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# FROM THE NEW ECOLOGICAL PARADIGM TO TOTAL LIBERATION: The Emergence of a Social Movement Frame

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Drawing on theories of social movements and environmental sociology, this article considers a frame transformation that is taking place within ecological social movements. This transformation produced a new frame: “total liberation.” We explore this phenomenon by analyzing interviews with activists, fieldwork observations, and documents from radical environmental and animal rights movement networks in the United States. Beyond introducing the total liberation frame, the article expands current understandings of how and why frame transformations occur through a consideration of how multiple frames, as well as intra- and intermovement tensions and influences, shape frame transformation.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2001, Earth Liberation Front (ELF) activists nailed metal spikes into hundreds of trees in Washington State’s Gifford Pinchot National Forest to protest the U.S. Forest Service’s decision to sell them to a timber company. Activists sent a communiqué to several media outlets shortly after, which read, in part:

This timber sale contains 99 acres of old growth and is home to spotted owls, grizzly bear, lynx, wolf, goshawk, just to name a few of its many inhabitants. This is truly a beautiful area, unfortunately one of the last of its kind because of the system we all live under. We want to be clear that all oppression is linked, just as we are all linked, and we believe in a diversity of tactics to stop earth rape and end all domination. Together we can destroy this patriarchal nightmare, which is currently in the form of techno-industrial global capitalism. (ELF 2001a)

The emergence of the ELF and Animal Liberation Front (ALF) in the 1980s and 1990s marked a new focus within U.S. ecological politics that involved forms of radical analysis and action that we had rarely seen in environmental or animal rights movements until that point.<sup>1</sup> By the late 1990s, segments of these movements were converging around new ideas and tactics, producing a broader discourse that linked ecology, social justice, and animal rights.

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Groups like ELF and ALF primarily seek to combat environmental degradation and animal exploitation. These activists believe that the exploitation of ecosystems and nonhuman species calls for immediate, direct action. They reject structured, bureaucratic approaches and instead target what they see as the roots of the problem. Radical earth and animal liberation movements have gained global visibility and notoriety in recent decades, causing significant property and economic damage to laboratories, slaughterhouses, power lines, fur farms, and industrial agricultural facilities through arson, animal rescue/liberation, and vandalism (Best and Nocella 2004, 2006). Through these actions and the discourse that supports them, activists question what they view as the violence of inequality, capitalism, state power, and speciesism. Regardless of their success, the vision of these radical social movements can shed light on present social arrangements, highlighting how they may be seen as unjust in ways that most members of society have never considered. And while these movements often reflect different emphases, we propose that they are developing a new collective action frame: total liberation.

The total liberation frame combines important elements from other key movement frames, including the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP), deep ecology, ecofeminism, and the Environmental Justice Paradigm (EJP), which will be explained in more detail below, to chart a new course for social movements concerned with a broader vision of ecological politics. We explore this phenomenon by analyzing interviews with activists, fieldwork observations, and documents from radical environmental and animal liberation movement networks in the United States. We have two goals: (1) introducing the total liberation frame, which activists have articulated in recent years but social scientists have yet to develop; and (2) presenting total liberation as an example of frame transformation that builds on previous scholarship by expanding our understanding of how and why frame transformations occur. In order to achieve these ends, we examine the main frames that preceded and inform the total liberation frame so as to provide a sense of this unfolding frame transformation—not for the purpose of developing a formal model, but rather to show what motivated activists to articulate the frame and how it has influenced the direction and contours of the movements thus far. We also extend the scholarship on frame transformation by deepening our comprehension of how and why frame transformations occur. In addition, we highlight how other social movements have influenced this frame transformation among radical ecological movements.

## **SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND FRAME TRANSFORMATIONS**

Social movements are carriers of beliefs, ideologies, and ideas, and frames are the “signifying work and meaning construction” that movement activists routinely practice (Benford and Snow 2000:614). These frames provide an intellectual grounding and moral compass for movement communities, guide their actions, and offer a way of constructing ideas, values, and social significance for activists (Benford and Snow 2000). What is sociologically significant about radical movements, then, is the power of

their vision of change—the frames they produce—and what they suggest about a society's potential for facilitating both oppression and freedom.

Interest in the framing process in relation to social movements has been a key aspect of sociological scholarship. Social movements construct collective action frames as their participants negotiate a shared understanding of the problems they seek to address, how the problems should be handled, and the motivation behind their actions (often called diagnostic, prognostic, and motivation frames, respectively) (Snow and Benford 1988). Such framing generally involves strategic efforts to link the interests of social movements to those of their constituents. These efforts, termed “frame alignment processes,” include *frame bridging* (linking two or more frames), *frame amplification* (embellishment or clarification of existing values), *frame extension* (extending a frame beyond its primary interest), and *frame transformation* (changing old understandings and/or generating new ones) (Snow et al. 1986). While each frame alignment process is key to framing, this article focuses on frame transformation.

Benford and Snow (2000) note that few movement studies have addressed the concept of frame transformation. Frame transformation occurs when “new ideas and values . . . replace old ones” and “old meanings, symbols, and so on are discarded [and] erroneous beliefs and misframings are corrected” (Taylor 2000:512). More broadly, frame transformation involves a “general reframing of the issues” within a movement (Taylor 2000:512).

Frame transformation remains understudied today, although frame transformation is integral to the success and survival of social movements. Numerous social movements have risen and fallen partly as a result of atrophy and lack of reflexivity. Many social movements that endure are able to survive because they undergo significant change and rethinking by participants who believe the underlying frameworks, methods, and goals must be reassessed and changed (Snow et al. 1986).

Yet, because of the paucity of studies regarding frame transformation, sociologists' understanding of *why and how* frame transformation occurs is minimal. Snow et al. (1986) suggest that frame transformation is a conscious decision of movement participants in order to secure additional participants and support for their cause when existing movement efforts no longer resonate with a population. Sociological studies of frame transformation are sparse but instructive. White's (1999) study of an African-American feminist collective's efforts to challenge racist and sexist myths about rape concluded that this group's work amounted to an effort at frame transformation because it sought to correct, challenge, and overturn old beliefs and misframings within the antisexual violence movement and the African-American community. Ulsperger (2002) offers an important addition to this literature by demonstrating how frame transformation arises as a result of an activist response to movement dormancy. He details how the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform gathered strength in the 1980s, produced a frame transformation that legitimized new ways of defining concerns for the elderly, and enjoyed major victories after many years during which the movement was inactive. Futrell (2003) presents another advance in our understanding of frame transformations by detailing how they can also be triggered by

external factors, such as opponent's actions. He investigates a grassroots environmental movement in Kentucky that arose to prevent the incineration of obsolete chemical weapons in their community. Countering the movement's approach, the army and the federal government rejected their alternate proposal after approving an environmental impact statement that supported incineration. The movement then transformed its frame from NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) to a frame that supports alternative disposal technologies in order to minimize public health and ecological threats associated with chemical stockpile management *wherever* it might occur.

These three studies offer some examples of why frame transformations occur. White (1999) and Ulsperger (2002) show how such a transformation can occur within a movement in order to initiate a course correction or a revitalization of that movement. Futrell's (2003) study underscores how a transformation can be initiated as a response to a change in external conditions, like opponents' efforts to frame a debate in ways that might be disadvantageous to the movement. While White's study comes closest to our own approach in this article—as we focus on efforts to transform existing understandings within an active social movement—our study departs from that perspective in that our emphasis is on radical movements, which can be thought of as both separate from and extensions of their mainstream movement counterparts.

Because of the lack of empirical inquiry regarding frame transformation, other aspects of its application and elaboration remain highly undeveloped as well (Benford and Snow 2000:625). For example, existing literature (Snow and Benford 1988; Benford and Snow 2000; Ulsperger 2002; Futrell 2003) assumes that a movement undergoes a frame transformation by transforming only a single frame. That is, a movement reimagines itself by transforming one frame into a new frame. Yet, this is a limiting view of how movements actually function. It is well known that movements often learn from and are influenced by other (historical and contemporary) social movements (Wang and Soule 2012). Accordingly, we contend that frame transformation can also be the result of a movement drawing on and transforming several frames, perhaps even from multiple movements, thus multiplying the various sources and resources it might use to reassess its own frames. In fact, many social movements began precisely because of a need to fuse two or more existing frames. The environmental justice movement, for example, emerged when activists linked civil rights, public health, and ecological protection frames and challenged the dominant NEP that undergirds the mainstream environmental movement (Bullard 2000). Thus, we seek to further develop the concept of frame transformation, and to do so, we rely upon the radical environmental and animal rights movement.

## METHODOLOGY

We began our study in 2008 with the goal of understanding how radical environmental and animal rights activists seek to effect change in the United States. We rely upon (1) 88 semistructured interviews; (2) fieldwork at conferences, activist gatherings, and other events; and (3) content analyses of thousands of pages of newsletters, magazines,

journals, Web sites, and related publications produced by activists. Overall, the three components—interviews, fieldwork, and document analysis—offer an opportunity to triangulate sources of evidence. As these data comprise a larger project (Pellow 2014), this article can only provide some examples from each of the different types of sources. However, all examples are representative of the broader population of documents, interviews, and fieldwork experiences.

We first identified key organizations within the radical environmental and animal rights movements, as acknowledged in both academic and activist literature (Jasper and Nelkin 1992; Best and Nocella 2004, 2006; Scarce 2006). We considered groups “radical” if they sought to effect change at the root of perceived problems rather than via reforming the system. While mainstream groups seek reform and work within the political and regulatory system, radical groups attempt to disrupt and transform the system, although in practice some groups support a combination of approaches to change. Thus, we identified a sample of the core groups as Earth First!, ELF, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, ALF, Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC), and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.<sup>2</sup> These groups are representative of radical ecological movements in the United States. The activists can be found in every corner of the United States, although there is a heavier concentration of these groups on the East and West Coasts compared with other geographic regions of the nation.<sup>3</sup>

We utilized respondent-driven and reputation sampling to locate interviewees, finding potential study participants through conferences and other movement gatherings as well as through social media and online sources like movement Web sites and blogs. Interviewees were selected based on their reputation among other activists as key participants and persons whose ideas and actions were critical to achieving and/or shaping the movements’ goals. We chose to employ a semistructured interview technique that allowed for standardized questions yet flexibility in answers and elaborations. Fifty-eight interviewees identified as men, and thirty identified as women, a reflection of the fact that many of these organizations are male dominated. All respondents were U.S. citizens, and their ages ranged from 20 to 62 years old. In addition, the majority of interviewees, as well as attendees at events where we conducted fieldwork, were white.

Interviewees were often active in several key organizations, although “membership” is difficult to assess, as many of the movements reject the notion of membership and do not keep membership lists. In fact, Earth First!, ALF, and ELF activists have frequently made a point of stating that they are movements, not organizations. In addition, several interviewees and subjects of this study have, over the course of their activist careers, been involved in all or nearly all of the core movement groups listed above, indicating a fluidity and overlap of agendas and participants. Furthermore, the majority of interviewees have been involved in multiple movements, even if their primary political focus was on earth liberation or animal liberation. Thus, it is difficult if not impossible to label every interviewee exclusively an animal rights or environmental activist.

In an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the movements and ensure we were interviewing a wide range of movement participants, we also attended several environmental and animal rights conferences and major events in the United States, including the Their Lives Our Voices Conference, Let Live Conference, the Earth First! Road Show, the Trans' and Womyn's Action Camp (TWAC), and the Earth First! Round River Rendezvous.<sup>4</sup> Last, we conducted content analysis of each organization's Web site, movement newsletters (when available), and literature available at the events we attended. After engaging in open coding to discover key themes in the data (Lofland et al. 2005), we found several major themes. Here we focus on how these movements and organizations utilize what we have termed the total liberation frame to challenge and transform other movement frames. As we primarily engaged with activists in relatively public arenas, our methods are well suited to gauging the development and deployment of a new movement frame.

"Total liberation" is a term that a small number of activists specifically invoke, but we use it to describe a combination of views that comprise a collective action frame. While 11 (13 percent) interviewees specifically used the term "total liberation," 60 (68 percent) interviewees embraced the four pillars of the frame that we detail below. Seventeen (19 percent) interviewees subscribed to at least two of the four pillars, and all of the activist publications in our sample either use the term "total liberation" or regularly print stories that are supportive of all four pillars of the frame.

Since these movements frequently involve participants' involvement in illegal actions, all interviewees were guaranteed confidentiality, and we only use real names with permission. Also, while we focus on the United States, these movements are active in other countries, and the total liberation frame is evident among movements in other nations. U.S. radical ecological movements are influenced by and connected to related groups in other countries as well, but the U.S. "branches" of these movements are among the biggest and most impactful and have triggered some of the most severe state repression (Scarce 2006).

## FRAME TRANSFORMATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE TOTAL LIBERATION FRAME

Based on these data, we contend that a new frame, the total liberation frame, emerged in the United States during the 1990s. Specifically, we argue that this frame is the result of an ongoing frame transformation that draws upon four previous frames. We first consider the four previous frames that contribute to the total liberation frame. Then, we detail the elements of this new frame and explore several possibilities regarding *why* the new frame emerged and how it has shaped the movement. It is important to note, however, that the process of frame transformation is still unfolding. Thus, we demonstrate that the frame emerged and explain *why* it emerged and *how* it shapes the movements, but cannot document the end point of this process—a task that will require additional space to fully document in the future.

### Frame Transformation: From What?

The total liberation frame resulted from a combined transformation of four of the most important frames from the 20th- and early 21st-century ecological movements in the United States. These traditions emerged in the context of intensified industrialization and urbanization that occurred after World War II and include the NEP, deep ecology, ecofeminism, and the EJP.<sup>5</sup> Note that the use of the term “paradigm” parallels the concept of a “master frame” in that a paradigm serves a similar function as movement-specific collective action frames but also helps to accentuate, amplify, and punctuate the attribution function of those frames. Conversely, master frames are “crucial ideological frameworks akin to paradigms” (see Taylor 2000:514). Thus, we see these paradigms as essentially master frames but use the term favored in the literature. Below, we briefly explain each of these frames.

#### *The NEP*

The NEP emerged during the 1960s as a response to the loss of ecosystems and nonhuman species that were sacrificed through the growth of industrialization and urbanization (Dunlap and Van Liere 1978; Catton and Dunlap 1980; Milbrath 1984). Drawing from the ideas of early preservationists and conservationists like Aldo Leopold, John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, Robert Marshall, George Perkins Marsh, and later, Rachel Carson, the NEP calls for a healthy balance between human economic activities and the needs of ecosystems, arguing that human social systems must reduce their impacts on nonhuman nature (Muir 1907; Marshall 1930; Leopold 1949; Carson 1962). William Catton and Riley Dunlap (1980) contend that the NEP emerged as a response and in opposition to what they term the Dominant Western Worldview, the driving force behind modern environmental crises that views humans as fundamentally distinct from other species and views the earth as a source of infinite resources. The NEP challenges these views but stops short of extending those critiques to capitalism or the elite classes (Humphrey, Lewis, and Buttel 2002) and is therefore a reformist approach that seeks incremental change. It reflects the dominant perspective of mainstream environmental movements; however, many radical environmentalists believe that the mainstream environmental movement has been too reformist in its goals, orientation, and tactics, too close to the industries it wishes to regulate, and too distant from the needs of grassroots communities (Taylor 2000).

#### *Deep Ecology*

In 1972, the Norwegian activist philosopher Arne Naess introduced deep ecology, which sees humans as merely a single species on a planet with millions of other species that have intrinsic value. Naess contrasted deep ecology with shallow ecology, which seeks to protect and/or improve the health and affluence of humans in industrialized countries (Naess 1973). Deep ecology sought a shift in western values, pushing the western concept of the self from anthropocentrism toward biocentrism. Moving beyond the NEP’s focus on a balancing of needs between humans and nonhumans, a deep ecological approach decentered human beings entirely (see Devall and Sessions



1985). For Naess, deep ecology could only be realized in a society marked by the absence of domination between humans and nonhuman species.

Deep ecology and the NEP share a focus on targeting Western cultural values and emphasizing the need to reduce the size of the world's human population in order to achieve sustainability (Scarce 2006:337–8). That focus on population growth ironically revealed a major Western cultural bias since the targets are generally non-Western societies, which are described as nations with high fertility rates and the primary sources of immigration to the West (Smith 2005). This bias revealed that there is not much gender analysis within deep ecology despite the fact that so much of ecological injustice affects women and men in vastly different ways and, according to some scholars, a masculinist worldview is largely responsible for many of our environmental problems (Scarce 2006:39).

### *Ecofeminism*

Much like deep ecology, ecofeminism—which emerged in the 1970s—proposes a politics that recognizes human interdependency with all other beings. However, many ecofeminists charge that deep ecology naively encourages a “oneness” or boundary-free relationship among living beings in a way that ignores actual social differences and histories of exploitation (Warren 1990).

Ecofeminism, therefore, was largely a response to the interrelated problems of ecological unsustainability and patriarchy (MacGregor 2006). This umbrella term encapsulates a range of perspectives whose “basic premise is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature” (Gaard 1993:1; see also King 1989). Ecofeminism “calls for an end to all oppressions, arguing that no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature” (Gaard 1993:1). What makes ecofeminism a distinct body of ideas is its position that nonhuman nature and naturism or dominionism (domination of nonhuman nature) are feminist concerns (Warren 1997:4). While dominated by white women, ecofeminism has, from the start, embraced antiracism (Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen 1999), albeit often through problematic approaches that sometimes impose ecofeminism on women of color environmental activists and romanticize Indigenous women's lives (Sturgeon 1997; Taylor 1997).

### *The EJP*

Beginning in the 1990s, many scholars argued that the emerging EJP went even further than the NEP, deep ecology, and ecofeminism by emphasizing the unequal environmental burden that historically marginalized human populations confront. Thus, they argued that social justice and human rights for people of color, working class people, Indigenous peoples, and women must be at the center of environmental discourse (see Capek 1993; Taylor 2000; and Walker 2009). While ecofeminism drew attention to the conceptual and philosophical links between the domination of humans and nonhu-

man nature, the EJP further concretized these ideas in material terms. It foregrounds the relationship between social inequality and the environment and encourages dominant institutions to address these issues.

The EJP nonetheless preserves a hierarchy of people over nonhuman nature as it “urge[s] people to be responsible *stewards* of the earth” (Taylor 2000:541, emphasis added). Furthermore, while environment justice activists have demonstrated a willingness to challenge state and corporate policymaking, the movement is ultimately rooted in a reformist model of social change that accepts the fundamental legitimacy of those institutions, including the legal system (Benford 2005).

### The Total Liberation Frame

The total liberation frame broadens and challenges the boundaries and assumptions of the NEP, deep ecology, ecofeminism, and the EJP by encompassing a wider intersection of concerns linking social justice, dominant institutions, and ecological politics. It is the result of a frame transformation that began during the 1990s among radical environmental and animal rights activists and groups who were influenced by the politics of social justice that permeated many other social movements, social change organizations, and academic disciplines on university campuses across the United States. Ideas and concepts like intersectionality (Crenshaw [1991] 1994), multiple and linked oppressions, and social privilege took hold in many of these spaces and had a noticeable effect on the language and practices of social movements. For example, at numerous activist gatherings, we found literature presenting perspectives on countering state repression and racial, gender, sexual, class, and species oppression. These perspectives were echoed in activist workshops, in our interviews, and in activist publications. The idea that we can no longer understand, analyze, or resist a single form of oppression in isolation from other forms materialized in feminist and antiracist activist and intellectual circles across the nation, and we saw these ideas appear in the writings, speeches, and actions of radical animal rights and environmental activists (Jones 2004; Sheen 2012). Similarly, small anarchist and anticapitalist groups enjoyed some growth and visibility in the late 1990s, urging others to radicalize their diagnostic and prognostic framings of the challenges and possibilities facing left-leaning grassroots movements, including support of illegal direct action. Within this context, radical earth and animal liberation groups pioneered the articulation of the total liberation frame in their movement struggles as a way of correcting and transforming extant frames.

Based on our data and analysis, we propose that the total liberation frame is comprised of four elements: (1) an ethic of justice and anti-oppression for people, nonhuman animals, and ecosystems; (2) anarchism; (3) anticapitalism; and (4) an embrace of direct action. As this frame transformation is unfolding at the movement level, each activist does not necessarily articulate each element of the frame equally. In addition, at times, some activists and groups placed more emphasis on some elements rather than others. Nevertheless, these four key elements appear consistently in our interviews, observations, and in movement documents. In addition, these four elements appear to

have emerged and converged at roughly the same time within these movements, as activists evaluated ideas and influences from the mainstream ecological movements and from other social justice movements. Thus, while total liberation is a term that not all activists use, we arrived at the definition of this frame inductively by examining myriad data sources. Interestingly, the federal government has also reached a similar conclusion, without using the term total liberation. Two recently declassified Federal Bureau of Investigation (2011a,b) reports indicate that agents describe these movements as “anarchist” with an orientation that argues that “animals and humans are inherently the same” and whose participants choose to “engage in direct action instead of legal social protest” by “[u]tiliz[ing] economic sabotage” directed at “. . . perceived symbols of capitalism, imperialism, and oppression.” These documents confirm that the U.S. government has also perceived the four components of the total liberation frame we have identified.

Total liberation is both a materialist and cultural project, seeking to reorder human/nonhuman/ecosystem relations as well as the guiding discourses and ideas that undergird them. Total liberation may not be the only frame in the movements we consider here, but it is one of the primary frames. It also reflects a significant vision of social change because it challenges and transforms other key movement frames. Below, we consider the four key aspects of the frame.

#### *Justice and Anti-Oppression for All*

Beginning in the late 1990s, there was increasing evidence of a convergence between radical earth and animal liberation activists around a call for justice and anti-oppression politics focused on people, nonhuman animals, and ecosystems (Molland 2006:56).<sup>6</sup> This perspective developed through a set of theoretical propositions that sought to understand the harm that humans perpetrate against ecosystems and nonhuman animals as reflective of and linked to systems of oppression *within* human society. An ELF communiqué from May 1997 began, “Welcome to the struggle of all species to be free. We are the burning rage of a dying planet” (ELF 1997).

For many activists, an ethic of justice was linked to a language of “rights” and liberation, contending that ecosystems, animals, and people should be free from oppression and harm. Since radical movements claim to confront the roots of a problem, members generally defined justice as the elimination of the conditions that produced the injustice in the first place. In addition, justice for ecosystems includes a focus on justice for nonhuman animals. Our interviewees also felt a need to focus on animals because they are unable to directly speak for themselves. As one activist told us, “In the animal protection movement, we have a situation where animals are not capable of organizing on behalf of themselves. They’re completely reliant on us to voluntarily give up the power that we have over them for altruistic reasons.”

While one might expect animal rights or environmental organizations to focus only on animals or ecosystems, the total liberation frame includes an ethic of justice for people as well. Sometimes, a concern for people was linked to a specific movement

campaign. For example, one activist who works to highlight the plight of animals in factory farms asserted:

If you are part of a meat-eating society based on factory farms, then you're participating in the pain for millions of animals, but it's also an extraordinary waste of land and food resources. It's like having 17 bowls of pasta around the table and throwing 16 of them away. . . . From a basic standpoint of human rights and poverty prevention, anyone might want to pay attention to that.

Citing concerns for human rights, the founder of the first-known ELF group in the United States described why his group opposed the production and application of pesticides by agricultural industries:

. . . the excessive and inappropriate use of toxic pesticides being applied to our food and land was alarming. Cancer, birth defects, immune system failures and other diseases were increasing. . . . All people, all ethnicities and classes were being victimized by having their food poisoned with pesticides. We wanted to put an end to ecocide and supported everyone's right to a poison free diet.

Numerous interviewees told us that making the links between the exploitation of ecosystems or nonhuman animals and humans required activists to recognize the role of privilege—especially their own—as humans and as members of largely white, middle-class social movements. As one activist succinctly explained, “We don't live in a vacuum. Racism occurs in the same world that animal exploitation occurs.” Similarly, a popular slogan among many activists is “animal liberation, human liberation, one struggle, one fight!” For these activists, the existence and acceptance of inequalities within human society and between humans and other living beings (speciesism) are major drivers of the abuse across various species and ecosystems.

One veteran Earth First! activist remembered a movement gathering years ago when one aspect of this problem arose:

A lot of people were basically indulging in their white, upper-middle-class, primarily male privilege who really didn't want to confront these issues. . . . And I as an Earth First!er [felt] that we need to be dealing with wilderness . . . issues while at the same time, confronting oppression within our circles simultaneously, or we will fail at both.

Accordingly, most movement events we attended entailed workshops on challenging social oppression; recognizing privilege; working in solidarity with people of color, immigrants, and Indigenous peoples; and answering questions like “How does the movement privilege white, male, middle-class, and able-bodied youth?” The

TWAC—an annual radical ecological movement gathering—also addressed issues of privilege. Our field notes from a session on Interrupting Oppression at TWAC read, in part:

We begin by defining oppression. The facilitator asks the audience for suggestions, and people throw out ideas like domination, something that someone/thing benefits from, discrimination, and systems. . . . The facilitator . . . then shares her definition of oppression, which is privilege + power + prejudice = oppression.

Similarly, at the Earth First! Round River Rendezvous in Oregon's Umpqua National Forest, there was a trove of literature on various topics related to social justice and anti-oppression. Our field notes detailed many of the pamphlets available, including one entitled "What Is White Supremacy?" as well as countless others about Indigenous solidarity, genocide, feminism, anarchy, immigration, and other topics.

Many activists drew direct connections between the harm visited upon ecosystems and other beings. One activist wrote the following in the *Earth First! Journal*: "If we don't have trees, then there would be no animals. If there were no animals, then there would be no us" (Earth First! Journal 2002a). This focus on the interconnectedness of justice for ecosystems, animals, and people stems from seeing exploitation and injustice as having similar root causes. According to one interviewee, ". . . it's really the same infrastructure and it's really the same societal norms that contribute to the exploitation of animals, the planet, people." Thus, while some activists focused on a single cause because of time and resource constraints, they remained cognizant that ecosystems, animals, and people are connected.

Nicoal Sheen, who works for the North American Animal Liberation Press Office, summed up the concept of total liberation as follows:

Total liberation provides agency for all. Every single being on this planet deserves their liberation and freedom from social constructs that limit who we are, how we live and how we interact with each other—human and other-than-human. Total liberation as a concept and in praxis recognizes that our oppression is inextricably linked and must be fought on all fronts. (Sheen 2012)

Much in line with this, Rylee, an activist posting on an online forum, stated, "I believe in total liberation. I want to better connect ideas of human, animal, and earth liberation to create a more unified radical movement. . . . we should work towards ending any hierarchal notions. I want to end domination and exploitation in all forms" (Rylee 2011).

Insisting on justice for ecosystems, nonhuman animals, and people, this perspective draws directly from and issues a challenge to other movement frames that tend to place a greater emphasis on just one or two of these elements. While earlier movement

frames focused mainly on what activists saw as the need for justice for one element of society (mainly ecosystems, animals, or people), the total liberation frame represents a transformation because it integrates concerns for human society with nonhuman species and ecosystems. For example, both the NEP and the EJP are ultimately anthropocentric, while deep ecology is decidedly biocentric. Like deep ecology, ecofeminism prioritizes concerns about nonhuman species and ecosystems, but deep ecology lacks serious attention to forms of oppression like racism and heteropatriarchy. The total liberation frame transforms these and takes the position that any effort to favor either anthropocentrism or biocentrism is a false choice because the rights and needs of people, ecosystems, and nonhuman animals are linked and must be integrated. This perspective also underscores the ways in which activists view human society as inseparable from nonhuman natures (Jerolmack 2012; Wachsmuth 2012), with humans being responsible for the exploitation of nonhumans and human activists feeling obligated to stop such abuse.

### *Anarchism*

Social movements that reject virtually any form of hierarchy organically lend themselves to anarchism, and radical environmental and animal rights movements are frequently shaped by such views. By anarchism, we mean a theory of governance that is anti-authoritarian and premised on mutual assistance and cooperation. Anarchists are not only critical of, but also generally opposed to, the development of states. They reject conventional forms of governance via states out of a concern that such forms of power are inherently corrupt and predisposed to exercising what Max Weber called a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force (Weber et al. 2004). Many earth and animal liberation activists view that monopoly as a legitimating function that extends to social control over vulnerable populations—both human and nonhuman—and ecosystems. These movements also view the domination of states over living beings and inanimate objects as practices that reinforce patriarchy, racism, class inequality, and heteronormativity. A focus on anarchist elements of social movements also reveals the long-standing state-centric bias in social movement theory in which scholars have tended to view the state as the primary target or vehicle of reform for movements (Pellow 2001).

The vast majority of interviewees stated that they harbored, in one activist's words, "an inherent distrust of government" and its institutions. One environmentalist who has been active in Earth First! shared:

Philosophically, politically, the closest label that would fit on me would be anarchist. I believe that which governs best, governs least. . . . And, you know, historically, that used to be called "being an American." But now it apparently makes me an anarchist, and if so, all right, I'll raise the black flag. . . . Reading Jefferson and Franklin and the rest, it seems that they, too, would have been anarchists and dragged away by the Patriot Act if they were around today.

One interviewee referenced a well-known ELF activist in order to make his point that using the legal system to pursue individuals and institutions responsible for harming ecosystems is counterproductive for anarchists: “. . . like my friend Craig Rosebraugh says, ‘you’re using evil to counteract evil’ because the criminal justice system is certainly evil. . . . We don’t want stronger criminal justice laws . . . because they aren’t about justice; they’re about keeping certain subsets down.”

Much of this distrust stems from the connection activists make between the state and hierarchy—a force they see as deeply oppressive—and the state’s direct involvement in the destruction of wilderness and wildlife. One interviewee explained:

. . . the reality in the world is, if you look at the loss of human life, Republican and Democratic parties are responsible for more mass death than anything else on the planet. And the planet itself is threatened by their interests. So it’s not surprising that, to protect their own interests, they create an infrastructure that supports what they do and opposes anybody who disagrees.

The rejection of hierarchy at the foundation of anarchism is also important for the structure and functioning of these radical movements. One activist told us about his nonhierarchical organization’s approach to everyday work and campaigns: “It was a beautiful anarchist campaign, it was so decentralized and it was about information sharing, and there was a spectrum and diversity of tactics—nobody was going to tell you [that] you could or could not do this.” This type of horizontal organizational structure, which focuses on democratic decision making and shared power, was common in the movements and groups we studied (for an exploration of this phenomenon in the Occupy Movement, see Maharawal 2013). It also represents a rejection of the way that many large environmental and animal rights organizations operate, with bureaucratic command structures and hierarchies that mirror the way corporate and state institutions function.

It is noteworthy that the anarchist sentiment among many members of these movements has been strengthened in recent years because of state repression against more radical factions of environmental and animal rights networks. In 2005, a prominent federal government official declared radical earth and animal liberation movements the number one domestic “terrorist” threat in the United States (Schuster 2005). Since then, state and federal governments have passed legislation, sponsored law enforcement efforts aimed at neutralizing these movements, and engaged in surveillance, infiltration, intimidation, and imprisonment—a range of practices that has become known as the Green Scare (Potter 2011).<sup>7</sup> The anarchist response to this repression is a dynamic that confirms Futrell’s (2003) observation that frame transformations can occur in part as a response to the actions of a movement’s opponents.<sup>8</sup>

Many activists we interviewed interpreted the Green Scare as an abuse of government power against social movements exercising constitutionally protected activities. One environmentalist argued that there is a double standard at work when corpora-

tions that damage ecosystems are celebrated for creating jobs, while environmentalists trying to protect those ecosystems are labeled “terrorists”:

It’s ironic that the people [industry] blowing up entire mountains point at the people [activists] and say, ‘That’s a bad idea,’ and saying, ‘Oh, you’re eco-terrorists for daring to protect our watersheds.’ We’re the new Communists. . . . It’s dehumanizing, and that dehumanization makes it easier to justify repression and attacking First Amendment rights.

Overall, anarchism is a core component of the total liberation frame, linking concerns with hierarchy among people, nonhumans, and ecosystems to a distrust of states and the power they embody. Anarchism’s antipathy for state institutions is complemented by its attempt to offer alternatives that involve a different way of thinking, living, governing, and decision making—a cultural project in which coercion is minimized and cooperation is emphasized (Maharawal 2013). This is a direct challenge to extant ecological movement frames that generally argue for a reformist approach to state practices, such as the NEP and EJP, which remain committed to state institutions as long as they can be partially harnessed to regulate and mitigate ecological disorganization and social inequalities. Deep ecology is also quite reformist in its declaration that “policies must . . . be changed” (Naess and Sessions 1984), and while some forms of ecofeminism embrace anarcha-feminism (see Jones 2004), that frame is much less concerned with abolishing states. Thus, the total liberation frame is a transformation of other ecological movement frames in that it heartily adopts an anarchist perspective that lends equal weight to other concerns such as confronting oppression in all forms within the human community and across the human/nonhuman divide.

### *Anticapitalism*

Anarchist movements are often deeply anticapitalist. Likewise, many social movements committed to anti-oppression and justice for vulnerable populations tend to be critical of, if not opposed to, capitalism. If capitalism is a system of production and social relations that is inherently hierarchical and predicated on the exploitation of working-class labor and ecosystems (Foster 2000), then the earth and animal liberation movements have many reasons to oppose it.

As many of our interviewees pointed out, capitalism requires continuous feed stocks of ecological wealth and nonhuman animals, workers to ensure the flow of those resources, and consumers to purchase and consume the products at the end of the cycle (Schnaiberg and Gould 2000).<sup>9</sup> This “treadmill of production” also demands social compliance from workers, citizens, and consumers and thrives on the intensification of social hierarchies and militarism (Hooks and Smith 2004). As one interviewee articulated, “Our government, our country was founded upon exploitation. And so the capitalist system . . . treats not only workers, but the environment and animals as, essentially, commodities to be exploited. Our entire culture is based on exploitation of



human and non-human animals.” Similarly, another interviewee declared that “the global economy treats people and the environment basically the same: [as] exploitable resources.”

As these statements demonstrate, an anticapitalist sentiment builds on the anarchist rejection of hierarchy and extends to the exploitation and objectification of ecosystems, animals, and people. For example, at the TWAC, we read activist literature that stated: “In the dominant-western-capitalistic worldview, nature is objectified. . . . Women are also fragmented into parts to be used for recreation and profit (in ways that men are not).”

One environmental activist linked his anarchist embrace of cooperation and mutual assistance to what he viewed as its perversion under capitalism:

We should be more cooperative, but we’re in a system that profits from us *not* cooperating with each other. . . . So when you look at a corporation . . . basically, a corporation is a model of forced cooperation for the benefit of a few, not for the collective people that are trying to work together.

This anticapitalist perspective is often focused on a single corporation or corporate leader. Activists regularly protest large firms that are household names (like ExxonMobil, Wal-Mart, and McDonald’s) for allegedly harming people, nonhumans, and/or ecosystems. For example, Home Depot has been the target of an environmentalist campaign in which Earth First! has been involved. As an activist involved in this effort reported:

. . . Home Depot is the largest retailer of old-growth forest products in the world. On the shelves of over 700 stores you can find products ripped out of the heart of every major threatened forest on the planet. . . . The continued sale of products derived from these forests must stop in order to turn the tide of mass destruction. (Earth First! Journal 1999:25)

Multiple corporations have been on the receiving end of activist reproach on the question of animal rights as well. For more than a decade, Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS) has been the focal point of animal liberation protests in the United States and the United Kingdom. An activist group called SHAC has mobilized for years around HLS:

Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS) have about 70,000 animals on site. . . . These animals are destined to suffer and die in cruel, useless experiments. HLS will test anything for anybody. They carry out experiments which involve poisoning animals. . . . Every three minutes an animal dies inside Huntingdon totaling 500 innocent lives every single day (SHAC.net 2011).

Many activists also share the belief that states and corporations are frequently too closely aligned, a hallmark of anticapitalist politics. The North American Animal Liberation Press Office explained the intersection of the above concerns:

The crisis in the natural world reflects a crisis in the social world, whereby corporate elites and their servants in government have centralized power, monopolized wealth, destroyed democratic institutions, and unleashed a brutal and violent war against dissent. Corporate destruction of nature is enabled by asymmetrical and hierarchical social relations, whereby capitalist powers commandeer the political, legal, and military system to perpetuate and defend their exploitation of the social and natural worlds. . . . (NAALPO 2008:10)

Radical environmental and animal rights movements demonstrate strong opposition to the routine violence, suffering, and exploitation that capitalist institutions are said to mete out to ecosystems, nonhumans, and human communities. They also voice considerable dislike for the inequalities that capitalism produces and appears to thrive on. Whether it is corporations or states aligned with them, these social movements reject any system of commerce and governance that creates hierarchies and requires the appropriation of life and labor in order to sustain itself.

The total liberation frame's anticapitalism is a direct challenge to and transformation of other ecological movement frames that tend to engage in criticism of capitalist institutions but ultimately accept their legitimacy, such as the NEP and the EJP's promotion of "green capitalism" and encouragement of collaboration with corporations whose leaders claim "green," "socially responsible," and/or "humane" practices (Seager 1994; Torres 2007). Deep ecology has traditionally concentrated on inward spiritual and cultural aspects of ecological politics, offering little in the way of a direct challenge to capitalism. And while ecofeminism is not explicitly anticapitalist, its opposition to all forms of oppression indicate that the logical implication of that frame suggests a likely support of such a viewpoint.

The anticapitalism within the total liberation frame also explicitly links the fate of human and nonhuman populations and ecosystems, detailing the ways that all species have a shared experience of abuse under this system and therefore a common interest in ushering in its abolition. Activists articulating the total liberation frame do not view capitalism simply as an economic system; it is a system that depends on humans and nonhumans to serve as raw materials, workers, and consumers, thus producing common oppressions and the inextricable meshing of our collective experiences. Thus, the total liberation frame is a transformation of other ecological movement frames in that it readily declares an anticapitalist perspective that pays equal attention to all manifestations of oppression among humans and across the human/nonhuman species divide.

### *Direct Action*

This last element of the total liberation frame follows from the previous three in that this theme suggests actions and practices that movement participants hope will bring about justice for ecosystems, nonhuman animals, and people within a just, anarchist, and noncapitalist society. Direct action is the application of what Benford and Snow (2000:616) call a "prognostic" element of a frame in that it is focused on "a proposed

solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack.” Every activist we interviewed for this study supported taking action to free and defend animals and ecosystems from captivity, harm, and destruction at the hands of governments and corporations, and each activist expressed the view that it was her or his duty to intervene against injustice. For these activists, direct action can take many forms, including mobilizing people to prevent or advocate a particular policy or practice, property damage, and personal confrontation.

Movement activists regularly engage each other in writing and in oral discussions at gatherings about what direct action entails. Writing in the *Earth First! Journal*, one group of advocates stated:

Direct action—action that either symbolically or directly shifts power relations—is an essential transformative tool. . . . Direct action, if only for a moment, seizes leadership and thus injects into the public sphere a competing discourse—a strand of a new reality that has the ability to ripple outward. (Earth First! Journal 2002b:4)

In other words, direct action is not simply about confronting authorities and forcing them to follow a particular path. It is also about transforming power relations in society so as to ensure that future practices will arise from a different worldview than the current dominant one.

For many activists, direct action is the most effective method to attack the root of the problem. As the ELF Web site states:

The quality of our air, water, and soil continues to decrease as more and more life forms on the planet suffer and die. . . . How much longer are we supposed to wait to actually stop the destruction of life? . . . There is also a certain intelligence and logic to the idea that with one night’s work, a few individuals can accomplish what years of legal battles and millions of dollars most likely did not. (Pickering 2007:56)

For many others, direct action is viewed as one of several tools in the movement repertoire. On this point, one activist who served time for arson told us that there are many tactics that movements must draw on to be effective: “I think that if we’re going to create real change . . . we really need to recognize that it’s going to take a combined effort of lobbying, lawsuits, civil disobedience, and illegal direct action to create the social pressure we need to create change. . . .” Thus even some radical activists agree that, at times, working within the system can produce results.

In particular, property destruction is a major topic of conversation among radical environmental and animal rights activists. A high-profile activist served nine years for arson at a car dealership—an action that he and a colleague took to protest climate change and the ecological consequences of U.S. “car culture.” As we spoke, he indicated his support of property destruction in defense of environmental sustainability:

“In terms of inspiring people around the world, [our action was] incredibly successful. . . . I mean, it was a symbolic thing that we wanted to do to bring attention to an issue that we felt was important. And . . . not only did we accomplish that, here we are years later and around the world, people are now doing this on a semi-regular basis. They’re recognizing that car culture is connected to the oil industry. . . .”

Similarly, an animal liberation activist told us that direct actions involving property destruction have resulted in significant movement gains: “Justin Samuel and Peter Young raided a fur farm and that fur farm . . . went out of business . . . that’s one instance where a corporation capitulated completely to animal liberation.”

Personal confrontation in public spaces is another tactic of choice for many activists. A well-known animal liberation activist who regularly leads home demonstrations against corporate targets stated:

Home demos . . . generally are four to five people, demonstrating about fur, vivisection. . . . We’ve had five years of demos against Andrew Baker, CEO of HLS. . . . Sometimes people do get irritated at our demos, like a neighbor may say, ‘quiet it down, I’m trying to get some rest.’ And I’ll respond ‘go to hell!’ There are animals being slaughtered by their neighbor and that’s more important. Other times, people come out and write checks to our organization.

Activists practicing direct action also make conceptual links between harms visited upon ecosystems and animals and injustices facing human beings. The following communiqué reports a direct action that reflects that vision:

. . . members of the Earth Liberation Front descended upon the Old Navy Outlet Center . . . [and] smashed . . . plate glass windows and one neon sign. This action served as a protest to Old Navy’s owners’ involvement in the clear cutting of old-growth forest in the Pacific Northwest. . . . Old Navy, Gap, Banana Republic care not for the species that call these forests home, care not for the animals that comprise their leather products, and care not for their garment workers underpaid, exploited and enslaved in overseas sweatshops. (ELF 2001b)

Thus, direct action is a core part of radical environmental and animal rights movements’ tactical repertoire and a critical component of the total liberation frame. Direct action also represents a major challenge to existing ecological frames that tend to rely on less confrontational approaches and tactics that are generally within the bounds of the law (with the exception of civil disobedience), amounting to a key element of the frame transformation that total liberation constitutes. The NEP, deep ecology, and the EJP call for activists to practice reformist and moderate tactical methods for achieving social change, none of which present fundamental challenges to dominant social institutions. In addition, ecofeminism retains a lack of clarity regarding direct action, but it is clear that many ecofeminists do support such efforts (Jones 2004).

## DISCUSSION

Thus far, we have documented that a frame transformation is occurring and outlined the key elements of the frame. Yet, there are still unanswered questions regarding why this frame transformation is occurring and how it is shaping these movements. As this is not an historical study, we are not able to track the transformation closely over time and develop a formal model, but can discuss what motivated activists to initiate this frame transformation and how it has generally influenced the direction and contours of the movement thus far.

The social movement literature does not offer much guidance on why frame transformations occur other than the perceived need among activists for new approaches. The few existing studies on frame transformation (White 1999; Ulsperger 2002; Futrell 2003) largely emphasize intramovement-specific issues at the micro-sociological scale, ranging from the desire to correct movement misframings, to reinvigorate a dormant movement, or to respond to an opponent's changing strategies. These emphases are critically important, but we find that the change is driven by a combination of micro- and macro-sociological forces. In the case of the frame transformation within radical ecological movements, we find a confluence of three factors, including (1) the intensification of socio-ecological crises coupled with the perceived need to respond to troubling threats to nonhuman natures and promote more just and sustainable relations among humans and nonhumans; (2) frustration among radical movements with dominant ecological movement frames and tactics; and (3) influences from other social movements, including nonecological social justice movements.

A key reason for the frame transformation is the eruption of socio-ecological crises and the perceived need to respond to them, as almost every activist with whom we spoke cited the following trends. According to leading scientists, damage to ecosystems over the last 50 years was more severe than during any other time in history, as the health of coral reefs, fisheries, oceans, forests, and river systems declined precipitously, while climate change indicators, species extinction, and air and water pollution rose dramatically. Paralleling these trends is the large-scale increase in factory farming and industrial animal production, consumption, and experimentation that results in the slaughter of billions of nonhumans each year. The threats to planetary sustainability and continued massive exploitation of nonhuman species through industrial agriculture, chemical testing, and entertainment have been widely reported and have rippled through activist communities. The effects of such activity have had enormously negative impacts on ecosystems and nonhuman species (United Nations 2005), and the total liberation frame emerged, in part, as a response.

The second reason for the frame transformation is the palpable frustration by radical activists with mainstream ecological movements' orientation, values, and tactics. While these frustrations are observable within individual activists, we assert that they have had movement-level effects. The process of frame transformation is most visibly punctuated at those moments when radical activists reject the mainstream ecological movement and instead focus on the four pillars of the total liberation frame.

Across each of these themes, we see the division between mainstream and radical activism, and we can see the reasons why the frame transformation took hold and the process of how it shaped the movement unfolding.<sup>10</sup>

Data in our earlier discussion of anti-oppression politics are rooted partly in the experiences of many radical ecology activists learning from tensions between mainly white and middle-class mainstream environmental and animal rights movements and Indigenous communities and people of color who perceive racially offensive and culturally insensitive campaigns, tactics, language, and behavior by mainstream activists. Because of these tensions and accompanied frustrations, the radical movements studied here have decided that one of the most important approaches to movement building should involve developing anti-oppression principles and practices within their ranks. Earth First! formalized this idea into an official Earth First! Anti-Oppression Policy that was published in a 2007 edition of the *Earth First! Journal*. In that article, the EF! Editorial Collective stated that oppressive behavior “calls into question our commitment to a better world and our qualification as a radical movement,” signaling the radical ecological critique of the mainstream movement (Earth First! Editorial Collective 2007).

The gulf between mainstream and radical activists with respect to state- and market-centered politics and strategies is a primary site where frame transformation takes root and shapes ecological movements. This area of contention is where anarchism, anticapitalism, and direct action politics converge. One animal liberation activist writes:

As [mainstream animal welfare] activists lounge around swank hotels preaching to the choir in endless conferences and Ego Fests, the enemy is growing in number and strength. . . . Mainstream ideologues are under the spell of Gandhi, King, and “legalism,” the system-created ideology that urges dissenters to seek change only in and through non-violence and the pre-approved legislative channels of the state. As the opiate of the masses, legalism disempowers resistance movements and leaves corporations and governments to monopolize power. . . . (Best 2009)

In fact, the founding of Earth First! was in direct response to radical environmentalists’ perception that mainstream groups compromised too readily with state and corporate leaders on policy goals. Speaking about mainstream approaches to environmental change through compromising with the U.S. Forest Service, Earth First! cofounder Howie Wolkie once stated, “We played the game, we played the rules. We were moderate, reasonable, and professional. We had data, statistics, and maps. And we got fucked. That’s when I started thinking, ‘Something’s missing here. Something isn’t working’” (Best and Nocella 2004:38). Today, the rejection of the mainstream as elitist and out of touch continues to exert a major impact on the contours and direction of radical ecological movements.

A third reason for the frame transformation is the influence of other social justice movements. These other movements’ ideas, beliefs, actions, and successes have

shaped radical ecological movements and given form to much of the total liberation frame. Many activists in radical ecological movements draw inspiration from other social movements, including the Civil Rights, Black Power, American Indian, Irish Republican, Abolitionist, Luddites, and Industrial Workers of the World movements of the 19th and 20th centuries (Pickering 2007:57–8). For example, many radical earth and animal liberation activists cite MOVE, which was a revolutionary group in Philadelphia led by African-American men and women who lived in a communal residence, practiced a vegetarian diet, and spread an anticapitalist, anti-authoritarian, antiracist, antimilitarist message. They publicly protested police brutality, animal abuse, and racism, and were eventually bombed by the Philadelphia police department, killing multiple members of the community. Those who survived were placed in federal prison, many of whom are still there at the time of this writing. The MOVE prisoners are widely viewed as political prisoners, and radical animal liberation and earth liberation groups publicly support the group by publishing interviews with MOVE members, listing those in prison on “political prisoner support” pages in publications, and featuring MOVE members as speakers at conferences (N.A. 1999).

Many activists specifically cited other movements during interviews. For example, scott crow, an animal and earth liberation activist who has been involved in earth and animal liberation, antiracist, and anarchist organizing for many years, said:

This is one thing I’ve learned from the Zapatistas, and I also take from the Black Panthers. . . . I want liberation for everybody, I want collective liberation, and anti-oppression to me is the first step in that it’s recognizing the difference between privilege and oppression and recognizing that people like myself have privilege that we receive from being white males from North America, but that it can be conditional.

Similarly, North American Animal Liberation Press Office (NAALPO) Press Officer Jerry Vlasak spoke to us about his inspiration from historic social justice movements:

We see this as a struggle comparable to other liberation struggles: slavery, Algerian resistance, anti-Apartheid, and the resistance to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—all are struggles of oppressed people and nonhumans for freedom. We don’t see a difference. Speciesism is something we don’t endorse, just like we don’t endorse racism or sexism or ageism or homophobia. . . . Every successful liberation struggle has always used illegal means. Nelson Mandela was a lawyer who tried to use legal means to fight Apartheid in South Africa, and when it didn’t work he broke the law and went to jail. . . . This is a perfectly legitimate form of resistance. When everything else has been tried, then people need to do something else.

Vlasak’s and crow’s statements reveal the influence of other social justice movements on radical ecological politics with respect to deepening their commitment to anti-

oppression and illegal direct action. Anarchist and anticapitalist ideas and sentiments were also highly salient within MOVE, the Zapatistas, the Black Panthers, and the Industrial Workers of the World—key influences on animal and earth liberation movements today.

The above data reveal that the frame transformation associated with total liberation began and continues to unfold as a result of the perceived expansion of socio-ecological crises and associated threats to humans, nonhumans, and ecosystems; frustration with mainstream ecological movements; and influences from other social justice movements. These three social forces shaped the frame transformation that produced total liberation and its emphasis on anti-oppression, anarchism, anticapitalism, and direct action, thus offering insight into how and why this frame transformation began. It is also important to understand that other social justice movements (including international movements and movements in the global South) have had a significant influence on the direction of radical ecological movements as well but are outside the scope of this article. In addition, we note that the relationship among mainstream and radical ecological movements and social justice movements is complex and difficult to disentangle. For example, in some cases, radicals' frustration with the mainstream results from exposure to other social justice movements (which helped them realize how limited mainstream movements are), while in other cases, the frustration with mainstream movements prompted radicals to reach out and learn from other social justice movements, which may have deepened their commitment to total liberation even more. Regardless of the sequence, social justice movements have had a marked impact on radical ecological movements and deserve credit for providing much of the foundation of the total liberation frame and inspiring the associated frame transformation. Thus, the social forces driving the frame transformation that resulted in the total liberation frame are apparent on multiple fronts, from the macro to the micro scale, including the myriad socio-ecological crises, reactions to the limitations of mainstream ecological movements, and influences by other social justice movements.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the four components of the total liberation frame reveal a frame transformation that challenges and confronts ideas, values, tactics, and goals embodied in existing frames associated with ecological movements. Activists pushed back against extant movement frames toward a much more radical orientation by challenging goals, ideas, values, methods, and means *and* developing new ones. Building on the NEP, deep ecology, ecofeminism, and the EJP, the ecological movements were transformed from reducing harm to the environment, public health, and nonhumans to an effort to achieve a complete reordering of human/nonhuman relations toward equality for all beings.

This dynamic also underscores a limitation of the concept of frame transformation in that rather than simply seeking to transform a single frame, radical earth and animal liberation activists' total liberation frame is a new frame and is drawn from and chal-



lenges multiple existing frames as well as other influences. The literature on collective action frames assumes that movements simply transform one frame into a new frame, but since movements often borrow ideas and tactics from one another (Wang and Soule 2012), we view a frame transformation as a practice that can also reflect a movement's capacity to draw from and transform more than one frame in order to reimagine and reinvent itself. As our data reveal, the total liberation frame represents a borrowing from several other movement frames and knowledge to launch a transformation of those ideas and meanings into a new frame for the purposes of getting at "the root" of the problems of ecological and social crises and articulating a strategy for addressing that problem. The four dimensions of the total liberation frame reveal four axes along which this transformation occurs.<sup>11</sup>

We assert that total liberation is evidence of a frame transformation that is still underway because it is evolving and subject to challenge and revision within and outside of the movement. The social movement literature has little to say about how and when we know that a frame transformation begins and ends, which could be a topic for future research. Perhaps it is helpful to avoid the assumption that frame transformations have discrete ends and beginnings and instead see them as social forces that are becoming or evolving and have extensive genealogies and far reaching effects. In that sense, total liberation might be thought of as less of a frame transformation and more of a frame transforming. The frame transformation associated with total liberation also speaks to the importance of paying close attention to the ways that radical and mainstream branches of the same movements may be inseparably linked and how influences from other movements—including those of the past—may require excavation and greater consideration.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>We include radical environmental and animal rights movements under the banner of *ecological* politics because these activists are focused on the relationship of human beings to the broader nonhuman world (see White 2003).

<sup>2</sup>Additional information on these groups and on the process by which we selected them is available upon request.

<sup>3</sup>Interviewees for this project came from Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, D.C., Washington State, and West Virginia.

<sup>4</sup>These events took place in Minnesota and Oregon.

<sup>5</sup>While we propose these were key influences, arguably many other ideas influenced the frame and the activists utilizing it. We cannot review all influences in one article, but we would point out a key example—social ecology. According to its founder, Murray Bookchin, hierarchy within human society predates and is at the root of the human domination and control of nonhuman nature (Bookchin 2005). Thus, social ecology calls for the eradication of hierarchy in order to produce ecologically sustainable societies (Torres 2007).

<sup>6</sup>While we are not suggesting that the animal and earth liberation movements are merging, there is evidence of collaboration and information sharing between these movements. In many edi-

tions of radical animal liberation publications like, *No Compromise* there are listings of “eco-defense” political prisoners alongside those of animal liberation prisoners and interviews with and articles by earth liberation activists who regularly draw links between the issues driving each movement. Conversely, in every *Earth First! Journal* published over the last several years, there are updates on various animal liberation campaigns, and listings of animal liberation prisoners.

<sup>7</sup>The strength of these movements is, even according to many prominent activists, waning in the wake of government crackdowns, with much of the movements’ energies being channeled into supporting imprisoned activists.

<sup>8</sup>The Green Scare is also evidence of opposition to the total liberation frame, which also occurs to some extent from the more moderate mainstream ecological movements.

<sup>9</sup>While we do not present a specific anticapitalist movement frame (since our interviewees are not specifically influenced by anticapitalist scholarship per se), there is clearly a great deal of overlap on this topic between the total liberation frame and the works of Marxist environmental sociologists we reference in this article (see Foster 1999, 2000; O’Connor 1994; Schnaiberg and Gould 2000; Torres 2007).

<sup>10</sup>It is also critical to note that the process goes beyond a “mainstream/radical” binary in that, even within radical groups, splinters have occurred around total liberation politics. For example, *Earth First!* saw significant changes and disagreements between members during the early 1990s. For an excellent study on the consequences associated with differences between mainstream and radical movement groups, see Haines 1984.

<sup>11</sup>Total liberation does not reflect a mere frame extension. Frame extension is defined as extending or broadening the frame to include issues that might attract potential adherents who would otherwise not be interested in the movement. This concept, like much of social movement theory, is predicated on the idea that, in order to be successful, a movement must grow and attract large numbers of supporters. Radical environmental and animal liberation activists using the total liberation frame are not focused on building a mass movement and understand that their views are so outside of the mainstream that a large following of supporters is highly unlikely and counterproductive. Rather, activists are interested in deepening their analysis of the problem of socio-ecological crises and acting in small cells to promote change.

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