, show support for addressing the climate crisis while other themes use discourses that are heavily pro-corporate interests. As a result, the *National Post* readers are receiving some discourses that support climate action and others that support corporate interests. This hides an important fact, namely, that there cannot be true climate action while fossil fuel extraction is still occurring, often at increased rates.

5.9 Theme – Green New Deal including Renewable and Alternative Energy

The GND did receive some media coverage during the 16-month timeline of this study. The GND is a resolution in the United States, so the term “Green New Deal” is not always used in Canadian media. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, the GND originated from the Canadian The Leap Manifesto. From the influence of The Leap and the GND, the Canadian mainstream media and alternative media outlets in this research discussed elements of the GND. The sub-theme of “GND” is “renewable and alternative energy” because that is a major component of the GND.

5.9.1 *Alternative Media*

Alternative media wrote more articles relating to “Green New Deal” than the mainstream media outlet. Both the alternative media outlets wrote 100% in support of a GND to address the climate crisis and create a more socially and economically just world. Some alternative media journalists would use the phrase GND and others would discuss the elements of a GND without using the term. It seemed dependent on context and possibly the journalist’s preference. *The Tyee* contained discourses that indicated there can be a healthy environment and a healthy economy it does not have to be an either-or situation (N. Klein, 2019; Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018; Winter, 2007). For example, Follett Hosgood (2019) uses an environment and economy discourse, explaining that

[t]he shift to a low-carbon economy has traditionally been touted as a choice between jobs and environment. But there’s a growing awareness that the outlook might not be so bleak. Exciting opportunities exist, not only in a post-carbon world, but in the journey to get there (para. 7)

Similarly, Kang (2020) explores what an inclusive transition off fossil fuels would look like. Although these articles do not explicitly say “Green New Deal”, they explore elements of one, such as how to transition to a green economy. Exploring the potential of transitioning away from fossil fuels was a main discourse in the alternative media articles relating to “Green New Deal” and “alternative and renewable energy”. This discourse increases readers’ understanding of the potential of renewable and alternative energy and a GND. This in turn can lead to resistance to fossil fuel projects (Hackett et al., 2017). Writing about the potential of a GND is crucial to getting the public to support it. Hackett et al. (2017) contend that media outlets must report on the possibilities of how something might go in a positive direction. This is clear in the alternative media articles about the potential of the GND and renewable and alternative energy.

5.9.2 Mainstream Media

In contrast to the unanimous support that the alternative media outlets demonstrated for a GND in Canada, the *National Post* articles were 50% in support of a GND or elements of a GND and 50% against. As mentioned earlier, the *National Post* published fewer articles relating to the themes of “Green New Deal” and “renewable and alternative energy” than the two alternative media outlets did. This is telling since more articles from the mainstream media outlet were analyzed than the alternative media outlets. This is an indication that the *National Post* is not reporting on the positive potential of the GND. The discourses that support elements of a GND came exclusively from *The Canadian Press* and *Reuters*. None of these discourses used the term GND but referred to elements of a GND such as transitioning to a green economy, and addressing inequities (N. Klein, 2019). For example, one article from *The Canadian Press* quotes Greenpeace activist and senior energy strategist Keith Stewart who stated “the federal government has been 'completely captured' by the oil industry. They just don't understand how the world is changing” (Rabson, 2020, para. 3). The article discusses potential jobs from clean energy and the economic value of clean energy.

If narratives such as these are presented more frequently, the public would likely better understand the potential of renewable and alternative energy and the GND. In contrast to the articles in the wire services, the *National Post* staff wrote exclusively against the potential of the GND. The term GND is only used by the *National Post* staff when they were reporting on the United States’s GND. Similar to the alternative media outlets, the *National Post* staff wrote about certain elements of a GND. The *National Post* staff argued against the GND because of its potential negative costs and claiming that it is unachievable. For example, Conrad Black wrote a climate change denying, anti-GND article claiming, “Green terror ... threatens the West” (Black, 2020a, para. 3). In yet another article, Black (2020b) critiques the United States’ GND, stating,

"the \$100 trillion Green Terror — the Green New Deal [is an] assault on the petroleum industry" while also declaring that Donald Trump was a successful president who was cheated out of victory (para. 5). It is noteworthy that Black was a convicted felon who received a pardon from Trump in 2019 (*CBC News*, 2019). Also recall that Postmedia is owned by a hedge fund group in the United States, which also has deep ties to Donald Trump (Hiltz, 2019). The *National Post* articles adamantly rejected the potential of progressive projects such as the GND. Despite the growing alarm worldwide over the effects of the climate crisis, the narratives in the *National Post* staff are that the GND is far too expensive and is an attack on some important national industries. They are also attempting to brand the GND as the "Green terror". These discourses relating to "GND" and "renewable and alternative energy" spread misinformation, leaving citizens uninformed (Kozolanka & Orłowski, 2018). Through these discourses the *National Post* is once again protecting the interests of the fossil fuel industry.

5.10 Theme – Covid-19 and the Climate Crisis

The Covid-19 pandemic befell the world, which includes, in the context of this study, Canadians and the Canadian economy in March 2020. The pandemic resulted in mass layoffs across the country and an economic downturn. This has been a life changing event for many people in Canada and across the world. In terms of this study, the pandemic may have shifted the mainstream media perspective pertaining to the climate crisis and GND. As previously mentioned, the GND is a massive stimulus plan that could very well help an economy in a recession (N. Klein, 2019). Did the media outlets see the potential for a GND in the timeline of this study?

5.10.1 Alternative Media

Alternative media discourses connected Covid-19 and the climate crisis. The main discourse in alternative media outlets was the potential for a green economic recovery. Elements

of a GND were mentioned often in the articles on the “Covid-19 and the climate crisis” theme. For example, Dembicki (2020b) writes that “[t]he moment demands that political leaders work towards a planned, quick and smooth transition away from fossil fuels in any ways possible” (para. 35). Another journalist wrote about employment in cleaning up abandoned oil and gas wells contending that “the work is critical and will keep people employed, and, in some cases, help them upgrade skills” (Suzuki, 2020e, para. 1). This is an element of a GND that calls for jobs in cleaning up abandoned oil wells (N. Klein, 2019). Thus, alternative media used discourses that suggest a GND, or at least elements of a GND, could play an important role in Canada’s economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.10.2 Mainstream Media

The Canadian Press and *Reuters* made connections between Covid-19 and the climate crisis in two ways. First, they noted the potential for elements of a GND in relation to a pandemic economic recovery. These two wire services used discourses in support of a green recovery, but they do not use the term GND, and only referred to a green recovery, or bailing out workers (not corporations), or investing in green infrastructure, all of which are elements of a GND (N. Klein, 2019). For example, *The Canadian Press* reported:

When the time comes for Canada to turn its attention to post-pandemic stimulus, a group of finance and policy experts says Ottawa needs to invest heavily in green infrastructure projects, including energy-efficient buildings, to secure an economic recovery with staying power (Wright, 2020, para. 1)

Articles such as these demonstrate that the mainstream media sees potential in a GND to address the Covid-19 economic crisis. The second narrative that was clear in the mainstream media outlet was the connection between the climate crisis and pandemics. The wire services cautioned more pandemics will occur if the climate crisis is not addressed. In this way, they also

call for climate action. Thus, *The Canadian Press* and *Reuters* used climate action discourses relating to “Covid-19 and the climate crisis” for improving the economy and preventing future pandemics.

The *National Post* staff made connections between “Covid-19 and the climate crisis”. However, the discourses were significantly different from the wire services and the alternative media outlets. In all five of the articles from the *National Post* staff the pandemic was portrayed as an excuse for the Liberal government to push through a green agenda that would not benefit the Canadian economy, particularly the economy in the Western provinces. For example, in one article Rex Murphy (2020c) claimed that a green economic recovery will not work in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and he contended that it will “fully radicalize the distemper already felt out West over how the ‘East’ cares nothing for Alberta and the oil-producing provinces. It is wrong-footed. It will not work. And it will rip our country apart” (para. 16). Yet again, there is evidence that the *National Post* staff are protecting the interests of the fossil fuel industries.

5.11 Revisiting Habermas

As discussed in Chapter 2, critical theorist Jurgen Habermas theorizes about the role the media plays in society. Habermas critiques the way the media can be manipulated for the benefit of elites (Wessler, 2018). He theorizes about the commercialization of the media because of its reliance on advertising (Habermas, 1989). The *National Post* relies on advertising for some financing, and it is not transparent who their advertisers are, or what impact this has on their discourses and political perspectives. Habermas argues that the role of advertising in financing the media hinders critical discussions and inserts the interests of producers and consumers (Wessler, 2018). *Rabble* and *The Tyee* also accept some advertising money, but they are transparent about who advertises with them. Considering Habermas’ ideas about the role of

advertising on the media, the alternative media outlets may be influenced by their advertisers as well, although much less as the bulk of their financing comes from reader donations.

Habermas contends that debate in the media is often limited. The research shows that the debate around the climate crisis and the GND in Canadian text-based media has indeed been limited, especially in the mainstream media outlet. For example, renewable and alternative energy had a very limited debate in both the *National Post* and the alternative media outlets. Similarly, the GND was barely debated. Alternative media was always supportive of the GND, or elements of a GND, and the *National Post* staff were against it, but with limited facts offered. Habermas argues that a healthy public sphere is one in which argumentation can occur (Pensky, 2014). Habermas theorizes that the mass media manufactures opinions from people in positions of power (Wessler, 2018). This was true in this research sample, as the mass media outlet the *National Post* limited the opinions it offered to mostly those of the elites it included, a strategy that gives the public limited perspectives on important issues.

5.12 Summary

The discourses from alternative media indicate potential for using alternative media outlets, such as *Rabble* and *The Tyee*, to build climate science literacy, which may be instrumental in helping students understand the looming climate crisis (Cooper 2011). As Hackett et al. (2017) explain, “alternative media can promote public engagement and critical perspectives specifically on environmental issues” (p. 10). Readers of the *National Post*, on the other hand, are not getting all the relevant information required to understand the climate crisis. This newspaper may confuse some readers when they read articles about climate action, anti-carbon tax, and pro fossil fuels while experiencing severe drought, freak storms, or while inhaling smoke from the devastating forest fires in recent years.

The data showed that the *National Post* does publish some articles that are pro carbon tax and anti-fossil fuels, but those discourses do not come from the *National Post* staff and mostly have a global focus rather than a Canadian one. Postmedia's neoliberal values are evident in their own journalists' writing. As mentioned above, the *National Post* staff often write pro-corporate, anti-climate action pieces. In fact, this mainstream media outlet the *National Post* could be classified as being an integral part of the "new climate denialism" (S. Klein, 2020). Sometimes the *National Post* articles contain support for climate science and climate action, while at other times the articles champion resource extraction. Through the mix of pro-corporate and some pro-climate action articles, the readers are getting the idea that there can simultaneously be extraction and climate action. However, it can be questioned if Postmedia ownership genuinely wants climate action since all the pieces written by the *National Post* staff use climate denial discourses, and often in strident fashion

This chapter analyzed the data for all three media outlets regarding how coverage of the themes were presented. The chapter also included a detailed example of how CDA was conducted on the data that was collected for this research. For the CDA, both the title and the body of each article were examined for ways the author was trying to persuade the reader. The language of each news story was examined for connections to hegemonic power, for the omission of marginalized groups, and for challenges to power. The CDA analysis did reveal some serious unequal power relations, particularly involving Indigenous peoples.

This research reviewed 749 articles that were sorted into 13 themes. To summarize, the 13 themes of the research were: "effects of the climate crisis", "climate science" (sub-theme of "effects of the climate crisis"), "corporate/bank investment", "fossil fuels" (sub theme of "corporate/bank investments"), "environmental racism", "Wet'suwet'en protests" (sub-theme of

“environmental racism”), “politicians and climate crisis”, “carbon tax”, “climate action”, “youth and climate action” (sub-theme of “climate action”), “renewable/alternative energy”, “Green New Deal”, and “Covid-19 and the climate crisis”.

Chapter 6 Conclusions: Wrapping Up the Study

The climate crisis is getting worse and is gaining media attention. The media shapes our understanding of the climate crisis and contributes to our sense of urgency (Carvalho, 2010; Good, 2008; Lakoff, 2010). For instance, *The Guardian* is a mainstream media outlet in the UK that is committed to using the phrase “climate crisis” rather than “climate change” to convey the severity of the situation (Zeldin-O’Neil, 2019). *The Guardian* is also a mainstream media outlet that runs without advertisers connected to fossil fuels and as such it is an example of how mainstream media can operate without the influence of shareholders and address the climate crisis (S. Klein, 2020). The Canadian mainstream media is not yet on board with using the phrase “climate crisis” instead of more benign terms such as “climate change” or the inaccurate term “global warming”. Further, mainstream media could also help people see the economic potential in a climate action plan such as the GND. This study examined how the flagship newspaper of Postmedia in Canada, the *National Post*, and two Canadian alternative media outlets, *Rabble* and *The Tyee*, addressed these issues from September 1st, 2019 to December 31st, 2020.

6.1 Primary Research Question

For reader ease, the primary research question is restated here:

What are the main discourses about the climate crisis and the Green New Deal in Canadian mainstream text-based media compared to alternative text-based media from September 1, 2019, to December 31, 2020?

The Canadian mainstream media outlet the *National Post* used a range of discourses on the climate crisis. The overall message in the *National Post* is that there can be climate action and fossil fuel resource extraction simultaneously. Although the media outlet did write about the climate crisis, the dominant sense was one of a lack of urgency (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004;

Gelspan, 2005; Hackett et al., 2017). At times, the *National Post*'s discussion on the economy was in support of diversification but the discourses were mixed and included new climate denialism (S. Klein, 2020). "New climate denialism" is when governments and the media accept climate science, but do not implement or promote policies and practices that align with what scientists say (S. Klein, 2020). The *National Post* also used narratives that asserted climate policy threatens corporate investments and thus the environment versus economy binary was clearly evident.

The predominant discourse on the carbon tax was that it hurts the economy. The journalists relied on government and corporate sources who had easy access to the media, which lead to limited perspectives in the news (Bagdikian, 2004). As such, citizens were omitted from the articles (Carvalho, 2010). The *National Post* had utilized strategies of climate denialism and misinformation. Articles purchased from the wire services *The Canadian Press* and *Reuters*, supported "climate action" and "youth and climate action". However, the articles written by the *National Post* staff did not support climate action. There was content relating to the climate crisis, but the media outlet did not convey the severity of the crisis. The range of perspectives from supporting climate action to anti-carbon tax may confuse readers and thus the outlet is not adequately reporting on the climate emergency. Omission was used as a hegemonic strategy to exclude valuable information and perspectives as well as limit debates. Therefore, readers of the *National Post* are not getting all the information needed for the realities of the advancing climate crisis.

Unlike the *National Post*, the alternative media outlets were more consistent with their articles relating to the climate crisis and the GND. *Rabble* and *The Tyee* always presented progressive perspectives that aligned with social and economic equality, an improved

environment, and sustainable government policy for the future. The alternative media outlets used local framing more often than global framing for the climate crisis. Another common approach in the alternative media outlets was solution-based framing, such as diversification and greening the economy. A main discourse that differed from the coverage in the *National Post* was that there can be a healthy environment and a strong economy simultaneously. This included the contention that fossil fuel investment and production must wind down. By corollary, another prominent perspective in the alternative media outlets was that fossil fuels represent a sunset industry. Overall, the alternative media outlets were highly critical of the continuation of fossil fuel industries and were very supportive of collective action protests such as the Wet'suwet'en blockades and the youth climate strikes. Similarly, these outlets advocated for climate action and were pro-carbon tax. In sum, readers of alternative media get clear and consistent messaging aligned with improving the environment and socioeconomic conditions on Earth.

6.2 Secondary Research Questions

In this section, all of the secondary research questions will be addressed. Again, for reader ease, they are restated here:

- Has the Coronavirus-related economic downturn affected media discourses on the climate crisis and the Green New Deal?
- In what ways have the mainstream and alternative text-based media taken up the term “Green New Deal”?
- How do these mainstream and alternative media outlets treat climate crisis side effects such as environmental racism?
- In what ways do the mainstream and alternative media promote a neoliberal agenda, particularly regarding the fossil fuel industries?

The economic downturn caused by the coronavirus impacted discourses on the climate crisis and GND in the *National Post*. However, the term “Green New Deal” was not used unless referring to the GND in the United States. The sample for this study showed that the *National Post* did not begin to discuss the economic potential of a GND in their articles until April 2020. The wire services in the *National Post* recognized the potential of elements of a GND to be part of Canada’s economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. These wire services (*The Canadian Press* and *Reuters*) also identified pandemics as a consequence of the climate crisis. The *National Post* staff journalists, however, took a different approach. They referred to the GND as “Green terror” and used the narrative that the United States’ GND and elements of a GND (transitioning workers, greening the economy) are too expensive to even contemplate, let alone implement. Conservative columnists such as Rex Murphy and Conrad Black are politicizing the term GND in Canada. In one article Black (2020b) calls the United States’ GND an assault on the petroleum industry, without mentioning the potential job growth and ecological benefits of a GND. As mentioned several times already, the *National Post* publishes their own articles and also publishes articles that they purchase from various wire services. Due to the mix of sources, there are mixed perspectives on the potential of elements of a GND to both address the climate crisis and to help with the economic recovery caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

A GND aligns with progressive values, so it logically follows that the alternative media outlets would support a GND in their articles. In contradistinction to the mainstream media, the alternative media outlets sometimes used the term “Green New Deal” in reference to Canadian policies. The economic downturn caused by the coronavirus affected the coverage on the climate crisis and GND in alternative media outlets as well. It is noteworthy that the alternative media outlets were reporting on elements of a GND for addressing the climate crisis prior to the

coronavirus economic downturn. However, the number of references to elements of a GND increased after March 2020 and the discourses shifted somewhat. In 2020, alternative media journalists presented perspectives that elements of a GND could address both the climate crisis and the economic recovery in positive ways. Readers of these alternative media outlets would get clear and consistent messages about the GND. The discourses tell readers that a GND and elements of a GND are instrumental in fighting the climate crisis and in Canada's economic best interests as the country recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic. The content in the alternative media outlets would likely help readers understand the potential of a GND, even when the term GND is not used.

Both mainstream and alternative media report on environmental racism; however, their approaches are vastly different. Mainstream media rarely used discourses that called for eradicating environmental racism. Most content on environmental racism related to the Wet'suwet'en protests in northwestern British Columbia. Instead of advocating for ending the social and economic inequalities, the *National Post* often used stereotypes and delegitimized Indigenous hereditary governance. This mainstream media outlet also omitted the reason for the blockades and completely ignored the perspectives of the hereditary chiefs and other Wet'suwet'en people who opposed the pipeline. The *National Post* did not use solidarity discourses to support the Wet'suwet'en people who were calling for an alternate route for the Costal GasLink LNG pipeline. The intention of the main narratives in the *National Post* appeared to be to divide Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In comparison, the alternative media outlets always used discourses that encouraged solidarity with the hereditary Wet'suwet'en chiefs and those Wet'suwet'en people who opposed the LNG pipeline when discussing the blockades. The progressive nature of alternative media enables the outlets to

report more fairly on important issues such as environmental racism. Mainstream media only sometimes reports on addressing environmental racism, while at other times they attack victims of it.

The neoliberal agenda and the interests of the fossil fuel industry were only evident in articles from the *National Post*. Alternative media did not promote the neoliberal agenda, nor the fossil fuel industry. On the contrary, the sunset industry narrative was common in alternative media as the outlets advocated for elements of a GND to transform the Canadian economy to be more fair for middle- and working-class people. Alternative media can be considered a counter-hegemonic device that does not promote corporate interests and offers different perspectives than those found in mainstream media outlets.

By corollary, the data provided is evidence that the *National Post* is a hegemonic device that promotes the neoliberal agenda and especially the fossil fuel industry. Some common narratives that promote neoliberalism are that the industry will save the Earth and the environment versus economy binary. The *National Post* also acted as a hegemonic device in their reporting on both the Wet'suwet'en blockades and the carbon tax. In the discourses used in the articles on these two topics, the *National Post* worked to protect corporate interests and fossil fuel shareholders' profits. As mentioned earlier, a main theme of the *National Post* was a "new climate denialism" that at times agrees with climate science, but at other times champions continued fossil fuel extraction (S. Klein, 2020). As such, this research demonstrates that the *National Post* is a hegemonic device for the fossil fuel industry while the alternative media outlets are counter-hegemonic.

To some extent the findings corroborate what many people might have thought prior to this research— that alternative media is more progressive and less pro-corporate than mainstream

media. But the research was still noteworthy for the following reasons: now there is evidence that demonstrates the difference in ideological perspective, and a mainstream right-wing outlet like the *National Post* has different levels of bias. The level of bias ranges from their own far right reporters to the more centrist global focus from the Reuters wire service.

6.3 Implications for this Study

Educators can and should play an important role in teaching climate science literacy in conjunction with critical media literacy. An understanding of climate science will not be enough to address the climate crisis — youth must also be taught to interpret message in the media that intend to confuse and tend to hinder real climate action (Cooper, 2011). Critical media literacy will give students a critical lens to interpret media frames, values, and ideologies (Garcia et al., 2013; Kellner & Share, 2007b). This type of literacy will show how media discourses are connected to power and influence the information that the public gets on the climate crisis (Garcia et al., 2013). Critical media literacy will help youth deconstruct hegemonic messages in the mainstream media that protect the interests of fossil fuel industries, and, by corollary, will encourage youth to engage in democracy through informed vote and protest. This type of literacy will help in the creation of an informed citizenry as the climate crisis becomes even more important in the minds of Canadians (Brooks, 2019).

It is common for educators to give current event assignments with students where they have students read a news article and answer the five W's (who, where, when, what and why). Educators must dig deeper into the implicit messages of the media because power is often hidden in media discourses to the point that working-class people sometimes vote against their own best interests. This is called false political consciousness (Orlowski, 2014). Educators need to teach students how to interrogate an article by asking what biases and ideologies are evident, whose voices are heard and whose are missing, who produced the text, and what are the sources from

which the media outlet gets its funding (Buckingham, 2003; Cottle, 2003). Critical media literacy can infuse climate science literacy into other areas of the curriculum, such as social studies (Orlowski, 2014).

Educators can use mainstream media outlets, such as the *National Post*, to deconstruct hegemonic messages. Alternative media is an important counter-hegemonic tool and offers different perspectives than mainstream media. In fact, this research provides the strong support for pedagogy focused on critical media literacy in the classroom. A student can select an article from the mainstream press that pertains to some aspect of the climate crisis and present on it. A classmate could select an article on the very same topic from the alternative press and present on it. Other students can go through the same exercise on different aspects of the climate crisis. Through this type of pedagogy, the bias implicit in various media outlets will likely become evident.

6.4 Limitations

This study highlighted the main discourses related to the climate crisis and the GND in the *National Post*, *Rabble*, and *The Tyee*. However, there are some limitations to consider for this study. The timeline of this study was September 1, 2019 to December 31, 2020 and it is possible that another timeline might provide different results. The *National Post* publishes thousands of articles each week. For example, the keyword search “Green New Deal” brought up 35,000 related articles. The number of articles on the *National Post* website is seemingly endless, and it is unwieldy for one person to go through them all. The keyword used for this research sample was “climate crisis”. A different keyword search could give different results. Additionally, another researcher may have used a different inclusion/exclusion criteria or they could have coded the data with different themes. In other words, there were aspects of this research that were subjective and influenced by the researcher’s own interests and biases.

This study had a narrow scope and only examined one mainstream media outlet. The study excluded other Canadian mainstream media outlets such as the *Globe and Mail* and excluded the publicly funded *CBC*. To include the *Globe and Mail* as well as the *National Post* would have been too unwieldy for the purposes of this study. The *National Post* was chosen because it has a farther reach than *Globe and Mail*. *Globe and Mail* owns one paper that is distributed across Canada. Despite being a company in the United States, the *National Post*'s parent company, Postmedia also owns three quarters of newspapers in Canada, whereas the *Globe and Mail* is the only print media outlet owned by Woodbridge, an investment arm of the Canadian Thompson family (Bradshaw, 2015). Additionally, this study only included alternative media outlets that take the perspective that the climate crisis is real. As such, right-wing media outlets such as the far-right *Rebel News* were excluded. Analyzing different media outlets may have resulted in different discourses being used on the climate crisis and the GND.

6.5 Future Areas of Study

Other media outlets should be examined to see how they are reporting on the climate crisis and the GND. Another alternative media outlet that could be analyzed is the *National Observer*, which originated in Vancouver. As for the mainstream media, the *Globe and Mail* could be analyzed to determine its biases regarding the climate crisis and the GND. The *Toronto Star* is another possibility for this type of research.

The *CBC* could and should be analyzed for bias. Since its inception, the *CBC* has always been a publicly funded media outlet, but it has had its funding severely cut in austerity budgets over the past few decades and has had to increasingly accept corporate advertising (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018). The *CBC* was “intended to be informative, educational, non-commercial, and Canadian-made” but perhaps its purpose has evolved into something else in recent years (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018, p. 29). Is the reporting of the *CBC* still in the public's best

interest? Has the *CBC* become a hegemonic instrument in the service of the neoliberal agenda in the same vein as the *National Post*?

S. Klein (2020) found that the *CBC* will only sometimes, and cautiously, use the terms climate crisis and climate emergency. In a future study, CDA could be applied to determine how the *CBC* reports on the climate crisis and the GND. There is potential that other mainstream media outlets are reporting on the climate crisis similarly to the *National Post*. Further research on the discourses in the *Globe and Mail* and *CBC* could validate the findings in this study. In fact, a future study could analyze how other forms of media, such as radio and television, cover the climate crisis and the GND. Social media could also be scrutinized along similar lines of inquiry.

Another intention of this study was to see if it would be worthwhile for teachers to implement critical media literacy in order to increase climate science literacy among students. A future area of study could be to analyze the effectiveness of critical media literacy. This kind of research could determine students' growth in interpreting hegemonic discourses in the media and their growth in climate science literacy. Another possible study on critical media literacy in schools could analyze educators own critical media literacy skills for deconstructing media bias.

6.6 Summative Reflections

The mainstream media must be held accountable for its reporting on the climate crisis. The discourses uncovered in this study demonstrate that Canadians who read mainstream media are not being informed on the reality of the climate emergency. The climate crisis is quickly accelerating, and climate action is needed now. During the time this thesis is being written, there have been horrific massive wildfires across British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, California, Turkey, and Greece. Currently, there have been about 1,250 wildfires in British Columbia since April 2021, and the *CBC* reported that “devastating wildfires like those currently burning in B.C.

will be ‘commonplace’ by 2050” (Owen, 2021, para. 2). As Swedish youth activist Greta Thunberg said, our home is on fire (N. Klein, 2019). The climate crisis is becoming undeniable, and the media should be covering it with a sense of urgency (S. Klein, 2020). Unfortunately, this research demonstrated that the *National Post* is still promoting the interests of fossil fuel industries. Recently, a *National Post* journalist reported that solar panels are not a good option for energy because they will result in “a ‘tsunami’ of unrecyclable trash” (Hopper, 2021, para. 1). This article omits the destruction of the land around the Alberta Tar Sands and the thousands of abandoned oil and gas wells in the prairies. In fact, there are an estimated 91,000 inactive wells and 2,992 abandoned wells in Alberta, “with another 10,000 inactive or abandoned wells in British Columbia and 24,000 in Saskatchewan” (Kemball, 2020, para. 6). The estimated cost to clean those up abandoned oil wells in Alberta could be up to \$70 billion (Bakx, 2019). In my opinion, the pro-corporate bias in the *National Post* is a disservice to Canadians.

As the results of this research demonstrate, the *National Post* staff almost always write from a climate denial perspective. Recently, Simon Fraser University communications professor Robert Hackett filed an ethics complaint against the *National Post* for promoting the work of an avid climate denialist (Holman, 2021). Hackett is hopeful that the National NewsMedia Council will create “guidelines regarding journalism’s responsibilities vis-a-vis fact-checking and the dissemination of misinformation on what is increasingly recognized, by governments, scientists and publics, as a climate emergency” (Holman, 2021, para. 43). Regulations for journalists would be useful in influencing the discourses on the climate crisis. S. Klein (2020) also advocates for regulations in broadcasting, suggesting that “The Canadian public regulator, the CRTC, could demand that reporting be scientifically factual (spreading misinformation should not be allowed under broadcasting standards)” (p. 91). Regulations similar to these for online

media would hold media outlets accountable for reporting accurately on the climate crisis. However, regulations rely on the whims of the government in power. Thus, I contend that it is crucial for students to develop critical media literacy skills.

The results of this study show that alternative media have a vital role in providing perspectives that differ from mainstream media outlets. The alternative media outlets reported in support of the Wet'suwet'en people and the youth who participated in the climate strikes. Unfortunately, Canadian alternative media outlets have small audiences compared to the mainstream media. Alternative media relies on reader donations for funding, not advertising, which may make them vulnerable to economic downturns. S. Klein (2020) argues that "the government should better support these outlets by making donations to independent non-profit news media tax-deductible" (p. 89). I agree with this idea because counter-hegemonic discourses play a critical role in informing citizens on issues such as the climate crisis and can actually strengthen democracy (Kozolanka & Orłowski, 2018). Thus, educators can use alternative media, such as *Rabble* and *The Tyee*, as a counter-hegemonic device when teaching critical media literacy. I know that, given the appropriate opportunity, I intend to do so with my future students.

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Appendix C – *National Post* Data

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