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## Coopted environmental justice? Activists' roles in shaping EJ policy implementation

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In this article, I augment scholars' explanations for why agencies' environmental justice (EJ) programs often fail to meet EJ movement principles. Other scholars have shown that countermovement actors within the state and from industry have coopted EJ policy implementation by reframing 'EJ' away from activist principles. Drawing on insights from social movement theorists who have shown that social movement outcomes are shaped also by movements' own internal struggles, I focus here on the cleavages among EJ activists and how those factions shape EJ policy implementation outcomes. I do so through an analysis of agencies' EJ grant programs in the United States. I use agency documents to describe how most of the programs were implemented in problematic ways that deviate from long-standing EJ movement priorities, and I use qualitative interviews with movement leaders influential over other EJ advocates and agency EJ efforts to help explain those outcomes. I demonstrate that EJ policy implementation often deviates from long-standing EJ movement priorities not only because of cooptation by countermovement actors and other factors that scholars have rightly noted, but also because some leading EJ activists are reframing what EJ means in problematic ways and shaping agency EJ efforts to accord with that vision.

**Keywords:** cooptation; environmental justice; environmental movements; factionalism; framing

### Introduction

In the past 20 years, government agencies in the United States and elsewhere have adopted and implemented 'environmental justice' (EJ) policies, programs, and practices in response to the EJ movement. Largely grassroots and loosely networked, EJ activists fight the unequal clustering of environmental problems in low-income communities and communities of color; criticize the mainstream environmental movement for ignoring environmental inequalities; frame environmental protections as rights; hold industry and the state accountable for environmental inequalities; and continue a long struggle against environmental racism in the United States and beyond (Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans 2003; Benford 2005; Bullard 1990; Bullard et al. 2007; Cable and Shriver 1995; Capek 1993; Cole and Foster 2000; Mohai, Pellow, and Roberts 2009; Pellow and Brulle 2005; Sandweiss 1998; Schlosberg 2007; Taylor 2000, 2009).

Agencies' EJ efforts to date appear to coopt the concept of EJ, disappointing movement members and academic supporters (Bullard et al. 2007; Eady 2003; Goode and Keiner 2003; Gordon and Harley 2005; Harrison 2015; Holifield 2004, 2012, 2014; Lewis and Bennett 2013; Lewis and Owley 2015; Liévanos 2012; Liévanos, London, and Sze 2011; London, Sze, and Liévanos 2008; Payne-Sturges et al. 2012; Scandrett 2007; Shilling, London, and Liévanos 2009; Targ 2005; Vajjhala 2010; Walker 2010). While scholars attribute these outcomes to numerous factors, many highlight *cooptation* by countermovement actors in the state and industry, who reframe

'EJ' to neuter EJ policy design and implementation (e.g., Eady 2003; Holifield 2012; Liévanos 2012; Sandweiss 1998).

Yet, studies of other social movements suggest that we might be missing part of the story by attending only to the framing conflicts between EJ advocates and countermovement actors. Social movement scholars have long shown that framing conflicts and other forms of factionalism abound *within* social movements in ways that shape movement outcomes (Armstrong 2002; Balser 1997; Benford 1993; Clemens 1996; Gamson 1975; Jenness 1995; White 1999). Here, I apply these insights to explain why one type of EJ policy implementation – agencies' EJ grant programs – largely deviates from the EJ movement's historical practices. Notwithstanding Holifield's (2001) argument against establishing one stable definition of 'EJ', the movement does evince some long-standing emphases from which agency EJ grant programs deviate in two important ways. First, in contrast to EJ activists' long-standing framing of environmental protections as a *right* to be protected by the state and associated pursuit of change through regulatory and policy protections rather than market-based and voluntary mechanisms, most agency EJ grant programs in the United States instead emphasize individual lifestyle change and voluntary agreements with industry. Second, whereas EJ advocates have long focused on hazard reduction, most agency EJ grant programs increasingly focus instead on other targets, such as developing parks and gardens, installing solar panels, and educating youth about nutrition, cooking, exercise,

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and wildlife. Although all of these practices and substantive foci have roles to play in environmental problem-solving, these patterns indicate that agency EJ grant programs are not adequately supporting projects that pursue socio-environmental change through the mechanisms and foci that long distinguished the EJ movement from mainstream environmentalism.

Drawing on ethnographic interviews with EJ activists influential over other EJ advocates and agency EJ efforts and attending to conflicts among them, I explain that these EJ policy implementation outcomes stem in part from the fact that many EJ activist leaders advocate for 'EJ' to be reconceptualized in this way and for agencies' EJ grant programs to take these forms. Often motivated by numerous structural factors constraining EJ advocacy, they craft a 'new common sense' about what EJ means – disparaging regulatory and policy protections against hazards as unnecessary, outdated, and ineffective – and influence the design of agency EJ programs accordingly. I thus argue that EJ policy implementation outcomes stem not only from countermovement actors' cooptation efforts and other factors scholars have rightly demonstrated, but also because some key EJ leaders reframe 'EJ' in these problematic ways and shape agency EJ efforts to accord with that vision. I also demonstrate that some advocates who maintain a vision of EJ that aligns with the movement's long-standing priorities contest this new common sense and shaped one of the grant programs to align with their views. These findings demonstrate that, to more fully explain EJ policy implementation outcomes, we need to look at the factions within the movement itself – specifically, to contestations among EJ activists about what EJ means and how they implement their ideas.

### Scholarship on EJ policy implementation

An extensive scholarship on environmental inequalities has investigated and substantiated EJ advocates' claims through analyzing the spatial relationships between environmental hazards and marginalized populations (Crowder and Downey 2010; Downey 2006; Grant et al. 2010; Mohai, Pellow, and Roberts 2009), while in-depth qualitative studies detail EJ activists' material and symbolic practices, their motivations, and the conditions that shape their outcomes (Bullard 1990; Cole and Foster 2000; Taylor 2009). Notwithstanding its internal diversity of practice, the EJ movement has long prioritized certain substantive foci and mechanisms of change. Substantively, EJ activists have criticized mainstream environmental organizations and the state alike for their preoccupation with wilderness and failure to address the environmental hazards disproportionately facing residents of low-income communities of color (Bullard 1990; Bullard et al. 2007; Cable and Shriver 1995; Capek 1993). Also, although EJ scholars and activists have observed that such communities lack equal access to environmental amenities like parks and other green spaces, EJ advocacy has historically focused on reducing

environmental hazards that threaten human health (e.g., from incinerators, waste dumps, mineral extraction, and dangerous workplaces).

Scholars have also shown that EJ activists criticize mainstream environmental organizations and the state for relying on undemocratic market-based and individualized mechanisms of change that obscure the structural causes of environmental inequalities, let industry off the hook, and fail to redistribute power over decision-making. Instead, EJ activists have asserted that freedom from environmental harm is a *right* to be protected by the state, not a privilege available only to those with means. Angered by polluting industries exploiting their communities, critical of neoliberal deregulation, and unable to buy their way into safer environments, EJ activists have primarily pursued change through stronger environmental regulations and policies, greater enforcement thereof, and more democratic state decision-making processes (Benford 2005; Bullard et al. 2007; Cable and Shriver 1995; Capek 1993; Cole and Foster 2000; Faber 2008; Faber and McCarthy 2003; Harrison 2008, 2011, 2014; London et al. 2013; Pellow and Brulle 2005; Sandweiss 1998; Schlosberg 2007; Schlosberg and Carruthers 2010; Taylor 2000; Walker 2009).

In response to EJ advocacy, numerous regulatory agencies in the US have developed EJ screening tools, trained staff in EJ principles, instituted EJ grant programs, and explored opportunities to develop EJ protocol for permitting, enforcement, and rulemaking. EJ advocates have played active roles in these processes through agency-convened EJ advisory committees and 'listening sessions', and some agencies hired grassroots activists to administer EJ programs.

However, observers have found that agency EJ efforts deviate markedly from core movement priorities, including doing little to reduce hazards in poor communities and communities of color or redistribute power over decision-making (Bullard et al. 2007; Eady 2003; Goode and Keiner 2003; Gordon and Harley 2005; Holifield 2004, 2012, 2014; Lewis and Bennett 2013; Lewis and Owley 2015; Liévanos 2012; Liévanos, London, and Sze 2011; London, Sze, and Liévanos 2008; Payne-Sturges et al. 2012; Scandrett 2007; Shilling, London, and Liévanos 2009; Targ 2005; Vajjhala 2010; Walker 2010). Scholars point to political opportunity structures (Meyer 2004) thwarting EJ policy implementation efforts: agency leaders hostile to EJ principles, insufficient funding, industry attack, conflict between EJ policy and agency mission, and the ways agency representatives interpret EJ (Harrison 2015; Holifield 2004, 2012, 2014; Lewis and Bennett 2013; Liévanos 2012; Liévanos, London, and Sze 2011; London, Sze, and Liévanos 2008; Payne-Sturges et al. 2012; Scandrett 2007; Shilling, London, and Liévanos 2009).

Social movement scholars have long attended to the problem of *cooptation* during social movement institutionalization (Campbell 2001; Coy and Hedeem 2005; Gamson 1975; Selznick 1966), and many EJ scholars

highlight the ways countermovement actors coopt the concept of EJ during EJ policy implementation. They show that state and industry actors reframe 'EJ' away from EJ activists' principles during policy design and implementation to neuter those efforts. Holifield (2012) and others have argued that EPA's EJ efforts were undermined when the George W. Bush administration redefined EJ in 2005 to apply to 'all people *regardless of* race, color, national origin, or income', a framing that veered from the EJ movement's demand for explicit attention to the environmental hazards disproportionately clustered in low-income communities and communities of color (U.S. EPA 2015, emphasis added). Liévanos (2012) illustrates how industry actors hostile to EJ activism coopted the state's EJ efforts by stripping core EJ principles like precaution and cumulative impact out of California EPA's definition of EJ. He laments that 'participating EJ advocates became disillusioned with how the meaning of "EJ" changed as it was institutionalized into regulatory policy' (487), noting that Eady (2003) and Sandweiss (1998) similarly found that framing was central to industry actors' success with coopting and neutering the EJ policy process elsewhere. By showing that EJ policy implementation outcomes stem from countermovement actors' efforts to redefine EJ in ways that diverge from movement principles, such work builds upon extensive social movement scholarship demonstrating the crucial ways in which *frames* shape activists' abilities to achieve their goals (Benford and Snow 2000). Organization theorists emphasize that frames matter in shaping agencies' organizational fields – the networks of social movement organizations and other actors that establish the 'rules of the game' and otherwise condition agencies' activities (Scott 2014).

Yet, whereas EJ scholarship on EJ policy implementation tends to present EJ activists' conceptions of EJ and their expectations of the state as *unified* and focuses on struggles between activists and countermovement actors, social movement scholarship shows that framing is an ongoing process among advocates and subject to intramovement contestation and change. Snow, Benford, and others have long shown that movements are rife with internal *conflicts* or *ambiguity* about framing, which can shape movement outcomes (Armstrong 2002; Benford 1993; Clemens 1996; White 1999). Such disputes are aspects of *factionalism* that scholars have observed in many social movements, where factions stem from various factors internal and external to the movements and can either strengthen movement efficacy or undermine solidarity (Balser 1997; Gamson 1975; Zald and Ash 1966; Zald and McCarthy 1980). Others have focused on how *shifts* in social movement frames can shape movement outcomes (Jeness 1995). Campbell (2001) provides insights into why organizations shift their frames in ways that seem to deviate from their long-standing principles. He argues that what looks like cooptation is often actually the strategic result of social movement organizations' need to relax their convictions in order to gain the support of elites and achieve material change. This work shows that, to

understand EJ policy implementation outcomes, we need to attend not only to countermovement actors' efforts to coopt EJ but also to the framing contestations *among* EJ movement members.

Here, I apply those insights from social movement theory by attending to the debates among EJ activists over what EJ means, examining how they apply their beliefs in advising EJ policy implementation, and considering the resulting consequences. I do so through an investigation of agency EJ grant programs in the United States and activists who influenced their design. In doing so, I provide new insights into why EJ policy implementation deviates from long-standing EJ movement principles. I explain EJ policy implementation as shaped not only by countermovement actors' efforts to neuter EJ and other factors scholars have rightly identified, but also because many EJ activists themselves are trying to redefine 'EJ' and help craft agency EJ efforts according to that new vision – though not without controversy.

In the next section, I describe my cases and research methods. Subsequently, I describe agency EJ grant programs' rules, priorities, and funding patterns, showing that most of the programs deviate in problematic ways from the EJ movement's long-standing model of change and substantive foci. I then turn to explaining those EJ policy implementation outcomes. I demonstrate that they align with many EJ activists' changing ideas about what EJ means and should look like, and I identify structural factors fueling this discursive shift. I also show that other EJ leaders contest those views, which helps explain why one of the grant programs differs from the rest. To conclude, I summarize my findings, reflect on their implications for EJ scholarship and social movement theory, and make suggestions for future research.

### Cases and methods

In this project, I analyze government agency EJ grant programs as an instance of EJ policy implementation. I compare and contrast five programs from the United States: California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) EJ Grants Program (93 grants awarded from 2005 to 2015); San Francisco EJ Grants Program (55 grants awarded from 2001 to 2010); New York EJ Community Impact Grant Program (121 grants awarded from 2006 to 2013); US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) EJ Small Grants Program (1345 grants awarded from 1994 to 2013); and US EPA EJ Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) Cooperative Agreement Program (51 grants awarded from 2003 to 2014).

These five programs constitute all of the grant programs in the United States that meet the following criteria: they are run by government agencies; are explicitly called 'EJ' grant programs; are explicitly dedicated to funding community-based, non-profit organizations and tribes (i.e., not university researchers or non-tribal government agencies); fund projects to improve environmental conditions in disadvantaged communities; and are not restricted to a

narrow range of issues (e.g., transportation or tree planting).

Most grants awarded are between \$15,000 and \$30,000, though US EPA CPS awards are \$100,000–\$120,000. Program administrators arrange a panel of reviewers from within the agency representing different areas of technical expertise, who score proposals per program requirements (e.g., description of how the project will benefit a disadvantaged community, realistic work plan, and detailed budget).

I describe how well the programs' implementation aligns with EJ advocacy in two key dimensions: mechanisms of change and substantive foci. To do so, I analyzed program materials to identify the rules, restrictions, and other language that specify which mechanisms of change each program encourages: *regulatory and policy protections* (e.g., fighting for stronger environmental regulations, greater enforcement thereof, state provision of key municipal services, and greater public participation in regulatory decision-making practices) or *other mechanisms of change* (e.g., modification of individual lifestyle behaviors, market-based measures, charitable service provision, or voluntary agreements with industry). I also analyzed those materials to identify which substantive activities the program encourages: *hazard reduction* (e.g., toxic waste cleanup, or potable water provision) or *other substantive foci* (e.g., park development, tree planting, or energy-efficient appliance installation).

Also, to determine how well the universe of funded projects aligns with the EJ movement's model of change and substantive foci, I also analyzed the abstracts (available online) of all funded projects and, when available, the full application narratives (procured through public records requests). These abstracts and narratives identify the proposed activities that the agency judged when determining which projects to fund. They do not indicate the outcome of the project nor grantees' broader suite of activities, so I do not evaluate the projects or grantees in those regards. A research assistant and I independently coded each funded project according to whether the project pursued change *through regulatory and policy protections* (and perhaps other mechanisms) or *only through other mechanisms of change*, and whether the project substantively focused on *hazard reduction* (and perhaps other substantive activities) or *only other substantive activities*. I then calculated frequencies for each program. Here, I report my findings about the projects' mechanisms of change for the 985 projects that specified a mechanism of social change (59% of the 1665 projects funded) and about the projects' substantive foci for the 1413 projects that specified a substantive focus (85% of the projects funded).

To determine whether the funded grants differ significantly from the broader pool of submitted applications in terms of these criteria, I also analyzed the full narratives of all available unfunded grant applications (procured through public records requests). These included unfunded applications submitted to the San Francisco program since 2001 ( $n = 31$ ), the unfunded applications of two cycles of

the CalEPA program ( $n = 46$ ), and the unfunded applications of two cycles of the New York program ( $n = 70$ ).

To explain these descriptive findings, I draw on confidential, qualitative interviews I conducted with grantees, other EJ activists, and agency staff, as well as ethnographic observation at agency and activist events. Qualitative interviews and observation are useful methods for identifying the factors that shape EJ policy implementation outcomes, as they help to illuminate variations in how key actors interpret movement concepts that otherwise appear to be widely shared, the structures they perceive to constrain their work, and how they claim to enact their beliefs (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995; Lofland et al. 2006). The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed me to pursue certain themes of interest while also allowing the participants to narrate and interpret their experiences, and to develop the rapport necessary to discuss politically controversial issues. Confidential interviews gave activists the space to express their beliefs that they cannot share in strategically crafted public statements.

Central to this paper are the interviews I conducted since 2012 with 35 individuals who self-identified and were identified by others as leading EJ advocates. These included 21 representatives from 18 grantee organizations and 14 representatives of other EJ organizations. Most were executive directors; the others held other leadership positions. I interviewed some advocates multiple times, had follow-up correspondence with many others, participated in site visits or tours with several, and had informal conversations with numerous others. I sought variation in organization age and size, geographic region, and, for the grantees, change mechanism and substantive focus of their agency EJ grant-funded project(s). Because I wanted to understand activists' roles in EJ policy implementation, I purposively recruited EJ advocates who actively advised the design or implementation of agency EJ efforts. I asked participants to identify agency EJ programs' major accomplishments, limitations, and opportunities for improvement, to describe their involvement in agency EJ efforts, and to reflect on changes in the EJ movement. I recruited participants by contacting them directly by email or phone. I conducted the interviews at locations chosen by each participant, except for several interviews conducted by telephone. Each interview lasted up to two hours and was audio recorded if the participant gave permission. The advocates I interviewed were a relatively even mix of men and women, diverse in racial/ethnic identity, and located in California, Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and Washington, DC.

To contextualize grantees' narratives, I draw on fieldnotes from observing a two-day training workshop for CPS program grantees in 2014, one 'Question and Answer' conference call about the US EPA application process in 2014, and various other agency meetings.

To analyze the interview and observational data, I read and coded transcripts and fieldnotes for the signifying work (Benford and Snow 2000) through which advocates

define 'EJ' and how they claim to shape agency EJ efforts accordingly. Some of my codes emerged from the literature, including EJ advocates' opinions about agencies' EJ programs, their theories about why agencies' EJ programs deviate from EJ advocates' historical priorities, and the constraints that shape their own work. Several themes emerged unexpectedly in the interviews: typologies of EJ activism, which mechanisms of change and substantive foci activists believe the movement should prioritize, and how they advised grant program administration according to those beliefs. Thus, drawing on the principles of grounded theory (Bryant and Charmaz 2007), I then re-coded transcripts and fieldnotes for these emergent themes.

All uncited quotations are from my interviews or observations. I obscure names, geographic locations, racial/ethnic identity, and, occasionally, gender identity to protect participants' confidentiality. Doing so does not undermine my arguments, as my findings do not vary by any of those factors.

### Agency EJ grant program discursive emphases and funding patterns

Whereas EJ advocacy has historically focused on state protections against environmental hazards, most agencies' EJ grant programs evince neither that model of change nor that substantive focus. These patterns are reflected in agency program documents and funded projects.

#### *Mechanisms of change*

Most of the programs' requests for applications (RFAs) and other key documents implicitly discourage projects that pursue environmental change through regulatory or policy mechanisms. Notably, where the San Francisco and New York programs' RFAs list types of projects eligible for funding, most emphasize individual lifestyle modification (e.g., 'teach local residents and school children about the nutritional and public health benefits of growing and eating fresh produce') and market-based change (e.g., 'promote purchase of environmentally preferred products and the use of less toxic consumer goods'); none references policy reform, regulatory enforcement, or increasing public participation in regulatory decision-making processes (NYSDEC 2011, 6; San Francisco 2010, 9). US EPA's program documents encourage industry-friendly collaborations. The CPS program promotes collaborations 'with various stakeholders such as communities, industry, academic institutions, and others' (U.S. EPA 2008, 1). EPA hails this approach: 'When multiple stakeholders work together, they create a collective vision that reflects mutually beneficial goals for all parties' (U.S. EPA 2008, 3). Similarly, the US EPA EJ Small Grants program RFA specifies that proposals 'should include strategies for... building consensus and... should demonstrate collaboration with other stakeholders', including industry and government agencies (U.S. EPA 2013, 3–4). Such emphasis

on collaboration implicitly discourages proposals from organizations pursuing change through mechanisms that industry actors would not support, such as stronger environmental regulations or increased enforcement. The CalEPA grant program differs from the others. Its RFA explicitly encourages projects aimed at regulatory and policy reform and increasing public participation in environmental decision-making processes, which are featured in its stated program goals and example projects in its RFA (CalEPA 2013, 1, 4).

Most of the funded projects also deviate from the EJ movement's long-standing model of change. Only 33% (327 of 985) held the state accountable for improving environmental conditions, such as by organizing residents to participate in regulatory decision-making or land-use planning events, or pressing agencies for basic municipal services, stronger environmental regulations, and enforcement of existing laws. Two programs had especially low rates of such projects: San Francisco at 11% (6 of 53 projects) and New York at 12% (11 of 90 projects). Again, the CalEPA program differs from the others; 76% of its projects (56 of 74) pursue change through regulatory and policy mechanisms. Each program's unfunded grant applications display patterns consistent with these, suggesting that the grantee organizations are not unique in terms of the mechanisms through which they pursue change.

The remaining projects sought change only through non-regulatory means, typically through urging residents to modify their own individual behaviors (e.g., reducing consumption of fish from contaminated rivers, eating organic produce, growing one's own produce, increasing physical activity, or recycling household waste). Others proposed to encourage local industry to voluntarily reduce emissions (e.g., educating truck drivers about diesel idling). Others sought change by providing goods or services (e.g., solar panels, or energy audits) at a reduced cost.

To be clear, such projects are not antithetical to EJ. They can improve environmental conditions in overburdened communities, they are appropriate ways to address some environmental issues, and some activists use them as ways to recruit members for policy or regulatory reform campaigns. Yet the EJ grant programs' discursive *emphasis on and predominance of* projects that rely on individual residents and industry actors to voluntarily improve environmental conditions deviates from the EJ movement's long-standing focus on holding the state accountable for protecting environmental rights. This deviation is problematic for many reasons. First, it implies that environmental justice does not require stronger regulatory and policy protections – and that individual residents and industry actors can and should handle those responsibilities. This emphasis thus absolves the state of its responsibilities and accommodates, rather than remediates, the broader neoliberal rollback of regulatory protections in the last 35 years that EJ activists and others have so stridently contested (Cable and Shriver 1995; Faber 2008; Harrison 2008,

2011, 2014; Schlosberg and Carruthers 2010). It also dovetails with industry's and other elites' long-standing tactic of blaming residents for their own health problems and otherwise framing social problems as rooted in group behavior and values.

Second, 'collaborative' agreements between residents and industry often undermine community organizing efforts. Although the EPA EJ grant programs' RFAs list various possible stakeholders, and one EPA representative I interviewed claimed that projects need not include *all* relevant stakeholders, multiple grantees I interviewed said that they felt pressured to collaborate with and reach consensus with industry in ways that undermined their goals. One grantee who received a grant to help his community address its concerns about the multiple polluting facilities in their vicinity said that EPA required their project 'to be totally collaborative'. He lamented that because the industry actors in the collaboration rejected most of the solutions residents and activists proposed, the group was only able to implement projects 'that didn't upset industry'. They thus focused on indoor air quality, smoking, and diesel bus routes – which he considered 'the lowest common denominator' – and were unable to address 'the big issues' that mattered most to the community. Moreover, he felt that the grant actually undermined his organizing efforts, as many of the community residents felt frustrated with his organization for pursuing a limited array of activities (see also Ottinger 2013; Pellow 2000).

Third, few of the grant projects cohere with the EJ movement's long-standing focus on bolstering the ability of marginalized residents to influence environmental decision-making processes. This applies to the individualized projects described above and projects that provide technical services to improve environmental conditions in overburdened communities – such as providing home energy audits, installing indoor air filters or subsidized solar panels, or building green roofs. Fourth, these discursive emphases and funding patterns signal which kinds of projects are most likely to get funded and thereby encourage organizations to propose and conduct such work.

### **Substantive focus**

Substantively, agencies' EJ grant programs also deviate in some ways from the EJ movement's long-standing emphasis on hazard reduction. While all of the programs' RFAs permit a wide range of projects in terms of their substantive foci, some of the programs' documents place considerable emphasis on activities not geared to hazard reduction. Both the New York and San Francisco programs' RFAs encourage community gardens, nutrition education, parks and trails, and energy efficiency, and devote much less attention to projects that reduce hazards like air and water pollution (NYSDEC 2011, 6, 2015; San Francisco 2010, 9). Additionally, the New York program dedicates a certain percentage of its EJ grant funding to 'Green Gems' grants that fund projects relating to 'parks,

open space, community gardens, or green infrastructure' (NYSDEC 2015).

At first glance, the projects funded by these programs appear to align with the EJ movement's substantive focus on hazard reduction, with 84% of the funded projects (1190 of 1413) committed to reducing one or more hazards to health or community (e.g., monitoring air or water for contaminants, collecting other data on toxic 'hot spots', educating subsistence fisherfolk about PCB-contaminated fish, remediating lead-contaminated housing, constructing sanitation systems, improving drinking water purification and/or storage systems, and protecting Native Americans' rights to subsistence or traditional cultural resources). Only the San Francisco program deviates markedly in this regard: just 22% of its projects (12 of 54) focus on hazard reduction.

Yet these overall patterns obscure the fact that, for nearly all of the programs, the portion of funded projects dedicated to hazard reduction has declined over time. The New York program's projects dedicated to hazard reduction dropped from 92% in the first two funding cycles (12 of 13) to 47% in the last two cycles (25 of 53). US EPA's CPS projects dedicated to hazard reduction dropped from 95% (38 of 40) in its first two cycles to 64% in its latest cycle (7 of 11). US EPA's Small Grants projects dedicated to hazard reduction dropped from 93% in the first four cycles (351 of 387) to 77% in the last four cycles (155 of 201). The San Francisco program's projects dedicated to hazard reduction dropped from 30% in the first few funding cycles (8 of 27) to 15% in the most recent four funding cycles (4 of 27). Only the CalEPA program differs from the others in this regard, with its portion of projects dedicated to hazard reduction increasing from 91% in the first three cycles (39 of 43) to 100% in the latter two cycles (36 of 36). The patterns of each program's unfunded grant applications are consistent with these, suggesting that such substantive foci are not limited to the organizations who received the funding.

Most agency EJ grant programs are moving away from hazard reduction and increasingly funding projects that develop and maintain community gardens and farmers markets; plant trees; develop and maintain parks, trails, or other green space; install alternative energy infrastructure or energy-efficient appliances; conduct energy efficiency audits; establish recycling programs; conduct ecological restoration; or educate youth about nutrition, cooking, exercise, or wildlife.

Such projects are not, in principle, inconsistent with EJ. They can provide valuable benefits to residents of low-income communities, and many of these projects – including trails and gardens – can provide tangible, material gains in a short amount of time with relatively little strife. Accordingly, many EJ organizations use these types of projects to help motivate their members. EJ activists and observers have long framed EJ as including hazard reduction *and* provision of environmental amenities. The problem is that, in the grant programs, these other projects are *replacing, rather than augmenting*, those focused on

hazard reduction. These grant programs thus appear to be dropping the task of reducing hazards threatening marginalized and overburdened communities, which the EJ movement has long held as a priority.

Additionally, the growing predominance of such projects in the grant programs unwittingly *minimizes* or masks the hazardous conditions threatening residents in marginalized communities. As one resident commented in a recent *New York Times* article about New York's proliferating curbside gardens, 'it makes it look better than it actually is' (7 November 2014).

Furthermore, the garden and other food projects – which outnumber all other types of projects not focused on hazard reduction – educate low-income residents of color about how to conform with organizers' ideas of proper behavior: variously promoting vegetarianism, eating whole grains, growing one's own food, cooking one's own food, avoiding fast food, losing weight, and getting more exercise. In addition to ignoring the most pressing environmental contributors to disease, these projects unreflexively promote perfectionist ideas of how residents should behave and look, reinforce racialized hierarchies of well-behaving bodies, and reify the normative ideal of thinness (Guthman 2011).

### **EJ activists' interpretations of EJ and influence on agency EJ programs**

To explain why these grant programs' implementation deviates from the EJ movement's historically prioritized mechanisms of change and substantive foci, I now turn to my interviews with EJ activists themselves.

#### ***'Traditional' EJ: combatting hazards through regulatory and policy reform***

Consistent with long-standing EJ activist emphases, approximately half of the EJ activists I interviewed asserted that EJ entails a substantive focus on hazard reduction and pursuit of change through regulatory and policy mechanisms. For example, one executive director of an EJ organization elaborated that the EJ movement was based in a critique of the mainstream environmental movement's focus on individual behavioral change, which she rejects because 'toxics, pollution, and people's exposure to them are fundamentally rooted in how capital is structured... Environmental injustice is not caused by individual behavior. It is caused by people's lack of decision-making and stems from racial inequality and corporate power.' Accordingly, her organization pursues EJ through 'multiracial organizing to impact local decision-making arenas, state policy reform, increasing civic engagement on a local level, and trying to shift the voter base to be more progressive and supportive of EJ policies on a broader scale.' Similarly, the executive director of one California EJ organization argued that EJ requires 'substantive outcomes' in the form of 'direct emission reductions' through 'chang[ing] the laws because they don't

protect people of color:' 'If the laws as written aren't working for environmental justice communities, then the laws need to be changed.' He lamented CalEPA's reliance on 'cap-and-trade' carbon markets to reduce carbon emissions as counter to what 'the EJ advocates' articulated at the agency's EJ advisory committee meetings (London et al. 2013).

When I asked about their own grant-funded projects that deviate from these goals, many explained that they view such projects instrumentally – as a way to motivate and organize residents toward larger campaigns focused on hazard reduction and policy change. For example, the executive director of one long-standing EJ organization noted that her organization occasionally does projects in which they teach residents how to mitigate lead hazards and increase energy efficiency in their homes. She explained that such practices help some residents come to view pollution reduction – even by industry – as a reasonable expectation:

We started with a household toxics program, which people would view as pretty tame. But ... they're making changes and then it's not a big leap to, if you can do it – if you just change out everything under your sink – then what about the company down the street? Think they could do that? Why shouldn't they make that same kind of change?

Moreover, although these trainings focus on individual behavior modification, she views them as a way to recruit residents for larger campaigns focused on large-scale polluters:

Some people just want the service. They want the light bulbs. They want the lead to be out of their home. But for others, it's a way in. They just aren't going to respond to the knock at the door, saying, 'We're all getting together to work on the power plant down the street, are you willing to help us?'. . . [But] if one of our organizers is in their home doing the energy education, helping them do a little energy audit, helping them get changes to their home on the lead – which is also a quality of life improvement too because generally the windows get changed out – it improves their quality of life. That's about relationship building. And you don't get that kind of time – you get five minutes at the door, maybe, probably not – and they're sending you on your way. So if you use it right, then I think you get more yes's than no's.

That is, while her organization's primary objective is state-mandated structural change to reduce hazards in overburdened communities, she uses other types of projects toward achieving that end.

Some criticized agency EJ efforts according to these goals. Another EJ organization leader argued, 'rules and regulations' are 'what EJ work is all about. . . . The types of activities that an environmental justice organization would be doing' include, principally, 'training [communities] on government and regulatory processes.' When I asked how she would judge agencies' EJ grant programs, she responded: 'Are the projects eventually resulting in actual



policy change? Because you have to have the policy change to get the real outcomes.’ Another leading EJ organization’s representative critiqued agency EJ grant programs on the same grounds:

You often don’t get the funding you need to change the systems the government is running. There’s nothing wrong with funding for community gardens. But let’s be clear that those are by no means the only challenges these communities are dealing with.

I responded that nearly half of the agency EJ grants in his state were awarded to community gardens in recent years. He paused and said, ‘It doesn’t make any sense.’

Multiple individuals who asserted such views worked for leading EJ organizations in California before being appointed to design and run CalEPA’s EJ grant program. One explained that the CalEPA RFA’s emphasis on fostering public participation in regulatory decision-making processes stems from the fact that he and other EJ activists believed that EJ requires greater community influence over regulatory decision-making processes. ‘When I came in, the question was, how do we get folks to participate?’ Another emphasized that he revised the RFA to explicitly encourage projects focused on hazard reduction: ‘I just want to know, what are you doing to reduce pesticide exposure, ... to have safe drinking water, ... to reduce the air [pollution]?’ These convictions help explain why the CalEPA EJ grant program more closely reflects the EJ movement’s historical mechanisms of change and substantive priorities than do the other EJ grant programs. As I detail elsewhere, these current and former CalEPA representatives were the only agency EJ grant program staff (of nearly 30 that I interviewed) who conceptualize EJ in these terms *and* felt able to implement the program accordingly (Harrison 2015). That they were able to put their beliefs into practice stems from multiple factors: their politically appointed status (whereas other agencies’ EJ staff are mostly career employees either worried about rocking the boat or unfamiliar with EJ principles), the state legislature’s growing Latino caucus, California’s demographic transition to a majority minority state, and the state’s politically influential EJ community (see also Perkins 2015).

### ***Reframing: crafting a new common sense***

The other half of the EJ activists I interviewed expressed a different, ‘new common sense’ about what EJ means – one that legitimizes the problematic ways in which the other agencies have implemented their EJ grant programs. This new common sense disparages the hazard reduction and state-focused work that has long been the core of EJ advocacy and glorifies other types of activist practice. Many characterized the practice of fighting toxic industries and pressing for stronger environmental regulations in pejorative terms, as ‘reactive’ and ‘oppositional’, led by the ‘old guard’, ineffective, and lacking solutions. They

also waxed enthusiastically about their efforts to build gardens, green spaces, and alternative energy infrastructure through charitable service provision and individual behavioral change, characterizing such work as ‘proactive’ and ‘propositional’, led by the ‘new guard’, effective, and ‘solutions-oriented’.<sup>1</sup> Many lauded the movement for ‘evolving’ toward such practice. By holding leadership roles in their own organizations and/or regional EJ alliances, they directly shape movement framing. Moreover, by informing – and in some cases directly running – agency EJ programs, these activists shape agencies’ EJ policy implementation efforts.

Some activists directly applied this reframing of EJ when designing agency grant programs. Notably, Robert<sup>2</sup> worked as an EJ activist before being appointed to lead the design of one agency’s EJ grant program. At that time, he felt that EJ advocacy had ‘a very oppositional frame. It was *always* about stopping something, always about *defending*, about *fighting*. And I really wanted it to be propositional.’ He asserted that the dominant (‘oppositional’) approach to EJ activism focused on fighting for stronger regulations on toxic facilities was outdated, closed-minded, ‘limited’, ‘laughable’ in the ‘obvious’ nature of its limitations, and lacking solutions. He designed the grant program to shift EJ activism:

We can’t just keep saying no. ... It’s laughable. If you just oppose everything, then what happens? (Pauses) My silence was purposeful. What really happens? Nothing. There’s a lot of people that are still very much an old guard. They tend toward opposing things and not being as open to new voices or new ideas... I was thinking about this stuff when we did the grant program in this way. I just knew that something wasn’t right and that we did need to identify some level of solutions... I was just like, well, we need to just do something different. We just knew that something else needed to happen. I think that experiment over time – as I look at it – was the right one.

Robert acknowledges that EJ activists balked at the way he designed the program: ‘People didn’t like it. ... It didn’t go over too well. ... It was amazing the vitriol we received.’ Despite this reaction from the activist community, he insisted on designing the grant program to accord with his views of what EJ should look like. Indeed, nearly all of his program’s funded projects pursue change through charitable service provision, individual behavior modification, and green space construction. As an example of a project that exemplifies ‘the values that are embedded within the principles of environmental justice’, he lauded a local organization that does ‘crowd sourcing [for] solar panels’, which ‘allows for individual ownership [and]... allows for individuals to invest whatever level of resource they want to into something they believe in.’ He continues to advocate this new common sense about EJ. Since departing the agency, Robert has joined a leading and long-standing EJ organization – which a well-published EJ scholar cited as one of five organizations that reflect ‘the essential core of the environmental justice movement’

– applying his beliefs in that capacity and within the regional EJ coalition of which his organization is a prominent member.

Another EJ activist who joined an agency and designed an EJ grant program stated that similar ideas shaped his thinking about how to design the program. Tom, who still works for the agency and identifies as part of the EJ movement (akin to Santoro and McGuire's [1997] 'institutional activists'), stated, 'I wanted to develop a model for solving problems in a 'collaborative' way. He applied those ideas in designing the grant program:

A lot of the communities themselves are trapped in [thinking that] if you're talking about environmental justice, you're only talking about the regulations, or you're only talking about making the government solve the problem for us. . . . But to a large extent, to really be transformative, you can't rely on anybody else to do it – you have got to do it yourself. Those that have succeeded are doing that.

Although implying that both regulatory and collaborative approaches are part of EJ, he ultimately denigrates activists who expect the government to protect them and situates regulatory protections as outside the scope of 'really transformative' and 'successful' EJ. Through public speaking events, publications, and his ongoing work in the agency's EJ grant program and other EJ activities, he continues to advocate and implement this conception of EJ.

These narratives were not limited to EJ activists positioned within the agencies. Stacy, who leads a statewide 'EJ Alliance' and leads discussions about 'reframing' EJ activism among her member organizations, similarly argued that the EJ movement should make a 'proactive' turn toward focusing on building environmental amenities. Her statements are striking not for the projects she advocates, as they are among the outcomes EJ activists have long fought for. Rather, what is remarkable is her implicit *disparagement* of EJ activism focused on reducing hazards through regulatory and policy protections. Her brief references to the need for increased regulatory enforcement were dwarfed by her extensive characterizations of the EJ movement's traditional focus on fighting hazardous industry as outdated and lacking solutions. She argued for EJ activism to be 'more sophisticated' and 'start being more solution-oriented' and 'actually create solutions' – 'versus just fighting with regulatory agencies about how much they do or don't enforce certain rules'. She advocates a 'proactive' shift in EJ activism toward constructing renewable energy systems, green spaces, mixed-use urban development, and green jobs. She presents this 'new' approach to EJ as enlightened and innovative compared to older, 'reactive' EJ:

A lot of groups have really gone to another level . . . Obviously those specific site battles are in many ways the foundation and the cornerstone of a lot of EJ work. But . . . we're also trying to move away from that

particular model of organizing and working. . . . We're just really trying to have a different framing on our work. . . . A proactive framing around all the things that we're trying to bring into these communities to transform them.

She advocates this reframing of EJ because 'I got tired of people being passive. . . . Somebody has to step up and have some initiative and innovation around environmental justice.' Her beliefs are fueled by industry attacks on EJ activists' policy and regulatory reform efforts (see Faber 2008). Stacy lamented,

One of the things that has stigmatized the movement . . . [is] this idea that environmental justice is about 'no' and is an economic killer. The [statewide] Chamber of Commerce is very powerful and has a lot of money, and they spent a lot of money and they just spin out lies that anything you try and do is a job killer.

These motivations notwithstanding, Stacy's narratives influence other activists and the broader discourse about what constitutes appropriate 'EJ' practice. Her status as an important actor in the movement's framing efforts was revealed throughout my fieldwork, as other EJ activists characterized her coalition as playing a key role in advocating the 'new' style of EJ.

Matt, the executive director of an EJ organization and self-identified EJ leader in his region, employed similar rhetoric when describing what he views as appropriate and effective forms of EJ activism. He argued that community organizing to redistribute political power and press for policy change is outdated: 'It's not the 1960s Chicago any more. . . . We need to modernize the Alinsky model'. Instead, he hailed the pursuit of change through entrepreneurialism and constructing green spaces as 'the new model of EJ'. He described a local organization that trains immigrants in small business development and builds parks in immigrant communities as '*the* thing when it comes to EJ' and 'the new model' of EJ because it 'has a self-perpetuating business model'. Matt actively informs broader discourse around what EJ means, both among activists and regulatory agencies. He helped spearhead the government EJ efforts in his state, including an advisory committee that makes recommendations on EJ to the governor and agencies. US EPA has actively endorsed his approach, presenting Matt's organization with an Environmental Justice National Achievement Award for its role in establishing and participating in the advisory committee.

Other EJ advocates more explicitly expressed their disdain for activism fighting environmental hazards through regulatory and policy protections. When describing her new focus on river restoration, Katherine noted how her own definition of EJ has changed over time away from 'EJ in the traditional format', a term she used to refer to advocacy for state-mandated pollution reduction. She used to engage in such practices but now views them as 'passive' and having 'no outcome'. Katherine's ideas are motivated in part by frustration with the slow pace of

regulatory reform: ‘There is no satisfaction in butting your head against the wall until it’s bloody just to say, “I went through the process.”...What’s the point?...[EPA] waits on you to sue, and then they fight you.’ She emphatically criticized activists demanding the state reduce pollution as foolish and ineffective – as ‘too busy fighting this phantom they can’t identify, rather than going out and saying, “Hey, let me see what I can do to make this *better*.”’ She asserts that she has ‘evolved’ to using charitable contributions to organize outdoor activities and get volunteers to remove garbage and invasive plants, practices she hails as effective and ‘active’:

The tire cleanups: it gets folks in touch with the river. ... You feel like you are doing something. The canoe outings: that was building rapport with folks as it relates to the river. ... You’re going to improve the environment with *active* kinds of initiatives, and that’s what we do. ... Then, it was fighting people. Now, it’s fighting *for* something.

That is, she dismisses the ‘traditional EJ’ pursuit of pollution reduction through state protections as ‘passive’ and lacking solutions and instead hails other activities as uniquely able to accomplish change.

Other advocates reinforced this new common sense even while displaying ambivalence. For example, Linda is the executive director of a long-standing EJ organization that is a key player in a statewide EJ coalition and widely regarded as a leading EJ organization nationally. She insisted that pollution reduction through regulatory and policy mechanisms is the core of her organization’s practice and that the organization’s new community garden helps keep members engaged amidst the slow pace of regulatory and policy reform. Yet she also characterized policy reform as ‘reactive’ in comparison with their new community garden project, which she hailed as ‘proactive’.

We can’t wait for the decision-makers in the [region] to make things happen. We have to do some of it ourselves. ... The majority [of our work] still remains reactive. But the proactive piece has been growing in importance over the past few years.

Moreover, ‘this shift is beginning to happen’ among other EJ organizations as well: ‘We all came upon this idea of needing to make things happen’, realizing that ‘we can’t wait’. It is a ‘new tactic in the movement that is becoming more visible’. Such discourse frames the ‘reactive’ policy work as ineffective and the ‘new’ ‘proactive’ work as uniquely able to effect change. Her praise of the movement for ‘shifting’ – evolving and developing away from the ‘reactive’ work and toward the ‘proactive’ work – promotes the new common sense about EJ and legitimizes the problematic patterns in agency EJ grant programs.

Reframing ‘EJ’ as not requiring hazard reduction or regulatory reform enables organizations that have historically eschewed the EJ movement to cast themselves as part of it, in turn reinforcing the new common sense about

what constitutes ‘EJ’. Chris identifies as an EJ advocate, is the executive director of a nonprofit that was widely noted to me as the leading EJ organization in its city, and helps lead a citywide EJ forum. His organization’s board of directors insists that the organization focus on expanding access to parks, gardens, trails, energy-efficient household appliances, and other environmental ‘benefits’ (and not confront hazards) through encouraging individual behavioral modification and providing resources and services (and not regulatory or policy reform). The board has historically refused to identify as ‘EJ’, which it has perceived as ‘out picketing a waste dump’. Chris hailed his organization’s approach, characterizing ‘working on the benefits side’ as ‘really solving an EJ problem’. Recently, he convinced his board that the organization’s work ‘*is* EJ’ by framing their work as ‘the benefits side of EJ’. The board ‘likes that’ framing – and now openly identifies the organization as part of the EJ movement.

Through these discursive and material practices, many EJ leaders are actively reframing EJ. They have shaped the implementation of agency EJ programs directly – as agency insiders and as external advisors to agencies. They have also shaped agency EJ programs indirectly – by advocating a new common sense among activists, agency staff, and the broader public about what EJ means.

To be clear, many EJ leaders stridently reject this narrative. For example, after I described my findings to one prominent EJ leader in our interview, he followed up via email:

I don’t think working collaboratively with polluters and government agencies ... is environmental justice at all. And I reject the terminology calling this approach ‘new’ EJ. That is a sad, sad commentary for those who think fighting polluters and standing in solidarity is *passé* and ‘old guard’.

Framing advocacy for state-mandated pollution reduction as lacking solutions dismisses its outcomes: securing protections against toxins and other hazards. The valorization of entrepreneurial practice and behavioral-based change casts residents responsible for their own contaminated environments and fails to hold industry and the state accountable.

Although problematic and contested, EJ activists’ narratives about what constitutes good EJ practice shape the ways that agencies implement EJ programs. In addition to the individuals noted above who moved from EJ advocacy organizations into the state to design agency EJ programs according to these ideas, other agency staff sympathetic to the movement insisted that activists shape agency EJ program implementation. One agency grant program representative noted, ‘We don’t promote one thing or another. We look at what the community wants.’ Another explained how he revised his agencies’ EJ grant program RFA:

I reached out. I have 100 people. ... I just polled them. It’s all EJ people. ‘These are the goals we’re considering. Rank them up.’ ... I didn’t tell my boss that I used the

results, but I went with their recommendations... I use them to give me input on what they want to see.

Activists' efforts to reframe EJ thus have numerous implications, including shaping agency EJ program implementation.

### *Popularizing the new common sense*

The new common sense is popularized by some charismatic, media-savvy champions of environmental activism in low-income communities of color. Notable are Van Jones, former advisor to President Obama on climate change, and Majora Carter, MacArthur Award-winning 'eco-entrepreneurship' advocate (TEDxMidwest 2010), who together established the organization Green for All. In his best-selling book, *The Green Collar Economy* (2008), Jones elaborates Green for All's vision for 'solving the two biggest issues facing the country today – the economy and the environment' (Jones 2008, back cover). Specifically, he hails green entrepreneurialism and individual behavioral modification, and he disparages activism that critically confronts industry and regulatory agencies as 'reactive', 'oppositional', 'negative', 'demanding', and lacking solutions. His name came up in many of my interviews with California EJ activists, some even referring to him simply as 'Van'. While some expressed misgivings about his advocacy, others actively valorized it. Notwithstanding those differences of opinion, many EJ leaders use the same narratives that permeate his writing, giving a cursory nod to regulatory and policy reform (or disparaging it) and emphatically advocating a 'new' 'proactive', 'positive', 'solutions-oriented', and 'propositional' style of EJ activism that leaves the state and hazard reduction behind.

In New York City, Majora Carter founded Sustainable South Bronx 'to promote environmental justice' (SSB 2015), won a MacArthur Foundation award for her advocacy, and was hailed by the *New York Times* as 'one of the city's best-known advocates for environmental justice' (14 December 2008). Placing particular emphasis on exercise, food choices, urban agriculture, green entrepreneurialism, and green jobs, she has similarly helped to shape EJ activism and agency programs in that region and legitimize such practices as emblematic of 'EJ'.

Additionally, some scholars repeat and thereby legitimize this narrative. For example, in a study of EJ activism in Los Angeles, Eric Carter (2014) characterizes the 'earlier generation' of 'reactive' EJ advocacy fighting 'hazards as they develop' as 'EJ 1.0', which he distinguishes from 'EJ 2.0', comprised of groups 'taking a more proactive approach to restoring nature and producing new environmental "goods" in the city' and foregrounding diet and exercise education (3). Carter acknowledges, 'it is fair to ask whether EJ 2.0 contributes to social and environmental justice goals' (18). However, his characterizations of 'the transition from EJ 1.0 to EJ 2.0' and assertion that 'childhood obesity and its associated health effects, such as diabetes, represent a more persistent and widespread threat

to the Latino community than toxins in the environment' (4; cf. Guthman 2011) disparage advocates' fights against hazards as outdated and unnecessary and frame the movement as productively evolving away from such work.<sup>3</sup> Such narratives help popularize the 'new common sense' about what EJ means, thus indirectly helping to legitimize agency EJ efforts cohering with that 'new' vision.

### **Conclusion**

Problematic patterns in agency EJ grant programs stem in part from the efforts of some EJ leaders influential in the activist and agency arenas to craft a new common sense about what EJ means – one that dismisses policy and regulatory mechanisms to reduce hazards as ineffective and outdated, other mechanisms of change and substantive foci as enlightened and uniquely efficacious, and the movement as progressively evolving in these ways. They advocate this interpretation of EJ to change public opinion about what constitutes good EJ practice and to directly shape the design of agency EJ programs.

Many of these advocates note that they are motivated by the increasingly slow pace of regulatory reform, philanthropic foundations' increasingly narrow funding priorities, and otherwise highly constrained political opportunities (Meyer 2004). Considerable scholarship has documented these constraints, including long-standing industry influence over environmental regulation and more recent neoliberal reforms that produce the glacial pace of regulatory reform (Bosso 1987; Faber 2008; Harrison 2008, 2011, 2014; Heynen et al. 2007; Lockie 2013; London et al. 2013; Park and Pellow 2011), as well as philanthropic foundations' resistance to funding policy reform, litigation, or other core EJ activities (Brulle and Jenkins 2005; Faber and Deborah 2001; Hansen 2012).

Notwithstanding these structural pressures and the valuable roles that behavioral modification and green space construction can play in environmental problem-solving, the 'new common sense' has problematic consequences. It legitimizes the problematic patterns in agency EJ efforts, disparages the structural reforms needed to reduce hazards in overburdened communities, and misleadingly implies that all environmental problems can be resolved through asking residents to change their own consumption practices. Indeed, other EJ activists firmly reject this new common sense, and some crafted the CalEPA grant program to accord with their view that EJ requires reducing hazards through regulatory and policy reforms and democratizing decision-making.

This study provides new explanations for why EJ policy implementation so often deviates from long-standing EJ movement goals and priorities. Other scholars' explanations for these outcomes emphasize *cooptation* by countermovement actors hostile to EJ advocacy, showing that agencies acquiesce to countermovement actors' reframing efforts. I have shown that agency EJ efforts are also shaped by framing conflicts among EJ movement

members themselves over what EJ means and how the state should implement EJ programs. These intramovement factions manifest both in EJ advocates' tacit understandings and conscious, intentional reframings (Oliver and Johnston 2000). Building on others' findings that EJ advocacy has been pushed in increasingly conservative directions, I have shown how some EJ activists discursively reinforce that narrowing.

These findings serve as a reminder that social movement theorists must approach movement factions and shifts with a critical eye. On the one hand, my findings are consistent with Campbell's (2001) argument that outcomes that appear to be cooptation by countermovement actors can also reflect the intentional work of some movement members aiming to 'adapt to political circumstances while retaining attachments to core values and constituencies' (Campbell 2001, 362). On the other hand, this case demonstrates that social movement organizations' tactical shifts will not necessarily be consistent with the movement's core values. The tactical shifts of some EJ organizations illustrated here deviate markedly from core, long-standing EJ movement priorities in problematic ways.

These findings align with other studies showing that some EJ organizations have moved away from the traditional EJ frame of treating the protection from environmental hazards as a state-protected right (Carter 2014; Malin 2015; Ottinger 2013). That said, because the EJ activists I interviewed are not a representative sample of the entire movement, I am unable to identify how widespread this new common sense is. Nor can I characterize these activists' full suite of practices. Future research should therefore investigate more systematically how widespread these discourses and their associated practices are within the EJ movement, and how EJ advocates try to reconcile these factions and their approaches. Additionally, ethnographic research with EJ organizations could illuminate the framing and other processes by which the cleavages among EJ advocates have developed.

These apparent factions within the EJ movement deserve more critical attention. If building parks and gardens and modifying residents' lifestyles are replacing rather than augmenting state-mandated hazard reduction, this discursive shift might signal not an *expansion* of the movement but instead its *derailment* away from what distinguished it in important ways from mainstream environmentalism in the first place.

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### Notes

1. These EJ activists use 'proactive' differently than social movement scholars and EJ advocates have done historically. Notably, Tilly (1978) distinguished 'proactive' mobilizations as asserting claims to resources they have not previously enjoyed from 'reactive' mobilizations that respond to loss of resources or power. In the preface to the landmark United Church of Christ report, Benjamin Chavis asserts that the report's data can enable EJ advocates to be 'proactive' – in that it 'should be utilized by federal, state and municipal governments to prevent hazardous wastes from becoming an even greater national problem' (UCC 1987, x).
2. A pseudonym, as are all other names used here.
3. See Perkins (2015) for another account of changes in California's EJ movement.

### Notes on contributor

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