

### Volume 31, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, Fall 1993/Winter 1994/Spring 1994/Summer 1994

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#### Recommended Citation

(1994). Volume 31, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, Fall 1993/Winter 1994/Spring 1994/Summer 1994. Speaker & Gavel, 31, (1-4), 1-130.

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et al.: Volume 31, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, Fall 1993/Winter 1994/Spring 1994/

FALL 1993/WINTER 1994  
SPRING 1994/SUMMER 1994  
Vol. 31, Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4

# SPEAKER AND GAVEL

*Quarterly Journal of*  
DELTA SIGMA RHO-TAU KAPPA ALPHA



# speaker and gavel

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3: Spring 1994

4: Summer 1994

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## **SPEAKER AND GAVEL**

**Published by Delta Sigma Rho—Tau Kappa Alpha  
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The editorial policy of *Speaker and Gavel*, the official journal of Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha, is to publish refereed articles dealing with theory, practice, or criticism of public argument and decision making. We are particularly interested in receiving articles in the following areas: (1) Contemporary rhetorical criticism; (2) Issues and controversies in academic forensics and debate; (3) Decision making. We welcome submissions from undergraduate and graduate students as well as DSR-TKA alumni and faculty.

Authors should submit three copies of their manuscript prepared according to the latest edition of *MLA* or *APA* guidelines. Use minimal footnotes only for exposition or explanation, not as bibliographic citations. Include a cover letter identifying author(s) and affiliation. Remove all references in the manuscript to author and affiliation to facilitate blind review. For quicker processing of accepted manuscripts, you may also enclose a 5¼" or 3½" computer disk with an accurate copy of your manuscript. DOS wordprocessors are preferable, but just be sure and clearly label the type of computer and the name and version of the wordprocessing software you are using.

Send articles, reactions, and submissions to the new editor:

*Bob Frank*  
*Department of Communication*  
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*Pittsburgh, PA 15282*

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

I am very pleased to present Volume 31 of *Speaker and Gavel*. This issue provided scholars of environmental communication an opportunity to analyze, categorize, and assess instances of environmental discourse. Environmental communication will continue to play a significant role in informing, mobilizing, and mystifying people about environmental issues. Rhetorical criticism and analysis of key texts and situations offers insight into different patterns of discourse and advocacy, and also provides teachers and scholars with different tools to empower public action. It was in this spirit that the special section on environmental criticism was announced, and the resulting essays succeed in articulating an interesting set of encounters with environmental discourse, useful for teachers and scholars alike. I hope you enjoy them as much as I have.

I am also gratified and relieved to present the tabulated results of a survey conducted at the National Debate Tournament on the increasing prevalence of electronic research in policy debate. This is an issue of some contention in the community, one worthy of more study and investigation. As a preliminary exploration of attitudes on this subject, this report does offer some findings of interest to the forensic community. Thanks again are due to the Policy Caucus for sponsoring this research.

This is my last issue, and I must thank my editorial board for their help in maintaining a high level of quality for the journal, for their willingness to respond promptly, and for their dedication to improving the conceptualization and the writing of the individuals who submitted material. They have been an excellent editorial board, and I am glad to have had the opportunity to work with them in this capacity.

I am delighted to announce that the new Editor, Bob Frank of Duquesne University, is a very capable and insightful individual, with many years of experience in forensics. I have directed submissions to his address, and would encourage individuals interested in having their material published to submit articles for his consideration.



## THE RHETORIC OF GREEN CONSUMERISM: A SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

John W. Delicath

University of Iowa

Since Philip Wander's (1983) call for an "ideological turn," discussions over the nature and purpose of rhetorical criticism have continuously transformed visions of rhetorical practice. At its most recent juncture, the ideological turn has led to the formulation of a perspective on rhetoric that views criticism as a "critical argumentative practice"<sup>1</sup> that seeks to participate actively in public dialogue as a means to affect conditions in society (see Jasinski, 1987; Klumpp & Hollihan, 1989; McGee, 1980, 1983, 1984; McGee & Martin, 1983; McKerrow, 1989; Ono & Sloop, 1992; Wander, 1983, 1984). From such a perspective, critical investigations have been directed at areas of discourse reflective of "ideographically masked claims to power" (Jasinski, 1988; McGee & Martin, 1983). Criticism as an argumentative practice places a fundamental emphasis on ideology and seeks to expose how ideology functions through discourse to influence symbolic and material conditions. Rhetorical criticism is not seen as a method, but as an argumentative practice designed to expose the "complicity between rhetoric and power" (McGee, 1983). As McGee (1984) suggests, "[t]he integration of power/knowledge is a necessity in the post-industrial state-what we need to be understanding is the broad political implication of the way such integration has been, is being, and can be accomplished [through rhetoric]" (p. 50). In this essay I examine the rhetoric of green consumerism—the marketing strategy/consumer movement discourse that asks consumers to make environmentally conscious purchasing decisions—and the power relationships that it sustains. I argue that green consumer rhetoric relies on a consumer ideology that defines nature as a storehouse of natural resources and progress in terms of economic and material growth.<sup>2</sup> In this essay I utilize a competing ideology as a "terministic screen" through which to examine and critique the functions of ideology

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This essay is based, in part, on work done for the author's masters thesis: "The Rhetoric of Green Consumerism: An Eco-Ideological Approach" (University of Georgia, 1992). The author would like to thank former committee members Celeste Condit, Thomas Lessl, and Edward Panetta, and Professor E. Anne Laffoon for their valuable comments on some of the ideas expressed in this essay.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "critical argumentative practice" is a synthesis of the descriptions of ideological criticism offered by these critics.

<sup>2</sup> For a relevant discussion, see DeLuca (1993) *Media Disidentifications: Social Movement Articulations and the Rhetorical Theorist*. Paper presented at the SCA Annual Convention, Miami Beach, FL. DeLuca discusses **nature** and **progress** as ideographs that maintain an ideology that treats nature as a resource and defines progress in terms of economic growth.

in green consumer discourse.<sup>3</sup> The criticism here juxtaposes an alternative ideology with green consumer rhetoric in order to analyze the power relations implicit in green consumer reform. I suggest that such a move represents an approach to ideology critique that has yet to become part of the ideological turn in criticism.

While rhetorical critics have increasingly sought to bring ideological concerns into their work, they have, so far, side-stepped the issue of to what extent and in what form the ideological orientation of the critic should be made available to the reader. The fact that a critic's ideology played an important role in one's criticism was assumed, yet never compelled critics to explicate fully the ideological assumptions from which they conducted criticism and arrived at their conclusions. I argue that it is time that rhetorical critics come clean and explicitly outline the ideological perspective that directs their criticism and serves as the basis from which they make critical judgments. This is not just a matter of fairness to the reader. Such a move offers a valuable approach to ideological criticism. First, under this transformation of the ideological turn, critics would outline and explicate an ideological perspective that would operate as a terministic screen capable of providing an alternative understanding of the potential meaning and influence of discourse. A critic would work from an ideological alternative, which when contrasted with the ideological assumptions of the text, would contribute to the understanding of the issue. Second, from such an approach, critics would juxtapose the ideological assumptions manifest in discourse with an alternative ideology in order to expose how power is manifest and functions in rhetoric. By explicating how ideological assumptions in a text function in relation to an alternative, critics can more adequately assess the power relationships implicated in rhetorical discourse. Third, contrasting the social, economic, and political realities constructed in discourse with an ideological alternative can expose what is absent in a text and therefore what alternatives are excluded or effaced by particular depictions of reality. Finally, juxtaposing the ideological assumptions in discourse with the claims of a competing ideology brings the issue of alternatives into the discussion and thus offers an opportunity to contribute to the emancipatory possibilities of critical rhetorical practice.

Nowhere is there more significant potential to reveal the possibilities for such an approach to ideological criticism than in the discourse surrounding ecological crises. Today environmental rhetorics confront the public on many levels, from international news about the greenhouse effect to McDonald's advertising campaigns about recycling. Discourse concerning the environment represents a body of rhetoric involving a complex web of social, economic, and political relationships relevant to ecological crises. The discourse of environmental advocacy is wrought with fundamental assumptions concerning a multitude of issues related to the environment; the extent of the ecological crisis, the root of its causes, the nature (and even possibility) of potential solutions, the acceptable justifications for protecting the earth, and the status of humanity's relationship with nature.

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<sup>3</sup> See Kenneth Burke (1966), *Language as symbolic action*, p. 44-62.



I argue that any critique of the discourse of environmental advocacy should start with a perspective that allows us to examine the existence of such fundamental assumptions about the environment. Such a critique should be founded on an ideological orientation to environmental advocacy that has its own assumptions about environmentalism. Much as the ideological criticism of marxist and feminist critics is guided by particular questions or emphasis on central issues, the criticism of environmental advocacy is appropriately conducted through an ideological perspective.<sup>4</sup> The approach I find most promising and which is incorporated in this criticism is a *notion* of social ecology.<sup>5</sup> Social ecology emphasizes that ecological problems are fundamentally social problems and that a society's dominant institutions and practices are the primary determinants of how it will relate to the environment. While social ecologists agree with other radical ecologists that the environmental crisis is a crisis of culture and the result of the way humanity sees and values nature, they stress that it is those institutions and practices that legitimate hierarchy and domination that are at the root of our ecological problems. From the perspective of social ecology, nature is seen as a source of the ethical and other normative principles capable of promoting and sustaining an ecological society. Drawing from ecological principles like 'unity in diversity', 'potentiality', and 'complementarity', social ecology suggests that we must reject all forms hierarchy and domination if we are to eliminate the domination of nature by humans and the domination of humans by other humans.

Social ecology is a program for the radical restructuring of society along ecological lines. It operates on the assumption that an economy premised on "the maxim, 'Grow or Die,' must necessarily pit itself against the natural world" (Bookchin, 1990, p. 15). Social ecology seeks to promote ecological sensibilities that recognize unity in diversity and the fundamental complementarity of life. Social ecology advances the goal of an ecological society that will reconcile human with human, and human with nature, in a network of humanly scaled and decentralized communities integrated into the eco-

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that some of the principles of marxist and feminist critiques inform social ecological criticism. While social ecology is decidedly anti-marxist, it does agree with some dynamics of the marxist critique. A social ecological critique goes beyond the narrow categories of marxism and addresses the problems "class" and "exploitation" in terms of "hierarchy" and "domination." Social ecological criticism directs investigations to expose how ideology works to maintain power relationships that privilege humans over humans: through hierarchical divisions of race, class, gender, and age; and humans over nature. A social ecological critique also incorporates aspects of the feminist critique linking the domination of nature and the domination of women and calls for a feminist sensibility toward human and nonhuman life; see Biehl (1991), Bookchin (1980, 1986). For a, by no means exhaustive, list of examples of eco-feminism that explore the connection between the domination women and nature see (Griffin, 1978; King, 1983; Merchant, 1983; Warren, 1987; 1990).

<sup>5</sup> I stress the word *notion* because the elements of social ecology incorporated here do not exhaust all of what is encompassed by this term. Social ecology is a comprehensive project of nature philosophy, critical ecological social theory, and revolutionary politics, created and sustained by the thinking and writing of Murray Bookchin. See Bookchin (1971, 1980, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1990, 1991). The elements I have highlighted here emphasize social ecology as a critical ecological social theory.

systems of which they are a part. An ecological society is one based on non-hierarchical relationships where political, economic, industrial, and agricultural decisions are made in face-to-face-assemblies in attempt to scale politics, economics, industry, and agriculture to human dimensions and integrate them into the natural environment. Social ecology promotes decentralization, but recognizes the importance of cities in regionally linked networks of political, economic, and agricultural systems (see Bookchin, 1980; 1989; 1990; 1992). The goal is to radically re-orient our approach to politics and economics and to scale-down and restructure institutions so that they are responsive to community needs and regional ecologies.

A social ecological critique is admittedly utopian. Social ecological criticism operates on the assumption that it is not impossible to change political, economic, and cultural institutions and practices, and seeks to foster the idea that the future is open for the making. Murray Bookchin (1990) maintains the faith that ecology, "firmly rooted in social criticism and a vision of social reconstruction, can provide us with the means of remaking society that will benefit nature and humanity" (p. 15).

As applied to rhetorical criticism, a social ecological critique examines the manner in which the arguments, language, and rationale of environmental discourse construct approaches to ecological activism that legitimize the institutions and perpetuate the practices of a anti-ecological society. In this essay, I work from an ideology based on social ecology to examine the nature of ecological activism inspired by and the type of ecological sensibilities cultivated in green consumer rhetoric.

### The Rhetoric of Green Consumerism

Green consumerism is becoming a substantial consumer movement (see Dadd & Carothers, 1991, p. 12). With the rise of this brand of consumer advocacy has come an ensuing line of environmental rhetorics. The prevalence of this discourse is becoming markedly more significant as consumers become environmentally aware and as more and more companies jump on the green bandwagon. The growth of this line of environmental advocacy represents an important development in the public dialogue over environmentalism. The rhetoric of green consumerism is not only a popular and widespread body of discourse, it is a valuable example of environmental advocacy. As a line of environmental argument, green consumerism reflects how fundamental ideological assumptions concerning the nature of ecological crises and the direction for reform are manifest in the rhetorics of environmentalism. Green consumer discourse is wrought with fundamental assumptions involving a complex web of institutions and practices relevant to ecological crises. Because green consumerism is directed at the marketplace and consumption its discourse brings an even wider scope of issues into question. Inherent in any discussion of consumer behavior and its impact on the environment are a host of ideological assumptions relevant to our consumer society and its emphasis on economic growth and material progress. Indeed, green consumer discourse implicates a number of social, economic, and political dynamics of the relationship between consumption and the environment. The relationship between the social, economic, and po-



litical factors relevant to consumption and ecological deterioration is a complex and poorly understood phenomenon (Uusitalo, 1986). It is thus difficult to assess the possible ramifications of protecting the environment by making ecologically conscious purchasing decisions.

One means of contributing to the attempt to assess the influence of green consumerism is by examining the ideological characteristics of green consumer discourse. In order to assess the potential of green consumerism as a means of ecological activism, the rhetoric of green consumerism needs to be analyzed for its potential to invite critical reflection into the nature of environmental crises and the types of solutions necessary to address existing problems. Critics must therefore examine how green consumerism is given meaning in relation to existing social, economic, and political conditions. As a type of environmental advocacy, green consumerism represents a potential critique of practices that are at the root of ecological deterioration. In directing change at consumer behavior and attempting to assess the impact of consumption on the environment, green consumerism offers potentially valuable insight into the nature ecological crises. Indeed, green consumer discourse represents an opportunity to invite critical reflection into the nature of our consumer society. However, it remains to be seen if green consumerism provides the critique and reform capable of realistically addressing ecological deterioration. Attempts to study the discursive implications of green consumerism have so far been limited to exploratory essays at communication conferences (see Laffoon & Delicath, 1992; Muir 1991a; Muir 1991b; Salvador & Samosky 1991). In examining the potential implications of green consumerism as a type of environmental advocacy, Muir and Salvador and Samosky investigate how green consumerism defines notions of environmentalism and motivates individuals to reform. While these authors pose interesting questions and provide valuable directions to investigating the potential influence of green consumerism, the more complex and encompassing question of whether green consumerism can provide "an adequate basis for evolving attitudes toward the environment" remains unanswered (Muir 1991a, p. 15).

Muir's works are concerned primarily with the sphere or agency to which green consumerism directs action. In his most recent paper, Muir (1991b) concludes that green consumerism is a rhetoric of self empowerment, offering individuals a sense of actually being able to do something. I find Muir's new conclusion disturbing, for it overlooks important dynamics of his essay's question. Muir (1991b) regards the fundamental question concerning the notion of agency in green consumer discourse as whether or not "the displacement from the public sphere is of sufficient strength to outweigh the infusion of an active stance" (p. 322). In concluding that green consumer discourse is a type of self empowerment rhetoric, Muir seems to have overcome his earlier concern with how responses at the individual level may "enhance a feeling of 'power', but also constrain the conditions under which that power is maintained" ("Identifying with nature", 1991a, p. 13).

Muir's latest investigation, however, sheds important light on how linking consumption with ecology may effect the commitment to and the nature of ecological activism. Muir points out the potential negative consequences of rhetorically situating the act of consumption within the realm of envi-

ronmentalism. His essay reveals that investigations into green consumerism must involve examining it not just as a shift from the public to the private, but a transformation from the public/political to private/consumption.

Salvador and Samosky hint at the notion of agency but do not discuss the implications of privatizing environmentalism. They argue that green consumer discourse "supplies little inspiration for individual activism and involvement" (p. 328) without exploring the dynamic of this problem in terms of critical political agency versus consumer advocacy. Salvador and Samosky also contend that the manner in which green consumerism is portrayed as a solution to looming environmental catastrophes confounds notions of environmentalism and diffuses commitment to environmental reform. While Salvador and Samosky (1991) conclude that "green consumerism offers potentially valuable measures for immediate action, [but] it severely risks limiting more substantial and long term reform in the relationship between consumer society and the environment" (p. 326), they do not fully explore how green consumerism invites critical reflection into or reification of the institutions and practices of a consumer society.

The efforts of both Muir (1991a, 1991b) and Salvador and Samosky (1991), while leaving unexplored several rhetorical characteristics that need to be examined if we are to fully understand the implications and potential of green consumer discourse, have provided the starting point for this work. In discussing the potential influence of green consumerism we must look more closely at Muir's questioning regarding the shift of environmentalism to the realm of private/consumption. Indeed, such an examination is integral to discussing Salvador and Samosky's conclusion that green consumerism may undermine opportunities for more significant measures of environmental reform. How green consumerism may influence the nature and direction of ecological activism needs to be examined with an emphasis on agency and the transformation of a public/political issue to the realm of private/consumption. In addition, there needs to be a more detailed examination of linking ecological and economic concerns. Here, there is a need to go beyond previous findings and examine how rhetorically situating environmentalism within the symbolic framework of economics effects the direction of activism and the type of ecological sensibilities inspired by green consumerism.

### *The Green Consumer as a Rhetoric of Environmental Advocacy*

The rhetorical component of green consumerism chosen for this analysis is the book *The Green Consumer*. This particular text is not only a widespread and popular book, but it is also representative of the philosophy and rhetoric of green consumerism. As Salvador and Samosky put it, *The Green Consumer* is, "the most comprehensive statement of this [green consumer] philosophy" (1991, p. 325). While this book does not represent the entire body of green consumer discourse, it is nonetheless a valuable opportunity to examine the

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<sup>6</sup> *The Green Consumer's* representativeness is further demonstrated by its rhetorical similarities to other green self-help books. For rhetorical analyses of such texts see Luke (1993) and Muir (1991a, 1991b).



potential meaning and influence of green consumer rhetoric.<sup>6</sup> *The Green Consumer* represents a poignant example of the rhetoric and ideology of green consumerism and is a valuable means to evaluate the basic assumptions of this approach to environmental advocacy.

*The Green Consumer* is not only representative of the philosophical assumptions behind the green consumer movement, it also displays the fundamental inadequacies of green consumerism as a viable discourse of environmental advocacy. The problems associated with green consumer rhetoric reside primarily in the type of environmentalist the text calls into existence and the nature of ecological awareness inspired by green consumer discourse. The nature of ecological activism evoked in *The Green Consumer* is problematic because it constructs an environmentalist who does not engage in public and political acts, but rather acts in the private sphere making decisions about consumption habits. Furthermore, *The Green Consumer* offers commodified and debased ecological sensibilities that define nature in terms of natural resources and which suggest that significant reform of our consumer society is not necessary.

#### *The Privatization of Environmentalism*

*The Green Consumer* contributes to the privatization of environmentalism by placing what has traditionally been a public/political act in the realm of private/consumption. In addition to the obvious orientation toward individual decisions over private purchasing habits inherent in green consumerism, *The Green Consumer* explicitly advocates directing ecological activism through the realm of private/consumption. Indeed, the text seeks to differentiate public and private modes of environmentalism and suggests that environmental advocacy is more appropriately carried out in the private sphere.

In laying out the framework for the book, the authors begin early on to differentiate acts of environmental advocacy. The authors clearly make a distinction between active members of the public and green consumers. Section three, a listing of the 'Ways to Get Involved', is described as "for those who want to learn more or become more involved" (p. v). The section of the book devoted to issues such as: taking on local polluters, joining environmental organizations, or learning about governmental offices is characterized as for those who "want to do more." In addition, this section is placed after the section that informs the reader what they can do. As the authors state, "activities of the citizen-action variety" are "omitted from the 'What You Can Do' section of the text" (p. 12).

In addition to differentiating between green consumers and other environmental activists, *The Green Consumer*, in suggesting that the free market is a more appropriate sphere of reform, seeks to direct ecological activism away from the public sphere. The authors argue that, "the marketplace is not a democracy; you don't need a majority opinion to make change" (p. 9). The authors explicitly characterize changing purchasing habits as a type of activism that could displace action in the public/political sphere. Instead of suggesting that consumers also become politically active, *The Green Consumer* describes purchases as "a never ending series of votes for or against the environment" (p. 5). The text states several times that consumers should

vote with their dollars and attempt to influence corporations. In the foreword, Ben Cohen suggests, "as Green Consumers, you have the right and responsibility to vote with your dollars " [and] "[a]s the saying goes, vote early, vote often" (p. xii).

Not only does the text suggest that the marketplace is the most fruitful arena for activism, it gives the impression that it is the most appropriate place to direct their energies. The authors suggest that, "Many of the problems are beyond our individual control. . . solutions to this and other environmental problems must come principally from businesses and governments working together" (p. 11). The authors, however, fail to discuss how citizens could or should attempt to further the cooperation between industry and government or be a part of governmental and business efforts. Throughout the discussion of "What You Can Do" to help the environment the authors never mention more active means of influencing environmental reform.

Indeed, the text does not even suggest that its audience engage in more active attempts as consumers to influence industry. The authors fail to suggest boycotting products or companies or other more forceful actions available to consumers. A prime example can be found in the text's discussion of the slaughter of dolphins as the result of the drift nets used in commercial fishing. While the authors describe a number of environmental group's response to this crisis, they do not suggest that readers participate (p. 103). The text also describes boycotts of fast food chains by environmentalists, but does not suggest that readers adopt such means of protest or give thought to boycotting problem industries (p. 105). This omission reflects a general sense of the brand of ecological activism inspired by green consumer discourse. *The Green Consumer* constructs an image of the environmentalist who is not active, but rather simply buys the right products and hopes that industry responds to consumer demand. *The Green Consumer* thus commodifies environmental advocacy, making the consumer an activist and the act of consumption an act of environmental responsibility.

### *The Commodification of Environmentalism*

Green consumer discourse constructs a particular type of environmentalist and seeks to direct concern for the environment into a particular brand of environmentalism. Indeed, *The Green Consumer* characterizes its usefulness as a means of jumping from "environmental concern to environmental consumerism" (p. 6). The notion of ecological activism fostered in *The Green Consumer* is problematic in that represents a constrained vision of activism and debased ecological sensibilities. This vision not only characterizes the consumer as an environmentalist, it makes substantial consumption and environmental activism.

Throughout *The Green Consumer*, the audience is called upon to act as consumers through the act of consumption. The solutions offered by the text to such threats as global warming locate promise in the purchasing power of the public. Indeed, the authors suggest that in order to conserve energy and reduce the consumption of fossil fuels, consumers should buy—fuel efficient cars, appliances, light bulbs, and organic food. The same is true for solutions to acid rain. *The Green Consumer* advocates conserving energy



by "buying new appliances" which can "eliminate the need for new power plants" (p. 14). While it may come as little surprise that in a section entitled "Shopping for a Better Environment" that the authors locate solutions to our problems in the act of consumption, such conceptions are, however, still problematic because they further reduce the complexity of the nature of environmental problems and leave consumers with the idea that buying the right products is the only option. Here too, is evidence of the tendency of the text to obscure the multitude of relationships involved with consumption, its effects on the environment, and potential solutions. The authors go on to argue that if every household in the U.S. had the most energy-efficient refrigerator that the "electricity savings would eliminate the need for about ten large power plants" (p. 14). This alternative not only offers consumption as a solution, it oversimplifies the relationship between energy consumption, appliances, and coal-fired power plants, suggesting that new appliances can alleviate problems more directly related to industrial production. Such a statement is not only a gross generalization of a complex set of relationships and decisions, it serves to place environmental solutions in the hands of those who can afford to purchase such items and blame on those who cannot.<sup>7</sup>

This example is typical of the distorted view of the relationship between consumption and ecological problems found in the text. The book claims to start with "a broad view of green consumerism and how everyday purchases can effect the earth's resources" (E, H, & M 1990, p. v). The authors then briefly describe environmental crises like acid rain, global warming and the greenhouse effect, ozone depletion, air pollution, the loss of rainforests and biodiversity, garbage, and water pollution, and claim to offer consumers a better understanding of how their purchases relate to these problems. However, this is exactly what the text does not do. The basic knowledge offered in the authors' descriptions of existing environmental crises does little to provide the public with the knowledge to understand adequately the relationship between consumption and environmental deterioration. *The Green Consumer's* description of problems like global warming and the loss of biodiversity fail to address their underlying causes and the role that consumption has in creating them. Indeed, the text's proposed "broad view" stops short of actually questioning the role of consumption in contributing to existing environmental problems.

Furthermore, *The Green Consumer* actually clouds the discussion over the

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<sup>7</sup> Here, a social ecological critique would point out another dimension of power implicated in green consumer discourse. Green consumerism fails to address the structure of consumption and what categories of consumers and what types of consumption contribute most to environmental deterioration. What is problematic here, is that green consumerism distorts who and what is responsible for environmental deterioration and places the power of environmentalism in the ability to purchase environmentally sound products. Green consumerism constructs a vision of environmentalism which inherently excludes the poor. Indeed, as Irvine (1991) argued, "consuming of whatever kind and hue requires money. So it is immediately not a strategy that can be used by those without money: the poor, the disadvantaged, and those of 'less developed' nations. Green consuming is thoroughly a middle class affair" (p. 21).

relationship between the significance of existing environmental problems and the nature of adequate solutions by describing the impacts of a major crisis like global warming while in the same breath arguing that significant changes in consumers lifestyles are not necessary. For example, the authors argue that "as warming continues, forests will die, coastal areas will flood, the world's agricultural areas will wither, and there will be great economic upheaval" (p. 14). However, in the introduction of the book, the authors suggest that; "by choosing carefully, you can have a positive [read: less negative] impact on the environment without significantly compromising your way of life. That's what being a green consumer is all about" (p. 5). While the authors recognize that "buying green products alone won't solve the huge environmental problems facing our nation and our world" (E, H, & M, 1991, p. 11), *The Green Consumer* nevertheless, characterizes green consumerism as an adequate measure of environmental reform. *The Green Consumer* depicts changes in consumptive behavior as not just a partial, but rather a significant program to solve existing environmental crises. The lay out of the text contributes to this sense of completion by describing the threats and then moving to solutions, giving a sense of resolution to the problem. *The Green Consumer* thus works to foster the idea that the actions necessary to address impending environmental crises will not require significant changes in consumer behavior.

#### *The Legitimation of a Consumer Society*

While it would be possible to discuss a multitude of ways in which *The Green Consumer* legitimizes existing institutions and practices,<sup>8</sup> I wish to limit the discussion here to the author's acceptance of our consumer society and rejection of alternatives that lie outside the economic marketplace. In the introduction, the authors implicitly accept a "convenience—and consumption—oriented society" (p. 5). Furthermore, the authors willingness to accept existing institutions and practices is evidenced by the absence of any discussion of alternatives, including the simple notion of consuming less. The authors also fail to consider alternative visions of the nature of environmental problems, the need to address them, the ways to address them, or the reasons to address them.

While the authors do not discuss the nature of alternatives, they nevertheless, cast judgment on the necessity and possibility of more significant measures of reform. They proclaim that; "No one wants to go back to a less comfortable, less convenient way of life" (p. 5), implicitly passing judgment on the adequacy of larger reforms. Such a statement not only pre-determines

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<sup>8</sup> For example, the text's characterization of green consumerism as an adequate response to looming environmental crises conflates the nature of the problem and the adequacy of consumer reform. In essence, the text distorts the magnitude of the problem and the potential of green consumerism to provide a remedy. As Salvador and Samosky contend; "*The Green Consumer* argument obscures the correlation between the dimensions of a problem and the effort needed to correct it" (p. 325). Such depictions contribute to the legitimacy of existing institutions and practices and undermine the incentive to search for alternatives.



the public's commitment to change, it casts judgment on the nature of alternative reforms, their feasibility and their desirability. Indeed the book outright forecloses the possibility that larger changes may be necessary as well as characterizes such notions as infeasible. The authors describe previous suggestions that to "truly care for the environment you had to drastically reduce your purchases of everything" as misfounded. And indeed, that such an "approach simply does not work" (p. 5). Furthermore, the authors characterize the only alternative as to wait for perfect solutions. They ask, "Is it better to do something now or wait for perfect solutions to come later on?" (p. 7). Readers have already been given the answer. It is presumed in the book's motto: "doing something is better than nothing." However, in getting consumers to settle for imperfect solutions now, green consumerism runs the risk of undermining the critical capacities of the public necessary to envision more adequate notions of ecological activism. Here, the problem becomes not simply one of legitimizing existing institutions and practices, but doing so in a manner that decreases the incentive to look for and the legitimacy of alternative ecological sensibilities. By implicitly denying the necessity and feasibility of alternative measures of reform the authors further undermine the legitimacy of those groups who suggest that more fundamental and widespread changes are necessary to address ecological crises.

As the next section will highlight, the characteristics of the text outlined here are indicative of *The Green Consumer's* potential to diminish the deliberative capability of the public and close off the debate on ecological issues to alternative voices.

#### *The Green Consumer:* Constrained Activism and Debased Sensibilities

The problems with green consumerism result primarily from its locating solutions within the realm of private/consumption. Indeed, green consumerism, through privatizing and commodifying environmentalism, decreases the incentive and capacity for critical reflection into the nature of ecological crises. The problem of privatization is that in taking a public/political issue and relegating it to the realm of private/consumption, green consumerism undermines the dialogue over environmentalism, displaces public critique, and inherently diminishes the political sphere. The problem of commodification is that offers debased ecological sensibilities. In defining consumption as ecological activism, green consumerism subjugates nature to a consumer ideology, relies on the inherently bankrupt language of the market place, and equates ecological and industrial concerns, which further distorts notions of environmentalism and reduces the critical capacity of the public. From a social ecological perspective, green consumerism not only fails to provide a critique of or alternative to existing practices, it reifies dominant ideological orientations to environmentalism and undermines the possibilities of alternative ecological sensibilities.

#### *Operating in the Private Sphere—Constrained Activism*

Green consumerism distorts notions of environmentalism by conflating the realm of activism in which acts of environmental reform take place. In

this instance, the public is called to act in private capacities in response to public crises. The public actor as critic is recast as a private consumer who participates in environmental activism by slightly altering his or her purchasing habits. An individual's dual role as a public actor and private citizen merge into the persona of a green consumer who through wise and prudent purchasing choices discharges an act of environmental responsibility. The problem is that green consumerism removes an important social dimension necessary in environmental reform. In emphasizing individual decisions regarding purchasing behavior, green consumerism avoids public deliberation. Placing the issue of environmental reform outside of that which is deliberated upon, where people work together to find alternatives, lessens the potential effectiveness of green consumerism as a means of ecological activism.

In removing the issue from deliberation and making it a private decision, green consumerism diminishes the incentive to share ideas and look for solutions. Goodnight (1990) explains the problem with such discursive strategies:

When communication is processed to suit the industrial vision of a public realm, the common domain of community discourse is transformed from an arena of advocate and audience to a market of salespersons and customers, thereby transforming the public sphere from a place where ideas are aired out to a supermarket where associations are picked up . . . . When the sources of opinion-making are removed from ordinary contingencies, dialogue dies and public participation becomes tenuous if it is ever born at all (p. 183,184).

Goodnight himself could probably not have imagined this argument's relevancy to the discussion of green consumerism's potential to invite critical reflection into ecological issues.<sup>9</sup> In privatizing reform, green consumerism actually collapses judgments in the public sphere to mere expressions of consumption. People purchase environmental solutions and activism: a pre-packaged means of being "green." *The Green Consumer's* presentation of consumer activism as the most fruitful avenue of reform and its conclusion that significant changes in lifestyle are not necessary to address the seven largest crises facing the planet removes the question of whether green consumerism is a necessary or a sufficient program for environmental reform from discussion. Playing upon concern over existing environmental crises and an underdeveloped sense of their relationship with consumption has created a situation where green consumer rhetoric comes across as publicly deliberated consensus. The legitimacy of green consumerism as a means of ecological activism becomes taken for granted.

In addition to diminishing the critical capacity of the public, the privatized nature of green consumerism undermines the commitment to more political measures of ecological activism. First, green consumerism inherently diminishes the critical capacity of the public by placing power within the purchase rather than actual public critique. Placing responsibility for environmental reform within the realm of individual decisions regarding consumptive be-

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<sup>9</sup> While Goodnight is talking specifically about the function of the media, his argument is useful to describe how green consumer discourse represents not only the industrial vision of the public sphere and public dialogue, but how it promotes an environmental activism and ecological sensibility based on the same industrial vision.



havior supplants an active public with a consuming one. Public demands for change are thus expressed in the act of purchases rather than political or other forms activism.

Second, *The Green Consumer's* depiction of the success and influence possible in the marketplace undermines the commitment to engage in political activism. Asking that consumers vote with their dollars and arguing that one can make their voice heard more effectively in the market, not only erodes consumer participation in making political change, it diminishes faith in the feasibility of political reform. Indeed, such depictions further the notion that only individual responsibility in the private sphere can work. Muir (1991a) points out that green consumerism "may overcome the boredom of the indictment, while propelling the agent toward some action, but it also seems symptomatic of a peculiar loss of awareness, of admitting no alternative" (p. 32). Green consumerism's overly pessimistic assumption that only in private decisions can individuals make a difference fails to invite critical reflection into ecological deterioration and undermines notions that larger and more significant reform is possible.

If Muir (1991b) is correct that green consumerism's primary force is in directing participation to the realm of the individual, then green consumerism may perpetuate citizens' "withdrawal from public life . . . into the cocoon of the personal and private" (Cooperstein, 1990, p. 15). Indeed, the withdrawal from the public is likely to be compounded when the realm of private action is the marketplace and the act of consumption. Directing reform through the act of consumption exacerbates green consumerism's tendency to undermine more political measures of reform. In making an act of consumption an expression of environmentalism, green consumerism invites the dangers associated the "communicative power" of consumption. Uusitalo (1986) discusses the communicative power of consumption as its ability to satisfy other needs, needs which include "the need to demonstrate one's group affiliation, socio-economic status or way of life" (p. 99). In the case of green consumerism the communicative power of consuming environmentally sound products may satisfy needs of political action. Purchasing products may serve as an expression of one's commitment to environmental reform, diminishing the need to engage in more political acts of environmentalism. This is problematic because the significant changes necessary to address growing ecological deterioration require concerted political action and the will to challenge those institutions and practices that perpetuate the plundering of the planet. The revolution is not a t-shirt away. Wearing slogans like "Save the Earth" on our clothing will not alleviate the threats facing the environment or remove the need to examine critically the complex web of economic, social, and political factors contributing to the destruction of the planet.

### *The Value of the Private Sphere*

There are those, however, who would argue that action in the private sphere may encompass the political. The shift to the private may be viewed as an opportunity for transforming the personal in a manner that has political significance. This notion is consistent with the cry of radical feminists in the sixties who stressed that the "personal is political." A similar rationale is often

found in green consumer rhetoric. There are those who suggest that green consumerism, by inspiring individual reform, may create the critical reflection necessary to make larger changes. However, there is an important distinction being effaced here when considering the private nature of green consumerism. Green consumer reform inspires private, but not personal involvement. It inspires attempts to reform purchasing habits not to transform personal awareness of the environment and is therefore incapable of evoking the type of consciousness-raising implied by the notion that the personal is political. There are three justifications for this claim.

First, green consumerism is not a move to make the personal political. Rather it is a move to make the private individual responsible for decisions concerning environmental protection. What is interesting is how it becomes that ecological deterioration is the responsibility of the individual. If green consumerism was simply a matter of individuals consciously choosing to alter their lifestyles as a means of affecting political change, this brand of activism might be more acceptable. However, this is not the case. The shift to individual responsibility in green consumer reform has as much to do with the rhetorical strategies of business and industry as it does with personal/political reform. Despite its characterization as publicly induced corporate responsibility, green consumerism actually represents a strategy of corporate advocacy. Green consumer discourse is an excellent example of what Depoe (1991) calls "transformative grounding"—"the strategic attempt to define a situation so as to symbolically relocate the discussion and adjudication of a contestable issue from one arena of judgment to another in order to advance a particular interest" (Depoe, p. 335). Depoe conducted a case study of McDonald's response to public demands that it stop the use of polystyrene packaging. Whereas *The Green Consumer* suggests that McDonald's response was a victory of the green consumer movement (p. 11), Depoe argues that such a response was actually an example of corporate advocacy that shifted the locus of responsibility from industry back to the private sphere. He specifically cites such discursive strategies as problematic for deliberations over environmental reform. Depoe (1991) argues that:

[i]t may be that corporate strategies such as those employed by McDonald's, which attempt to transform the environmental debate from a question of corporate responsibility and public policy to a question of personal choice and consumption, contribute to an unhealthy interiorization and privatization of the environmental issue (p. 339).

Seen in this context, green consumerism represents not individual consciousness-raising, but industry bullet dodging.

Second, when we consider the influence that green consumer rhetoric has on the motivations for ecological activism, it becomes evident that the problems associated with industry driven reform further diminish the emancipatory capabilities of green consumerism. Green consumerism has the effect of linking individual and corporate interests in a manner potentially harmful for ecological reform. Muir (1991a) argues that green consumerism creates a unity of motivation between industry and citizen. The problem with motivational unity between industry and individual is that it links consumers to environmental activism through the corporation. Green consumerism creates a situation where industry and a consumer society are able to



define ecological reform. This represents a dangerous trend, limiting the nature of activism, defining it by the criteria of and giving it meaning consistent with institutions and practices at the heart of ecological deterioration. In this sense, linking individual and industrial motivations further enhances industry's ability to influence and shape environmentalism in a manner consistent with the ideologies of a consumer society. Indeed, situating ecological activism within the scope of activity defined by and consistent with economic progress enhances the ability of a consumer ideology to direct activism and define ecological sensibilities. Muir (1991a) argues that effecting means of environmental control through the purchase of products offers "a constrained consciousness, a filtered awareness" (p. 12). It is a kind of awareness that is incapable of promoting the ecological sensibilities necessary to make green consumerism a viable brand of activism.

Third, green consumerism does not transform personal awareness of the environment or personal relationships with the earth. Unlike social ecology and radical ecological perspectives, green consumerism does not provide an alternative to anthropocentric (human-centered) approaches to environmentalism that define nature as a storehouse of resources here for the benefit of humans. Green consumerism calls on the public to act according to an ethical system not governed by respect for the earth but by the desire for the human species to survive in ways of living to which we've become accustomed. One's decision to be a green consumer is primarily to safeguard the environment as a measure of one's quality of life. Indeed, the green consumer philosophy regards changing consumption as a necessity so as to safeguard effectively the planet for future use (consumption). The back cover suggests that we "be a green consumer today and help save the earth for tomorrow," implying that the earth is a resource which we must use wisely. Under the motivational schema of green consumerism the dominant conception of the earth as a resource here for the benefit of humanity is never questioned.

*The Green Consumer's* depiction of the need to save tropical rainforests exemplifies green consumerism's anthropocentric approach. The authors characterize the relevance of the loss of plant and animal species due to deforestation in terms of their implications for humans. They ask; "What does the loss of these trees, insects and plants have to do with us?" (*The Green Consumer*, p. 23). The importance of these components of the world's rainforests are explained in terms of their potential to benefit humans, never mind the magnificence of some of the rarest species on the planet. In this instance the significance of the biodiversity in rainforests is relegated to economics, where the authors assess the potential monetary value that plant and animal species represent as possible medicines, pesticides, and other products for human consumption. Once again, the environment is reduced to a natural resource here for the benefit of humans.

Thus while action in the private sphere may be an opportunity for critical reflection into the complex issues surrounding environmental problems and a basis for personal actions of political consequence, the shift to the private inherent in green consumerism does not invite the critical reflection necessary to make it an opportunity for transforming consciousness. I agree with Kirpatrick Sale (1991) in arguing that

this individualistic approach does not in fact raise consciousness. It does not move people beyond their familiar liberal perceptions of the world, it does nothing to challenge the belief in technofix or write-your-Congressperson solutions and it does not begin to provide them with the new vocabulary and modes of thought necessary for a true change of consciousness (p. 60).

What is significant about Sale's assessment is that it recognizes the importance of the language used to describe green consumerism and the potential of the communicative power of the act to influence how we perceive and respond to environmental problems. Indeed, it is the rhetorical characteristics of *The Green Consumer* which are indicative of the debased ecological sensibilities inherent in green consumerism.

The problems associated with green consumer rhetoric stem, in part, from the commodification of environmental advocacy as it enters the sphere of economic discourse and argument. In defining consumption as an act of environmentalism, green consumerism suffers the problems associated with placing ecology within the symbolic context of economics, using the consumer model of argument, and the language and logic of the marketplace. As a result, green consumer discourse offers a debased ecological awareness and legitimizes the institutions and practices of a consumer society.

#### *Operating in the Economic Sphere—Debased Ecological Sensibilities*

Locating ecological appeals within the argumentative framework and the symbolic context of economics undermines critical reflection into the relationship between consumption and its impact on the environment. The consumer model of argument and the discourse it inspires diminishes the public's ability to assess critically the type of reform inspired by green consumerism. A host of rhetorical and critical theorists have pointed to the ways in which a consumer society has diminished the critical capacity of the public. Most relevant here may be Jasinski's (1988) argument that, "[t]he audience's capacity to judge has atrophied due, in large part, to the prominence of consumer advertising as the modern paradigm of reason-giving" (p. 214). This critique applies well to green consumerism. Indeed, the green consumer model of argument and its rhetorical characteristics offer a constrained and debased vision of environmentalism.

First, the commitment to purchasing green products gives the illusion that they are "environmentally safe," rather than less ecologically harmful. Under the green consumer model of argument there is a sense that consumers are improving the quality of the environment when purchasing so-called green products. The discursive strategy of green consumerism blurs the realization that all consumption has ecological consequences and suggests that so-called green products are beneficial for the environment. In this instance, buzzwords like "environmentally friendly," "environmentally safe," "biodegradable," "recyclable," and "organic" become signs of environmental correctness. The purchase of goods with green labels, advertised as environmentally safe, becomes an act uncritically accepted as an act of environmental advocacy. In the process, the complex relationship between the social, economic, and political issues related to consumption and their contribution to ecological deterioration is simplified so as to preclude critical reflection.



Second, the diminished critical capacity of the public sphere is compounded by the debased language offered by economics and consumer appeals. The problem here is “the invocation of the private in order to ‘solve’ a public problem such that subsequently the language of the critique is the corrupt language of the marketplace” (Laffoon & Delicath, 1992, p. 20). Indeed, it is problematic that green consumerism uses the language of commercialism and consumption to advocate reform. Such debased language has inherent limitations in expressing liberating thought and courses of action. When environmental appeals are relegated to the marketplace, nature is subjugated to the criteria of economics. It is given an ad hoc value that is weighed against other competing interests like cost and efficiency. In the green consumer model of argument, the environment is just another factor to consider when purchasing a product. Within the context of green consumerism, the ecological effects of consumption are treated as mere externalities, not something intrinsically linked to a consumer society.

Third, the prevalence of green consumer rhetorics are likely to foster even more debased ecological appeals. As the consumption of “environmentally friendly” products becomes identified with environmental advocacy, discourses that further distort the relationship between consumption and ecological deterioration will abound. Green consumerism has the tendency to cloud the discussion over the environment by popularizing random associations between products and ecological activism. Chevy trucks are advertised in conjunction with preserving wetlands. Dow Chemical promises us a brighter and better tomorrow. Animals protesting pollution are used to advocate nuclear energy. Such images are made possible by the existence of green consumer rhetoric. By being a prevalent and popular type of environmental advocacy, green consumer discourse serves as a symbolic bridge for subsequent images that attempt to further equate ecological and industrial concerns.<sup>10</sup> In this instance, green consumer discourse establishes a discursive terrain that creates associations between ecological awareness and corporate advocacy which make consumption and ecological activism substantial.

#### *Legitimizing the Institutions and Practices of a Consumer Society*

Despite the effort to characterize green consumerism as consumer activism, it seems more a response of a consumer ideology and an attempt to maintain the legitimacy of those practices necessary for its continuation. At some level, green consumerism must be recognized as a means for consumer society to adapt the tenets of its ideology to changing conditions in the natural environment. Seen in this context, green consumerism reflects the suasive force of capitalism and its ability to legitimize the practices necessary for its continued existence.<sup>11</sup> Capitalism maintains its legitimacy by sustaining

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<sup>10</sup> I am grateful to Celeste Condit for this particular description of green consumerism’s ability to link ecological and industrial concerns.

<sup>11</sup> Relevant here is Panetta’s (1991) discussion of the ability of capitalism to sustain itself by legitimizing the practices necessary for its continued existence. Panetta specifically cites the appeals and popularity of consumer reform as a suasive tool of capitalism.

an economy based on production for production's sake. What is particularly ironic is that green consumerism itself promotes and legitimizes production and consumption. Indeed, the green consumer movement has generated the production of an entire line of new goods. From t-shirts that express concern for the environment to huggable planets, "eco-gifts" are popular products because of corporate awareness of concern for the environment. While at this level, green consumerism's tendency to legitimize existing institutions and practices may seem obvious, there are more subtle ways in which green consumer discourse re-affirms our faith in a consumer society.

First, characterizing environmental crises as problems that do not require significant changes in our consumer lifestyles undermines the incentive to further explore the ecological problems associated with consumption. In suggesting that no disruption of the consumer lifestyle is necessary, green consumer discourse makes unproblematic what are complex questions regarding the significance of environmental crises, the nature of their causes, and the formulation of adequate solutions. Green consumerism's depiction of environmental problems glosses over a complex web of social, economic, and political factors related to the environmental impacts of consumption and suggests that larger changes are not necessary to respond adequately to environmental problems. Such characterizations can only re-affirm our faith in a consumer society and the legitimacy of existing institutions and practices. When suggestions that consumers need not fundamentally alter their behavior come in the context of addressing issues like global warming and the loss of biodiversity, the connection between the magnitude of the problem and the act of changing purchasing behavior is simplified in such a way as to suggest that there are no deeper questions to ask.

Second, green consumer discourse suffers from problems inherent with reformist rhetoric. In suggesting ways to participate more effectively in a consumer society, green consumerism runs the risk of insulating the institutions and practices of that society from critique. Peter Grahame (1991), in his discussion of consumer reports discourse, suggests that information provided by rhetorics like green consumerism invite reflection into products, but fail to go beyond there to encourage deliberation of the more fundamental issues involved with consumption. He argues that

the legitimacy of the marketplace as an instrument of satisfaction remains largely unquestioned. The report encourages deliberation about propositional claims, about facts of satisfaction, but not about the correctness of the norms that determine that, in societies like ours, the marketplace functions as the chief arena of satisfaction. Indeed, it is this underlying accord with market culture that grounds the consumer report's production of alternative facts (1991, p. 165, 166).

Grahame's critique is a criticism of the *raison d'être* behind green consumerism. The very practice of providing "alternative facts," (i.e. ways in which consumption contributes to ecological deterioration), in order to suggest better ways of participating in the system, insulates consumer culture from further critique. Indeed, in suggesting ways to participate better in the system, green consumerism removes the incentive to look at the need to make larger changes.



*Undermining the Search for Alternatives*

The dynamics of green consumerism that serve to undermine the search for alternatives are readily apparent. Indeed, those factors that contributed to green consumerism's tendency to diminish the capability and capacity for critical reflection into environmental crises, all contribute to the ways in which green consumerism lessens the apparent need to develop more fundamental and far reaching changes in our consumer society. However, there are additional grounds on which to argue that green consumerism may undermine the search for alternative ecological visions.

The incentive to search for alternatives is diminished by the sense of accomplishment/completion inherent in the discourse of green consumerism. When it is suggested that larger changes are not necessary, the rhetoric of green consumerism gives the impression that green consuming is all that is necessary to address environmental problems. Indeed, in failing to invite critical reflection into the nature of the environmental crisis, or the environmental impacts of consumption and its relation to society's commitment to economic progress, green consumerism fosters the ill-informed conclusion that slightly changing ones' consumptive behavior will make a difference. Kirpatrick Sale (1991) suggests that

such solutions . . . get people thinking they are actually making a difference and doing their part to halt the destruction of the Earth . . . It is the kind of thing that diverts people from the hard truths and hard choices and hard actions, from the recognition that they have to take on the larger forces of society (p. 60).

In making such a concerted effort to convince readers that doing something is better than nothing *The Green Consumer* runs the risk of creating a false sense of security, suggesting that changing consumption habits is enough to address the environmental problems threatening the planet. Such a depiction masks fundamental assumptions about the possibility and nature of alternatives in a such a way that limits visions of environmental reform. While it may be an innocent attempt to foster the belief that consumers can actually make a difference, the sense of completion and satisfaction with actually being able to do something fostered by green consumerism decreases the incentive to search for alternatives. Salvador and Samosky (1991) argue that, "[i]n allowing consumers to content themselves with their limited efforts, *The Green Consumer* undermines commitment to deeper cultural introspection and change" (p. 328). Indeed, "there is real danger that green consumerism will divert attention away from the need to change institutional structures" (see Dadd and Carothers, 1991, p. 18). In addition to diverting attention away from the need for more significant changes, the rhetoric of green consumerism may undermine the legitimacy of those voices advocating more radical responses to ecological crises.

*Undermining the Legitimacy of Alternatives*

The legitimacy of alternatives is inherently diminished by the absence of a discussion of them in the text. *The Green Consumer* reinforces the legitimacy of existing institutions and practices by failing to consider acts of environ-

mentalism that occur outside the free market. Not discussing alternatives places the faith in a consumer society in the realm of the taken for granted. In not recognizing the possibility of alternatives, green consumer discourse insulates existing power structures and their ideologies from critique. It becomes assumed that we must work through existing institutions and reform existing practices. The significance of the absence of alternatives in the text is compounded by the function of a consumer ideology in green consumer rhetoric. While what is not said in a text may be a simple omission, it can also be indicative of more meaningful operations of ideological practices. As Hart (1990) argues, "ideology operates like a linguistic legislature which defines what is open for discussion and what is not" (p. 408). Here, a consumer ideology operates to exclude the possibility of alternatives. The text both implicitly and explicitly signifies that larger, more fundamental, changes are not necessary to address the environmental threats facing the planet. This move is accomplished because *The Green Consumer* evaluates the plausibility of ecological activism using as its measure of the palatability of proposed solutions, an evaluation derived from the hegemonic perspective of a consumer society. It is clear that because alternatives to consuming fall out of the free market they are not considered options. Plant and Albert (1991) suggest that, "the whole idea that we could possibly do without most of these goods is never mentioned, because no one stands to make additional profit from not producing things: the alternative lies outside of the market and subsequently receives no attention" (p. 3).

*The Green Consumer's* tendency to undermine the legitimacy of alternatives is particularly insidious because it recognizes the existence of environmental problems and the need to reform consumptive behavior, yet suggests that significant changes in our consumer society are not necessary. Green consumer discourse thereby exorcises environmental advocacy of its radical content and critique. In "cloak[ing] consumerism in the appearance of ecology" green consumerism cages the "surly antagonistic spirit" and refracts the "radical revolutionary animus" of ecology thereby "providing the symbolic and substantive means to rationalize" the ideology of a consumer society (Luke, 1993, 171, 170). The message of green consumerism is that the existing system is simply in need of minor reform. However, in suggesting that larger changes are not necessary and even that such changes are infeasible, green consumer discourse undermines the legitimacy of groups advocating that we look more deeply at the institutions and practices behind ecological crises. The claim that we need not fundamentally alter our lifestyles or our consumer society conflicts directly with the voice of even most mainstream environmentalists. Salvador and Samosky (1991) point out that, *The Green Consumer's* recurrent proposition that consumers need not fundamentally alter their lifestyle "conflicts with the arguments of even moderate environmental groups suggesting more substantial reform" and thereby "implicitly weakens the rhetorical foundations of more ambitious environmental movements" (p. 328, 327). Indeed, green consumerism inherently undermines the rhetorical foundations of any environmental group committed to a radical approach because it makes calls for significant changes appear unjustified. If consumers accept the notion that environmental solutions do not require significant changes, they will inevitably reject the



claims advanced by those who feel that more fundamental and widespread actions are necessary.

The influence that green consumer discourse may have in excluding alternative voices is perhaps its most detrimental. A social ecological critique suggests that we must find new ways of looking at environmental crises and seek changes that fundamentally reorient our approach to ecological issues. Green consumerism specifically excludes those voices that suggest that ecological problems are something more difficult and complex than the by-product of poor consumption habits. Such voices represent an important dimension of the discourse of environmental advocacy and are an integral part of the effort to find answers to the ecological crises threatening the planet. Radical visions which call for more widespread and fundamental changes in society take us forward as active participants in a future of our own making and defining rather than leaving us as mere consumers. These lines of ecological argument are necessary if we are to develop the sensibilities, practices, and institutions capable of addressing effectively the threats to the planet.

### Conclusion

In light of the critique offered here, many will question if I have not overlooked the potential benefits of changing consumer behavior and ask if green consumerism may not yield a step in the direction of ecological salvation. The question is often posed: *doesn't the increase in awareness engendered by green consumerism, among people who would probably not otherwise be involved, outweigh the potential significance of the problems associated with misdirected activism and the legitimization of a consumer society?* Before explaining that my answer is unequivocally; "No, the potential significance of green consumerism's ability to raise awareness of environmental issues and inspire ecologically conscious purchasing habits is far overshadowed by its potential to legitimize a consumer society and close off the debate on ecological issues to more radical voices," it is necessary to take issue with the question.

First, the question springs from the assumption that doing something is better than nothing and reveals the prevalence of the ideology of a consumer society. Indeed, the question reflects the tendency of green consumerism to be taken for granted as a measure of environmental reform. While there can be no doubt that inspiring ecologically conscious consumption must be a part of any program of ecological activism, what is important is how green consuming is defined in relation to the institutions and practices of a consumer society and how green consumerism gives meaning to ecological issues.

Second, the question reflects the pessimism that afflicts discussions of social reform. While sounding optimistic in looking at the possible benefits of green consumerism, the question actually reflects a pessimistic willingness to accept what little activism can be mustered and what minimal reform can be made. Social ecology suggests that we must resist this mentality if we are to find the means of addressing ecological crises.

Third, the question is problematic because it presumes that green con-

sumers are individuals who will try to make ecologically conscious purchasing decisions, but who otherwise would not engage in ecological activism. Here, it is appropriate to ask: "Who are these activists that would engage in green consuming, but who would not do anything else?" Remember that green consumerism is primarily a middle-class affair. This has two implications regarding the assumptions made in the question.

The first implication of green consumerism being a middle-class affair is that it makes evident the tendency to overlook poor people and minorities who need alternatives to the increasing number of ecological threats facing their communities. Green consumerism ignores the fact that many people, because of socio-economic status and the struggle to meet basic needs, have little choice, but to engage in anti-ecological practices. Green consumerism does nothing to discuss environmental threats that are largely the problems of a post-industrial consumer economy or the fact that the poor will require a level of economic well-being that can afford them the opportunity to make more ecologically sound purchases. If green consumer discourse can also work to exclude ecological alternatives, that in their call for a radical restructuring of society along ecological lines, address the relationship between urban, industrial, and economic practices that create underclasses, exploit and pollute the environment, bury toxic waste and place incinerators in poor and minority communities, as related; it will prove even less ecologically adequate.

The second implication of green consumerism being primarily a middle-class affair is that it calls into question the assumption that green consumers are often people who would otherwise "do nothing." There is no reason to presume that middle-class consumers would not do more. I operate from the assumption that the real impediment to environmental reform is not the level of the public's commitment, but the lack of opportunities and a diversity of channels in which to engage in activism. We cannot make definitive claims about what may happen if such publics were confronted with adequate knowledge of and the ability to participate in more radical ecological alternatives. As a social ecologist and as a rhetorical critic, I want the public to at least be confronted with such ecological alternatives.

Finally, the real problem with the question is, of course, that it assumes that the type of awareness raised by green consuming provides an adequate basis for ecological activism. This, however, ignores the criticisms leveled against the debased nature of the ecological awareness offered in green consumer discourse. At one level, the awareness inspired by green consumerism serves to perpetuate dominant conceptions of nature and legitimize a consumer society. Any consciousness raising or awareness generated by green consumerism is, from the perspective of social ecology, inherently anti-ecological for it reinforces the notion that the earth is merely a storehouse of natural resources and legitimizes the institutions and practices of a consumer society. On another level, green consumerism further clouds the debate on ecological issues by working to create symbolic bridges that harmonize the relationship between a consumer society and ecological deterioration. Here, the fact that green consumer rhetoric popularizes environmental appeals may actually prove harmful to the nature and direction of ecological reform. Because green consumer rhetorics establish random



connections between consumption and ecological activism the nature of the awareness generated by green consumer discourse may further undermine the critical capacities of the public and cloud the discussion on ecological issues.

Given the debased nature of the activism and ecological sensibilities promoted in green consumer rhetoric there really is no small reward to weigh against the problems associated with legitimizing the institutions and practices of a consumer culture. This skepticism and condemnation of green consumerism is all the more warranted when we add to the equation, the potential for green consumer discourse to close off the dialogue on ecological solutions to more radical ecological voices. It is important that green consumerism be taken to task on these issues. While it would be easy to say that green consumerism may have a slightly beneficial impact on the environment and is a valuable means of individual reform, we should not accept it as an unquestionable, *a priori* act of environmental responsibility. This is especially true of rhetorical critics, who as scholars interested in public argument, should be concerned with the communicative power of green consumerism and its ability to invite critical reflection into environmental crises or reified belief in the institutions and practices of a consumer society. We, as rhetorical critics, should be uniquely concerned with leveling discursive playing fields and uncovering, analyzing, and advancing discourses that challenge the forces that maintain the relationships of domination of human by human and nature by human.

We cannot examine green consumer rhetoric and reform in a vacuum and hail its ability to at least get people to do something. Green consumerism must be interpreted within a larger context of environmental advocacy. It is in this respect that one can see the value of the approach to ideological criticism taken in this essay.<sup>12</sup> By outlining an ideological alternative and revealing how it functions in relation to the ideological assumptions of green consumer discourse one is able to see what influence the rhetoric of green consumerism may have on the nature and direction of ecological activism. In the final analysis, it appears that green consumerism represents much more than a rhetoric of self-help offering consumers simple things they can do to save the earth. Examining green consumer discourse through the terministic screen of social ecology reveals the workings of a consumer ideology and the power relations it sustains. In this case, we find that green consumerism legitimizes and insulates from critique the institutions and

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<sup>12</sup> The efforts to develop such a perspective on ideological criticism are, however, by no means complete. Questions remain concerning the nature and feasibility of outlining ideological perspectives which critics can use to analyze discourse. Indeed, further elaboration is necessary to delineate what is made possible and problematic by such a transformation of the ideological turn in rhetorical criticism. I fear that I may have characterized the necessity to conduct ideological criticism through an ideological perspective too broadly. Not all ideological criticism requires that a critic develop and present an overarching perspective regarding the way the world is and should be. In many cases, explicating a developed and comprehensive ideological position will not be necessary or possible. Discovering in what contexts and circumstances such an approach works best is work that remains to be done.

practices of a consumer society while promoting a "doing something is better than nothing" attitude which effaces the consideration of alternative ecological sensibilities.

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## THE SKIPPER AS SCAPEGOAT: ALCOHOL AND MORALITY IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RHETORIC ON THE EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL

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"Heavy drink was on his breath, her death was on his hands."

—Michelle Shocked, "Cold Comfort"

In the late evening hours of March 23, 1989, a supertanker filled with crude oil left the port of Valdez, Alaska, on a journey into disaster. During its voyage out of Prince William Sound, the *Exxon Valdez* failed to make a critical turn into open waters, and instead slammed into Bligh Reef, spilling more than 11 million gallons of oil into the pristine water. When Coast Guard investigators reached the stricken vessel hours later, they asked its captain, Joseph Hazelwood, what the problem was. Referring to himself, Hazelwood replied: "I think you're looking at it."<sup>1</sup>

After the oil gushed from the stricken tanker, an environmental catastrophe was quick in the making. William Reilly, the director of the Environmental Protection Agency, said during congressional hearings in April of 1989, that the spill was "obviously an environmental catastrophe of the first magnitude. It is a national tragedy for environmental resources of a very unusual quality and significance" (April 6, 1989, 17). As Alaska was reeling from what would become North America's largest oil spill, Congress held several hearings to discover the causes of the accident.<sup>2</sup> Lawmakers attempted to identify the reasons for the spill, but much of their attention soon focused on finding an individual to blame for the calamity. Representative

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Brock, "Lost At Sea—And On Land," *Life* (February 1990): 79. For a description of the events leading up to and following the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, see: John Keeble, *Out of the Channel* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991); Art Davidson, *In the Wake of the Exxon Valdez* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990); and John Strohmeier, *Extreme Conditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> See: "Exxon Valdez Oil Spill," hearings before the subcommittee on Coast Guard and Navigation of the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, April 6, 1989; "Oilspill in Prince William Sound, Alaska," hearings before the subcommittee on Environmental Protection of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, April 19, 1989; "Exxon Oil Spill," hearings before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, April 6, 1989 (part one), May 10 and July 20, 1989 (part two); "Investigation of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, Prince William Sound, Alaska," hearings before the subcommittee on Water, Power, and Offshore Energy Resources of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, May 5, 7, 8, 1989 (part one), July 18, 1989 (part two) and July 28, 1989 (part three). When referring to "hearings," I also include in my analysis speeches from the House and Senate floor printed in the *Congressional Record*.



Dennis Eckart put it bluntly while speaking on the House floor when he said, "[s]omeone has to be responsible" (*Congressional Record*, April 11, 1989, H1015).

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) supplied lawmakers with an easy target for indignation when they reported on March 30, 1989, that Hazelwood was legally drunk when the Coast Guard tested him some 10 hours after the tanker hit the reef (Lauter 1989). The news of Hazelwood's intoxication influenced the rhetoric about the spill during the congressional hearings, as many lawmakers focused on issues relating to alcoholism. For example, Representative Greg Laughlin said that "it certainly seems that the master's alcoholic problem was one of the critical factors in this disaster" (April 6, 1989, 34). Alaskan Senator Frank Murkowski squarely laid the blame on Hazelwood, claiming: "I am not going to use this opportunity to go into a great degree of blame or responsibility, other than to admit beyond a doubt that it is human error, the realism of alcohol that causes so many of our accidents . . ." (*Congressional Record*, April 4, 1989, S3222). Representative Jim McDermott echoed this attitude during a speech on the House floor: "But one thing is absolutely certain: We will pay a price because of this environmental disaster. The captain of the tanker will be hung out to dry out" (*Congressional Record*, April 11, 1989, H1016).

Kenneth Burke, long concerned with humanity's urgent need to project its sins on a worthy scapegoat, has suggested that "the sacrificial principle is intrinsic to the nature of order" (Burke 1968, 450). Our task as students of rhetoric, he claims, is to show "not how the sacrificial motives revealed in the institutions of magic and religion might be eliminated in a scientific culture, but what new forms they take" (Burke 1968, 451). The congressional rhetoric surrounding the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill is an appropriate place to apply Burke's theory, since participants in the hearings evaded responsibility for the spill by constructing a scapegoat out of the *Valdez* skipper, Joseph Hazelwood. A Burkean analysis of the event reveals a disturbing tendency among lawmakers to individualize the spill by casting blame on Hazelwood, while subordinating discussion of other causes of the grounding. By focusing on Hazelwood's alleged alcoholism, lawmakers and other participants in the hearings were able to facilitate the merger, division, and re-identification that was necessary to make the skipper a successful scapegoat.

### The Scapegoating Process

Since the opening of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System in 1977, two potentially competing values, or hierarchies—cheap, abundant energy through domestic oil production; and an untouched, biologically-rich environment—had remained in precarious harmony. The Exxon oil spill starkly highlighted the tension between these two hierarchies. Suddenly it appeared as though environmental destruction was the price society had to pay for oil exploration in pristine areas, and for many, the price was too high. As one hierarchy comes "in conflict with another," suggests Bernard Brock, "rejection of one will inevitably occur. Since man [sic] cannot satisfy all the requirements of his traditional hierarchies, he is saddled with eternal guilt" (Brock 1980, 350). Whatever the source of guilt, it is a powerful emotion that people must expiate.

The Alaskan oil spill created these intense emotions. Cheap oil and a clean

environment were no longer hierarchies that seemed compatible. Speaking during congressional hearings, Michael L. Fischer, the executive director of the Sierra Club, indicated that the frustration and guilt among Americans following the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill was tremendous:

Our members, like all Americans, have been really horrified by this disaster. One of the indicators that we have is the number of phone calls that have come in at our offices angry at us for not doing more. Basically, there is free-floating grief and anger among Americans. (April 19, 1989, 76)

Scenes of oil-soaked wildlife on television and descriptions of those scenes in newspapers across the country helped to fuel public anger. The *Tulsa World* called the environmental damage "stunning," the *News and Observer* of Raleigh, N.C., said that the harm to birds and sea life was "incalculable," and the *Burlington Free Press* lamented that "[b]irds are already dying. Sea lions are trapped on islands surrounded by oil. Beaches are black with heavy crude ("Largest U.S. Oil Spill . . .," 1989, 301-304). Much of the anger that Americans felt over the spill became evident in the hearings. In fact, lawmakers tried to indicate that they not only understood the nation's mood, but that they felt similar anger. Representative Thomas Manton expressed his feelings about the event:

If this imperilment is the result of an unavoidable circumstance, then maybe I would just be shocked and saddened. But, given the facts—as I understand them—I am angry, and the American people are angry. And they have every right to be. (April 6, 1989, 17)

The grief and frustration felt by many people was well-represented on Capitol Hill. Most lawmakers were not immune to the daily bombardment of television news pictures of oil-soaked animals. "Like most Americans," said Senator Max Baucus, "I have watched the TV news reports of the ecological disaster—the oil-soaked coastline, the dying sea otters, and the struggling water fowl—and, like most Americans, it has made me angry" (April 19, 1989, 1). Struggling with public frustration and anger, many lawmakers searched for an outlet for these emotions.

Burke suggests that people can expiate guilt through either mortification or victimage. Mortification involves a symbolic killing of the self, usually displayed through self-sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> Victimage involves finding a sacrificial vessel on which to load one's guilt; one must then symbolically kill the scapegoat in order to alleviate the guilt. Burke argues that a scapegoat is "the 'representative' or 'vessel' of certain unwanted evils, the sacrificial animal upon whose back the burden of these evils is ritualistically loaded" (Burke 1941, 39-40). Far from a phenomena relegated to primitive people, scapegoating is painfully apparent in modern society.<sup>4</sup> Burke sums up the process this way:

<sup>3</sup> Duncan describes mortification as a "punishment of an 'unruly' aspect of the self. Mortification is never simply the result of 'frustration' from without. It must come from within" (xl). For an application of mortification theory, see: Paula Wilson, "Hubert Humphrey's Civil Rights Arguments From 1948 To 1964: A Cycle of Order Completed," *Speaker and Gavel* 29.1-4 (1992): 2-13.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Burke's discussion of the scapegoating of Jews in Nazi Germany in *A Grammar of Motives* (1945, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), and in "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle,'" *The Philosophy of Literary Form* Third Ed. (1941, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973): 191-220.



"If order, then guilt; if guilt, then need for redemption; but any such 'payment' is victimage" (Burke 1968, 450).

The scapegoat principle is further divided into three steps. First, there is what Burke describes as "an original state of merger" (Burke 1945, 406), in which the people who bear the guilt share certain unwanted qualities with the scapegoat. For, while people are eager to delegate their guilt to someone else, it is important that "the receiver of this burden possesses consubstantiality with the giver" (Burke 1941, 45). In many ways, we are like what we vilify. Upon attainment of consubstantiality, however, there is the second step—"a principle of division"—where individuals ritualistically separate themselves from the unwanted qualities of the scapegoat. Finally, there is "a new principle of merger," where people are unified through their opposition to the qualities embedded in and represented by the scapegoat (Burke 1945, 406). Gordon Allport suggests that scapegoating is a convenient way for society to expiate unwanted emotions:

Guilt feelings arise from the omission or commission of certain deeds. Such feelings may be relieved by blaming others for one's own sins. This projection of guilt onto others is the classic form of scapegoating. The goat carries our burden of sin. (Allport 1948, 17)

Upon achievement of re-identification, the final phase of scapegoating, people attain a stable order. The scapegoating phenomena allows society to avoid more fundamental changes in terms of re-structuring its hierarchies.

#### Merger: Consubstantiality With the Villain

When the NTSB made public the results of Hazelwood's blood alcohol measurements, they did not make an assessment as to whether the skipper had consumed alcohol before or after the grounding, or whether alcohol played any role in the accident. Still, congressional lawmakers and oil executives riddled hearings in the weeks after the spill with allegations and assumptions about Hazelwood's alcoholism. Alaskan Senator Ted Stevens stated that the wreck of the *Valdez* came "[a]s a result of *alcohol abuse* on board this tanker" (April 6, 1989, 4, emphasis mine). Alcohol was the clear culprit, and the individual who drank too much of it became the clear villain.

Yet, despite the harsh language that society directs toward the villain, there is often an initial sympathy to the plight of the scapegoat, even if it is a drinking-driver. In his analysis of the ritual persecution of drugs, Thomas Szasz points out that "whatever the act, we should expect it to be viewed and treated quite differently depending on whether society regards the actor as a person yielding to temptation or as a *victim* of an (irresistible) impulse" (Szasz 1985, 170, emphasis in original). In the former, drinking-drivers are moral agents who overstep the boundaries of good judgment, and through their action, harm innocent people. Society views the drinking-driver as an individual who has succumbed to vices they should have avoided. In the latter view, drinking-drivers are victims of forces beyond their control. Many alcohol researchers who believe in this viewpoint refer to alcoholism as a

"disease."<sup>5</sup> The people who suffer from this affliction often have little control over their behavior. Alcoholics should not be the objects of our scorn, according to this view, but rather the recipients of our help. In his classic work on drinking-driving, Joseph Gusfield elaborates on the contradictory views regarding the person who drinks and drives:

Drinking is a source both of condemnation and of sympathy . . . From the standpoint of the law the drinking-driver is a villain—irresponsible, hedonistic, antisocial, undisciplined. From another standpoint he is a victim—unable to control himself, more likely to hurt himself than others. (Gusfield 1981, 156)

It is the latter viewpoint which forms the basis for merger between society and the scapegoat.

In American society there is widespread use of alcohol as a "social lubricant" (Ross 1992). For many people, alcohol helps to ease tensions during social settings and it stimulates relaxed conversation. People accept, perhaps even expect, the presence of alcoholic beverages at social functions, family gatherings, and business lunches. Alcohol has become ubiquitous in American society and culture. In addition, there is also a nearly total dependence on the part of Americans on the automobile. Americans use a car in over four out of five occasions when they need to travel somewhere (Ross 1992). The widespread use of both alcohol and the automobile has led to a situation where drinking-driving is ingrained in the American way of life. Ross explains:

Drinking to the point at which the drinker is significantly impaired in driving a vehicle is socially accepted in America, and drinking to BACs [blood alcohol contents] that yield extraordinary multiples of serious crash risk is tolerated and even expected in particular social strata . . . Large proportions of drinkers admit in interviews to having driven after drinking in the recent past and to expectations that they will drink and drive in the future. (Ross 1992, 170)

The "normalcy" of drinking and driving is supported by apprehension and crash statistics. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's National Center for Statistics and Analysis, police officers arrested more than 1.8 million drivers in 1991 for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. The odds that any American will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives is about 40 percent (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1992).

Writing in *Grammar of Motives*, Burke states: "For the scapegoat is 'charismatic,' a vicar. As such, it is profoundly consubstantial with those who, looking upon it as a chosen vessel, would ritualistically cleanse themselves by loading the burden of their own iniquities upon it" (406). In addition to the common behavior among drinking-drivers in America, there is identification through social status. The drinking-driver is a businessperson, a

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<sup>5</sup> For example, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism quotes Mark Keller of the Center of Alcohol Studies at Rutgers University as saying that "[a]lcoholism is a chronic disease, or disorder of behavior, characterized by the repeated drinking of alcoholic beverages to an extent that exceeds customary dietary use or ordinary compliance with the social drinking customs of the community . . ." (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism 1972, 9).



teacher, a factory worker. All different types of people from “normal” occupations are the offenders in drinking-driving incidents. Aside from the one instance where they happened to get caught, the drinking-driver is “just like us.” Though society publicly scorns the drinking-driver’s attraction to alcohol, they privately participate in the very same behavior. People may secretly engage in the very behavior that they publicly condemn, since, according to Trevor Melia, “[t]he Devil who is, by definition, quintessentially evil is also, paradoxically, strangely attractive” (Melia 1989, 416).

#### Division: Condemnation of the Villain

While there is consubstantiality between society and the scapegoat, such feelings are usually short-lived. In order for society to expiate the guilt it feels, it must ritualistically distance itself from the qualities represented by the scapegoat. Thus, society draws a distinction between the “social drinker” and the “problem drinker” (Gusfield 1981; Ross 1992). The social drinker is an individual who avoids drinking to an excess. He or she is a law-abiding citizen who drinks for pleasure in social circumstances, but wisely avoids looking foolish by drinking too much. Only occasionally does the social drinker consume too much alcohol; when they do, others recognize such behavior as a “slip,” a momentary lapse of judgment, and not a permanent characteristic. On the other hand, the problem drinker is an individual who is reckless and irresponsible. The social drinker lives within the boundaries of sensible living; the problem drinker engages in morally condemnable behavior. Problem drinking, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, “is usually recognized as such whenever anyone drinks to such an excess that his ability to control his actions and *maintain a socially acceptable life adjustment* is impaired” (National Institute, 1972, 8, emphasis mine). Unable to respect their drinking limits, the problem drinker knowingly consumes too much alcohol, and as a result, endangers the lives of innocent people. “The distinction is fundamental,” writes Ross, because it divides “sheep from goats, the massive numbers of ordinary, conventional, good people who drink socially from a small proportion of bad, blameworthy deviants who drink and drive irresponsibly” (Ross 1992, 168). In the congressional hearings following the Valdez spill, Hazelwood became what Gusfield labels as the “killer drunk,” a morally deficient person “who ignores the boundaries of prudent living and planning and by this action kills innocent victims and even himself” (Gusfield 1981, 173). Despite the fact that no person died as a result of the Exxon oil spill, lawmakers were able to cast Hazelwood in this role. An analysis of the congressional rhetoric about the oil spill reveals several themes or narratives that lawmakers developed to accomplish the principle of division in the scapegoating process.

#### *The Incident Resulted in a “Crash” in Which Innocent Victims Were Killed*

Society is more likely to be tolerant of “quiet” alcoholics who drink by themselves and avoid others, than of the problem drinker who endangers the lives of other people. To a certain extent, blame is absent when there are no victims and no crash. Society tolerates drinking as long as the drunk does not harm anybody. Franklin E. Zimring suggests that “[t]he noncrash

episode of drinking and driving is victimless in two senses: no one complains and no one is injured" (Zimring 1988, 381). But when people can identify suffering victims from an alcohol-related crash, there is substantial societal condemnation. Candy Lightner, a woman whose daughter was killed by a drunk driver, founded the anti-drinking and driving organization, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). Although only a small minority of those people involved in alcohol-related accidents are sober themselves, the Lightner case typifies the stereotype that many people have of the "killer drunk" and his or her victims. "Nothing is more likely to gain public sympathy," writes Kenneth J. Meier, "than an alcohol-related accident where a child is killed by a driver with previous convictions for drunk driving" (Meier 1994, 167).

The *Exxon Valdez* oil spill may not have killed any people, much less any children, in an actual sense. But "children" soon came to be used as a metaphor to describe the wilderness and the animals of Alaska. Lawmakers and other participants at the hearings used the metaphor to describe the pain and suffering that drinking-driving had inflicted on the Alaskan environment.

First, like a child, the Alaskan wilderness was untouched and pristine, unscarred by the daily activities of life. Many lawmakers lamented that the spill had caused permanent damage to the rich Alaskan ecosystem. In a speech on the House floor, Representative Bruce Vento mourned over how oil exploration was "leaving a permanently scarred ecosystem that will never be restored to the pristine natural conditions so essential to the biological diversity and a global population so dependent upon such resources" (*Congressional Record*, April 4, 1989, H912). Like a child that is forever and unalterably scarred by a traumatic experience, the Alaskan wilderness suffered irreparable damage. The spill had blackened the shores of beautiful wilderness islands, rendering them inhospitable to the "children" (both animals and humans) who once "played" there. In a speech before his Senate colleagues a few days after the spill, Ted Stevens of Alaska explained his anguish over the environmental calamity that had just struck his State: "It is like walking into your child's playground and finding a foot of oil on it. Every foot of the playground I have used in the last 35 years is covered with oil" (*Congressional Record*, April 4, 1989, S3220).

The Alaskan wilderness was also like a child in its innocence and its appearance. Children are often not responsible for problems, but they do suffer from the effects of these problems. Like children who cannot control or influence the outcome of the decisions that their parents make for them, the Alaskan wildlife had no direct "voice" in the debate over oil exploration. In addition, some of the Alaskan animals that were visibly damaged by the spill were also, like children, unbearably cute. The Alaskan sea otters, in particular, seemed childishly playful. Science writer Janet Raloff says that the "[s]ea otters rank among the most popular animals in Alaska's Prince William Sound. They mug endearingly for tourists' cameras, swim with the fluid grace of an aquatic prima ballerina, and cavort like impish tricksters" (Raloff 1993, 200), characteristics not uncommon in children. The human-like characteristics of the otters helped to create societal grief over the spill. Jeff Wheelwright explains that the plight of the otters "evoked emotions, unquantifiable



emotions in people, which, ironically, was why the rescue and research efforts were so urgent and extensive" (Wheelwright 1994, 229).

Many lawmakers and witnesses at the hearings humanized the plight of the Alaskan animals. Some lawmakers used war metaphors to describe the damage: Representative Bob Clement called dead animals "casualties" (April 6, 1989, 11), Senator Frank Lautenberg referred to the ongoing devastation as the "body count" (April 19, 1989, 48), and Representative Jim McDermott sadly acknowledged that there would be "no compensation for the birds, the seals, the sea lions, the sea otters, the shrimp, the millions of salmon, herring, and cod, who will lose *their lives* so that we may have oil" (*Congressional Record*, April 11, 1989, H1016, emphasis mine). Workers quickly established sea otter rescue facilities, which came to be known as "MASH units" (Browne 1989). Pete Isleib of the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Association predicted during hearings before the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries committee that there would be "cries in the wilderness" (April 6, 1989, 112). Michelle Hahn O'Leary of Cordova District Fishermen United testified in Senate hearings that there were "few things in this world that will tear your heart out quicker than the pained screams of sea otters as they try to get the oil out of their eyes" (May 10, 1989, 238). In a statement prepared for the same hearing, the president of the Center for Marine Conservation, Roger McManus, wrote that the spill was Alaska's "silent spring," referring to the famous Rachel Carson book of the same name. "Instead of a time for birth and renewed life," said McManus, "this spring is one of aborted fetuses, of death and destruction" (May 10, 1989, 227). Attributing human-like traits to the animal victims of the oil spill helped to characterize Hazelwood as the evil, indifferent murderer of innocents. The significance of the harm caused by the spill was connected to the value of what was lost, and the child-like innocence of the animals made Hazelwood's apparent act of irresponsibility all the more heinous.

#### *The Presence of Alcohol Proves That It Caused the Accident*

Another rhetorical tactic that characterized attempts to label Hazelwood as a problem drinker was the assumption that alcohol was the cause of the accident. Alcohol researchers have labeled this as the "malevolence assumption" because this viewpoint assumes that the appearance of alcohol at a crash scene implicates alcohol as responsible for the crash (Hamilton and Collins 1981). This means, for example, that the appearance of alcohol in Hazelwood's blood proved that drinking was at fault for the oil spill.

Hazelwood became one of the prominent targets of congressional outrage and the victim of the "malevolence assumption" when the National Transportation Safety Board said that a test administered to him ten hours after the accident revealed that he had a blood alcohol level of .061 (Smith 1992). That was higher than allowed by the Coast Guard for operators of ships (.04), but lower than the .10 level applied by most law enforcement officers on land. Although there was no proof that Hazelwood had consumed alcohol before the grounding, or that the alcohol contributed to the accident, many people assumed that it was to blame. Certainly his employer thought so: in an April 30, 1989, press release, Frank Iarossi, the president of Exxon Shipping

and the man Exxon sent to Valdez to co-ordinate cleanup efforts, said: "We are all outraged that an officer in such a critical position would have jeopardized his ship, his crew, and the environment through such actions" (Davidson 1990, 66).

The news of Hazelwood's possible intoxication during the grounding of the *Valdez* was a popular topic among members of the Congressional committees that listened to testimony on the spill. Senator John Breaux said during testimony before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation that "we have a system that is incredibly broke that allows that type of captain to be in command" (April 6, 1989, 39). In hearings before the House subcommittee on Coast Guard and Navigation, Representative Norman D. Shumway said in prepared testimony:

Mr. Chairman, this hearing is certainly timely. Unfortunately, we already know that the cause of the VALDEZ accident was avoidable and the result of gross negligence on the part of the master. In response, I believe this Committee needs to re-examine the regulatory policies for drug and alcohol testing for those responsible for navigating these tankers. (April 6, 1989, 4)

The announcement of the blood alcohol readings had created an assumption among many lawmakers that the cause of the accident was Hazelwood's imbibing behavior.

Hazelwood's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) was significant not only because it first identified alcohol as a possible source of the grounding, but because it lent a degree of scientific certainty to the argument that alcohol was the source of the accident. The BAC refers to the number of grams of pure alcohol present in 100 milliliters of blood. Since alcohol is metabolized in the liver, and the liver can only convert alcohol into fat at a given rate, the remaining alcohol stays in the person's blood prior to metabolism. Investigators can use a variety of methods, including blood testing and urinalysis, to detect the amount of alcohol in a person's blood. A BAC of .10 (indicating that each 100 milliliters of blood contains 100 milligrams of alcohol) is a level that many law enforcement officers use to determine if someone is under the influence of alcohol (Cohen 1992).

Although a high blood alcohol level (BAL) proves there was alcohol in a drinker's blood, it does not prove that he or she was impaired. A variety of factors, including weight and tolerance to alcohol, can influence whether or not a driver can handle the alcohol they have consumed. Yet, according to Gusfield, people have equated the BAL reading with impaired driving: "*What began as conjecture, as generalization, as a matter of practical application has been turned into a consistent and certain judgment.*" The B.A.L. has been taken as the icon, the model, for the event—impaired driving" (Gusfield 1981, 66, emphasis in original). Originally conceived as a practical way to test someone for alcohol, the BAL has become the bright line separating the social drinker from the problem drinker. Since many equate a high BAL with deviant behavior, Hazelwood's high BAL automatically established him as a criminal. After hearing about Hazelwood's measurement, Representative Eliot Engel proclaimed on the House floor:

A blood test of Captain Hazelwood after the disaster found that his alcohol level was over the legal limit. Hazelwood had lost his driver's license due to



Rawl was in a difficult position. He could not disparage the abilities of the third mate without undermining Exxon's credibility, since Exxon contended that the training Cousins received made him a competent pilot. However, Rawl found it difficult to explain how a 25 year-old third mate provided competent backup to a licensed captain. In obvious frustration over the exchange with Hollings, Rawl conceded, "[i]f you want to quiz me on the rules of the road of the Coast Guard, you have got the wrong witness. I will get somebody up here who can spend all day talking about such stuff. You will not find out a whole heck of a lot from me" (65).

The pilotage issue, far from placing the blame on Hazelwood, actually highlighted the problems with Exxon's shipping policies. Exxon officials could not prove in Congressional testimony that Hazelwood's actions were reckless. As Jerry Adler points out, "Hazelwood's orders to Cousins, if properly executed, would have safely turned the ship away from the rocks" (Adler 1989, 55). In addition, Exxon officials could not prove the wisdom of staffing their tankers with only one licensed mariner. The pilotage issue, moreover, probably was not sufficient to prove that Hazelwood was a powerful, evil scapegoat. Handing control of the ship over to the third mate was at worst a technical error; it was not the kind of condemnable moral lapse required to catapult the captain into infamy.

Hazelwood's association with alcohol was the key to proving him a worthy scapegoat. Although Hazelwood was only one man, his drinking-driving was capable of inflicting vast carnage. During Hazelwood's bail hearing in April of 1989, judge Kenneth K. Rohl set the skipper's bail at \$1 million, saying: "This is a level of destruction we've not seen since Hiroshima . . . I'm appalled at the enormity of the damage that has been inflicted. This will send a ripple effect around the world" (Schmitt 1989, B12). In comparing the oil spill to another Alaskan disaster, Senator Ted Stevens argued that "the spill dwarfs the 1964 earthquake. That earthquake was over in four minutes. This will be with us for years. The effects of the spill spread terror and destruction and that continues now" (April 6, 1989, 4). As the captain of a supertanker carrying 60 million gallons of crude oil, Hazelwood was in the unique position of committing the "ultimate DWI." But he also came to represent the tortures inflicted on society by problem drinkers. Unpredictable, irresponsible, immature, and capable of inflicting harm at any moment, problem drinkers achieve immense power in society—they cause people to become afraid of them, to be held hostage by their behavior. Society also sees problem drinkers as evil, uncaring, and even bent toward criminality. Ross contends that the "association of drunk driving with violent crimes like rape and robbery, and of drunk drivers with vicious people like professional criminals, characterizes past and present approaches to drunk driving in America" (Ross 1992, 22). Like the common criminal, the drunk driver exhibits little regard for the rights of others.

Society reacts to the actions of the alcoholic driver more vehemently than other traffic violators. People see other causes of accidents, such as fatigue and weather conditions, as inevitable risks in a complex transportation system. Drinking-driving is what Gusfield calls a "moral lapse, the action of flawed people who fail to observe and obey the boundaries that should distinguish legitimate cultural releases from illegitimate ones" (Gusfield 1981,

169). Thus, during the hearings lawmakers emphasize Hazelwood's alleged alcoholism but de-emphasize other potential causes of the accident: the inexperience of the third mate; the incompetence of the helmsman; the fatigue of the crew; the icy conditions in Prince William Sound; and the lack of effective radar surveillance. Lawmakers de-emphasize these elements because they do not have the same moral force as alcoholism. The other elements are "natural" conditions or "normal" mistakes, not the morally repugnant behavior of a corrupt person. It is doubtful that Hazelwood would have endured as much indignation as he did if it were not for the presence of alcohol. Had Hazelwood been "speeding," a common traffic violation on land, he almost certainly would not have been as powerful a scapegoat, if at all. People would likely have shifted the blame to Exxon for encouraging its tanker pilots to cut costs by shipping oil quickly. Under that scenario, Hazelwood would have simply been taking orders from his superiors. On the other hand, the presence of alcohol makes Hazelwood a powerful scapegoat, because it focuses the attention on the behavior of a morally corrupt individual. Attributing the environmental disaster to alcoholism allowed lawmakers to symbolically locate the source of evil in the person who allegedly consumed the liquor. According to this viewpoint, by indulging in pleasure at the expense of rationality, Hazelwood was personally responsible for the spill.

#### A New Principle of Merger: Castigation of the Villain

Having identified with the scapegoat, but ritualistically alienated themselves from its unwanted qualities, society is now ready to expiate its guilt and unify itself in opposition to the principles represented by the scapegoat. In sacrificing the goat, society attempts to transform the values it represents, returning to a stable hierarchy. In the case of Hazelwood, society condemns the captain's excessive and inappropriate drinking by enacting laws aimed at deterring individual drinking behavior.

Policies aimed at deterring the individual fall into what Ross (1992) describes as the "dominant paradigm" in drinking-driving law. This perspective sees the consequences of drinking and driving as the fault of a small minority of individuals. The common characteristic among these drinkers and the thing that separates them from "normal" drinkers is their immoral and irresponsible behavior. Given that excessive drinking is a personal choice, this paradigm suggests that the appropriate way of controlling the behavior is to deter it with stiff laws. Drinking-drivers who are caught should be made to suffer, so that others will be persuaded to act in a socially acceptable manner. During the hearings on the oil spill, several lawmakers advocated punishing Hazelwood to deter future skippers from drinking while commanding supertankers. Representative Nita Lowey claimed that "[b]ringing Captain Hazelwood to justice will not erase the damage that has been done to the pristine environment of Prince William Sound, but it can and should deter other ship pilots from committing the same infractions" (*Congressional Record*, April 11, 1989, H1021). Information about Hazelwood's drinking past magnified the perceived need for stiffer laws: police in New York State had revoked Hazelwood's drivers license and he was unable to operate a moter



drunk driving convictions and should never have been allowed to pilot the Valdez. (*Congressional Record*, April 12, 1989, H1035)

The BAC measurement established a degree of scientific certainty about Hazelwood's alleged intoxication. Once the NTSB released the figures, discussion of alternative causes of the grounding was stifled.

Hazelwood may have consumed alcohol prior to the grounding, and alcohol may have influenced the outcome of the ship's voyage on that fateful night. However, once the NTSB announced the readings, lawmakers automatically assumed that alcohol had caused the wreck, without investigating the matter much further. There was little or no discussion on issues such as whether the Valdez crew noticed if their captain was impaired, whether the BAL reading proved impairment, or whether the BAL reading was authentic. Instead, many lawmakers rhetorically constructed a narrative of Hazelwood as a boozy, inebriated sailor, swaying his ship about like drinking-drivers who swerve their cars. In fact, Hazelwood was not even piloting the tanker when it ran aground—he had given control of the ship to third mate Gregory Cousins minutes before the grounding. Yet, the image of a drunken captain piloting his ship into the rocks resonated among lawmakers. Representative Byron Dorgan said:

This is a tragic case. It was the ultimate DWI—an Exxon ship piloted by a drunk captain runs into a reef in Alaska, dumps millions of gallons of oil into the water, devastates the environment, kills wildlife, and raises havoc with the fishing and tourist industries and the local economy (*Congressional Record*, September 19, 1989, H5706).

Other lawmakers were even more blunt. Alaskan Senator Ted Stevens said simply: "That tanker went aground because of a drunk driver" (*Congressional Record*, April 4, 1989, S3220). The BAL reading gave these claims perceived scientific certainty.

The BAL reading also opened the door for an investigation into Hazelwood's past, including the revelation that the former skipper had his New York State driver's license revoked, and was unable to drive an automobile when he piloted the Valdez during its last voyage (Behar 1989). After the B.A.L. reading, newspapers began to report on Hazelwood's early drunken exploits. The Anchorage *Daily News* reported that Bruce Amero, a former Exxon employee, had sued the company in 1986 because Hazelwood had been abusive while drinking. "I smelled liquor on him on a number of occasions," Amero said. "I was asleep, and he was jumping up and down on his floor one evening screaming at me to come up and drink with him. There's a bad joke in the fleet that it's Captain Hazelwood and his chief mate, Jack Daniels, that run the ship" (Davidson 1990, 66). James Shiminski, an Exxon chief mate until 1986, claimed that Hazelwood "had a reputation for partying, ashore and on the ship" (Behar 1989, 45). The St. Petersburg *Times* reported that "[w]orkers for other companies in the area are now telling anyone who will listen that they often witnessed open, mass drunkenness among crew members boarding the Exxon Valdez" ("Largest U.S. Oil Spill . . .," 1989, 299). These stories of Hazelwood's unglamorous past only seemed to vindicate the original BAL readings, and helped to reinforce the

idea that Hazelwood was a "killer drunk."<sup>6</sup> One of Hazelwood's lawyers, Thomas Russo, later complained that "[i]ncidents in Joe's life that involve alleged alcohol abuse only poison the atmosphere. They make people assume that alcohol played a role in the grounding, when it didn't" (Behar 1989, 43).

Because alcohol was involved in the *Valdez* accident, lawmakers assumed that it was responsible for the grounding. The blood alcohol readings conducted by the Coast Guard lent scientific credence to this assumption. Stories about Hazelwood's drinking past tainted him as a problem drinker. The identification of Hazelwood as a "killer drunk" reinforced perceptions among lawmakers that the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill was just a story of a drunken sailor.

### *Drinking-Driving "Accidents" Are Preventable*

In addition to the assumption that alcohol was the cause of the accident, there is the related assumption in the rhetoric about Hazelwood that the grounding could have been prevented if the skipper had not been drinking. To argue otherwise is to admit that oil shipping itself is hazardous, which would call into question the wisdom of transporting Alaskan crude. Once an individual's behavior and moral choices are implicated in a crash, the "accident" turns into negligence. Paul LeBel suggests that "[i]n the popular understanding, the term 'accident' may subtly imply that an event was impossible to avoid or that we should not attach a great deal of blame to it" (LeBel 1992, 5). The integrity of oil shipping would be endangered with this interpretation, however, because it would mean that more *Valdez*-like oil spills could occur. Blaming the event on the captain's drinking, though, allows lawmakers to transform the "accident" into an act of criminality worthy of societal condemnation.

In portraying the oil spill as the work of a drunken sailor and thus preventable, some lawmakers emphasized how easy of a task it was to steer a ship through the ten-mile-wide Prince William Sound passageway, as long as the sailor was competent and sober. In fact, it was so easy that even a child could do it. This "child steering the supertanker" narrative originated with Coast Guard Commandant Paul Yost, who said: "This is not a treacherous area . . . your children could drive a tanker through it" (quoted in Lauter 1989, 1). The analogy caught on. Alaskan Senator Ted Stevens said:

It [the oil spill] could have happened anywhere when you consider the effects of drunkenness and operating vehicles . . . The National Transportation Safety Board report will demonstrate, as the Commandant of the Coast Guard has said, that any child could have driven that tanker through that 10-mile wide, clear, well-marked sea lane. The trouble was that people under the influence of alcohol could not (*Congressional Record*, April 4, 1989, S3220).

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<sup>6</sup> Actually, far from being a drunken sailor, Joseph Hazelwood appears to have been one of the Exxon Shipping Company's finest ship masters, to judge from his professional record. After officials assigned him to the *Valdez*, his performance aboard the ship turned out to be exemplary, as established by the ship's safety record. According to Behar, the *Valdez* "was singled out for a prestigious company award for 'safety and performance'" (45).



The implication was that anyone could sail the ship through the passageway, except perhaps a person who had rendered themselves incoherent by consuming alcohol.

The child analogy accomplished several things for lawmakers. First, it allowed them to define the physical conditions during the early morning hours of May 24, 1989, as safe and routine. If a child could navigate through these waters, surely a competent mariner could as well. If lawmakers defined the passageway through Prince William Sound as narrow and hazardous, the *Valdez* spill would call into question the safety and reliability of Alaskan oil shipments. Defining the journey through the Sound as routine and one a child could handle allowed lawmakers to focus on Hazelwood, since it was the skipper's own actions which put the ship in peril. The spill is not the symptom of a misguided energy policy, but an aberration, an accident which is unlikely to reoccur.

Second, the child analogy, like the child metaphor mentioned earlier, denotes innocence. The implication is that, acting on nothing more than common sense and good intentions, a child could have steered the ship to safety. However, someone who does not possess these qualities, i.e., an irresponsible drinker, might not be up for the task. By impairing themselves with alcohol, drinking-drivers make themselves less competent than even a child. Moral character, rather than actual seafaring ability, becomes the guidepost for effective navigation. Again, the analogy calls attention to the agent, Hazelwood, and not to the scene. Hundreds of tankers had passed through the Sound without incident. Why didn't this one? Because the captain drank. The grounding of the *Exxon Valdez* was an accident caused by a weak-willed individual, not a symbol of the dangers of oil transportation in ecologically sensitive areas. The rhetoric of the hearings allowed this interpretation to prevail.

Many commentators have disputed the contention that the shipping lane was easy to navigate in. On the night of the grounding, thousands of chunks of ice had broken from the Columbia Glacier and had drifted into the southbound shipping lane. Hazelwood chose to avoid the ice by maneuvering toward Bligh Reef and then turning sharply south into the northbound shipping lane. Davidson argues:

There would be little room for error. The vessel needed at least six-tenths of a mile to make the turn, and the gap between the ice and Bligh Reef was only nine-tenths of a mile wide. The tanker itself was nearly two-tenths of a mile long. The tanker would have to start its turn well before the gap between the ice and the reef if it was to make it through. (Davidson 1990, 16)

The actual conditions in Prince William Sound on the night of the grounding make it difficult to accept the contention that a child could have maneuvered through the area. Despite the hazardous conditions in Prince William Sound, there was a prevailing theme in the rhetoric of the hearings which emphasized that the spill could have been prevented. The *Exxon Valdez* was not the victim of treacherous and stormy Alaskan waters, but rather a victim of an indifferent, drunken villain.

*Hazelwood is a "Criminal," Making Him a Powerful Scapegoat*

In order to successfully accomplish the principle of division, lawmakers needed to establish that Hazelwood was both evil and powerful. Criminals

make excellent scapegoats because they are offenders against a moral order. In *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke writes: "Criminals either actual or imaginary may thus serve as scapegoats in a society that 'purifies itself' by 'moral indignation' in condemning them, though the ritualistic elements operating here are not usually recognized by the indignant" (Burke 1945, 406). But no ordinary criminal would suffice in the congressional hearings, since lawmakers were dealing with the largest oil spill in North American history. Grief, frustration, anger, and guilt ran high among the American public, and required a powerful scapegoat for its expiation. Burke suggests that "[a]s an essence of motivation, the scapegoat is a concentration of power . . ." (Burke 1945, 407). The power of the scapegoat must be equal to the degree of guilt if society is to achieve redemption. Thus, in order to make him a "worthy" scapegoat, lawmakers would have to prove that Hazelwood was both evil and powerful. They attempted to do this by connecting the skipper with two flaws he allegedly made on the night of the accident: giving control of the ship to the third mate, and drinking alcohol.

Lawmakers first tried to make Hazelwood a powerful scapegoat by stressing that as captain, he had the authority to make the decisions that shaped the course of the voyage. One of Hazelwood's controversial decisions on the night of the grounding was handing over the controls of the supertanker to his third mate, Gregory Cousins. After getting radio permission from the Coast Guard to steer clear of ice in the outbound shipping lane, Hazelwood told Cousins he was going to his cabin to do paperwork and asked the third mate if he felt comfortable with the controls. Cousins replied that he was in control of the situation. Hazelwood left the bridge at 11:53 p.m. on the night of the accident, while the ship was still headed straight toward Bligh Reef. At nearly midnight, the watchperson on board noticed that the navigational light on the Bligh Reef buoy was on the ship's right, when it should have been on the left. Cousins tried to make the turn, but it was too late. At 12:04 a.m. on Good Friday, March 24, 1989, the *Exxon Valdez* came to a crashing halt in the waters of Prince William Sound.<sup>7</sup> Hazelwood had left the bridge for less than 15 minutes.

Lawrence Rawl, the chair of the board of the Exxon Corporation, said in testimony before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation that Hazelwood violated company policy since he left the bridge while the ship was still in transit out of the sound. Rawl told the committee that while Exxon would provide Cousins with legal assistance, Hazelwood would have to find his own attorney since "we knew that when the ship ran aground and he was not on the bridge, we obviously had a conflict between the corporate interest and the individual's interest, and we said you get your own counsel" (April 6, 1989, 50). When Ernest Hollings, the chair of a Senate subcommittee, asked Admiral Paul Yost of the Coast Guard about the regulations regarding pilotage, Yost replied:

Well, the third mate did not have a first-class pilotage license for that particular area. That area, from Hitchinbrook on in, requires a first class pilotage license . . . the master was the only one on board that had that pilotage. The third mate was qualified to operate the vessel, but did not have pilotage for that

<sup>7</sup> Specific times and events are recorded in Art Davidson, *In the Wake of the Exxon Valdez*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990, pp. 17-18.



area. He should not have been on the bridge by himself. That is very clear.  
(April 6, 1989, 73)

Lawmakers and oil executives attempted to establish that Hazelwood's action was reckless and criminal. As the master of the vessel, Hazelwood had the responsibility to guide the ship through dangerous situations.

Much attention was paid in the hearings to the youth and inexperience of the 25-year old Cousins. Again the analogy of a child crept into the rhetoric that lawmakers used during the hearings, but this time the analogy was based on different assumptions. Whereas before the child narrative emphasized the simplicity of steering a ship through a ten-mile-wide channel, now the narrative stressed the child-like characteristics (i.e., youth and inexperience) of Cousins. Surely a child cannot be expected to execute the difficult maneuvers required to steer a 987-foot supertanker through waters teeming with hazardous chunks of floating ice! In the previous child analogy, lawmakers stressed the calm waters and the huge width of the passageway; when lawmakers applied the analogy to Cousins, they defined the waters as rough and dangerous, the passageway as narrow, and the ship too difficult for anyone to navigate save a seasoned master. The blame falls again on Hazelwood, since as captain he served the functional role of parent, and failed to watch over the third mate, his child. In testimony before a Senate committee, Transportation Secretary Samuel Skinner said:

There is no excuse for the fact that a man who was licensed and, if sober, properly qualified to make this trip was not on the bridge. That is human error of major magnitude. He should have been there. It is like having the captain of the airplane sit back sleeping and having a flight attendant, or the flight engineer, up in the left seat. That is against the law. It is prosecutable.  
(April 6, 1989, 38)

Skinner's assessment of Hazelwood's criminality helped to make the *Valdez* skipper a serviceable scapegoat.

The question over pilotage was not significant enough on its own, however, to ensure that Hazelwood would remain a successful scapegoat throughout the course of the congressional hearings. Lawmakers ultimately had a difficult time blaming Hazelwood for recklessness since the Coast Guard's own laws on pilotage standards were murky. The Coast Guard regulations were so confusing that it was not clear that Hazelwood violated the law. According to Davidson: "Beginning in 1986, the Coast Guard issued a series of temporary and conditional directives that made pilotage requirements so complicated that at the time of the accident many people were uncertain as to just what those requirements were" (Davidson 1990, 72).

When officials opened the Alaskan pipeline in 1977, the Coast Guard required rigorous standards all the way down to the entrance of Prince William Sound, past the point where the *Valdez* ran aground. However, the Coast Guard subsequently loosened the rules. In 1986, for example, they issued a directive stating that as long as visibility was at least two miles, pilotage endorsements were not mandatory beyond a certain point in the area. This point was not clearly defined and was always fluctuating, so that Hazelwood's decision may have been consistent with the law at the time (Behar 1989). A state jury in Anchorage, Alaska, on March 22, 1990, acquitted

Hazelwood of the charge of reckless endangerment. The *Birmingham Post-Herald* said that although the prosecution made an issue out of Hazelwood's decision to give control of the ship to the third mate, there was "no legal or company policy that required the captain to be on the bridge while it was traversing Prince William Sound" ("Captain Acquitted . . .," 1990, 356).

The pilotage issue also served as a poor way for lawmakers to scapegoat Hazelwood because it highlighted the inadequacies of the government. The Coast Guard could have monitored the ship by radar through the dangerous passageway since, as Davidson suggests, at the time of the *Valdez* grounding a Coast Guard operations manual for the area "explicitly required the plotting of tanker passage beyond the Narrows. However, the Coast Guard had discontinued plotting vessels as far as Bligh Reef without informing tanker crews" (Davidson 1990, 74). Had the Coast Guard monitored the ship on the night of the grounding, the *Exxon Valdez* might never have struck Bligh Reef. The NTSB stated in its marine accident report of the spill:

Had the watchstander tracked the EXXON VALDEZ, he or the relieving 0000-0800 VTC watchstander would have recognized that the vessel had changed course to 180 degrees and that this course would cause the vessel to head out of the TSS toward shoal water east of Bligh Reef. (National Transportation Safety Board, 1990, 153)

Cutbacks in the Coast Guard budget encouraged tanker captains to monitor ice conditions themselves from the ship's radar. On the night of the oil spill, Cousins may have been so preoccupied with watching the ice on his radar that he forgot to make the critical southbound turn until it was too late.<sup>8</sup>

The pilotage issue, in the long run, did not serve as a serviceable method for Exxon to scapegoat Hazelwood, either. When Exxon officials chastised Hazelwood for handing over the controls of the ship, many lawmakers wondered why the oil giant could only afford to have one licensed master piloting such an expensive cargo through dangerous waters. For example, Senator Ernest Hollings had the following exchange with Exxon chair Lawrence Rawl during testimony before the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation:

Hollings: But, right to the point, if that master had had a heart attack, it was the policy of Exxon that the vessel should just run itself. Because you did not have anybody licensed to take over from him. That is your policy.

Rawl: But we had people that could run the ship. We had people that could take that—

Hollings: Well, let us not equate run the ship with a licensed pilot. I mean we know this fellow (Cousins) could not run the ship, he is the one who ran it into the rocks.

Rawl: Well, as I understand it, and I have a lawyer over here who can tell me again if I am not stating it properly, that you could have two officers on the deck, along with the helmsman in addition, without the captain there, I guess, or without the licensed pilot. (April 6, 1989, 64)

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<sup>8</sup> This theory of why Cousins failed to make the turn is supported by Exxon Shipping President Frank Iarossi, according to an interview with *Newsweek*. See: Jerry Adler. "Alaska After Exxon." *Newsweek* 18 Sep. 1989: 50-62.



vehicle on land when the *Valdez* accident occurred. Reacting to this information, Senator Ernest Hollings said during committee hearings:

It is obvious that our laws are not an adequate deterrent to such disasters, or to the hundreds of accidents daily, which are the direct or indirect result of substance abuse. Why should the citizens of this country continue to be subject to the tyranny of small minds who abuse alcohol and drugs? (April 6, 1989, 3).

This type of rhetoric creates certain assumptions about drinking-drivers and how to deal with them: they are a minority, yet they inflict vast suffering on innocent, law-abiding citizens. Since many of them ignore current traffic laws, outrageously high penalties are the only thing any of them will understand. Although laws currently exist to deter excessive drinking, lawmakers must constantly create stiffer penalties so that drinking-drivers are made to understand the severity of their behavior.

Deterrence focuses on changing individual behavior. It is virtually useless in correcting other causes of accidents. A reliance on this perspective places emphasis on the people who run the machine, rather than the machine itself. Thus, there is little debate in the congressional hearings over the quality of the ship itself—whether there should have been double hulls, or whether the navigational equipment contributed to the accident. The machine is flawless; it only fails when the person using it fails. The advanced navigational equipment aboard the *Valdez* was useless if the captain failed to ensure that someone competent was using it. In a society increasingly reliant on technology, people are loathe to admit that the problem exists with the machine itself. According to Elise Bedsworth Scott: "Technology has been considered a positive force in the evolution of human society" (156). Thus, it is easier to blame the captain for the oil spill, given the high-tech navigational equipment available on supertankers. Exxon chair Rawl mentioned in the House hearings:

This thing had the latest in celestial navigation equipment. I do not understand. You might—I thought someone who knows something about ships would understand it better than I do. I do not understand at all, frankly, why this happened. (April 6, 1989, 78)

The only explanation seemed to be that the captain abdicated his responsibilities. Oil executives and some congressional lawmakers used this reasoning to blame him for the environmental calamity.

Likewise, the dominant paradigm in drinking-driving cases relegates to rhetorical obscurity other potential causes of the accident. Weather conditions, the inexperience of Cousins, a national energy strategy—all subordinated to the issue of alcoholism. Policy solutions aimed at these other elements are difficult, but it is much easier to direct policy at changing the behavior of an individual. As a result of the attention placed on Hazelwood, lawmakers passed legislation which included tough penalties against drunken or drugged ship workers.<sup>9</sup> This legislation helped lawmakers to reconcile the energy and environment hierarchies. The two were not mutually exclu-

<sup>9</sup> The legislative actions taken by Congress after the spill are briefly described in: Mary H. Cooper. "Oil Spills." *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* 17 Jan. 1992: 25-48.

sive because the spill was the result of an aberration, a drunken ship master. Legislation aimed at curbing drinking eliminated what many lawmakers perceived to be the cause of the problem. by placing the blame on hazelwood, participants in the hearings were able to achieve the consubstantiality, division, and re-identification necessary to make the skipper an effective scapegoat.

### Conclusion

The general consensus among writers is that the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill helped to spur environmentalism and led to significant attitudinal and legislative changes. Writing about the surge in environmental awareness among the public after the spill, Thomas Sancton says: "No single incident did more to raise that consciousness than the Exxon Valdez disaster . . . the Valdez spill convinced all but the most skeptical observers that humanity was courting ecological disaster" (Sancton 1989, 60). Yet, although the spill offered congressional lawmakers with an excellent opportunity to discuss broader environmental legislation concerning energy policy, much of the discussion during the hearings focused on Hazelwood's alleged alcoholism. By concentrating on the skipper's drinking habits, participants at the hearings were able to define the spill in terms of an individual's moral failings, rather than as societal addiction to oil. By placing responsibility on an individual, lawmakers avoided political and economic conflicts over oil drilling and energy policy. Whether intentional or not, Congress avoided a much larger debate over environmental and energy policy when it placed the blame on Hazelwood.

Some critics have suggested that scapegoating was an ineffective tactic for Exxon to take, since the company took much of the heat for the failure to clean up the oil in Prince William Sound. Citing Exxon's attempt to make Hazelwood a "fallguy," Lisa Tyler includes the tactic in a list of "Exxon's Damaging Communication Practices": "The company has severely undercut its own statements, however, by its simultaneous willingness to characterize the spill as an unpreventable accident and to displace blame onto Captain Joseph Hazelwood, the state of Alaska, and the Coast Guard" (Tyler 1992, 161). David E. Williams and Glenda Treadaway specifically identify scapegoating as a technique that Exxon used but claim that the "scapegoating strategy was not successful" because of the public backlash against the company (Williams and Treadaway 1992, 62).

These authors are correct in arguing that the scapegoating tactic was an ineffective public relations ploy by Exxon, since the tactic failed to keep the company out of the public spotlight. But it also helped to keep the debate over energy policy, oil transportation, and related issues out of the legislative limelight. The scapegoating of Hazelwood, however damaging to Exxon's image, still kept the congressional debate focused on issues relating to alcoholism and away from oil production issues. Critics who have analyzed media coverage of the oil spill have confirmed this outcome. The inordinate attention that news media placed on Hazelwood helped to stifle discussion about broader issues. Writing about newspaper coverage of the spill, Patrick Daley and Dan O'Neill argue:



These crime narratives turned Hazelwood into a monster whose proportions seemed to dwarf even the huge supertanker he had captained. More important, this individual focus did the ideological work of closing down an interrogation of the systemic power of ideological control. (Daley and O'Neill 1991, 49)

In his analysis of television news coverage of the *Valdez* disaster, Conrad Smith reaches a similar conclusion:

Although there was no tangible evidence that Hazelwood had been drinking when the tanker crashed, rumors to that effect, combined with Hazelwood's history of alcohol problems, made journalist's jobs easier by providing a simple and dramatic explanation for the crash: a drunken sailor ran into a rock. (Smith 1992, 89)

The attention that the media gave to Hazelwood helped to focus public discussion on relatively minor concerns while ignoring systemic problems.

An examination of the congressional rhetoric on the Exxon oil spill reveals the same disturbing trend toward scapegoating in environmental policy-making that others have found in media coverage. By focusing on Hazelwood's alleged drinking problem, congressional lawmakers and oil company officials were able to individualize the incident. The spill was not the fault of larger forces, but an accident caused by the carelessness of a single person. Participants in the hearings focused on a drunken image that they had of Hazelwood—that of an inebriated sea captain at the wheel of a ship zigzagging through Prince William Sound. Information about Hazelwood's history of alcoholism reinforced this image. During congressional testimony, Hazelwood became a rhetorical Devil representing the evils of alcohol abuse. Since excessive drinking was a personal act that Hazelwood had the power to control, he was solely responsible for the consequences of the spill. The legislative focus during the hearings was on punishing the person, not the system.

A year after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, an Alaskan state jury convicted Hazelwood of the charge of negligent discharge of oil, but acquitted him of all other counts, including the misdemeanor charge of operating a vessel while intoxicated and the more serious felony charge of criminal mischief. In 1991, the Coast Guard held its own hearing and also acquitted him of charges that he was impaired while commanding the supertanker. In 1994, a federal jury decided that Exxon was reckless in allowing Hazelwood to operate the ship because the company knew of the skipper's drinking problems (Schneider 1994).

Although Hazelwood was never convicted of operating the *Valdez* while intoxicated, participants in the congressional hearings assumed alcohol was to blame merely because it was associated with the event. Society was able to achieve substantiability with hazelwood due to its own acceptance of alcohol as a social lubricant, but they distanced themselves from the morally corrupt overindulgence and carelessness that the skipper represented. Hazelwood's actions were all the more deviant and reprehensible because the spill resulted in enormous environmental devastation. By focusing on the evil actions of an individual, congressional lawmakers were able to stress the wrongdoings of an agent without implicating the scene. The legislation that

followed placed strict guidelines on a ship master's sobriety but did little to address the behavior of a nation addicted to oil.

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## THE RHETORIC OF ECOTAGE: EARTH FIRST! AND THE LANGUAGE OF VIOLENCE

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"The Pen is Mightier than the Sword—but a monkeywrench can do a whole lot more!"

—Earth First!

During the late 1960's and 1970's, America witnessed a growth in both radical rhetoric and action. With unprecedented levels of participation in both public and governmental arenas, radicalism began to emerge in many disciplines. Borrowing many tactics and approaches from the anti-war movement, "radical environmentalists" began using dramatic, unconventional tactics to publicize environmental problems. Sam Love and David Obst, in their 1971 and 1972 citizen-created "how-to" books entitled (respectively) *Earth Tool Kit*, *A Field Manual for Citizen Activists*, and *Ecotage*, described activities that ranged from vandalism and corporate harassment to boycotts and law-suits (Love, 1971; Love & Obst, 1972). Simply put, "ecotage" is "sabotage done in the name of ecology" (List, 1993, p. 4).

Founded by refugees from the mainstream, Earth First!<sup>1</sup> was the most widely publicized eco-saboteur group of the 80's. Parfit claims it to be "the most active and notorious home grown radical environmental group in the United States" (List, 1993; Parfit, 1990, p. 186). Earth First! is radical in both its actions and its words. Their no-nonsense radicalism is reflected in their speech quite candidly. Susan Zakin writes that it is the willingness and ability to "cut through the sagebrush-scented bullshit of the western power elite that made the group truly radical" (Zakin, 1993, p. 7). By employing satire, paradox, and irony as some of their tools, their texts redefine contexts and empower others into action.

The purpose in this paper is to evaluate Earth First! discourse for its use of the "language of violence." It begins with an explanation of the term "language of violence." It continues with an introduction to Earth First! through a review of their history, philosophy, and an exploration of EF! culture as it appears in the *Earth First! Journal*. Next, aspects of the rhetoric used within Earth First! are examined, focusing on the violent discourse of certain activists within Earth First!, especially the use of a warrior metaphor, vilification, and language of menace. The paper concludes with the discussion of the possibly violent consequences of violent discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter also referred to as EF!

## The Language of Violence

The term "language of violence" has been used at least once before. In his discussion of Irish nationalism, L. Perry Curtis employed the term to describe ambiguous vocabulary used to celebrate violence. Curtis described a continuum of rhetorical devices and strategies, "the extremes of which may be called pacific protest and direct physical assault. The middle ground may be established as rhetorical violence to mobilize support" (Curtis, 1988, p. 156).

Curtis uses this continuum to make the distinction between moral and physical force. He also characterizes the term "language of menace" as being distinct and separate from the "language of defiance." Whereas a language of defiance simply involves "some kind of approval of physical force in the past," the language of menace describes language that "warns of dire consequences" if concessions are not made by the oppressor group (p. 164). Curtis' focus differs from the one taken here in one important respect: Curtis limits himself to how violent acts are discussed rhetorically, whereas this essay defines the language of violence as that rhetoric, through the use of metaphor or otherwise, which instills a psychological acceptance of violence as a possible recourse for future action.

Although Curtis appears to be the only scholar who has previously used this term, others have focused on violent, agitative, and aggressive speech. Within this literature are those who focus on rhetoric within movements (see, for example, Cathcart, 1978; Griffin, 1969; Gustainis, & Hahn 1988, McEdwards, 1968; Scott & Smith, 1969; Short, 1991; Stewart, Smith & Denton, 1994). There is also substantial literature on verbal aggressiveness, which addresses the tendency to attack the self-concepts of other people (Infante & Wigley, 1986; in Infante, Riddle, Horvath & Tumlin, 1992). Studies on attack politics are tangentially related to this discussion, and may also be of interest (Roese & Sande, 1993).

As will be shown below, Earth First! language encompasses many of the traits of a language of violence. First a brief synopsis of Earth First! is provided to acquaint the reader with the movement, which employs the language under evaluation.

## The Earth First! Movement

### *History*

Dating even as far back as the 19th century, environmental advocates in this country have traditionally been grouped into two camps: Preservationists and Conservationists. Preservationists are comprised of those who advocate the value of untouched wilderness, while conservationists are those who approach wilderness as a resource. The history of the environmental movement is rich with examples of conflict between these two ideologies.

The Earth First! movement is merely a recent and highly dramatic mani-

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<sup>2</sup> In the discourse analysis which follows, I borrow this term from Curtis as it does an accurate job of describing the threatening nature of some Earth First! rhetoric.



festation of the preservationist perspective. The movement<sup>3</sup> began in 1980 by disgruntled activists sick of working within the system. Dave Foreman was one of these activists. As a chief lobbyist for the Wilderness Society, Foreman found himself frustrated by the co-optation of the environmental movement by big business and government interests. Finally, in 1979, after eight years with the Wilderness Society, Foreman faced a particularly catastrophic defeat when environmentalists lost to timber, mining, and cattle interests on every point of a major government wilderness proposal. As a result, Foreman quit his job and joined together with four friends for a desert retreat in Mexico. It was here that the idea for Earth First! was born. Using the slogan, "No Compromise in Defense of Earth First!" they vowed to use any means necessary to preserve natural diversity.

By 1984, the Earth First! movement had grown from these five individuals to the point where more than 6,500 readers were receiving the national newsletter (Japenga, 1985). Earth First! gained in notoriety as activists increasingly chose guerrilla warfare over civil disobedience as their tactic of choice. Their use of "monkeywrenching" continued to grow along with their desperation as the amount of wilderness left in the country shrank to 10% (Lange, 1990). In 1985, Dave Foreman published a controversial "how-to" book entitled *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* (Scarce, 1990, p. 74). Tree spiking, the tactic of hammering nails in trees so that they shatter loggers or lumber mill saw blades, was one of the most controversial of the tactics mentioned, as it carried the potential to maim or kill an unwary logger. In addition, it was estimated to be an extremely costly and dangerous practice for logging companies to find and remove these "spikes" from trees once they have been placed (Manes, 1990). An integral part of Earth First! lore also includes burning bulldozers and damaging equipment as well as other actions designed to slow or halt activities deemed harmful to the environment. In 1986, a small local logger's timber sale in Montana was sabotaged. On May 8, 1987 a forest worker was seriously injured when felling a spiked tree (Zakin, 1993).

With the increase in violent action, the movement had begun to lose its charm for some. The media, once fascinated with this little known fringe organization, became scandalized. Headlines such as that of the Chicago Tribune declaring "Terrorists for nature proclaim Earth First!" punctuated the change in the media's outlook (Hargrove, 1993, p. 250).

Things had become more dangerous for protesters as well. One notorious incident occur during the summer of 1990 as the radical environmental movement Earth First! was busy in preparation for a summer campaign to stop destruction of the Redwood forests in Northern California. As the event approached, organizers began receiving a series of death threats. On May 24, 1990, Judi Bari, one of the recipients of these threats, was car bombed (Scarce, 1990, p. 31).

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<sup>3</sup> Many activists within Earth First! abhor being referred to as a "group." This word implies a hierarchical mindset which they clearly reject.

### Philosophy

Despite all the controversy surrounding the violence in its past, Earth First! maintains that it is non-violent. Earth First! justifies this based on at least two assumptions. First is the assumption that we cannot truly act violently against non-living entities. Since Earth First! never acts against any living creatures, their actions are non-violent. Ed Abbey, author of *The Monkey Wrench Gang* defines sabotage as force against non-living things, versus terrorism, which is the use of some form of deadly violence directed against people and other living things (List, 1993, p. 248).

The second assumption is based on the idea of intent. Dave Foreman writes in *Confessions of an Ecowarrior* (1991) that as long as hurting people is not the intent, monkeywrenching is non-violent and necessary. Even tactics that willfully destroy machinery are non-violent under this definition. Direct actions are radical in order to shock the public and save wilderness. In fact, EF! followers would have us believe that it is all in fun. Many EF!ers refer to themselves as participating in a "prankster organization" with a sense of humor (Bari, 1992, p. 11; Scarce, 1990, p. 57).

Paradoxically, these same people declare that Earth First! is also a "non-organization." Earth First!ers point out that there are no by-laws and no rules. Some participating within the movement even go so far as to pride themselves on their lawlessness. Their intent is to create profound changes in the way we think and act toward our planet by any means necessary. Using the tools of "monkeywrenching," Earth First! wreaks havoc by disrupting the cogs in the industrial wheels of society.

The use of potentially violent acts by Earth First has been the focus of some serious scrutiny. Within the movement itself there is a ongoing debate between those who justify only civil disobedience, and those who feel Earth First! not only should, but *must* advocate monkeywrenching along with civil disobedience in order to survive the ecological collapse of the future. Critics and advocates alike argue back and forth about the ethics of deliberate ecotage actions.

This focus on Earth First! actions makes it easy to overlook the fact that it isn't just the monkeywrenching which makes this group so unique. Talk, just as much as direct action, is used for fighting "the powers that be."

There is much need for a more extensive investigation of Earth First! "talk." Despite the notoriety and war of words evoked by Earth First!, little critical analysis has been done on Earth First! rhetoric. Even within the general literature on radical environmentalism, the subject of rhetoric in general is curiously lacking. Killingsworth and Palmer (1992) only speak briefly of the rhetoric of resistance in radical environmentalism.

There are two exceptions to this rule. Lange's (1990) investigation into Earth First! and the concept of no compromise is comprehensive and thought provoking. He briefly touches on the immoderate rhetoric employed by Earth First!, and their use of paradox, satire, contradiction, parody and irony. Short's (1991) analysis of the moral rhetoric of confrontation is another exception. Making use of the literature on the rhetoric of social movements, he discusses Earth First!'s use of both discursive and nondiscursive public communication in his evaluation of the form and structure of the movement.



Although somewhat rhetorical, both of these investigations lie within the context of a more sweeping analysis of the movement itself. More direct evaluation of the discursive rhetoric of Earth First! is certainly necessary. For this, we will look to *Earth First! The Radical Environmental Journal*.

### *The Journal*

*Earth First! The Radical Environmental Journal* has been described as "the primary communication link" for news and culture within the Earth First! movement (Lange, 1990, p. 474). Neither violence nor violent speech dominates discussions in this forum; in fact, the most significant feature of the Earth First! Journal is its diversity. Published eight times a year, the *Journal* addresses issues on local, national, and international levels. This 40-page newspaper includes in-depth feature articles on all major environmental issues, news reports of local direct "actions," essays, book reviews, artwork, and several unedited pages of letters to the editors. There is a separate section for poetry, another for letters specifically on new "ecotage" techniques, and another section for merchandise.

Like the people who participate in Earth First!, those that read the journal are quite varied, and include deep ecologists, ecofeminists, hunters, vegetarians, animal rights advocates, anarchists, cowboys, eco-spiritualists, and individuals of various other radical political persuasions. Coupled with the open editorial policy of the journal (if it gets mailed to the journal, it usually gets published) this diversity can create quite heated discussions between readers. Within the "Letters to the Editor" there will often be several ongoing debates raised during previous issues of the journal. Accordingly, each issue contains a disclaimer absolving the editorial staff of any responsibility for the viewpoints contained within its pages.

My primary "text" is drawn from editorials, articles, and letters appearing in the journal between the years of 1989 to 1994. Although most of the discourse can be found within this context, it will be supplemented by texts from other sources, including outside articles, bibliographies, and transcripts. Occurrence of a theme rather than frequency of occurrence is of primary relevance. In fairness to Earth First!'s editorial policy, and to the movement as a whole, my intent here is not to prove that *all* Earth First! rhetoric is violent, but rather to prove that the language of violence plays a significant role.

Finally, my choice to focus on newsprint to study rhetorical violence is not arbitrary. It has been acknowledged that the use of newsprint to spread radical rhetoric is not a new phenomenon, as "the deliberate, tactical development of papers as tools for revolutionary propaganda began at the dawn of the twentieth century with Lenin's establishment of *Iskra* . . . (Picard, 1991, p. 91).

### Discourse Analysis of Earth First!

#### *The Warrior Metaphor*

Particularly important to Earth First! is the rhetoric produced by Dave Foreman, the primary spokesperson for the group for roughly ten years.

Foreman's rhetoric is compelling for its prominence, its clarity, and for its importance in motivating the EF! movement for so many years. Of all the different voices of Earth First!, Foreman was the closest to what could be considered its leader. He was the public relations artist for Earth First! to a whole generation of college students, "granola" types and rednecks.

Foreman was especially instrumental in establishing the rhetoric for what he called a "warrior society." He encouraged activists as they role played warriors prepared to "defend" Mother Earth. "Earth First! is Warriors!" Dave Foreman bellowed during the 1987 annual rendezvous, "and if you aren't a warrior, then I suggest you find another group" (Foreman, 1987b, p. 13).

There are three major themes prevalent within the warrior metaphor. First is the theme of interconnectedness. In a wild, primitive sense, one is part of the earth wholly and completely. One editorial announces Earth First! as "the keeper of Green Fire, the spark of wildness in us all that connects us to our brothers and sisters in the wilderness, our true home" ("Ozone," 1992, p. 25). Every time a harm is committed against the earth, it is committed against the members of EF! directly. These are not simply stewards, but no less than integral components of the earth. There is no room for "pastime environmentalism" within Earth First!.

In Foreman's words, EF! members needed to unite together as a tribe. He called for a society that would "rise up out of the earth, to be antibodies against the human pox that's ravaging this beautiful planet" (Foreman, 1987b). It is not by accident that Foreman chose those words. The obvious parallels between the human body and the body of the earth promotes deeper thought on how we relate to the earth. The earth is a body, and Earth First! is the disease-fighting extension of that body. Earth First! suffers from the same disease with which Mother Nature is stricken: a disease caused by humans.

The attitude reflects the antagonistic split between mankind and nature in which EF! stands alone against the "human pox that's ravaging this beautiful planet." The fact that EF! warrior humans are disconnected from other non-EF! humans, while at the same time connected to the earth, is an essential dichotomy that must exist within the interconnectedness theme. EF! warriors may be human, but they arise from the earth and are spiritually part of it. This sets them apart from the rest of the human race, the "human pox." The only way that Earth First! (and the earth) can overcome this scourge is if Earth First!ers divorce themselves from the rest of the human race and fight as a *part of the earth*.

Like the crusader, Earth First! is the savior coming to aid "Mother" Earth in her distress. In addition, because the warrior society is to "rise up out of the earth", and identifies itself as part of the planet, EF! is open to the same mistreatment as the earth receives. Thus, Earth First! is both savior and victim. This is the ultimate fight, the fight to save oneself. Foreman said, "When a chain saw rips into a two-thousand year old redwood tree, it's ripping into my guts. When a bulldozer plows through a virgin hillside, it's plowing through my side, and when a bullet knocks down a grizzly bear or a wolf, it's going through my heart" (Zakin, 1993, p. 292).

This personalization brings about a willingness to sacrifice everything. Like Japanese samurais willing to commit hara-kiri, Earth First!ers need to commit



themselves completely and totally to the task of defending the earth, even to the death. This doesn't come from a lack of respect for life. To the contrary, it is precisely because life is so sacred that the Earth First!er contemplates the possibility of losing his or her own life.

The warrior is willing to sacrifice, but he or she is not willing to budge on principles. They are a "very specific warrior society—men and women who are planting their spears in the ground and who are taking a stand" (Foreman, 1987b, p. 8). When you see yourself as a warrior for the totality of life as we know it, i.e. earth, you remain firm. In what would essentially become the Earth First! position paper, Dave Foreman wrote in 1981: "Win or lose. No truce or cease fire. No surrender. No partitioning of the territory" (List, 1993, p. 189). Lange explains that this refusal to compromise is intrinsic to the movement. For Earth First! to compromise would mean sacrificing their values, ideas, and world view (Lange, 1990).

Great strength and commitment are important in order to maintain this "no-sacrifice" attitude. This explains the importance of the second theme present in the warrior society: the warrior as a passionate savage. Foreman's commitment to living passionately was reflected in his rhetorical style. His speeches often shifted quickly from a loud shout to a quiet whisper and back again for effect (Zakin, 1993). He spoke from the heart: "But damn it, I am an animal. A living being of flesh and blood, storm and fury. The oceans of the Earth course through my veins" (Foreman, 1991, p. 4–5).

The experience is essentially an emotional one, emerging "out of an ecological consciousness that comes from the heart—not the head" (Scarce, 1990, p. 31). Mainstream society asks for cool facts. Earth First! rejects this in favor of passion. Earth First! experiences the destruction of habitat and ecology as "rage at what has happened to my home. Our home. As if Mother Earth is crying through me" (Cody, 1994, p. 30).

Being "reasonable" in the face of such emotion would only lead to compromise which would destroy the movement. The idea is to let rage overpower one's senses and let the earth take control:

[Y]ou who have spent years under domestic strain begin to feel a little wild in your teeth. Then your toes, your hair, your kidneys, your knees get a new spring to them, your eyes change hue and before you know it [the earth] has devoured you up and you find yourself overcome by a wild, raging desire, a fury, a howling anger at the inability of those lunatics at the Red River Ranger Station to perceive what a stupid thing it is they are doing to this place. But when you return to base camp, or arrive at the satellite camp, you look around you and you realize you are not alone. Others have that wild look, too. (DogPatch, 1993, p.11)

The paradox of warrior knowledge is that it is only attainable through the rejection of logic. Only when we stop thinking reasonably will we actually attain knowledge. Losing yourself in rage, anger and passion is the only "sane" reaction in the activist's eyes. Ironically, those at the Red River Ranger Station who are completely in control of their faculties, are the ones who are considered the "lunatics."

Not only does passion bring sanity for EF!ers, but also it brings strength. Earth First!ers write that "emotions and adrenaline are the body's tools to protect itself," and that "survival is an emotion" (BRAG-SWEFI, 1989, p. 29).

When Earth First!ers clash with the State and protesters are thrown in jail, they are hungry and exhausted, but "[t]he continuous blasts of energy from our collective anger, adrenaline, and chaos [are] enough to create a rumble [that is] clearly audible [from outside]" (Rousseau, Beneville, & Victor, 1994).

Passion is exchanged through extreme language and the power of the word. Just as the state gets its power from rational logic, the Earth First! movement gets its power from subjective emotions. The more intense the emotion, the more powerful the movement. Tokar writes:

For writers in *Earth First!* ideas are a game and words are for riling people up and getting them angry. The more outrageous the better. Novelist Edward Abbey, whose quintessentially Western brand of anarchist individualism has been a major inspiration for Earth First!, is the reigning master of that kind of writing (Tokar, 1988, p. 134).

Abbey's embrace of a "healthy hatred" is illustrated in his story of the three men and one woman who undertook acts of sabotage in the novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (Abbey, 1975). The characters were single-mindedly acting to protect nature against the evil cogs of the industrial society's machine. In his last interview before his death in 1989, Abbey said,

When someone invades your home, you don't respond objectively and reasonably. You strike back with emotion, with rage. Well, government and corporations are invading the wilderness, our native natural home. There's no time to be dispassionate about that. (Manes, quoted in Killingsworth & Palmer, 1992, p. 218)

Here are the first two elements of the warrior metaphor. He refers to the interconnectedness we feel with our "natural home," and he further provides a passionate and personal appeal typical of Earth First! rhetoric. This quote also embraces the third and final central element of the warrior metaphor, the theme of war. It is a "fight", or a "battle" against mainstream ideology in general and the United States Forest Service in particular. And, what's more, they are the aggressors. The USFS has been engaging in warfare against nature for many years, beginning with the act of fire fighting. As one Earth First!er expresses it:

The war metaphor aptly describes the [Forest Service] agency's ideology and methodology of fighting fires. Agency managers command a vast army of firefighters, an armada of vehicles (e.g. "tankers" and "bombers") and arsenals of tools and equipment using trench-warfare tactics to "fight" fires and to "keep forests green." Yet the policy to suppress the forest's wild fire is a search-and-destroy mission to extinguish the natural *greenfire* that restores and regenerates all native forests. Fighting fire, the Forest Service is literally at war with Nature. (Ingalsbee, 1994, p. 21)

Issues such as accountability to the public, due process, and standard procedures are trivial when framed in the context of war. Regarding the public's concern over tree spiking, one Earth First!er writes, "This is not a popularity game, this is a battle. If we start worrying about offending people by our actions, we are compromising" (Cowbirdy, 1992, p. 29). Indeed, war is the ultimate uncompromisable position.

As with any war, there are also prisoners of war. These are those Earth First!ers who have been placed in prison. Since 1991, the *Earth First! Journal* has regularly reported on the status of those who have fallen in battle by



publishing their letters and offering their addresses for others to write to them in support. There is a certain sense of obligation that the tribe on the "outside" must be sure to take care of those on the "inside." In one open letter to the movement, "Janosik" implores others to remember those "wounded in the line of duty" (Janosik, 1993, p. 32). Another letter comes from a prisoner complaining about his lack of contact with the outside, complaining that others have forgotten their "fallen comrade" all too easily: "I once stood shoulder to shoulder in the war against the genocide that is being perpetrated against our planet. [H]ow can people of ecological substance fight for life here on earth and ignore a fellow soldier in prison?" (Lassell, 1994, p. 31).

The war metaphor appears when demonstrations are likened to battles and the forests likened to battlefields in *Earth First! Journal* news articles. Because Earth First! is also tribal, their warfare is far from traditional; they engage in "war dances" with "Neanderthals" and "wild creatures," and describe chanting rituals taking place between EFlers during demonstrations.

Earth First!ers are quite willing to compare themselves to past and present military struggles. "The military (though non-violent) style of this whole action made it seem as though it were planned out by Zapatista Subcomandante Marcos" (Hellbender, 1994, p.1). In this respect, the "Dear Ned Ludd" section in the journal on monkeywrenching tips is akin to an army teaching guerrilla tactics. It won the war in Vietnam, so it should be good enough for Earth First!, one anonymous editorialist reasons (*Earth First Journal*, May, 1989).

Effectiveness is key, regardless of the means. Earth First! justifies this because of the urgency and morality of their goal. The war is a righteous one, a moral battle equal in proportion to the Holocaust and the fight against Hitler. Indeed, EFlers are not shy about making this comparison. They call forest employees "timber nazis" and call clear-cuts "slaughter." An article in the June 21, 1994 issue of the *journal* reads:

Now June 6, 1994, the 50th anniversary of D-Day, will also be remembered as D-Day for the forests, the day the final assault on our tattered remnant of an ancient forest system was sanctioned by the very groups who should have stood shoulder to shoulder in uncompromising defense (Time, 1994 p. 7).

Waters takes the metaphor to its full conclusion. He coins the term "ecoholocaust" explaining the use of the word to imply that "the destruction of the biosphere resembles the Holocaust that was perpetrated on the Jews and other non-Aryans during World War II" (Waters, 1994, p.14).

### Vilification

As in any war, there must be an enemy. This brings us to the next weapon in the Earth First! language of war arsenal: vilification. At least four forms and functions of the rhetorical strategies of vilification have been identified as they apply to environmental conflict (Lange 1993). These are: formulating specific adversarial opponents, casting them in an exclusively negative light, attributing diabolical motives to them, and magnifying their power.

We have already explored the creation of the adversarial opponents: the earth and EFlers against the human aggressors. Attacks against the planet are

labeled attacks against "Mother" Earth. The forest service (or whoever the enemy happens to be) answer to charges of "land rape" and "mother rape" that call up the image of the powerful male desecrating the passive female. Defenseless, the female continues to be "pillaged" unless someone steps in. Earth First! gladly takes up this call. To Cherney, a well known organizer involved in Northwest Earth First! actions: "[EF!] is not the aggressor, we are in the role of defenders to the environment. We are being attacked and we are engaging in as non-violent a manner of self-defense as we can possibly manage (Scarce, 1990, p. 12).

Cherney reveals much in this statement. By pluralizing the experience to a group "we," it is no longer just nature that is being attacked, but humans as well. As with the warrior metaphor, defending the environment becomes "self-defense." Actions which may have been questionable before suddenly become more reasonable when it is a matter of self-defense. Victimization plays a powerful part in justifying ecotage.

Being able to identify those responsible for victimizing empowers Earth First!ers into action. "The earth isn't dying: it's being killed, and the people who are killing it have names and addresses," the *Earth First! Journal* proclaims (*Earth First! Journal*, Sep. 22, 1992, p. 25). Without a culprit, the destruction is passive, but as we see here, when you can name an enemy, you can act against them. You can then vilify them, including diabolize them, and motivate others to act more easily.

For many in EF! there is an underlying satisfaction experienced in arousing the aggressors. As Cathcart described, it is characteristic of all confrontational rhetoric, which "shouts 'STOP!' at the system, saying, 'You cannot go on assuming you are the true and correct order; you must see yourself as the evil thing you are'" (Cathcart, 1973, p. 243). Perhaps it is retribution for the anger and violence these aggressors have caused against Earth First! In any case, it seems there is great mirth in making those opposed to them frustrated and angry. Events are described as "fun and games," even when ranchers and loggers have been so mad that they have threatened violence against Earth First! Those "loggers are livid" they exclaim (Freedman, 1989). Frustrated tuna men yelling "eat more tuna!" during a dolphin-free tuna demonstration are said to have "sure looked funny from aboard the banner-draped *Dolphin*" ("Activists," 1989, p. 1).

Ridicule and belittlement are also common strategies for portraying the enemy in a negative light. Forest Service employees are commonly referred to as fascist "Freddies," and their offices are "Fredquarters." Shell is written "(S)Hell," Corporate CEO's are described as "corpse-like" and called "the slugs and thugs of industry," and ORVers are "vermin" that we should "eradicate." They are all "corrupt" and "hideous" and "particularly sleazy" bastards with "greed glands." A campaigning politician is described as "a puke" who isn't much better than the puke that previously got elected to office. "Deputy Dipshit" runs the law and one gets the impression that these are definitely not the kind of people you would want to leave watching your two-year-old daughter or other precious creatures.

"Diabolization" is obvious in statements by Earth First!ers like Nancy Morton: "Monkeywrenching is in many ways using the tools of the Devil against the Devil" (Manes, 1987). Editorials to the journal join with the banner raisers



at protest sites in proclaiming "DEVELOPERS: GO CLEAR-CUT IN HELL!" Both of these examples display a clear religious heaven/hell dichotomy. The struggle is very simply outlined as a struggle between good and evil. "They" are against "us" and we are the good guys, is what Earth First! seems to be saying.

Another aspect of vilification is magnifying the enemy's power. Nature is "pillaged", "raped", "destroyed", and "slaughtered" by the aggressors, usually corporations and government. These are "land exploiters" who are given "a license to kill." Earth First! editorials proclaim that "for 50 years, these 'stewards' have raped, scraped, sawed, and mauled some of the most biologically rich lands of North America" (Dugelby, 1991, p. 26). The attacks against the earth are described in human terms: landscapes of pit mines are "scabs" on the earth and "lesions of some unspeakable disease" (Czolgosz, 1989, p. 1). In a fascinating turnaround, the Earth is portrayed as the defenseless human, while the human enemies become all powerful aggressors.

### *Revolutionary Rhetoric*

When one is fighting a war against the establishment, one is advocating revolution. Thus we find revolutionary rhetoric in much of Earth First! speak. And what better revolution to allude to than the quintessential democratic revolution, the American revolution. One of Dave Foreman's favorite analogies was to compare Earth First! to the revolutionaries who participated in the Boston Tea Party, describing that act as "the classic act of monkey-wrenching" (Manes, 1987). Foreman's rhetoric was often reminiscent of the revolutionary war, and filled with a deep patriotism. Foreman's favorite themes included visions of freedom, tyranny, and revolution. "I want to take the flag back to show Americans that the people who want to preserve nature are the real patriots," says Foreman (Carpenter, 1990, p. 50). In this case, patriotic toward their country, yes, but also their earth.

There are many who share Foreman's view of revolution. Many others have borrowed his analogies and have drawn parallels with other wars since then. Some have compared the monkey wrencher's battle with the fight against slavery. In most cases, the battles with which Earth First! compares itself are universally accepted cases of good vs. evil.

But while the above examples may be universally accepted, not all people in Earth First! share Foreman's patriotism toward their country. As was true for the anti-war movement during the 1960's and 1970's, there are those in EF! who completely disapprove of the United States: "The red, white, and blue represents bloody greed, the earth don't need it," one EF! letter to the editor proclaims ("Activists," 1989, p. 3).

Rossiter's characterization of "revolutionary" political argument aptly describes the revolutionary approach taken by Earth First. Stewart et al. (1994) describe it in the following way: "Revolutionary argument urges total overthrow of the existing order but disagrees as to the form and/or nature of the new regime they agree that the existing order is intolerable, corrupt, and burdensome" (Stewart et al., 1994, p. 237).

Reasons given by Earth First! for a revolution include those based on the false values of this system, its corrupt power, its elitism, and its inability to

change. Revolution is necessary because the "status quo is no recourse" (Cowbirdy, 1992, p. 15).

Revolutionary minded Earth First!ers adopt rhetoric from revolutionaries of various dogmas, such as socialism, bioregionalism or anarchism. Regardless of their preferred system, they seem to agree on at least one crucial point: that it is up to Earth First! to start the new environmental system. "There are many arms in this building rebellion against corporate fascism throughout the world. Earth First! is the environmental arm . . ." (p. 15).

There is a sense of urgency, a degree of apocalyptic adrenaline. Earth First! knows that the time is ripe and that something needs to happen now or never. "We are living in an era of overpowering horror," Foreman has said, "We don't have time for normal lives we don't have time for business as usual" (Manes, 1987b). This sense of urgency embeds itself in Earth First! calls for revolution. First, action is urgent because Earth First! fights an ever-powerful and growing system. "The eco-warrior does not fight people, he fights the institution, the planetary Empire of Growth and Greed" (Lewis, 1990, p. 6). This Empire of Growth and Greed becomes more insinuating every day. It's not about to melt slowly and gradually away, as some people might think.

Earth First! sees the government as bent on suppressing their movement. To this end, the state won't hesitate to use violence if necessary. Lewis, a contributor to the *Journal*, describes the process:

We will increasingly be singled out by the hired thugs of the ruling minority for harassment, intimidation, infiltration, and arrest. The US always responds to threatening popular movements with repression, as evidenced by the anti-labor violence of the thirties, McCarthyism of the fifties, National Guard murders in the seventies and now a return to violent tactics in the nineties. (Lewis, 1990, p. 6)

Earth First! takes these threats seriously, as is shown by the devotion of a full one hundred pages of *Ecodefense* to security measures, and by the following sentence within the introductory paragraph to the same chapter: "As monkeywrenching becomes a more serious threat to the greedheads ravaging the Earth for a few greasy bucks, they will force law enforcement agencies to crack down on Earth defenders" (Foreman, 1993, p. 233).

Indeed, Those in power have the capability to monitor you carefully. Being "the victim of surveillance, infiltrators, and attacks" is something which an eco-defender must come to expect" (Southwind, 1989, p. 14). The state naturally "victimizes those fighting to destroy the megamachine" (Fifth estate staff, 1989, p. 3). Those in the elite will "vie for power and control of every aspect of our lives" (Whistle, 1994, p. 31). This power elite is "determined to destroy all environmental controls" (Hermit, F.M., 1989, p. 25).

For all of these reasons, Earth First! psychologically needs to be prepared for armed resistance, if necessary. Faced with the oppressive alternatives, it is the unavoidable next step. In a letter to the editor, an Earth First faction called "Repotopia" works hard at convincing some non-violent Earth First!ers into accepting this option:

Let's face it, armed resistance is nothing new to liberation movements at home or worldwide. From Nicaragua to the Black Panthers to the Eco-Terrorist Pie Brigade, those who have decided to take up arms should be re-



spected and honored for that decision. While that doesn't mean we should all be stockpiling arsenals, it might make us think twice before denouncing comrades who chose different or more extreme tactics. ("Repotopia EFL," 1992, p. 25)

### *The Language of Menace*

Harris points out that there is a long tradition in the environmental movement of pointing to an all consuming Armageddon should we fail to change the social political process (Harris, 1971, p. 361). Earth First! falls neatly into this pattern. Earth First! holds a menacing and pessimistic attitude toward the future, warning of what the planet might be like if we don't act soon. Dave Foreman advocated saving wilderness areas "so that there is something to come back to after human beings, through whatever means, destroy their civilization" (Tokar, 1988, p. 138). Rick Bailey, another Earth First! advocate heavily involved in the movement in the 1980's, summed up the Earth First! attitude when he said "I pretty much feel the biological and ecological foundation of the earth is under siege right now" (Manes, 1987).

Killingsworth and Palmer noticed that this apocalyptic attitude gave Earth First! rhetoric a dark, violent side. They commented in their book *Ecospeak* that Foreman's rhetoric could "become inflammatory as when in response to a call for moderation and reason in a discussion of wilderness protection he responded with this analogy:

You walk into your house, there's a gang of Hell's Angels raping your wife, your sister, you old mother. You don't sit down and talk balance with them, you go out and get your twelve-gauge shotgun and come back in and blow them to hell." (Killingsworth & Palmer, 1992, p. 217)

Although he and other Earth Firsters couched their language with disclaimers regarding their condemnation of violence, compelling metaphors such as these are clear examples of a use of menacing language.<sup>4</sup> This menacing language often describes future consequences in terms of violent acts. "We're sticking a wrench in the system, we're slowing it down, we're thwarting it, we're kicking it in the face," Foreman bellowed at a rendezvous speech (Foreman, 1987b). Ironically, it is a former *anti-war* demonstrator, Mike Rosell, who offered one of the more obvious examples of a language of menace: "People don't adopt industrial lifestyles. They have it shoved down their throat. And the only way to get rid of it is to cough it up, and that's going to be a violent reaction" (Manes, 1987).

The language of menace hints that acts of violence are always just around the next corner. It warns the system to change its evil ways or else face the consequences. Earth First! language flirts with future scenarios to get this point across, as is the case in the following passage:

Maybe it's time to change the playing field. Time to take the battle for the forests to the homes, cars, and offices of the old white men destroying our

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<sup>4</sup> Foreman and others still have a hard time admitting that there is violence involved. He insists to this day that monkeywrenching is nonviolent. "Maybe the terminology is a little frightening," he will admit, but he still doesn't feel that it "has a violent connotation. It means to me, that I am dedicated." (Manes, 1987)

only planet. Maybe it's time for direct action to cut the demand for dead trees by reducing the number of mills left to turn forest into truckloads of chips and stinking, poisoned pulp. Picket signs and protest marches alone won't sway the industrial elite. A few million dollars' profits lost might help them see the situation differently (Greacen, 1993, p. 6).

The irreverent rhetoric of monkeywrenching adopts a less prankster quality with the language of menace, such as when Earth First!ers shift to more obviously threatening statements such as this message to Fletcher Challenge, a powerful multinational corporation investing in timber clearcuts British Colombia:

we wish you nothing but suffering and losses for every year to come until you crumble! We are the thorn in your side, as are you to the Earth. We will see you in the woods again and, again we will not go away—and you know this is true. We hope your Yule is filled with nothing (at all). Keep those security guards filled up with coffee, they may soon need eyes in the backs of their heads! (Stewart, 1993, p. 27)

A partial commitment to non-violence harbors insinuations of menace. Yes, demonstrators are peaceful, for now. But this is contingent on the good behavior of the forest service and the government. These are threat tactics, and they are certainly powerful. To Howie Wolke, they are also the only realistic possibility, as he said in an editorial on violence in the *Earth First Journal*:

A philosophical commitment to total nonviolence, under all circumstances, would be both unrealistic and unnatural. The most basic human animal instinct is to fight back when under attack or when members of your tribe are under attack. (List, 1993, p. 247)

Scarce remarked, "Earth First! founders perceived non-violence as a tactic" (Scarce, 1990, p. 72). In fact, for some factions in Earth First!, non-violence has become more than just a tactic; it's their philosophy. These people reject all other tactics even when they are posed as only viable alternative, much to the dissatisfaction of Foreman, who found himself fighting against what he called "woo-woo" factions within Earth First! His cowboy buddies were sometimes found to mutter under their breath about Civil Disobedience "junkies" (Zakin, 1993). This faction is anxious for ecotage:

I'm sure it has occurred to all of us that "No Compromise" would include in its parameters the use of violent and lethal force in defending the Earth. I am not advocating this, only revealing an unspoken truth. Perhaps our slogan should be "Some Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth." (Cowbirdy, 1992, p. 29)

Earth First! rhetoric has the ability to taken on an even more sinister tone when it warns of retribution. This raises the stakes tremendously. It says to those opposed to Earth First: "You didn't listen to us. We warned you. Now just wait and see . . ." Some Earth First!ers have taken this message to such an extreme that they even raise eyebrows among the editorial staff at the *Journal*, as is the case with the following letter to the editor, which even warranted a disclaimer from the editor:

So let justice be done! Try to stop the killing, but when you fail, take revenge! Avenge Glen Canyon! Avenge Prince William Sound! Avenge the coral reefs



and the old-growth and the wetlands and the rainforests! Love your mother — but also avenge her! Remember, you're evening the score. (Bear, 1990)

### Discussion

There are those who argue that Earth First! is effective, and therefore shouldn't change. Its strategy attracts the public's attention (Stewart, Smith & Denton, 1994). Furthermore, an extremist image is important for the group's self-identity & mission. Without that image, it is doubtful that Earth First! would have the drive and dedication that it does. It certainly wouldn't appear as frequently in the nation's popular press (Short, 1991). Others cite the need EF! fills for an extremist movement to give perspective to the environmental movement as a whole (Short, 1991; Lange, 1993). This is able to give the more moderate groups needed leverage at the bargaining table: "Ugly, symbolic and sometimes violent confrontations make moderate social movements elements and critics within the system more respectable" (Stewart, Smith & Denton, 1994, p. 191). Windt writes that "Just as Stokely Carmichael legitimized the moderate, nonviolent posture of Martin Luther King, Jr., so too, the violent acts of the Weatherpeople and the absurd acts of the Yippies contributed to acceptance of traditional critics of the war and enhanced the ethos of those critics who held positions of power" (Windt, 1972, p. 13).

Earth First! metaphors hope to create an enemy and a polarization of issues toward violent resolution. Incidents suggest that these metaphors have worked: Even law enforcement agencies describe the conflict between Earth First! on one side and timber companies and the government agencies on the other as a "range war." This was a war in the true sense of the word: "I tell you, someone's going to die. That's what I fear most," one timber company vice president has said (Manes, 1990, p. 15).

However, by engaging in violent metaphors, Earth First! runs the risk of a backlash of violence occurring. Hart quotes Hatzenbuehler and Ivie on the implications of the diabolization of an enemy: "It can create an enemy *out of nothing*. Such a strategy transforms yesterday's random events into today's incendiary words and, all too often, into tomorrow's protracted battles" (Hart, 1990, p. 14). Indeed, concern has have even been raised from within the movement itself. "Activists engaging in tense, non-violent confrontation could be endangered. Articles in the Journal can be and have been used by provocateurs to inflame violence toward protesters and protest organizers" (Wood, 1994, p. 29).

The threat of violence insinuates a consideration of violent action. Winning a major battle is only possible if you accept the war metaphor. One must first go to war to fight a battle. One can only fight if one has an enemy. "If you do not accept the existence of an external enemy, then the issue of objective truth or falsity cannot arise" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 158). Identifying an enemy and going to war, even with words alone, will probably probably provoke retaliation from those targeted. The "enemy" will probably strike back, if only in self-defense.

Indeed, I would argue that tomorrow's battles have already begun in the form of violence *against* Earth First! protesters by irate forestry employees and sympathizers. The Center for Investigative Reporting has logged over 200 reports of attacks and harassment against environmental activists; Earth

First! incidents account for almost half of these. Examples of such violence are plentiful. In Ohio and Florida, activists have been beaten and stabbed. Elsewhere they have been punched and run over. Two activists in Maine had their house burned down (Cherney, 1993, p. 7). In July of 1988, when so-called "pot commandos" arrested tree sitters, they carried with them high-powered rifles. The sheriff on the scene was quoted as saying that if the protesters had made any hostile moves the arresting officers "would have shot their asses out of the trees." In a separate incident, timber company personnel fired guns at radical protesters at least twice (Manes, 1990, p. 15). Protesters have suffered leg injuries, neck injuries, been hit in the face, punched, bruised, and dragged. They have received death threats and had their cars vandalized. Loggers have harassed and threatened to rape protesters (Bari, 1992, p. 69).

Most recently, residents of Dixie Idaho have experienced an influx of Earth First!ers determined to save forest lands. As recorded during the summer of 1993, one resident reacted in the following way: "This summer, yes, you will see some signs. I have posted one at my place that I'm sure the Earth First!ers don't like. It's a picture of a long-haired fella' with a bullet hole through his forehead" (National Public Radio Transcript, July 25, 1993).

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## ENVIRONMENTAL NAFTA? ENVIRONMENTAL RHETORIC AND THE NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

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Free trade, economic growth and environmental protection are three concepts that have often been at odds in policy making discussions. Initially, environmentalists argue that economic growth created by free trade is inconsistent with the protection of the environment. Environmentalists cite the pollution problems facing major urban centers as tacit proof of their claim that growth destroys the environment. They further argue that, absent government regulations, the environment would be completely destroyed as businesses seek growth at all costs.

On the other side, free traders argue that economic growth benefits humans and outweighs any residual harm to the environment. Additionally, free traders argue that economic growth creates a climate for innovation that produces technology which solves pollution problems. They cite damage done to the environment in the lesser developed countries as tacit proof of their claim.

President Clinton attempted to transcend these competing interests and sell the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and its side accords as an environmentally friendly free trade accord that would both save the environment and produce economic growth within the United States. This article will examine the Clinton Administration's selling of the environmental side agreements of NAFTA.

### NAFTA As Campaign Issue

NAFTA was controversial from the moment the decision to pursue a free trade agreement was leaked to the *Wall Street Journal* on March 27, 1990 (Kondracke, 37). NAFTA was challenged from the beginning by a "coalition of U. S. interest groups—led by organized labor and including environmentalists and some industry groups—which fear that free trade will severely damage their constituents" (39). The opposition to NAFTA centered around two major points: job loss, and environmental protection. Paul Krugman notes that, "[a]side from job fears, the most effective argument against NAFTA has been the claim that the agreement will hurt the environment" (16). Kondracke reported that the "central battle over fast track was about jobs" and that the "second major point of contention over fast track involved the environmental effects of NAFTA" (40, 41). The *Congressional Digest* sum-

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The author wishes to thank John Bart and the anonymous reviewer for their comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript.

SPEAKER AND GAVEL, Vol. 31, Nos. 1-4 (1994), 68-77.

marized the opposition's arguments noting: "One of the greatest concerns of opponents is that lower wages in Mexico, as well as less stringent environmental regulations, labor standards and occupational safety and health laws, may lead U.S. firms to relocate production there" ("U.S.-Mexico," 34). Labor and Environmentalists were united in their opposition to NAFTA based on their interests in American jobs and the environment.

Answering these challenges, were the proponents of free trade. This group focused on the economic advantages to be gained by free trade with Mexico. Rudiger Dornbusch articulated one example of the economic interest the U.S. has in Mexico's prosperity noting: "Mexico spends 15 cents out of every extra dollar of income on U.S. goods" (52). Additionally, Dornbusch notes, "[t]here is already proof of these advantages" as Mexico has unilaterally increased the openness of its markets to the U.S. which have led to an increase in exports totalling \$10 billion (52). Senator Max Baucus summarized the focus of the economic arguments in favor of NAFTA:

Several economic analyses of the proposed agreement indicate that the United States will gain tens of thousands of new jobs from free trade with Mexico. And, further, a successful agreement would grant U.S. business unfettered access to a \$6 trillion market of 360 million consumers—the largest in the world. This would provide a tremendous economy of scale advantage to United States businesses vis-a-vis their Japanese and European competitors. (50)

Proponents of NAFTA, then, attempt to keep the public focused on the seemingly overwhelming economic benefits for the United States once there is free trade with Mexico.

During his presidential campaign, Bill Clinton united the interests of economic growth with environmental protection. Clinton introduced the union by offering conditional support for NAFTA provided there were side agreements to protect the environment and prevent jobs from flowing to Mexico. President Clinton fulfilled his campaign promise by negotiating environmental side agreements with Mexico and Canada aimed at preserving the benefits of economic growth while preventing an escalation of pollution and environmental destruction. Clinton's action marked a new initiative in the international arena to engage in environmental policy making.

The Clinton administration's sales pitch to Congressional leaders included an emphasis on the environmental agreements as the mechanism for plugging the holes which existed in NAFTA. In this way he attempted to preserve the support for NAFTA based on the economic benefits while increasing the support of the environmentalists who saw NAFTA as a threat to environmental interests. Clinton devoted significant resources to negotiations over the environment after the original NAFTA had been agreed to by the relevant countries as the introduction of new agreements risked the breakdown of the entire treaty. Given the risks, the Clinton administration's action on making NAFTA environmental suggested a commitment to the environment.

#### Framework for Analysis

The testimony and remarks of four individuals—U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor, Director of the EPA Carol Browner, and Undersecretary of



State for Global Affairs Tim Wirth, and Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen—are treated as representative of the Clinton administration's rhetoric on the environmental aspects of NAFTA. They spoke to the Congress as the Administration's chief negotiators. Their testimony, offered during congressional hearings held in 1993, featured the administration's primary justifications for the environmental accords and their impact on NAFTA. With indepth testimony and prepared statements, these hearings offer a better perspective as to the position of the administration than one can get from sound bites which appear in the media.

There are two competing claims which are made in the Clinton administration's rhetoric on the environmental accords of NAFTA. The first claim is that the environmental accords increase United States' ability to enforce tough environmental standards and the second claim is that the accords increase the spirit of cooperation between Mexico, Canada, and the United States. A closer examination of the imagery and arguments used to support these claims reveals a worldview which favors compliance over cooperation. Kenneth Burke's concepts of terministic screens and motives provide a framework for discussing the underlying message presented by the Clinton administration's rhetoric on the environmental aspects of NAFTA.

Burke notes that the terminology one employs is not only a reflection of reality but, "by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality" (Language, 45). One's occupation or culture will lead to terminology which focuses attention on one area over others, which Burke labels deflection. Deflection, for Burke, "concerns simply the fact that any nomenclature necessarily directs the attention into some channels rather than others" (45). While Burke is referring specifically to the language one employs, the screen which is developed creates a worldview and controls the language available for viewing reality. A policy maker would operate from a screen featuring an emphasis on the greater good for the public at large. In the international arena, the screen might focus on the benefits versus the costs of an action for the United States. The specifics of the worldview would change from policy maker to policy maker but the overall framework for discussion would remain the same.

Burke's concept of terministic screens can be viewed within the concept of motives. "[S]ince we characterize a situation with reference to our general scheme of meanings," explains Burke, "it is clear how motives, as shorthand words for situations, are assigned with reference to our orientation in general" (Permanence, 31). The way in which we view the world (our screen) will guide the way in which we explain our actions. Motives are "distinctly linguistic products" which allow us to "select certain relationships as meaningful" (35). In order to determine what the relationships are, Burke suggests an examination of clusters within a rhetorical act. Burke defines clusters as the "[s]ignificance gained by noting what subjects cluster about other subjects (what images b, c, d the poet introduces whenever he talks with engrossment of subject a)" (Attitudes, 232). In this way, one can reveal underlying messages which may not be fully presented if one looks simply at the key terms employed in a work. For example, if a rhetor speaks of cooperation and employs imagery of competition and self interest, the rhetor's "true subject" is competition.

Images create impressions which, if charted through a body of work, reveal the underlying set of motives or reasons for action. These motives, in turn, reveal the worldview from which a particular rhetor is operating. This study examines the clusters of images within the Clinton administration's advocacy of the environmental accords of NAFTA. These images resolve the apparent contradiction in the administration's advocacy of both cooperation and forced compliance with U.S. environmental policy. Clinton's rhetoric of environmental cooperation deflects attention from the underlying motive to protect the economic interests of the United States.

### Cooperation, Compliance, and NAFTA

Within the Administration's rhetoric on the environmental accords in NAFTA there are two sets of imagery which comprise the major arguments of the Administration. The first set of imagery relates to environmental compliance. The second set of imagery relates to environmental cooperation.

#### *Environmental Compliance*

Prior to the actual negotiations of the environmental side agreements, administration officials participated in hearing with congressional leaders to detail the goals of the negotiations. In March of 1993, Mickey Kantor detailed the need for stricter regulations because the administration found "a persistent serious pattern of violations and a country [that] has not responded" ("NAFTA and"). The agreements reached, Kantor urged "must result in decisions that have real teeth and meaningful results" ("NAFTA and"). In fact, that term—"real teeth"—is used repeatedly by Kantor throughout the hearing to define the goals of the administration. The image suggests an agreement which functions as a watchdog. A good watchdog is mean to strangers. A dog who is friendly to all, like a law without enforcement, is useless for protection. The "teeth" of the accords are necessary to take a bite out of crime so to speak. In other words, laws designed to protect the environment are only good protection if they have the ability and willingness to do harm to those who would break them.

Kantor explained in testimony presenting the accords that there were laws in place in Mexico but they were not being enforced, hence the need for "teeth" in the accords:

... for years the Mexican government, having on the books strong environmental and labor laws—Section 103 of their constitution—and labor, frankly, Mr. Chairman, is somewhat stronger than (sic) our labor laws—have not been enforced. That has given companies operating in Mexico—I call this insult added to injury—a competitive advantage over our companies operating in the United States. With the labor and environmental side agreements, with our ability to open up their courts and administrative processes in Mexico to enforce their laws, which we have done in these agreements, we believe in the administration we will knock down these barriers and start exporting goods even more than we have than (sic) jobs south. ("NAFTA Implementing")

Kantor's explanation is important as it paints a clear picture of the Admin-



istration's definition of the problem. Secretary Bentsen echoes this sentiment noting that the environmental accords recognize "the obligation to enforce those environmental laws" ("Environmental Side"). The existence of environmental legislation is not the problem, enforcement is the issue. The solution is for the U.S. to use Mexican courts to force compliance with environmental standards. The solution advocated by the Administration begs the question of why a country which has ignored its own environmental regulations for so long will suddenly comply with NAFTA. The answer, "teeth," is based on what Bentsen calls an "obligation to enforce" environmental laws which may take the form of trade sanctions, or the use of Mexican courts to sanction violators. In essence, the U.S. will be the watchdog and sink its "teeth" into Mexico unless and until it complies.

Carol Browner extends the imagery of the U.S. acting as environmental enforcers in her testimony, saying: "We've got to take the responsibility of putting in place programs to deal with the future not just for this country, but also for all other countries of the world" ("Environmental Side"). Indicating a philosophy whereby the U.S. is the world's keeper, hardly a new sentiment from a superpower. This imagery reflects a new generation of leaders (the Clinton administration) clinging to the "old" school of power politics. In this view, lesser developed nations have no part in the dialogue except to say "yes we will do as you say." Unlike cold war diplomacy with lesser developed nations, conducted for increasing allies versus communism, this updated version of "old" school power politics conducts diplomacy for the purposes of nationalistic advantage (national security, economic benefit, etc.).

The imagery surrounding the administration's advocacy of environmental compliance offers insight into its motivation. Overall, the imagery clustered around the term compliance is captured in three terms—"teeth," obligation, and responsibility. Kantor's testimony reveals most explicitly the economic motivation driving the environmental side agreements. The administration did not seek out these additional agreements based on any overriding commitment to a clean environment. Economic motives are constantly expressed throughout the testimony advocating U.S. intervention to force Mexico to carry out its environmental protection legislation. This emphasis on the economic aspects of environmentalism is expected from Mickey Kantor as he is the United States Trade Representative, responsible for negotiating and enforcing international trade agreements. Yet this analysis is also employed by Carol Browner of the Environmental Protection Agency. Browner's expected position would be to advocate the importance of environmental protection for its own sake.

Expressing an economic motive may simply be adaptation to the audience, given that the Congress is looking out for the best interest of the citizens of the United States. While audience adaptation may account for part of the motivation, it does not account for the fact that environmental concerns could be presented from within the framework of public interest. It is this alternative which points to the importance of the imagery of forced compliance. Not only does the administration reveal its screen for viewing actions on the environment as being based on economic advantage, it also suggests a course of action which makes the U.S. the environmental enforcer.

### *Environmental Cooperation*

It is somewhat ironic, given the discussion of compliance discussed above, that there would be a set of imagery relating to cooperation. Nevertheless, the administration attempts to incorporate imagery of environmental cooperation with imagery of environmental compliance. Tim Wirth explicitly challenged the idea of forced compliance arguing that the purpose of the environmental side agreements is "not to create some supernational authority which invades the sovereignty of any one of these governments," but to get Mexico, Canada and the United States to enforce existing laws ("NAFTA Implementing"). Carol Browner agreed with the goals of cooperation noting, "pollution doesn't recognize political or international boundaries; it moves back and forth. And if we are going to deal with these problems, it has got to be through enhanced cooperation" ("Environmental Side"). The literal implications of cooperation are invoked here allowing the Administration to avoid the appearance that other countries might dictate U.S. environmental policy. This appearance is avoided as all three countries will enforce their own laws in unison. Additionally, this use of cooperation may be used to argue that the U.S. is not being imperialistic in imposing its will on others because the others are acting with the U.S.

The Administration's lip service to cooperation as working together does not eliminate the possibility of the U.S. acting at will to push Mexico into enforcing its laws. Carol Browner goes so far as to declare that the agreements are "the first to *require cooperation*" (emphasis mine, "White House"). While there may be no "supernational authority" there is a national authority in the Clinton administration who will force compliance. Browner more clearly links cooperation and environmental compliance in later testimony:

NAFTA and the side agreements we have been able to negotiate are very, very, very strong in terms of environmental safeguards. For the first time ever, we have a trade agreement that acknowledges the importance of environmental protection. It promotes cooperation among nations on things like pollution prevention and using natural resources sensibly, region wide planning, not just pollutant by pollutant work. It will allow for and require the enforcement of environmental laws. It makes it harder to pollute in all these countries. It specifically reduces incentives for American businesses to move to Mexico to avoid compliance with environmental standards, and I think very importantly, it preserves the right of this country to continue to set tough environmental standards and see them enforced. ("Environmental Side")

Browner's statement begins by outlining environmental goals to be achieved by cooperation between the U.S. and Mexico. However, the second half of her statement reveals a mistrust of cooperation alone to accomplish the tasks of environmental protection. By linking cooperation with required enforcement of regulations, Browner indicates a commitment to forcing cooperation if the spirit of cooperation breaks down. At that point cooperation is little more than a polite term for forced compliance.

A second level of cooperation is spelled out by Treasury Secretary Bentsen. He sets out the specifics of cooperation:

We believe the agreement we have negotiated reflects their [Mexican] interests and offers a new model for international cooperation at the grassroots



level. It's an important complement to the NAFTA agreement. Now, we have a window of opportunity here to help Americans in the border regions and across the United States with new trade opportunities, new jobs and joint environmental commitments. And I think that your support for the NAFTA package is essential to turn that opportunity into a reality. ("Environmental Side")

This form of cooperation focuses primarily on "grassroots" or local public participation in areas needing environmental assistance. The "new model for international cooperation at the grassroots level" Bentsen is referring to is based on two new organizations created after NAFTA. Bentsen explains:

Our new agreements let us address those problems and they'll generate significant new financing to support the cleanup efforts at minimal cost. We're creating two new institutions. The first is the U.S.-Mexican Border Environment Cooperation Commission to help coordinate projects and put together financing packages, and the second is a new U.S.-Mexican border financing facility to provide an additional source of financing to support border environmental infrastructure projects. The new coordinating agency will help border states and communities arrange financing for environmental infrastructure projects and oversee the use of the money. . . . The degree of public and local participation will be unprecedented in an international agreement. It's going to include a broad-based board of directors with federal, state and local government and public representation as well as a public advisory council all drawn from the border region. ("Environmental Side")

Bentsen's comments reveal a commitment to fostering and encouraging cooperative efforts. However, these efforts at environmental protection are not generated from the federal government, but from communities and businesses. The agencies created will simply approve projects and arrange for funding, they will not create the projects or specify the environmental protection which must take place. The cooperation generated is aimed at environmental cleanup and operates at the grassroots level while cooperation at the federal level may still be coerced (see above discussion of environmental compliance).

The final image which indicates cooperation is harmony. Kantor introduced the nature of harmonization:

. . . we have on one hand the problem of sovereignty and super national powers being exercised, we want to be careful of. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. That's one hand. On the other hand, we want to come back with something that's meaningful . . . so in walking that thin line, we're attempting to come back with something that will harmonize up standards in these areas throughout North American continent (sic) in order to achieve a strong, effective NAFTA. ("NAFTA and")

The term harmony, as a musical referent, indicates multiple voices coordinated with each other to produce an aesthetically pleasing chord. Within economic or trade policy, harmony refers to parity of opportunity or standards. Kantor is arguing that the environmental standards of the United States and Mexico are discordant and must be brought together. Furthermore, the suggestion that the harmonization must be upward indicates that it is Mexico who is out of harmony and must strengthen their standards to the level of the United States.

Kantor's argument serves two purposes, first it reassures the Congress that

American standards will not change and, secondly, it reinforces the need for environmental compliance. In arguing for harmonization upwards, Kantor is answering potential challenges made by environmental groups that the environmental accords will cause the U.S. to loosen its regulations to be harmonious (on par) with Mexico. Kantor's argument also reassures the Congress that no other country will be dictating U.S. environmental regulations nor will there be the need (based solely on NAFTA) for additional regulations which might be unpopular with some constituents. The net result of Kantor's argument is to reinforce the idea that it is Mexico who is taking an unfair advantage by not enforcing its environmental regulations and so the U.S. must act to force them to do so.

Kantor's argument for harmonization implies cooperation in the literal sense of the word. A careful examination of the Administration's view of cooperation reveals not a meeting of the minds but forced compliance. The means to harmonization is not cooperation in the purest sense of the word. Once again, the operational definition of cooperation for the Administration is giving into U.S. demands.

Within the clustering of subjects around the concept of cooperation, we see that the administration's "true subject" is enforced compliance. Environmental cooperation is clustered with the terms required enforcement, required cooperation, international cooperation at the grassroots level and harmonization upward. NAFTA is a symbol of the spirit of cooperation that exists between the U.S. and Mexico, yet the description of the specific elements of cooperation reveal a mistrust of governmental cooperation and a commitment to forcing compliance. Finally, the administration's rhetoric of cooperation does extend a commitment to allowing private citizens and free markets to work together for environmental cleanup. The apparent contradiction between cooperation and forced compliance is resolved within the administration's rhetoric in favor of compliance.

### Conclusions

The Clinton Administration's imagery of NAFTA's environmental accords is heavily imbued with a sense of the superiority of the United States over Mexico. The rhetoric also indicates a belief that the U.S. must wield that superiority over Mexico to gain compliance on environmental issues related to trade policy. Imagery describing the competitive disadvantage faced by U.S. companies who must comply with environmental regulations versus those companies operating in Mexico who do not have to comply with such regulations points to the economic motivation for the environmental accords. This economic motive is prevalent even within imagery advocating cooperation.

Employing imagery of forced compliance within the imagery of cooperation allows the Administration to demonstrate leadership. Browner indicates that the United States must take responsibility for all countries. Clinton is in a tough situation, since opposition leaders point to potential loopholes within NAFTA (prior to the side agreements) which would allow for Mexico to retain a competitive advantage over the United States. Clinton must also reconcile these pressures with external pressures from the two other nations involved in the treaty who have their own political constituency riding on



the agreement. If the U.S. were to back away from the agreement it would send a signal to Mexico, Canada and the entire world Clinton's inability to lead on major issues. Clinton walks the line by attempting to seal off loopholes (primarily the environmental issues) while demonstrating leadership and resolve.

The use of the term cooperation allows Clinton maneuvering room between preserving a good working relationship with the other countries involved in the agreement and appearing strong to those within his own country. By invoking the spirit of cooperation, Clinton can cast the negotiations as a true team effort in rectifying the harms to the environment which have occurred. On the other hand, Clinton can also maintain the support of Congress by demonstrating his ability to take a hard line against a country who has a "persistent and serious pattern" of environmental violations and force them to enforce their laws.

### Implications

The economic motive underlying the environmental accords and the reliance on forced compliance over cooperation has several implications for the future conduct of the Clinton Administration in matters of the environment and third world diplomacy. By employing imagery detailing the imposition of U.S. policy on Mexico, the Clinton administration is demonstrating the powers which can be used (abused?) when one is an economic superpower dealing with an inferior economic power. Clinton's rhetoric presents the attitude that those with the most money, should, and do, get their way.

Clinton's rhetoric demonstrates the ability of a rhetor to couch motives which may be negatively viewed within terminology which is accepted. It would be difficult to simply admit openly: "We believe that we can force Mexico into meeting our demands on these environmental issues because we are a great power and they need our economic support." The ability to make the same argument but without the threatening rhetoric, allows for diplomacy rather than belligerence. This couching of motives points to the need for concern and criticism as this ability can also invite abuse of power. Diplomacy conducted through double-speak may hide numerous, potentially dangerous, motives which may be quite persuasive. This ability to hide potentially base motives creates a challenge to critics to seek out the underlying motives and explore their implications for policy making.

Clinton's rhetoric also demonstrates the potential for the downfall of international environmental cooperation. By emphasizing forced compliance within the framework of cooperation, the Clinton administration is demonstrating a preference for competition. Unless alternative imagery and motivations can be developed, we run the risk of perpetuating the animosities other nations harbor towards the U.S. given our tendency to treat them as inferior partners.

Finally, Clinton's rhetoric on the environmental accords of NAFTA may aid in our understanding of the charges leveled against him for waffling. As was noted earlier, the debate over NAFTA had two clear camps free traders versus environmentalists and labor. Clinton's rhetoric agreed with both camps. To the free traders he argued that NAFTA would promote growth and a

healthy U.S. economy. At the same time he said to environmental and labor lobbies that they had legitimate concerns which would be met. Given the divide, agreeing with both sides may be interpreted as waffling. However, a close look reveals a carefully crafted strategy to unite what appear to be irreconcilable differences. Rather than waffling, Clinton has sought to compromise and transcend division. This approach to policy making may be revealed in other rhetorical acts by the Clinton administration and would help illuminate the discussion over his abilities to make policy.

Future studies should be concerned with examining other audiences of the Administration's environmental message regarding NAFTA and can compare the differences in imagery across discourse. Such studies could discover whether or not the imagery reveals the same underlying motivations or if new motivations are developed. Regardless of the rhetorical acts which have been produced and discussed here, the true test of the arguments made and supported by imagery of cooperation and compliance will be time.

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## A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT AFTER 100 YEARS: THE PRAGMATISTS AND THE RADICALS

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Since the inception of the American environmental movement in the 19th century, environmentalists have clashed over the most effective approach to managing or protecting America's natural resources. One perspective, the origins of which can be traced back to John Muir (founder of the Sierra Club in 1892), discusses the environment with activist and value-laden language.<sup>1</sup> Consider Muir's tone in his characterization of human impact on nature, "Pollution, defilement, squalor are words that never would have been created had man lived comfortably to Nature" (Borrelli, 1988, 73), and his views on the national parks, "They have always been subject to attack by despoiling gain-seekers, and mischief-makers of every degree from Satan to Senators, eagerly trying to make everything immediately and selfishly commercial" (Muir, 1912, 262). Muir, the mystic and naturalist, demanded that the land and its species be protected from human assaults.

A second perspective, tracing its roots back to Gifford Pinchot (founder of the U.S. Forest Service), favors the effective management and development of natural resources. In contrast to Muir's message of living in harmony with the earth, Pinchot argued that "The first duty of the human race is to control the earth it lives upon" (Pinchot, 77). Pinchot emphasized common ground, common sense, and cooperation in opting for political solutions for environmental issues; he often collaborated with President Teddy Roosevelt in supporting policies dictating the wise use of land and natural resources.

Over the past 100 years these two perspectives have grown into hundreds of groups with a myriad of splintered perspectives; however, they are usually categorized into the broad philosophical positions of preservationists and conservationists, although these labels often vary. For example, Scandinavian philosopher Arne Naess (1973) characterizes the two perspectives as shallow or deep environmentalists, O'Riordan (1981) refers to ecocentric and technocentric environmentalists, and Norton (1991), while admitting each perspective represents a constellation of values and goals, also divides them into two groups: moralists and aggregators.

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<sup>1</sup> Concern for the American environment actually begins with ordinances regulating cutting and sale of timber on Plymouth Colony Land in 1626. Throughout American history there have been expressions of concern for the environment in terms of laws and regulations, founding of the national parks (Yosemite in 1884 and Yellowstone in 1872), but the movement (in terms of groups and significant dedication of budget and energy by the government) doesn't begin until the founding of the Sierra Club in 1892, the Audubon Society in 1905, or the Presidential administration of Teddy Roosevelt.

While these philosophical classifications are helpful, the authors have chosen to use the classification offered by Fox (1990). In his book, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism*, Fox classifies the two groups based on their persuasive tactics (pragmatic and radical). Since persuasive tactics are pervasive in social movements (Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 1994, 13) and strategies and tactics dictate the particular form of any rhetorical discourse (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 1993, 19), a classification based in their specific tactics is useful for the study of the environmental movement.

Both the pragmatists and the radicals are characterized by specific themes, goals, and parameters for acceptable tactics. List (1993) describes pragmatists (or "moderates" as he calls them) as those who assume that "humans can resolve the environmental crisis by modifying their anthropocentric attitudes toward nature and by reforming laws, governmental policies, corporate behavior, and personal lifestyles to make them sensitive to environmental consideration" (2). In contrast, radicals are those who tend to focus on a biocentric and deep ecology perspective; refuse to compromise in political processes; engage in strong, unconventional, nonviolent tactics; and stress anarchism and bio-regionalism.

Differences over what tactics are acceptable occurs, in part, out of differences in objectives. Pragmatists often want to refine policies of existing social or political structures. This willingness to accept and work within the basic value system of the establishment—a technique Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen called agitation based on vertical deviance (1993, 7)—is in direct conflict with the approach taken by radicals. Radicals seek to reform the existing social and political structures and reject the basic value system of the establishment. The foundation for this approach—labeled agitation based on lateral deviance (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 1993, 7)—can be seen in comments made by radical Dave Foreman (1984). Foreman criticized the pragmatic approach and noted that, "too many environmentalists have grown to resemble bureaucrats—pale from too much indoor light; weak from sitting too long behind desks; co-opted by too many politicians" (24).

This schism in objectives was also noted by former Sierra Club president, Michael McCloskey, when he distinguished between norm-oriented and value-oriented environmentalists, "The norm-oriented environmentalists work within the social, political and economic structures of society. The value-oriented environmentalists want to change the relationships of individuals to society and engage in changing institutions" (Borrelli, 1988, 20).

Although American attitudes and industry regulations reflect many successes of the environmental movement's goals, the schism between these two perspectives has grown progressively wider. In honor of the environmental movement's first 100 years,<sup>1</sup> the authors reviewed newspaper stories, magazine articles, and prominent books from 1984–1994 that focused on environmental issues. The authors then examined the data using an instrument developed by Charles J. Stewart (1980; 1983) for the analysis of social movement persuasion—The Five Functions of Persuasion. The purpose of this functional analysis was to identify the extent of the schism between the two perspectives, pragmatists and radicals, by examining their persuasive tactics.



### Method of Analysis

The first researcher to recognize the potential of a functional approach to analyzing persuasive tactics was Leland Griffin (1951). In the conclusion of his seminal essay, Griffin called for research into the identification and codification of the rhetorical patterns of social movements. He argued that further research along those lines might ultimately discover whether or not a consistent set of rhetorical forms might exist (188).

Furthermore, Griffin believed that researchers should view a movement's rhetoric and persuasive tactics as the primary agency through which the movement performed necessary functions that enable them to come into existence, meet opposition, and possibly bring about their desired change. This functional approach was further developed by Robert K. Merton in his book, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1957), but according to Stewart (1980) it was Herbert Simons and Bruce Gronbeck who provided the theoretical base for the functional approach in their 1970 essay, *Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements*. In it, they outlined functions for all social movements:

- 1) They must attract, maintain, and mold workers (i.e., followers) into an efficiently organized unit.
- 2) They must secure adoption of their product by the larger structure (i.e., the external system, the established order).
- 3) They must react to resistance generated by the larger structure.

These three functions were separately expanded and redefined by Gronbeck (1973) and Simmons, Mechling, & Schreier (1980).

While these typologies were helpful in understand social movements from a systems or organizational approach, they were not helpful in the study of the specific persuasive functions of social movements. Stewart (1980; 1983) addressed this research gap when he developed a functional analysis tool for the study of social movement persuasion. Stewart argued that all movement persuasion performed one of the following five general (and 14 specific) functions:

1. Transforming Perceptions of History (altering perceptions of the past, present, and future)
2. Transforming Perceptions of Society (altering self-perceptions and perceptions of the opposition)
3. Prescribing Courses of Action (prescribing what must be done, who must accomplish the task, and how the task must be accomplished)
4. Mobilizing for Action (organizing and uniting the discontented, gaining sympathy and support from opinion leaders or legitimizers, and pressuring the opposition)
5. Sustaining the Social Movement (justifying setbacks and delays, maintaining the movement's viability, and maintaining the movement's visibility) (1980, 300)

This model was later refined (although all the categories remained the same) in conjunction with Smith & Denton (1994).

Of particular significance is the flexibility of this model as envisioned by Stewart, Smith, and Denton. Throughout their work, *Persuasion and Social Movements*, they note the numerous forms of persuasive tactics (both verbal and visual) in which movements engage. These forms include sit-ins, con-

ventions, marches, written manifestos, bumper stickers, leaflets, street dramas, billboards, tee-shirts, and countless others. Despite this wide array of artifacts, the model's creators demonstrate that the functional approach can be used in their analysis (43–65). The flexibility of this tool made it attractive for our analysis because of the plethora of different persuasive tactics employed by our subjects—especially the radical environmentalists.

### Analysis

#### *The Pragmatists*

The environmental movement has roots in the United States conservation movement of the 1800s. The writings of Emerson and Thoreau are often viewed as precursors of the value orientations in the modern environmental world view. Because of a pluralism of values and persuasive strategies, pragmatists have looked more like a coalition of interest groups than a movement with clear goals. In part, this results from the environmental movement's birth as a reactive phenomenon to industrial exploitation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Thus, the pragmatists' agenda has focused less on the development of a unified conceptual framework to guide action, and more on the formation of expedient, pragmatic solutions to immediate problems. Because of the plurality of values that pragmatists apply to solutions for environmental problems, they often appear to possess a fragmented world view. Although they do sometimes lack unity, there are many issues where they find common ground, agree on policy goals, and pursue similar objectives (Norton, 1991).

Pragmatists' arguments usually include statements emphasizing human need, such as the preservation of raw materials for future science and industry, the protection of the earth's ozone layer in order to reduce human cancer risk, or the management of the earth's soil in order to prevent drought and provide the best farm production. The pragmatists focus efforts on conventional political processes and tend "to be very technical and oriented only to short-term public policy issues of resource allocation" (Devall & Sessions, 1985, 2). There is a preoccupation with method and tactics rather than an exploration of goals or commitment to a well-defined set of long-range plans. Proponents of this perspective support government actions that improve managerial practices such as making recycling mandatory, banning Styrofoam packages and aerosols, or encouraging the use of biodegradable disposable diapers.

Almost 12,000 groups with almost 7 million members compose the segment of society that can be characterized as pragmatic or moderate environmentalism (Reed, 1992). The largest of these groups are the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Wilderness Society. Because membership in these groups has mushroomed, primarily since 1960, the function of Mobilizing for Action by organizing and uniting the discontented has not been a great priority. Additionally, because there has been sufficient apocalyptic rhetoric reported in the media, there has been less need to establish environmental policy through discourse aimed at the functions of Transforming Perceptions of History and Transforming Perception of Society. Instead, the pragmatists' persuasive tactics have func-



tioned by Prescribing Courses of Action (what must be done, who must accomplish the task, and how the task must be accomplished) and Mobilizing for Action (especially by gaining sympathy and support from opinion leaders and legitimizers and by pressuring the opposition). Specifically, four persuasive strategies dominate the discourse of pragmatic environmentalists: 1) Greening the corporations, 2) Working within the social and political systems, 3) Personalizing the issue with pragmatic solutions, and 4) Establishing credibility with celebrity appeals.

*Greening the Corporations*—A tremendous amount of energy is focused on efforts to pressure the opposition by calling for corporations to become more environmentally responsible—a tactic the environmentalists call the “greening of corporations.” David Brower, former executive director of the Sierra Club, summarizes this point, “We have to green the corporate movement. We have to green all businesses that operate without ecological conscience” (Chiras, 1990, 101).

Environmentalists claim responsibility for influencing Dow Chemical to adopt corporate policies that include the installing of corrosion-resistant pipes, working with its chemical suppliers to obtain purer raw materials, and removing chloroethelene from its K2R spot lifter (Kleiner, 1991). A significant effort at greening corporate policy occurred in September, 1989, when environmental groups united in Boston to form the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies (CERES). CERES described itself “as a unique collaboration of worldwide environmental organizations working with companies and individuals critically involved in responsible investing” (Russell & deLong, 1991, 35). CERES drafted 10 recommendations for corporate conduct, which they called the Valdez principles. This set of recommendations—a kind of environmental ethic for corporations—calls on businesses to minimize and eliminate pollution, conduct annual assessments and audits, market safe products and services, practice sustainable resource use, use energy efficiently, reduce risk to workers and the public, and repair damage caused to the environment.

The CEO of Dupont, E. S. Wooland, reflects the success of moderate lobbying for industry greening in his assessment, “Environmentalism is now a mode of operation for every sector of society—industry included. We in industry have to develop a stronger awareness of ourselves as environmentalists” (Shabecoff, 1993, 145).

The strength of Mobilizing for Action through a persistent, yet peaceful, pressuring of the opposition is that it allows mainstream Americans, who want to be identified as environmentalists (“The sky,” 1994), the opportunity to incrementally reform the institutions which employ their families or neighbors, instead of rejecting these institutions in favor of systemic reform. This is significant because getting results without alienating the movement from the general public and would-be supporters is a concern for every social movement engaged in pressuring the opposition (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 77–78; Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 61–62).

*Working within the Social and Political Systems*—A second example of Mobilizing for Action by pressuring the opposition is the pragmatists’ willingness

to work within the established social and political systems (including compromising with those systems). Borrelli (1988) notes: "Even before Ronald Reagan stormed the White House—the task of environmental groups has been the tedious grind of dogging federal agencies charged with implementing the environmental laws in the sixties and seventies and of preventing Congress from backsliding" (13).

Wilson (1988) credits training in legislative processes and visits to members of congress for policy victories such as the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. Similarly, the National Audubon Society stopped construction of a jetport in the Florida Everglades, and the Sierra Club fought the development of Disney's Mineral King in the Sierra Mountains.

Pragmatists limit their anti-establishment rhetoric in favor of incremental changes in government policy and industry practice. Darrell Knufe, director of the Colorado Wilderness Society, demonstrates the pragmatists' willingness to compromise in comments made after the defeat of the Two Forks Dam, "We certainly won more than we lost. The Wilderness Bill may not be the bill of our dreams, but it represents important progress" ("Conservationists," 1992). Pragmatists believe they will accomplish more through pressuring and compromising than by hard-lining. David Brower (1990) defends this approach, "Politics is Democracy's way of handling public business. There is no other. Embrace politicians. Yes. Why not? We won't get the kind of country in the kind of world we want unless people take part in the public's business" (249). In essence, pressuring the opposition and even compromising with it within the social and political processes reflects the principles of mainstream Americans concerning the management of conflict. This match between goals and tactics serves to protect allegiance to the moderate cause and commitment to pragmatic choice of actions.

*Personalizing Issues with Pragmatic Solutions*—Perhaps the most visible strategy, one that personalizes Prescribing Courses of Action, involves an emphasis on individual prescriptions, agendas, and blueprints for preserving the environment. Members are drawn into the larger agenda of the group through individual actions. Each action serves the purpose of reinforcing intrapersonal messages, which reinforce commitment to the cause and solving the problem. This approach follows smoothly from a world view that highly values the present social system, centers on human need, and affirms the potential of technological solutions for environmental problems.

Examples of individual solutions abound. In *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth* by EarthWorks (1990), readers are encouraged to stop junk mail, snip six-pack plastic rings, aerate home faucets, recharge batteries, stamp out Styrofoam, recycle motor oil, use cloth diapers, and eat low on the food chain. In the *Green Consumer*, Elkington, Hailer, & Makower (1990) encourage readers to drive fuel efficient cars, choose organic baby food, and buy "green gifts." Jon Naer (1990) takes a similar approach in *Design for a Livable Planet*. He lists ways to recycle trash (the "Zen of recycling"), provides 33 answers to what individuals can do about acid rain, and suggests eight tips on how to plant healthy trees.

One strength of this tactic is that it creates sensitivity and awareness that may be translated into greater openness to other issues promoted by move-



ment leaders. Educating an audience about motor oil's impact on ground water supplies creates a daily awareness that supports requests for policy change when oil spills occur off Alaska's coast. Rhetorically, environmentalists must maintain the perception that individual actions make a difference in reducing danger to the earth's ecosystem. Harris (1990) encourages readers, "We need to resurrect our sense of responsibility to the earth if we are going to have any chance of solving the environmental crisis" (xiv). The Environmental Magazine featured a list of technological improvements that resulted from the efforts of environmentalists: a California company that mixes recycled Styrofoam with cement to form an alternative to cinder blocks; a company in Philadelphia that recycles newspapers into low-density, fire-resistant cellulose insulation; and a Minneapolis appliance recycling center that removes toxic PCBs from old refrigerators before the units go to scrap dealers (Russell & deLong, 1991, 31).

Environmentalists tend to focus on strategies and tactics to solve immediate problems rather than focus on long-term goals. Thus, they must emphasize Prescribing Courses of Action by maintaining the perception that individual responsibility and efforts will have a significant impact.

*Establishing Credibility with Celebrity Appeals*—A highly visible strategy that personalizes and heightens public awareness concerning environmental issues occurs through celebrity appeals. The audience is asked to support an environmental policy based on the credibility and ethos of the celebrity. In 1980 the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) aired an appeal in the form of a radio advertisement featuring the narration of movie star Jimmie Stewart. In Stewart's unique, raspy speaking style, he urged Americans to support efforts to stop the slaughter of elephants by not buying products made from ivory. The AWF believed that Stewart's long career in American westerns would translate into credibility concerning environmental issues. At a 1989 "Don't Bungle the Jungle" fundraiser in New York City, Madonna asked her audience to support policies that prevent further deforestation: "Every second, an area the size of a football field is gone—forever. At this rate, the entire rain forest will be gone in 50 years—forever. The forests gave us life; we've got to find a way to preserve them" (Piasecki & Asmus, 1990, 161). Similar appeals have been made by celebrities such as actor Robert Redford, producer Norman Lear, actress Jane Fonda, and singers John Denver and Gordon Lightfoot. In Colorado, Gunsmoke star Dennis Weaver speaks more about his home made entirely from garbage than he does about his movie career.

Entertainment Lawyer Bonnie Reiss believes that appeals from the entertainment industry can be extended into movies and television programs. She formed a group called Earth Communications Office whose purpose is "to recruit producers, directors, and writers to weave ecological values into tomorrow's soap operas, sitcoms, and even Saturday-morning cartoons" (Piasecki & Asmus, 1990, 161).

This use of media (especially television) and celebrities to help Mobilize for Action by legitimizing the pragmatic environmental movement works because it follows comfortably from a world view that values the American culture's institutions—including entertainment. It is also crucial because en-

dorsements from individuals within the social establishment helps Sustain the Movement (heightening its visibility) by providing even more media attention to the issue and breaking down the built-in bias of the media against movements (Bowers, Ochs, & Jenson, 1993, 22–23).

### *Radical Environmentalists*

Radical environmentalists differ from their pragmatic cousins on many philosophical and tactical issues. Most radicals favor a biocentric, egalitarian view of nature, reject ideology that de-couples humans from animals in the global ecosystem, argue against the refining of policies concerning land use and for the preservation and protection of the land, promote no-threshold levels for risk instead of acceptable thresholds, discount the effectiveness of policy compromises, and, generally, choose to engage in more demonstrative acts of protest than the pragmatics. Dobson (1990) describes the radical line in the sand with his assessment, “Central to the theoretical canon of Green politics is the belief that our social, political, and economic problems are substantially caused by our intellectual relationship with the world” (37). Lewis (1992) adds that “many eco-radicals hope that a massive ideological campaign can transform popular perceptions, leading both to a fundamental change in lifestyles and to a large-scale social reconstruction” (11).

Most eco-radicals view the environment as a sacred entity with an integrity of its own that needs to be revered and respected. The revolutionary ideology of eco-radicals is difficult for traditional society to understand, largely because eco-radicals employ symbols, engineer events, and engage in tactics that reject society’s traditional structures (agitation based in lateral deviance).

An examination of the publications of eco-radicals provides a rich source of information concerning their ideology and its translation into persuasive tactics. Because radicals try to distance themselves from the ideals of contemporary American culture and to differentiate themselves from principles espoused by environmental moderates, their persuasion functions differently than that of the pragmatists. Radical persuasion functions to Transform Perceptions of History (by altering the perceptions of the past, present, and future), Transform Perceptions of Society (especially by altering perceptions of the opposition), Mobilizing for Action (by organizing and uniting the discontented and by pressuring the opposition), and Sustain the Movement (by maintaining high visibility). Four specific persuasive tactics are prominent in the language and behaviors of eco-radicals: 1) Creating an “us versus them” polarization, 2) Motivating listeners to take action, 3) Giving followers a reason-to-be, and 4) Dramatizing appeals to attract attention.

*Creating an “us versus them” Polarization*—Social movements often Transform Perceptions of Society by using persuasion to create an evil opposition or devil that helps polarize the battle as “us versus them” (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 1993, 34–36; Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 1994, 51–52). Radical environmentalists have identified two major devils: industrialization & technological progress and the moderate pragmatists who compromise with advocates for industry and technology.

Radicals routinely denounce the harmful effects of industrialization &



technology and the scientific world view that supports them. Porritt and Winner (1988) describe the radical agenda as "nothing less that a nonviolent revolution to overthrow our whole polluting, plundering, and materialistic society, and in its place, to create a new social order" (9). Lewis (1992) points out that radicals see industry as causing an "intellectual rift that has torn humanity away from nature" (124), and Rifkin (1983) describes the destruction facilitated by industry's impact:

As bioengineering technology winds its way up through the many passage-ways of life, stripping one living thing after another of its identity, replacing the original creations with technologically designed replicas, the world gradually becomes a lonelier place. From a world teaming with life . . . we descend to a world stocked with living gadgets and devices. (252)

Radicals also equate the destruction of nature by technology with the destruction of human culture. Dobson (1990) characterizes the impact of technology as "The modern scientific project is held to be a universalizing project of reduction, fragmentation, and violent control" (198).

Whereas pragmatists allow room in discussion for the use of appropriate or monitored technology, radicals once more draw a firm line in the sand. Manes (1991) leaves no room for compromise in his assessment that "There is no 'appropriate' technology. There are merely crafts, on the one hand which tap into abundant creativity of earth; and on the other, technology which always seeks to dominate it" (129).

In a call for a more human-centered approach to culture, radicals question Western culture's preoccupation with industrial development and technological progress. The impact, argues Glendinning (1990), is that technology "squashes the individuality and uniqueness that fed the human spirit in times past" (144). The schism between moderates and radicals rests on more than a discussion of the most effective land use for human and nonhuman species. Opposition to a mechanistic social paradigm lurks behind discussion of the visible issue. Tokar (1987) leaves no room for misinterpretation in his statement, "The increasing computerization of all spheres of life has allowed methods of social control and surveillance to evolve in staggering proportions" (24).

In place of a mechanistic social paradigm, radicals espouse an agrarian, pre-industrial past as the ideal that promotes the greatest quality of life for earth's species. Merchant (1992) echoes this theme in the goals she asserts for the radical perspective: "push[ing] social and ecological systems toward new patterns of production, reproduction, and consciousness that will improve the quality of human life" and "removing the cause of environmental deterioration and raising the quality of life for people of every race, class, and sex" (9).

Chiras (1990) characterizes the radical's Transforming Perceptions of History as frontierism, a perspective steeped in pre-industrial, return-to-nature, and early American principles. An examination of the *EarthFirst! Journal* supports this hypothesis. The journal includes monthly reports in a section titled "Tribal Lore," advertises T-shirts with slogans such as "Back to the Pleistocene" or bumper stickers that read "Dis-invent the Wheel," and features articles by authors who call themselves Daniel Boone, Coyote, and

Grey Wolf Clear Water (Lange, 1990). Most radicals reject contemporary goals for managing the environment and propose instead ideals that recreate a pristine setting as perceived was true in the 17th or 18th centuries.

At this point, discussions between radicals and moderates reach an impasse. The issue becomes less of creating consensus solutions to environmental problems and more an issue to eliminate technology or further industrialization. Radicals reason that such a move eliminates the source of the problem. Pragmatists counter that this ideal is an unrealistic, and, perhaps, unwanted goal. Manes (1991) displays the kind of rhetoric that supports a wall between the two positions, "Deep ecology is not saving Earth from man; it is saving Earth and humanity from complete effacement by technology" (120). Earth First! member, Howie Wolke (1991), polarizes positions still further, describing industry as "earth-raping power-brokers of the multinationals and their government cohorts" (247). Sales (1985) calls for Western culture to replace the industrial-scientific world view, "that has so imperiled us," with an ecological world view that prevents "the major living species on her crust [earth] from destroying themselves" (37). This split on the impact of industrialization & technology has led the radicals to name the pragmatists as the second major devil or opposition in the "us versus them" battle.

Radicals criticize their pragmatic cousins for their willingness to collaborate with government agencies, compromise on policy, and settle for lower standards of ecosystem protection. The unwillingness to collaborate or compromise violates American social norms for fairness, team play, and principled negotiation. Productive dialogue is often grounded in give-and-take compromise. But to preserve identity, radicals reject conformity and any measure of compromise.<sup>2</sup> They violate social norms and expectations, in part, to differentiate and distance themselves from the pragmatists and culture to which they belong. Radicals view legitimate and orderly discourse as "ensnaring traps that assimilate revolutionary intentions" (Branham and Pearce, 1985).

Risking labels of fanatic or crazy, radical activists engage in controversial discourse and tactics. Commitment to the cause and group identity supersedes traditional channels of persuasion. This, in part, explains comments by Earth First! member Karen Pickett (1990). She describes a logging protest in Northern California as polarizing the timber communities, failing to win the hearts of community members, but contributing to a "process of empowerment," a "raising [of] the general level of consciousness," and put[ting] a clear message out about the commitment to keep the front-line battle going to defend the planet" (210).

Radicals express their need to preserve identity as a reflection of their ideology and goals in the choice of names for groups. Foreman (1991) explains that EarthFirst! was chosen as the name for his group in order to affirm "a pure, non-compromise, pro-Earth position . . . that in any decision, consideration for the health of the earth must come first" (40-41). With similar ideals, there are radical groups named Cathedral Forest Action Group, Friends

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<sup>2</sup> Lange (1990) provides an in-depth discussion concerning the reasons and world view that results in the unwillingness of radicals to compromise on ideals.



of the Whale, Band of Mercy, and Last Chance for Animals. Radical group names are functionally more significant than the names of mainstream or moderate groups because the names serve to make a statement concerning purpose and goals and to clearly separate “us” from “them.”

Kramer (1994) points out that because significant numbers of people affirm “green” principles, German radicals struggle with finding a niche in the political climate and maintain their long-prized, distinct identity. A parallel situation may exist in the United States. A 1994 Roper poll reported that 72% of Americans call themselves “environmentalists” and that 66% believe that “environmental protection and economic development can go hand in hand” (“The sky,” 1994). Similarly, in a 1990 New York Times/CBS News random poll, 74% of Americans agreed with the statement, “Protecting the environment is so important that requirements and standards cannot be too high, and continuing environmental improvements must be made regardless of cost” (“Guarding,” 1990). As public opinion continues to support stronger environmental policies, we might expect greater competition and more daring tactics by radicals in their efforts to create distinct identities.

The attempt to Transform Perceptions of History is crucial to the survival of the radical environmental movement. Without transforming individuals’ views of the past, present, and future impacts of industrialization & technology, the movement loses one of its most vital persuasive functions. Equally crucial is its attempt to Transform Perceptions of Society by painting the pragmatists as a second devil because social movements (especially more radical ones) always face the danger of being absorbed or co-opted into more moderate organizations or even establishment institutions (Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 1994, 84). By promoting an antagonistic relationship with the more moderate wing of the environmental movement, the radicals maintain their own identity and perpetuate their survival.

*Motivating by Creating a Crisis Mindset*—Stewart, Smith, and Denton (1994) argue that in order to Transform Perceptions of History, social movements must, “convince [their audience] that an intolerable situation exists that warrants urgent attention and action” (46). Therefore, a second example of the persuasive function of Transforming Perceptions of History can be found in the tremendous amount of radical rhetoric aimed at the opposition’s counter claims that damage to the ecosystem is within tolerable limits or is repairable.

In order to create a perception of sufficient need and to motivate people to action, radicals promote a perception of urgency or crisis. Wolke (1982) confidently affirms that “it is possible that Homo Sapiens will drive nearly half the species on the planet to extinction by early in the 21st century” (3). Green activist Porritt (1986) echoes the same theme, “The fact that thousands of species will disappear by the turn of the century is not just an academic irritation; our own survival depends on our understanding of the intricate web of life in which we are involved” (99).

Creating a sense of urgency moves into the realm of apocalyptic admonitions by some who push for faster change. Highly speculative theories of the future serve as rationale for political action in the present. Wildavsky (1991) explains that apocalyptic radicals:

... bring all the dangers of the future into the present, hold them over people, and say the most terrible things will happen unless [their] views are accepted. If we are not freezing to death from nuclear winter, for instance, then the greenhouse effect is going to fry us crisp. The solution of course, will be local, state, national, international, and intergalactic regulation to prevent these awful things from happening. (238–239)

The tone of crisis for both human and nonhuman species rests in doomsday forecasts. Radicals Bookchin and Foreman (1991) propose that, “conventional reform efforts, at best, can only slow down but they cannot arrest overwhelming momentum toward destruction within our society” (77). Earth First! activist Rick Bailey asserts that “the biological and ecological foundation of this planet is under siege right now, and something has to be done to at least slow down the technological beast” (Manes, 1990, 24). The Green Party Manifesto leaves no room for misinterpretation with its proclamation: “Encroachment on natural habitats and the extermination of animal and plant species is destroying the balance of nature and along with it the basis of our life. It is necessary to maintain or restore a biologically intact environment, in order to ensure the humane survival of future generations” (“German Green”, 1983, 29).

*Giving Followers a Reason-To-Be*—A social movement requires a meaningful reason to justify its existence or the movement loses its energy and momentum. Stewart, Smith, and Denton (1994) describe this function of social movements as Mobilizing for Action by organizing and uniting the discontented. To do this, the leaders of the movement must “create a ‘collective identity’ so individuals come to identify themselves as a group” (60–61). This tactic also functions to Transform Perceptions of Society by altering the radicals’ self-perception.

For many of the radical environmental groups, the most central reason-to-be (or their collective identity) is as defender of the earth and all its species. This defense, argues Earth First! co-founder Dave Foreman (1991), is against “hostile humanism, against the machines, against the dollar, against jail, against extinction for what is sacred and right” (9). Foreman also describes radicals as warriors with a “willingness to defend Earth’s abundance and diversity of life” (1991, 34).

Reason-to-be and defender role are united in Sea Shepherd Society founder, Paul Watson’s, assessment that the Sea Shepherds are “the Navy of mother Earth and Earth First! the army” (Watson, 1986). Australian John Seed, co-founder of the Council of All Beings, so identified with his roles as protector of the primeval forest in Australia that he commented, “I realized then through all this chaos that I was part of the rain forest—that I was the rain forest defending herself” (Manes, 1990, 117). With similar passion, Randy Hayes, co-founder of the Rainforest Action Network, asks “The question is how do we get industrial society’s foot off of the throat of the rainforest?” (Scarce, 1990, 149).

Inherent in this principle is the assumption that earth’s species and its land have not been sufficiently defended in the past and lack the ability to defend themselves in the present. Radicals view their role as protectors of vanishing species, threatened forests, and human expansion. Names of some of the



radical groups reflect this theme: Friends of the Earth, Friends of the Wolf, Whale Friends Society, and Animal Liberation.

Advocates for earth's rights extends for some radicals into the wider arena of human rights. Opposed are cultural values that represent hierarchy, exploitation, or domination of gender or race. Bookchin and Foreman (1991), in a book appropriately titled *Defending the Earth*, assert: "We must look beyond economic forms of exploitation into cultural forms of domination that exist in family, between generations, sexes, racial and ethnic groups, in all institutions of political, economic, and social management . . . including nature and non-human life forms" (58). For Bookchin and Foreman, all environmental problems have their parallel in social problems.

Though at times torn by internal strife, German Greens hold together a loose alliance of left-wing members oriented toward social policy, protection of minorities, and others committed to purely environmental concerns. Merchant (1993) points out that, at times, eco-feminist groups align themselves with other groups who identify with nature, oppose male-dominated power structures, or oppose the mechanistic science mindset. Involvement of eco-feminists reflects the loose alliance of groups dedicated to liberation of both social and ecological systems. Foreman (1993) advocates these linkages in his comment that "We should also make common ground with other progressives of society whenever possible" (189).

*Dramatizing appeals*—To help Sustain the Movement by maintaining its visibility, radicals often engage in unorthodox, and, at times, dangerous appeals designed for media exposure. In July, 1994, Greenpeace members climbed 15 stories of the Time-Life Building in New York to hang a banner that protested the chlorine-rich paper on which Time is published. To protect whales, Greenpeace activists jumped out of helicopters to form a human blockade in front of whaling ships. EarthFirst! members blow-torched a utility tower in the desert west of Phoenix, sat in front of bulldozers to prevent them from moving earth, dressed in bear costumes as they blockaded a bridge in Yellowstone National Park, and sat on boxes of dynamite in order to prevent their use in blasting a hillside. Such events are staged in order to attract followers, get public attention, and coerce industry to adopt greater concern.

Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen (1993) explain that in the rhetoric of agitation it is important to stage newsworthy events that are unusual or involve conflict so that "when the media cover conflict they also expose the agitators' message to the public" (23). These events also reinforce the aforementioned "us versus them" polarization because Americans are drawn into a drama where they become actors who must fight against the evils and villains of modern industrial society and their damaging acts against Nature, the victim.

Though the tactics risk public censure for the group, radical activists argue that the tactics, which they call ecotage, serve an important function. Sea Shepherd leader, Paul Watson, explains:

When you do an action, it goes through the camera and into the minds of millions of people. The things that were previously out of sight and out of mind now become commonplace. Therefore you use the media as a weapon

... The more dramatistic you can make it, the more controversial it is, the more publicity you will get ... the drama translates into exposure. (Scarce, 1990, 104)

Tarshis (1991) concludes that this priority guides most of ecology's strategies: "Earth First [sic] and Greenpeace campaigns are designed for maximum exposure and publicity value" (21). Bowden (1990) describes radical tactics as "guerilla theatre, not guerilla war" (51).

In an age dominated by television reporting, rhetors can strategically include elements in the form of short vignettes or emotion-laden images that can be sensationalized for dramatistic presentation in the media. In a study of every environmental risk story (564 of them) aired by CBS, ABC, and NBC during the two-year period from January, 1984, through February, 1986, Greenburg et al. (1989) concluded, "In their coverage of environmental risk, the networks are guided more by traditional determinants of news and the availability of dramatic visual images than by the scientific degree of risk of the situation involved" (275). These carefully constructed vignettes, called ecobites by Spangle and Germann (1994), function for environmentalists much like soundbites do for politicians. Scarce (1990) describes an animal-liberation protest at Trafalgar Square in London:

We had a demonstration there which involved 9,000 people. We had a slogan, "Every Six Seconds an Animal Dies in a British Laboratory." At the base of the plinth of Nelson's column we made a mock laboratory. We got a tape loop playing that struck a bell every six seconds and a sign with big numbers on it that turned over every time the bell struck. Two people dressed as scientists took people from the audience at the demonstration and symbolically killed them. They would lie on the ground. At the end of the hour we had 600 people lying down. (257)

These choreographed dramatic events are designed as metaphors of visual rhetoric that trigger emotions of anger and guilt with audiences. Ecobites serve as arguments for change and are better remembered than volumes of statistics by audiences. Murray Bookchin (1989) explains that the success of short dramatic vignettes may be because Americans: "... have been conditioned to see life as a television sitcom or talk show composed of discrete, self-contained, anecdotal segments. We live, in effect, on a diet of short takes ... episodic rather than systemic; the scene dissolves, the camera moves on" (19-20).

Dramatic acts and made-for-television ecobites converge in a strategy of "nonviolent" unlawful confrontation. Because radicals hold to the belief that human values and institutions are the root sources of problems, radicals are more inclined to openly challenge the status quo. Foreman (1991) explains the rationale for a strategy that involves sabotage or monkeywrenching: "The actions of Earth First!—both the bold and the comic—have gained attention. If they are to have results, we must resist the siren's offer of credibility, legitimacy, and share in the decision making. We are thwarting the system, not reforming it" (30). Radicals will risk the danger of alienating those who they want to influence for the greater goals of rejecting cultural ideals, shaping an identity born by a cause, and commanding the public's attention to an issue. For radicals, the risks of appearing fanatical or irrational are within sustainable limits. Foreman summarizes the guiding theme of the world



drama radicals portray, "No compromise in the defense of Mother Earth!" ("If a tree," 1990).

### Conclusions

The authors began this functional analysis with the goal of better understanding the schism between the two perspectives of the environmental movement by examining their persuasive tactics. After completing the analysis, we can conclude that the schism is apparent in the general functions performed by their persuasion. The pragmatists' persuasion functions to Prescribe Courses of Action (what must be done, who must accomplish the task, and how the task must be accomplished) and Mobilizing for Action (especially by gaining sympathy and support from opinion leaders and legitimizers and by pressuring the opposition). Their specific persuasive strategies include: 1) Greening the corporations, 2) Working within the social and political systems, 3) Personalizing the issue with pragmatic solutions, and 4) Establishing credibility with celebrity appeals.

Radical persuasion, on the other hand, functions to Transform Perceptions of History (by altering perceptions of the past, present, and future), Transform Perceptions of Society (especially by altering perceptions of the opposition), Mobilizing for Action (by organizing and uniting the discontented and by pressuring the opposition), and Sustaining the Movement (by maintaining high visibility). Four specific persuasive tactics are prominent in the language and behaviors of eco-radicals: 1) Creating an "us versus them" polarization, 2) Motivating listeners to take action, 3) Giving followers a reason-to-be, and 4) Dramatizing appeals to attract attention.

When the persuasive functions of these two groups are combined and examined under the single banner of the environmental movement, it is easy to see why this movement has been so successful in changing American attitudes and industry regulations concerning the environment. Together, the groups engage in all five persuasive functions identified by Stewart (1980; 1983) and Stewart, Smith, & Denton (1994). This creates a fascinating paradox in which the two groups have managed to work together for a common goal, while remaining fiercely independent of each other (and, in many cases, overtly antagonistic).

This strange relationship has not gone unnoticed by its participants. Radical Dave Foreman (1991), perhaps tongue-in-cheek, suggests that radical environmentalists perform the role of making the pragmatic agenda more appealing, thereby enhancing the possibility of environmental policy changes. Another radical (who goes by the alias "C.M.") affirms in the *EarthFirst! Reader* that the role of radicals is to "take seemingly obscure environmental issues out of the dark of scientific calculations into the limelight of individual passion and commitment" (C.M., 1991, 261). Once in the limelight, the pragmatists can use their more traditional means of social influence to enact the desired changes.

There is a danger in this two-pronged approach, however. As Stewart, Smith, & Denton (1994) note:

Internally, movement persuaders must deal with competing and often antagonistic organizations, each with its own leaders, followers, ideological

quirks, and favorite strategies. Even fragile coalitions are essential for the appearance and effect of a united front. Persuasive feats of magic are necessary to sustain coalitions for extended periods. (79)

And if the coalition does indeed begin to crumble, or if the movement simply follows typical social movement development as outlined by Stewart, Smith, & Denton (1994, 71–87) and Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen (1993, 19–45), the radicals may be in for some problems in the near future. During a movement's later stages (maintenance and termination):

Both movement and society are ready for a respite from exciting but unnerving, disruptive, and often destructive confrontations. Movement persuasion once again emanates from the pen and printer and from legislative, judicial, conference, convention, and lecture halls. . . . Radical organizations . . . disappear and original, more conservative groups . . . remain to carry the movement forward. (Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 1994, 81)

If this is the case, the radicals may soon begin to fade, while the pragmatists remain to carry on the environmental battle. If so, the authors would end this analysis by challenging future researchers of environmental persuasion to monitor any shifts in its functions. By doing so, communication scholars may be better able to understand, not only the environmental movement, but the hundreds of other movements that exist in this "age of the social movement in America" (Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 1994, 1).

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## MANAGING PUBLIC VALUES IN ENVIRONMENTAL RISK COMMUNICATION: THE RHETORIC OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARSENAL

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In an age where technology frequently outpaces our understanding of its consequences, environmental concerns have come to the forefront in public discourse. Acid rain, global warming, the ozone layer, toxic waste, landfills, chlorofluorocarbons, pesticides—these are words which have become common household terms for all of us. Environmental issues are no longer left to a handful of radical environmental activists but have become an active concern for almost everyone. In fact, much environmental policy is public driven and according to Schneider (1993) is often based on “reaction to popular panics, not in response to sound scientific analysis of which environmental hazards present the greatest risks” (p. 1A).

The “popular panics” whether warranted or not, can have adverse long-lasting effects on an organization. Public opinion can be a valuable corporate ally or a powerful foe. When environmental disasters occur the organization involved must react quickly and dynamically or risk the crippling political, economic, and social consequences of public outrage.

In the wake of the Alaskan Valdez incident, Exxon launched a multi-million dollar campaign to repair their tainted public image resulting from the environmental disaster. The nuclear power industry reacted in like fashion after the Three Mile Island incident with far reaching campaigns extolling the safety of modern nuclear technology and emphasizing the nation’s ever increasing energy needs. These are but a few examples of reactive campaigns in which an organization has been forced to respond to public outrage. Many large organizations have crisis management teams whose sole purpose is to organize and implement programs to repair public image and minimize backlash in the event of a crisis.

In times of environmental crisis the public will get involved, will demand to be informed and will demand a voice in the policy decision making process. Risk communication is a field that has developed in the past five years to study and analyze means of sharing risk-laden information with the public (Wilkins & Patterson, 1991). Because this process frequently requires the organization to overcome public opposition and to promote their own public image, this is largely a rhetorical effort. The success or failure of the rhetorical message will depend on the organization’s ability to effectively manage public values. This paper will examine the role of human values in environmental risk communication and how these values were utilized by the “corporate voice” in the rhetorical campaign of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal (RMA).

The RMA has been described by the local television news media as “the

SPEAKER AND GAVEL, Vol. 31, Nos. 1–4 (1994), 96–109.

most contaminated piece of land in the world" (KWGN, 3/16/90, 9:00 PM); "the most polluted spot on the planet" (KWGN, 3/16/90, 10:00 PM); and "the most poisoned area on Earth" (KMGH, 3/16/90, 10:00 PM). Whether or not it is actually "the most polluted spot on the planet" is difficult to assess. However, there is no doubt that the Rocky Mountain Arsenal is contaminated with highly toxic chemicals and it is estimated that remediation will take from 20 to 30 years to complete. The "corporate voice" of the Arsenal has the formidable challenge of convincing the local residents that the remediation technologies they have implemented and will implement in the future are safe and will not have an adverse effect on the lives of those who live in the surrounding areas. In order to do this, their rhetorical campaign has emphasized human values.

### Environmental Risk Communication and Human Values

Environmental disasters tend to bring out citizen concern centered around values. Such values as quality of life, health and love of nature are brought to the forefront in public discourse. Common values lead to common fears. Public discourse serves as an "axiological barometer"—an indice of the direction and degree of those fears (Hart, 1987). Risks are selected for public concern according to the strength of the values underlying those concerns and public discourse is a means of articulating, elucidating, and solidifying those values. As Hart (1987) explains, "although public rhetoric is not an unerring barometer of what society values, it tells citizens what beliefs are in the wind, and it tells observers how strongly the winds are blowing" (p. 752).

Public discourse is not only a means of articulating values but a means of reproducing those values as well. Public discourse, in a kind of self-reproducing circularity, is both a means and an outcome. Giddens (1984) explains the recursive nature of public discourse:

Human social activities, like some self-reproducing items in nature, are recursive. That is to say, they are not brought into being by social actors but are continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors. In and through their activities agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible. (p. 2)

Public discourse expresses public values and at the same time reproduces those values in the very act of expressing them. Because of the recursive nature of the process, that which is articulated will be reinforced and become a standard which guides ideology attitudes and action. Organizations, when faced with the dilemma of dealing with risk and communicating that risk to the public, can, in effect, set the agenda of public discourse by articulating certain values and then addressing those values. In so doing, an organization can conduct a campaign on its own "value turf" so to speak. Hart (1987) suggests that "one need not become a symbolic determinist to understand the attraction that effectively communicated, consensually shared values have for even a practical and technologically inclined people" (p. 751).

### Rhetorical Limitations of Scientific Risk Assessment

One approach commonly used by organizations when communicating risk is to respond to public value concerns with "expert," scientific opinion



thereby placing the dialectic in a reason versus value dichotomy. Perceiving risk as objective "facts" which can be explained, predicted and controlled by science ignores the socially constructed values which are not products of science and technical expertise (Bradbury, 1989). Expert opinion becomes reified while the values of the layperson are seen as "reactions of the uneducated and uniformed." Individual judgments that do not conform to expert judgments are seen as erroneous and in need of correction through education.

They [scientists] assert that probability of harm and level of worry, with its concomitant behavioral responses, should be positively correlated, and highly so. When a bad fit is uncovered scientists are likely to blame the receiver. The possibility that differing risk judgments may stem from a difference in underlying values is rarely entertained. (Friedman, 1991, p.12)

The obvious response of an organization faced with communicating risk to the "uneducated and uniformed" is to educate and inform the public about the scientific risk assessments. While this is, no doubt, an essential part of risk communication as a rhetorical strategy it will most likely result in an unsuccessful public campaign for several reasons. The first has to do with the fact that science tends to emphasize reason at the expense of values.

Since ancient times scholars of rhetoric have realized that humans are not solely or even predominantly rational cognitive beings. Rather our decision making processes involve a complex mix of rational and emotional responses. Fisher (1978) suggests that "humans as rhetorical beings are as much valuing as they are reasoning animals" (p. 376). Any public campaign which focuses only on rational attributes and excludes the valuing attributes of our humanness is doomed to failure or, at the very least, to minimal success.

Another reason why educating the public about risk assessment is insufficient as a sole rhetorical strategy has to do with the quantity versus the quality of the risk. The scientific approach to risk communication relies heavily on quantifiable probability or degree of risk. The probability of risk says very little about the possible consequences of risk. The valuing nature of our humanness will place emphasis on the quality of risk or its possible negative consequences and "the qualities of a hazard can matter as much as the quantity of risk faced by the public" (Gregory, 1991, p. 1). Probabilistic risk assessment carries little weight when compared with such things as the health and well-being of our loved ones. Because of the weight placed on such values, the expert's view of risk frequently fails to coincide with the public's view of acceptability. Douglas and Wildavsky explain that:

... the key terms in the debate over technology are risk and acceptability. In calculating the probability of danger from technology, one concentrates on the risk that is physically 'out there,' in man's intervention in the natural world. In determining what is acceptable, one concentrates on the uncertainty that is 'in here,' within a person's mind. (p. 10)

In order for a rhetorical campaign to be successful an organization must address not only what is quantifiably "out there" but must also take into consideration people's perceptions of those risks or what is "in here." All the scientific assessments and the greatest experts in the world will fall to the rhetorical efficacy of a single narrative. A one-in-ten thousand probability of risk carries little weight when compared to the story of little Bobby Jones who has cancer. The news media is especially quick to pick up on human

interest stories of hardship and fears adding a new dimension to the rhetorical force of value laden stories and narratives.

Another reason why scientific education alone is insufficient as a sole rhetorical strategy has to do with the highly technical and complex nature of scientific risk assessment. The disparity between value and reason is aggravated by differing rationalities of risk as well as different levels of understanding between scientists and lay persons. Krinsky and Plough (1988) refer to this as the difference between the viewpoints of the "technosphere" and the "demosphere." By concentrating solely on the technical, scientific aspects of risk, an organization may alienate the public and actually increase the antagonism between the "demosphere" and the "technosphere." Friedman (1991) observes that

Quantitative risk analysis, rather than narrowing differences, may actually increase the antagonism between the 'technosphere' and the 'demosphere' as they call them [referring to Krinsky and Plough, 1988]. Casting issues in a technical language reduces the possibility of a dialogue between the public and the technical elites. (p. 36)

An organization faced with the rhetorical challenge of communicating risk to the public must find a way to educate the public in such a manner that the highly technical scientific information is understandable to the lay person. However, this alone is not enough. Another reason why education alone will not suffice a sole rhetorical strategy is that there is an inherent mistrust embedded in the context.

Each side is thought by the other to have self-serving interests (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). The organization involved is often seen as self-serving capitalists unconcerned with public well-being while environmentalists, especially those who speak the loudest, may be considered by the organization to be the "radical fringe." These attitudes serve to alienate the organization from the public and the public from the organization.

Each views the other as coming from the opposite end of the continuum as diagrammed in Figure 1 (Killingsworth and Palmer, 1992). One end of the continuum is experimental science, seen as purely objective and detached from all natural objects including human objects. In the center is the perspective of nature as resource. This anthropocentric viewpoint sees nature as a bounty of resources for human use and enjoyment. The opposite end of the spectrum is the perspective of "deep ecology" described by Killingsworth and Palmer (1992) as "... a mythic involvement with nature, an identity in which the spirit of creation wraps the human and the nonhuman in an indissoluble unity with definite ethical consequences" (p. 12). (Killingsworth and Palmer, 1992)

Nature as Object		Nature as Resource		Nature as Spirit	
Traditional or mainstream science	Government	Business and industry	Agriculture	Social ecology (humanistic environmentalism)	Deep ecology (wilderness ethic, nature mysticism)

Figure 1.



It is important for an organization to accurately evaluate the position of the public before attempting any kind of rhetorical campaign in order to avoid what is known as a "contrast effect." Social Distance Theory (Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergal, 1965) suggests that when an advocate expresses an attitude that is too far on the continuum from the receiver's position, the receiver will view the advocate's position as being even farther from his or her own position than the advocate actually is. This is known as a "contrast effect." Conversely, for those who are predisposed in favor of the views of an advocate, an assimilation effect will occur. When this happens the receiver perceives the advocate to be even closer to his or her own views than the advocate actually is.

A contrast effect can occur if the public sees the organization closer to the "nature as object" end of the continuum than it may in fact be. Likewise, the organization may view the public as being more towards the "nature as spirit" end than it may actually be. The polarization of perspectives can diminish the effectiveness of any rhetorical campaign.

The Aristotelian view of science as beyond the need of rhetoric carries with it the notion that "facts" are beyond argument. Socially constructed values and science are frequently involved in conflict in which each side is perceived to be the enemy or antithesis of the other. Yet cultural reason and technical reason need not be mutually exclusive. Killingsworth and Palmer (1992) argue that "we must learn to see that science is not merely a data base upon which we can rely in making good decisions. It is a view of the world that must be broadened if it is to effect social morality" (p. 272).

The scientific approach to risk communication tends to emphasize "scientific fact" and ignore human values. It tends to concentrate on the quantity of risk and place little emphasis on the quality of risk. In addition, scientific risk assessment is complex and highly technical. This can decrease the possibility of dialogue between the experts and lay persons and increase the possibility of a contrast effect. An organization faced with the task of communicating risk would do well to consider these limitations of scientific risk assessment when dealing with the public and incorporate human value management into their rhetorical campaign. The Rocky Mountain Arsenal has done just this. The corporate voice of the RMA relies heavily on human values in their on-going rhetorical campaign. The following sections offer a brief history of the RMA and an analysis of its value management campaign.

#### History of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal has long been plagued with environmental problems and these problems are far from over. With the advent of W.W.II the U.S. Army purchased the twenty-seven square mile site about ten miles east of downtown Denver from area farmers. Construction of facilities for the manufacture of chemical and incendiary weapons, including mustard gas and the napalm bomb, began in 1942. In 1952 a portion of the land was leased to Shell Chemical Company-now Shell Oil-to produce pesticides. In the 1960's and 70's there was also a rocket fuel blending plant on the site which produced Aerozine 50, a fuel used in the moon rocket program. Hill POW Camp operated on the site from 1943 to 1946 and during this time it held as many as 300 German prisoners. The Army ended all chemical weapons productions in 1969 and Shell stopped their production of pesticides on the

site in 1982. Fortunately, the chemical weapons manufactured at the Arsenal were never used and between 1970 and 1982 the Arsenal's main concern was the destruction and disposal of these weapons.

All of this took place at a time when concern for the environment had not yet reached its current level of public awareness and before technology and regulation had made the production and disposal of these types of hazardous materials environmentally safe—at least comparatively. Toxic wastes created by the production of chemical weapons and pesticides were disposed of in a natural basin—a practice common at the time. Contamination of ground water was first discovered in the mid-50's when nearby farmer's crops began to die. In response to this problem the Army transferred the contaminated liquid from the natural basin into a 93-acre asphalt lined storage pond called Basin F. Unfortunately, it did not take long for the toxic liquid to eat its way through the asphalt. In 1962, in response to the increasing migration of ground water contamination, the Army Chemical Corp began operating a Pressure Injunction Disposal Well. This pumped waste liquid into deep underground rock cavities in an effort to permanently dispose of the contaminated liquid with no leakage into ground water near the surface. However, in 1965 a series of earthquakes racked the Denver area. A theory supported by many of the nation's geologists held that the fluids being pumped into the ground via the Pressure Injunction Disposal Well acted as a lubricant, causing large blocks of rock beneath the earth to shift. The Arsenal shut down all pumping activities in 1966. Basin F has since been drained and the liquid is stored in tanks and a lined pond on the site.

A submerged quench incinerator has recently been put into operation for burning the 12.5 million gallons of toxic liquids now being stored at the arsenal. The liquid is being burned, quart by quart, in a 1900 degree Fahrenheit gas flame. This process destroys organic compounds leaving a salt brine which will be pumped into the ocean. Public concern has arisen questioning potential safety hazards of the incinerator, the health risk due to emissions from the smoke stack, as well as concern for the ocean disposal of the brine.

Since the arsenal was built in 1942, the twenty-seven square mile area has been fenced and secured. Most of the land is undeveloped and has become a wildlife refuge for animals escaping the urban sprawl as well as migratory fowl including the bald eagle. Concern for the well-being of the abundant wildlife has added yet another dimension of environmental concern. Through the summer of 1964 area newspapers ran stories reporting that waterfowl were dying after exposure to polluted Arsenal Lakes. Remedial efforts have stopped obvious mortality of wildlife and a long term bio-monitoring plan is in effect. One positive outcome of all of this is that once the clean-up is completed the land will be turned over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be maintained as a wildlife refuge.

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal is one of the most serious cases of ground and water contamination in our nation's history and has been declared a two billion dollar Superfund site. After years of litigation, the U.S. Army and Shell Oil Company in conjunction with the EPA, the Colorado Department of Health, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service signed an agreement in 1989 to begin the long process of remediating the damage. Four years and 500 million dollars later the actual on-site cleanup has begun and it is expected



to take anywhere from twenty to thirty years to complete. Today the buildings remain abandoned and dilapidated—a sad reminder of our past history of war and of what can happen when technology outpaces our understanding of its consequences.

#### Analysis of The RMA's Risk Value Management Campaign

Analysis of the risk communication strategies employed by the Rocky Mountain Arsenal is based on information gathered from (1) the public tour, (2) publications distributed by the Arsenal, and (3) an interview with Bill Thomas, Director of Public Relations for the Arsenal. All three of these provide rich texts for analysis because they have all been sanctioned by the organization as the "corporate voice." Cheney & McMillan (1990) describe this corporate voice as the voice of the "juristic person" as opposed to the voice of the "natural person:"

Once focused on natural human users, we must now take into account the juristic persons, the corporate 'voices' which speak to us and for us while remembering that all messages in some way originate with efforts of natural person. (p. 59)

When looking at organizational rhetoric, the classical model of "a good man speaking well" no longer holds. The corporate rhetor is not the voice of the individual-as-person but a collective voice articulating the rhetoric of the organization. While the rhetorical message may have originated with an individual or a group of individuals, ownership of authorship has been subverted and the corporate voice has emerged in the form of the juristic person.

The public tour, the publications, and the Public Relations Director all represent the corporate voice speaking through one medium or another. The tour guide, as a juristic person presents to the visitors a memorized script carefully prepared to disseminate information and at the same time present a favorable image of the organization to the outside world. Analysis of the publications produced and distributed to the public by the U.S. Army in conjunction with the other agencies involved in the clean-up project reveal the rhetorical messages of the organization. The Public Relations Director, Mr. Bill Thomas, was transferred to the site in 1988 to spearhead the task of communicating risk information to the public. As one juristic voice of the organization, his philosophy is evident throughout the rhetorical campaign.

Attempts of the corporate rhetor to manage public values becomes apparent in the analysis of these texts. What clearly emerges is the Arsenal's predominant emphasis on three values: (1) patriotism, (2) concern for wildlife, and (3) concern for public health. By articulating its own agenda and bringing these values to public attention, the Arsenal can direct the tenor of public discourse.

#### *Patriotism*

When facing stiff rhetorical odds, rhetors return to root cultural values (Rasmussen, 1973). One such root value is patriotism. The Arsenal's emphasis on this value is not surprising since it is an operation of the U.S. Army. As

mentioned earlier, productions of chemical and incendiary weapons began in the 1940's with the advent of W.W.II and continued throughout the 1960's. The Soviet threat to world peace fueled patriotism and the Arsenal's role in the defense of our country was heralded:

In March of 1954, while the Soviet Union was tightening its grip on the "Iron Curtain," The Denver Post quoted an Arsenal spokesperson who announced that RMA "is working round the clock seven days a week in full production of a weapon as deadly as the atomic bomb and as frightening . . . GB nerve gas." (Taken from "Eagle Watch", a special historical magazine issued in honor of the Arsenal's 50th anniversary, August, 1992, p. 8)

The Arsenal's contribution to the war effort is emphasized repeatedly:

"Production of chemical weapons by the U.S. deterred the enemy from initiating chemical warfare in W.W.II and the Korean Conflict". (Taken from *An Eye on Progress*, a brochure distributed by the RMA, May, 1992).

"The Rocky Mountain arsenal was good for the area because it offered many jobs to local citizens. It helped us to defend our country during W.W.II." (Taken from *The Rocky Mountain Arsenal Story*, a colorized story booklet for children distributed to the Colorado public schools by the RMA, 1992, p. 2)

With the recent fall of the Iron Curtain the "patriotic defense effort" theme has lost some of its impetus. Nevertheless, by calling attention to our past dark history, the corporate voice of the Arsenal creates a sense of the vital role played by the Arsenal in the defense of our nation and effectively brings patriotic values to the public's attention.

### *Concern for Health*

Public Relations Director Bill Thomas expresses the difficulty of the rhetorical task the corporate voice must face:

In risk communication you cannot win-it's a no win situation. If you can get to a tie you've done well. We try to communicate in a very hostile setting . . . One of the things we must try to gain from them is their trust and confidence. (personal interview with Bill Thomas, Public Relations Director, RMA, April 5, 1993)

Gaining trust and confidence is a difficult task when a value such as health is perceived as being in jeopardy. As mentioned earlier, one approach commonly taken by organizations when communicating risk is to respond to public value concerns with "expert" opinion. This involves educating the public about technological assessments. Bill Thomas sees himself primarily as an educator responsible for educating the public:

I think there's a lot of people out there who need to be educated. I look at my job and my staff's not as practitioners of public relations but as educators. . . . The cleanup technology is expert technology. I have to bring it down to at least an eighth grade level. Sometimes it is very hard to do that with a program as technical as this. (Personal interview, April 5, 1993)

Expert assessment of potential health dangers is, of course, an essential part of risk communication. The public will need and demand to know what the experts have determined. The results of these risk assessments will often sound something like this:



The cumulative potential cancer risk estimated for the Offpost Study Area are 1 in 10,000 for Zone 1; 2 in 10,000 for Zone 2; 3 in 10,000 for Zone 3; 2 in 10,000 for Zone 4; 3 in 100,000 for Zone 5; and 7 in 100,000 for Zone 6. (Informational brochure distributed by the Arsenal, 1992)

While these are relevant figures for those who understand the comparative insignificance or significance of a 1 in 10,000 probability, they are meaningless to the layperson. The Arsenal has recognized this and made an effort to communicate technical information in such a way as to make it comprehensible to the layperson. For example, one public concern currently receiving a great deal of attention is the potential health hazards of the liquid waste incinerator which has recently begun to operate. The Army has responded to this concern with the following release:

"It would take the SQI [submerged quench incinerator] 134 years to emit the same amount of carbon monoxide generated in just one day of winter driving by Denver motorists. The SQI will emit the same amount of nitrogen oxide as 50 cars. According to the Denver Regional Council of Governments, during the afternoon peak rush hour, there are more than 469,000 vehicles on metro streets." (Brochure distributed by the Arsenal, 1992)

This analogy makes the information easily comprehensible to the non expert. Indeed, this has brought it down to an eighth grade level. Another example of this metaphorical approach can be seen in the following explanation of measured amounts:

"A number of hazardous compounds are present in Basin F liquid. However, they are present in low concentrations, in ppm (parts per million) or ppb (parts per billion) amounts. One part per million equals 0.0001 percent, equal to one penny in ten thousand dollars. One part per billion equals 0.0000001 percent by weight, or one penny in ten million dollars." (Informational brochure distributed by the Arsenal, 1992)

While these analogies bring the numbers into a comprehensible perspective, they do little to dispel concern for health. Concern stems not necessarily from the public's refusal or inability to employ logical, rational thought process based on statistical facts, no matter how easy to understand the information is. Public disquietude stems, in part, from the mistrust embedded in the context. Jeff Edson, RMA Project Manager for the State Health Department summarizes the problem. "Anything that comes from the Army will be questionable to some people. They don't want to hear it from the polluter" (personal interview, August 23, 1994). The non expert public has a tendency to mistrust statistics and may question the underlying motives of those who are communicating the information. The Army is seen as having self-serving economic and political interests that will engender questions concerning the validity of the information being communicated. Excerpts from transcripts of local television news coverage illustrate the public mistrust of the corporate voice. The following excerpts are in reference to the Arsenal's decision to build and operate a toxic waste incinerator to burn the ten and one half million gallons of toxic liquid that have were stored in tanks and ponds on the site:

(Environmental group leader) "They claim its a safe technology and a cheap technology. And we go half way with them to agree that it's certainly a cheap technology. But as far as being safe, no." (KMGH, 5/4/90, 5:00 PM)

(Environmental group leader) "These people have violated the laws for forty years, why should we trust them now?" (KMGH, 3/16/90, 10:00 PM)

(Environmental group leader) "The government is saying that it doesn't have to comply with its own laws and when it goofs up, they don't have to pay for any damages they might have caused." (KMGH, 8/19/92, 5:00 PM)

(Local resident) "And so our concerns are that the U.S. Army in its infinite wisdom, may have chosen a means that might be a threat to our community, our children, us, pets, animals, birds, trees." (KWGN, 9/15/92, 9:00 PM)

Public disquietude also stems from the fact that the expert's view of risk and the public's view of acceptability often fail to coincide. Probability risk assessment carries little weight when compared with health risk to our loved ones, even if that risk is very small. A risk probability equivalent to one penny in ten thousand dollars is not acceptable if that one penny represents a debilitating or fatal disease. Once again, the television news media offers an insight into the public's mistrust of scientific risk information:

(Reporter) "The state health department has done its own risk assessment. It figures the increased chance of getting cancer from the incinerator is only one in 20,000,000 for people on the Arsenal boundary."

Followed by:

(Denver mayor) "I'd be willing to bet that the health department staff that did that did not live in Montbello [a community near the RMA]." (KCNC, 1/11/93, 5:00 PM)

(Anchor) "The Army says 99.99 percent of it will be destroyed."

Followed by:

(Environmental group leader) "Our scientists concur that there is no such thing as 99.9% efficiency." (KCNC, 1/12/93, 5:00 PM)

(Army representative) "If you would do comparisons, it produces about as much [carbon monoxide] as 50 cars in the metropolitan area."

Followed by:

(Local resident holding baby) "In the past we've been assured that these things won't harm us, but afterwards we find out they do . . . Right now, I just don't believe in the incinerator." (KUSA, 1/11/90, 10:00 PM)

Faced with these rhetorical odds, the Arsenal has recognized the impossibility of diffusing public concern through probability assessment. The goal is not to diffuse public concern but to incorporate it into the decision making process. As Bradbury (1989) states:

Improved technical analyses are not the key to improved risk management and risk communication decisions. The risk management problem requires the development of institutional procedures for structuring critical dialogue among different perspectives and social groups." (p. 394)

The Arsenal has recognized the demands of citizens to participate in the decision making process and institutional procedures have been implemented to facilitate dialogue with the public. The public has been given numerous opportunities to participate in town meetings and information forums. A technical review committee has been established which includes representatives of local government and the public at large. In addition, the



Joint Administrative Record and Document Facility (JARDF) which maintains a log of all communications and administrative records is open to the public six days a week along with a telephone hot line for questions and concerns. While Superfund regulations require that the organization keep the community informed, the Arsenal feels that it has exceeded these requirements. Ruth Meekam, spokesperson for the RMA states:

We have taken a lot of initiatives over and above the CERCLA [Superfund] requirements. Based on indicators we have received from the public, we have been effective with reaching the community. We feel we have provided the information necessary for the community to form their own informed opinions." (Ruth Meekam, Spokesperson for the RMA, personal interview, August 23, 1994).

The Arsenal, in managing the value of health has made an effort to eliminate the expert versus value dialectic by presenting technical information in layperson's terms and by encouraging community involvement in the critical dialogue. In so doing they have created an interactive process which, while not dispelling the concerns of the public, gives them a forum to express those concerns and to become a part of the decision making process.

#### *Concern for Wildlife*

By far the most publicly exhibited theme of the Arsenal is the concern for wildlife. As one rides the tour bus through the site, the tour guide details the plant and animal life that abounds on the twenty-seven square miles of virtually undeveloped land. No mention is made of the degree of contamination and very little is said about the clean-up efforts that are underway. The tour bus stops at the visitor's center where a twenty minute video is shown which depicts the wildlife that is found at the site. Once again the discussion of the contamination is conspicuously absent. The film does include about a thirty second description of the Arsenal's past history: "The Arsenal was not always so pristine. With the advent of Second World War, the land was transformed into a giant war factory by the U.S. Army." Visitors on the tour also receive colorful brochures of the wildlife along with picture books and coloring books for the children.

The conspicuous absence of mention of what is one of the worst cases of ground and water contamination in the country may be construed as an attempt to distract the listener's attention from the unpleasant reality and to focus instead on a more congenial subject. This is what Crable (1990) refers to as "magic" in the form of sleight-of-hand:

The magic of magicians is based primarily on 'misdirection' and 'distraction.' As the audiences of magicians we look where we have been directed and see what we have been told to see. The magic is not that we see things 'appear' and 'disappear;' the magic is that we fail to see what is really occurring." (p. 123)

Concern for the wildlife on the Arsenal has been one of the main focuses of local citizens. While remedial efforts have put a stop to the obvious mortality of wildlife, there is still considerable on-site contamination and its long term effect on the wildlife of the area is still largely unknown.

The Army and its associates have done extensive ecological assessments

in an effort to evaluate the risks to plants and animals. The results are published and available to the public. On the basis of ecological risk assessment the Army concluded that in general the populations look good. There are, however, a number of areas remaining on the site that are potentially damaging to wildlife and a long term bio-monitoring plan is in effect.

While the probability risk assessment is part of the rhetorical campaign, by far the most persuasive tactic in managing the value of concern for wildlife is the tour itself. The wildlife at the Arsenal is abundant and spectacular to see. The Arsenal has a number of planned activities for public participation. These include, along with the tour, nature walks, eagle viewing, and a catch-and-release fishing program. In addition to these activities, special days are planned such as the "Bald Eagle Day" which are geared for family outdoor enjoyment.

All of these things have helped to create the image that the Arsenal is proud of and concerned about the wildlife and it appears to have been a successful value management campaign. When one sees first hand the beauty of the habitat and witnesses the abundant wildlife in a natural setting, it is hard to believe that there is any serious threat to their existence. Probability of risk carries little weight in comparison to this picture.

With urban sprawl stalled at the arsenal's boundary and contamination clean-up activities well under way, the wildlife haven at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal will continue to provide security for nature's family." (Taken from the twenty minute visitor's film)

However, the fact remains that the Rocky Mountain Arsenal is a two billion dollar Superfund site and cleanup is expected to take 20 to 30 years to complete. One must question whether or not the intensive wildlife campaign is being used to divert the attention of the public from the contamination problems. The Competing message of the EPA emphasizes the fact that potential risk to neighboring communities and to the wildlife still exists and will remain for many years to come. Connally Mears, EPA Manager for the Rocky Mountain Arsenal explains:

The Arsenal parties [U. S. Army, Shell Oil Company, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Colorado Department of Health, and EPA] are quite effective when we can work together on a common message to the public. Since the EPA and the State have independent responsibilities to involve the public, and because our viewpoints differ significantly from those of the Army, Shell, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we supplement their programs via independent communications with the public. These communications share our views on the contamination and encourage the public to share their concerns about cleanup issues. (Personal interview, August 23, 1994)

It has been a far-reaching, multi-faceted campaign that has drawn on the vast financial and expert resources of the U.S. Army and Shell Oil Company. Kenneth Conright, Environmental Health Manager for the Tri-County Health Department recognizes the extent of the campaign: "The Arsenal has bent over backwards to get its message out. It would be hard to do more" (Personal interview, August 23, 1994). The campaign has set the "concern for wildlife" agenda and opposing messages have been overshadowed by the lack of necessary resources to compete with the resources of the RMA.



## Conclusion

The cleanup at the Arsenal will be a long, difficult and complicated process which requires expertise, technology, and collaboration among the agencies involved as well as local citizens. Balancing expert technology and public values is a difficult task if the two points of view fail to coincide as they frequently do. Any campaign which seeks to dispel public concern by means educating the public about the results of expert risk assessment alone is doomed to failure. Recognizing this, the juristic voice of the RMA has emphasized public values in its rhetorical campaign.

Patriotism, concern for health, and concern for wildlife comprise the impetus of the rhetorical campaign; concern for wildlife has been by far the most publicly exhibited theme. Nature hikes, Eagle Watch days, wildlife calendars and colorful brochures have emphasized to the public the pride and concern with which the Arsenal views its wildlife. The RMA is perhaps the only Superfund site in the nation that distributes coloring books to children.

By incorporating these human values into the rhetorical campaign, the juristic voice of the RMA has executed and continues to execute an effective campaign. Bringing human values to the forefront of public discourse has served to articulate and reinforce these values and set the human value agenda. However, in analyzing their rhetorical tactics, one is disquieted by and aware that the attention of the public is being diverted from the real issue of the serious contamination problem that remains on the site—a diversion which is beneficial to promoting the RMA's public image and overcoming public opposition.

We live in an era in which technical advances have left us spinning. As science advances, the moral and ethical dilemmas resulting from our mastery and exploitation of natural resources increases. Values and science are incrementally and inevitably linked. The corporate rhetor who recognizes the link between science and human values will be a powerfully persuasive voice. Perhaps too persuasive if human values are used to draw attention from the real issues thereby quiescing public reaction.

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## COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON ELECTRONIC RESEARCH

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A critical issue facing the policy debate community involves the recent surge in electronic research (ER). With the advent of wide spread access to the internet, debaters and debate researchers have capitalized on opportunities to access and download information from electronic databases. Such practices have significantly changed debate research, and have influenced the nature of debate as well. Time once spent at the library is now often shifted home or to some other access point for receiving and printing material. Computer technology and information networking make access to a modem and account codes a critical part of a squad's research effort. Not all research is done electronically, as most successful programs will attest, but the extent and the effects of this practice can hardly be ignored. At the National Debate Tournament, a room, termed by some as the "war room," is now traditionally set aside for computers to be set up for researching the latest new case or position. The transition to the internet society is now solidly underway in policy debate.

The effects of electronic research, given the responses in this survey and the observable evidence on the debate circuit, should be given some serious thought by the community. Electronic research will remain a dominant and particularly characteristic feature of the evolution of debate in the 1990s. As the internet grows, the dual possibilities of quality and breadth will make access to this information critical to competitive success, and will also increase the quality of arguments and clash.

The community faces a significant challenge in dealing with this issue, at least in part because of the polarization of attitudes about the ethics and the effects of electronic research. Many respondents, for example, are particularly concerned about inequities in access to electronic databases. Some schools do not have access to particular databases, and others have trouble even paying for or gaining access to computers. Another affect noted by many is that more scholarly material, including books and journal articles, may be neglected in favor of newspaper articles or wire releases. On the positive side, respondents did note that it is more difficult to retain the advantage of a "surprise" affirmative, since research is available as soon as a laptop is setup and plugged into a phone jack. Likewise, several respondents applauded the equalizing effect of nationwide access to a common set of electronic resources. More national and international information is available to programs and debaters, especially those located in rural locations.

One of the more significant effects is the increasing availability and use of up-to-date information on national and international affairs. Debate ar-

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Prepared under the auspices of the Policy Caucus.

SPEAKER AND GAVEL, Vol. 31, Nos. 1-4 (1994), 111-130.



guments, now susceptible to daily "updates," strategically privilege recency and timeliness. Having recent, short quotes with soundbite punch can be a real advantage, especially on political and economic issues. Electronic research has played a definite role in bringing political effects positions into greater vogue. For instance, a recent focus on voting and turnover in political bodies, and on interactions between the branches of government, has been topic-related (i.e. Commander-in-Chief and Crime), but has also been spurred by the availability of day-to-day information on popularity, treaty ratifications in Congress, bipartisanship struggles, economic statistics, and other daily workings of the institutions of government. This information seems at times a mixed blessing. On one hand, it is good to see debaters squared off over current affairs, familiarizing themselves with the inner political workings of the system. On the other hand, this debate often seems shallow, a recency "game," only peripherally related to the topic being addressed. Either way, the focus on recent updated evidence seems a foreseeable feature of the future of the activity, given the ease of access and the evident competitive utility of electronic updates. The internet, of course, is still evolving. Changes in internet access and scope will eventually open up new avenues to better and more thorough sources of evidence, and some of the quality of evidence objections to electronic research may diminish.

Responding to some of these concerns, this survey was sponsored by the Policy Caucus as an opportunity to assess attitudes, feelings, and practices with regard to electronic research. As part of its ongoing efforts to maximize community input into issues affecting the future of debate, the Policy Caucus hopes that these results—positive and negative—are duly considered by members of the community both for shaping future policies on electronic research, and for reevaluating the practices of individuals and of programs. In addition to quantitative data, which are discussed and then presented in abbreviated form in **Appendix 1**, written comments were solicited and are reproduced in **Appendix 2**. Readers will find many of the written comments interesting and far more expressive than this brief report. The first section of the report provides a summary of the results, and the second section offers some implications and thoughts about the future of electronic research.

## Results

### *Demographics*

Out of approximately 250 surveys distributed at the 1994 National Debate Tournament (NDT), 108 were returned, including the input of 17 program directors, 26 coaches, 57 debaters, and 8 others (mainly hired judges). The sample included a wide mix of programs, with different levels of activity in policy debate. In regional competition, 11% of the respondent's programs rarely reached elimination rounds, 18% frequently did, and 73% almost always reached the elimination rounds. At national tournaments, 45% of the programs rarely made the elimination rounds, 13% frequently did, and 41% almost always qualified for the elimination rounds. At the extremes, then, 11% (12) rarely reached the elimination rounds of regional tournaments, while 41% (44) almost always reached the elimination rounds of national

Table 1. Personal and Squad Electronic Research

Responding Group	Amount of Evidence Cut	Personal Research Done Electron- ically	Squad Research Done Electron- ically
Overall	2,519	41.6%	48.2%
Large Squad	3,329	41.3%	47.9%
Medium Squad	3,507	40.9%	45.9%
Small Squad	1,275	42.4%	50.0%
Always Clear National Tournaments	3,990	37.1%	48.0%
Rarely Clear Regional Tournaments	1,544	52.2%	51.2%
Program Directors	950	46.8%	45.0%
Coaches	1,459	43.8%	53.6%
Debaters	2,839	40.8%	48.0%

tournaments. All respondents together averaged 9.31 years of participation in debate; program directors averaged 20.7 years experience in debate, coaches 10.2 years, debaters 5.5 years, and other respondents 14.4 years in debate.

#### *Evidence Gathering*

Respondents cut a rough average of 2500 pieces of evidence during the season.<sup>1</sup> Denying a direct relationship between squad size and evidence gathering, individuals from large squads (40) averaged 3329 pieces, medium squads (24) averaged 3507 pieces, and small squads (41) averaged 1275. Individuals from schools always clearing to elimination rounds at national tournaments (44) averaged 3990 pieces of evidence, while individuals from schools rarely clearing to elimination rounds at regional tournaments (12) averaged 1544 pieces of evidence. Program directors averaged 950 pieces of evidence, coaches 1459 pieces of evidence, and debaters 2839 pieces of evidence.

Overall, respondents thought that 42% of their own personal research was conducted electronically, while they felt that 48% of their squad's research was done electronically. Results presented in Table 1 indicate that most respondents felt that their squad relied more on electronic research than they personally did.

In terms of different means of accessing electronic databases, respondents were allowed to mark more than one of the available answers. Most (52.8%) gained access through a library account code, 3.7% had a personal account, 32.4% used a law student account, 23.1% used a team account, 2.7% used a corporate account, and 19.4% indicated that they used other means of access.

<sup>1</sup> These estimates are rough, obviously, and do not reflect comments entered on the surveys like "lots," or "tons."



### *Influence on Research*

The quantitative responses were all measured using a five-point Likert scale, with responses circling either Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, or Strongly Agree. With 3 representing a neutral point, responses closer to 1 express disagreement, and responses closer to 5 express agreement. There seemed to be general agreement that electronic research has had a negative effect on the development of library and research skills (mean of 3.9, Standard Deviation (SD) = 1.33), and there was some feeling that it has made researchers "lazy" in their research habits (mean of 3.3, SD = 1.22). Electronic research has not, respondents felt, reduced the research burden (mean of 2.6, SD = 1.43), freed up time for other pursuits (mean of 2.49, SD = 1.29), or increased the quality of research (mean of 2.78, SD = 1.24). While opinion seemed fairly evenly distributed as to whether this new research tool causes information overload (mean of 2.95, SD = 1.29), most did not feel that it resulted in "overresearching" to the point that it hurt debater's academics (mean of 2.43, SD = 1.13). By a slim margin, 51% of respondents agreed (37) or strongly agreed (16) that electronic research has made it easier to participate in policy debate (mean of 3.22, SD = 1.26).

This last point is somewhat puzzling, since 61% of respondents previously disagreed (33) or strongly disagreed (28) that electronic research has reduced the research burden in debate. On closer inspection, there were significant differences between the program directors and the debaters on this question. The debaters (mean of 2.94, SD = 1.41) felt that electronic research had reduced the research burden significantly more ( $t(28) = -2.3, p < .014$ ) than the program directors (mean of 2, SD = 1.33). There were also significant differences here between the levels of program success. Individuals from schools always clearing to elimination rounds at national tournaments (44) felt that electronic research had not reduced the research burden (mean of 2.64, SD = 1.46), while individuals from schools rarely reaching the elimination rounds of regional tournaments (12) felt that it had reduced the research burden (mean of 3.25, SD = .92). The difference between these groups was significant ( $t(28) = 2.0, p < .027$ ) and may reflect the breadth of information sources necessary for success in all areas and types of discussion. These two groups also felt differently about the effects of electronic research on the quality of research. Individuals from less successful programs<sup>2</sup> felt that the quality has increased (mean of 3.33, SD = 1.10), while respondents from the more successful programs felt quite differently ( $t(21) = 1.82, p < .04$ ) that electronic research has not increased the quality of research (mean of 2.73, SD = 1.27).

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<sup>2</sup> While the terms "successful program" and "less successful program" have negative connotations, this distinction is based on self-perceptions of performance in reaching the elimination rounds. It is a pragmatic distinction that admittedly does not capture the range of opinion across different programs with different goals and perspectives. These terms are not intended to slight other alternative views and criteria for success.

### *Access Issues*

Access, as evidenced by the strength of this survey, remains a key issue for the community to address. At a general level, 75.1% of those surveyed agreed (33) or strongly agreed (48) that database access is not equal across different schools that participate in debate. The responses to this question (mean of 4.07, SD = 1.11) indicate that there are serious equity problems for electronic research, even with differences of opinion within the responding groups. Large squads (40) felt significantly less strongly ( $t(65) = 2.93, p < .002$ ) about this issue (mean of 3.64, SD = 1.32) than small squads (41) felt (mean of 4.34, SD = .9). Successful programs (44) also felt significantly less strongly ( $t(42) = 2.99, p < .002$ ) about equal access (mean of 3.69, SD = 1.32) than less successful programs (12), who expressed considerable concern about the lack of equity (mean of 4.41, SD = .64). There were also differences on this issue between debaters (mean of 3.85, SD = 1.27) and program directors (mean of 4.58, SD = .60), with the programs directors much more concerned about equal access than the debaters ( $t(60) = 3.39, p < .0006$ ).

There seemed to be general agreement that database access was unfair to schools without accounts (mean of 3.58, SD = 1.36), and that electronic research was unfair to schools lacking money for laptops and account access (mean of 3.50, SD = 1.37). There was not, however, substantial agreement on whether electronic research hurts small schools. In fact, given the written comments and the results on this question (mean of 2.83, SD = 1.38), many respondents felt that electronic research is an equalizer in terms of access, at least for those small schools who do have access.

There was agreement on the issue of illegal access. Sixty-seven percent of respondents agreed (32) or strongly agreed (35) that illegal access to databases is widespread (mean of 3.84, SD = 1.09). There seemed to be further sentiment that fostering illegal access teaches debaters wrong values (mean of 3.25, SD = 1.41), and that illegal access jeopardizes debate programs (mean of 3.13, SD = 1.19). There was no sentiment for the proposition that illegal access jeopardizes the activity of debate (mean of 2.88, SD = 1.20), and the effect of illegal access on individual careers drew as close to a neutral response as possible (mean of 3.01, SD = 1.18). Predictably, there were significant differences between the program directors and the debaters on the effects of illegal access. Program directors felt (mean of 4.41, SD = .84) significantly more strongly ( $t(44) = 6.21, p < .00001$ ) than debaters (mean of 2.74, SD = 1.35) that illegal access teaches debaters the wrong values. Likewise, program directors felt (mean of 3.76, SD = 1.11) more strongly ( $t(27) = 3.22, p < .002$ ) than debaters (mean of 2.78, SD = 1.11) that illegalities jeopardize debate programs, they felt (mean of 3.53, SD = 1.11) more strongly ( $t(26) = 3.19, p < .002$ ) than debaters (mean of 2.53, SD = 1.11) that illegalities jeopardize the activity of debate, and they felt (mean of 3.52, SD = 1.09) more strongly ( $t(28) = 2.72, p < .005$ ) than debaters (mean of 2.71, SD = 1.16) that illegal access jeopardizes careers.

### *Affects on Arguments and Debates*

Most respondents, 71%, agreed (50) or strongly agreed (23) that electronic research has lead to more on-point case evidence and more clash (mean of



3.69, SD = 1.11). They also felt that electronic research has increased access to foreign affairs information (mean of 4.09, SD = 1.13), and that this new tool for research puts a premium on recency in deciding debates (mean of 4.10, SD = .92). Many felt that electronic research makes it easier to defend against new cases (mean of 3.85, SD = 1.01). Forty-eight percent disagreed (36) or strongly disagreed (13) that electronic research has increased the quality of arguments (mean of 2.81, SD = 1.21), while 68.3% agreed (39) or strongly agreed (30) that it has decreased exposure to and use of academic sources and books (mean of 3.69, SD = 1.25). There was substantial disagreement (mean of 2.3, SD = 1.16) with the possibilities of evidence fabrication and distortion, since 59% either disagreed (31) or strongly disagreed (28) that electronic research has increased problems in this area.

### *Judgements and Policy Options*

In responding to overall questions about the value of electronic research, a general sense of this value did seem to emerge. Most, 54.5%, agreed (29) or strongly agreed (25) that access to current and foreign events information was worth the problems of equity and skill development (mean of 3.51, SD = 1.23). The flip side of that question was also asked, and overall 45% disagreed (26) or strongly disagreed (19) that equity concerns are more important than quick access and ease of research (mean of 2.82, SD = 1.31). Program directors, again, have more concerns on this issue. They felt (mean of 3.29, SD = 1.12) that equity concerns were more important than ease of access and research, which was significantly different ( $t(36) = 2.34, p < .012$ ) from the debater's perceptions of this comparison (mean of 2.71, SD = 1.443). Overall, respondents did not feel that electronic research has had a negative effect on policy debate (mean of 2.55, SD = 1.27), and instead felt that over time, electronic research will be a significant benefit to policy debate (mean of 3.66, SD = 1.16).

The policy options offered for reaction by the community evoked very clear responses. The highest mean rating for the survey was returned on Question # 28, the issue of the NDT negotiating with a database company to gain account access (mean of 4.37, SD = 1.03). Eighty-five percent of the respondents agreed (22) or strongly agreed (63) that this should be considered by the debate community. Many of the written comments referred to Question #28, some of them expressed reservations about both the feasibility and the desirability of such contact, but the general sentiment in favor was strong. There was a definite rejection of any attempt to prohibit the use of electronic research from rounds (mean of 1.65, SD = 1.11), but there was sentiment for some action to be taken by the community. Overall, 55% of the community disagreed (23) or strongly disagreed (33) that the debate community should take no action at this time (mean of 2.43, SD = 1.32). Opinion seemed fairly split overall about the desirability of establishing standards of evidence to address some of the problems of electronic research (mean of 2.96, SD = 1.40). Interesting in this regard is that large squads felt that standards should not be adopted (mean of 2.34, SD = 1.35), while small squads felt (mean of 3.22, SD = 1.39) much more strongly that some standards should be adopted ( $t(79) = 3.31, p < .0006$ ). Program directors also felt (mean

of 3.29,  $SD = 1.27$ ) significantly more strongly about this issue ( $t(32) = 1.77$ ,  $p < .04$ ) than debaters (mean of 2.81,  $SD = 1.46$ ).

### Implications

One initial point about the survey itself should be addressed. Several comments were made about the bias apparent in the questions, and about the need to introduce more randomness in the survey administration. Both of these comments are essentially true, but there were no readily available alternatives at the time the survey was conducted. Some respondents perceived bias because the questions frequently referred to the negative effects of electronic research, and that focus was, in fact, a central concern of the author. The questions were written to address some perceived problems with the use of electronic research, and that orientation was apparent. Given the overall positive response of the community to the issues, however, the questions did not seem to strongly influence respondents against electronic research. Two of the comparative questions were poorly phrased, but even those "double-barreled" questions elicited a relatively clear on-balance assessment. Greater randomness might have increased the generalizability of the results, but there did seem to be a fair representation of a cross-section of attendees at the 1994 NDT, and alternative procedures would have involved selection and follow-up efforts beyond the time availability of the author, and the needs of the community at this point. The results of the survey are presented here not as a complete picture of policy debate attitudes toward electronic research, but as a preliminary assay of some perspectives of some participants at the year-end championship tournament.

The first implication for consideration is the issue of access and equity. There is some indication that current patterns of access to electronic research favor schools with budgets to afford accounts, and also result in illegal uses of account codes. There seems to be interest in initiating negotiations with particular database companies, with various possibilities of securing two or three accounts for smaller schools, identifying key hours and months for access, and/or certifying programs eligible to use databases (school has official account, etc.). Considerable skepticism is also expressed about the workability of any means of control, and about whether the debate community possesses the degree of cohesion and collective clout necessary to successfully negotiate such an agreement.

At a more general level, many respondents feel that electronic research is an equalizer for smaller programs. One coach commented that there are "always access discrepancies. Georgetown has immediate access to Congress and the Library of Congress. Small rural schools don't. ER equalizes this inequality." Another coach maintains that

... the benefits outweigh the negatives—esp. if the equity problems are resolved. ER is the best alternative for small/medium sized programs to compete with programs with grad asst., more than one coach, etc. I think these electronic programs bring uniqueness debates into the real world...

Finally, as one enthusiastic debater puts it, "ER kicks ass. It's especially useful at the NDT when new cases come out. It helps small schools too b/c they



get access to materials they normally could not get." While there is considerable concern about the equality of access to electronic databases, and a fair amount of skepticism about different ways to correct this problem, there is a reasonable agreement that such access can equalize traditional research barriers facing smaller rural schools.

A second implication, of course, concerns the nature of this evidence and its effects on the debate process. Many respondents noted the short, "blippy" nature of electronically researched evidence. One debater observed that electronic research "has substantially decreased student's research skills in the library. Additionally, the quality of evidence has reduced. A majority of cards from ER are repetitive (i.e. one AP report republished by different newspapers). Also, they often contain claims that lack warrants." A program director notes in this regard that "we are moving to shorter cards. The community had just moved to "long" cards, which made for better quality argumentation, it moved us away from blip arguments. Lexis is moving us back to the one-liners." While this may be true to a degree, what becomes clear, especially after looking at the differing responses of more and less successful programs noted above, is that electronic research has a role to play in fostering quality debate, but it should be a limited role in an overall context of the larger body of literature available on the topic. One debater makes this very clear:

ER makes it easier to debate new cases at the tourney they are broken, and makes it easier to find good uniqueness evidence. However, good debate is still premised on an understanding of the issues one is advancing and targeted ER is insufficient for that—particularly at the beginning of a topic when one has to read huge chunks of topic literature to even know what to ER. Given the inefficiency in terms of cost and download time for large research assignments v. copying, I think good debaters continue to rely on "paper" research, supplemented by ER.

The ease of translating this advice into coaching practice remains to be seen. Program directors and coaches should, however, give significant thought to explicitly integrating electronic and non-electronic sources of evidence.

One effect that has been noted by several respondents is the advent of the "war room" at the NDT. At the moment, there is considerable motivation to continue this practice, especially given the perceived importance of that tournament and the frequent introduction of new cases. Some debaters and coaches, however, see it as something straight out of *Clockwork Orange*, a contributing factor to the burnout of debaters at the upper level of competition. One debater comments that

I think it makes debaters work too hard at tournaments. They become unfeeling and manic when they should be enjoying themselves and the opportunity to make new friends. The "war room" at the NDT is like a bad science fiction movie, everyone just stares at their screens and doesn't socialize.

The social effect may not be a unique causal consequence of electronic research at the NDT, but it is hard to deny that the increase in specificity and recency of evidence does have some tradeoffs with relaxation and socialization. The balance of these two values will probably continue to be answered in the drive for competitive success.

A final implication is simply that this issue should be addressed by members of the community. It is very tempting to chalk some of these effects up to the inevitability of the internet society and hope that the improvements in quality and scope of access come soon. Many respondents see both negative and positive effects, but ultimately conclude that the benefits either are worth it now, or will eventually outweigh the disadvantages. The current situation, however, still needs some attention. A program director argues that

With proper educational controls, access to the "information highway" would be a good thing. We could teach students computer application that will be mainstream in a few years. But right now, Lexis abuse is "outta control." We're teaching our students all about fraud, theft, copyright infringement, etc.

The analogy to the inception of the information age is aptly drawn by another program director:

The use of ER is in its infancy. The problems associated with the advent of this technology models the problems that are facing society with the information age. There is a definite rich-poor gap with certain schools having access and others who don't. The technology is not inherently bad but some of the issues about the use need to be addressed by the debate community.

This survey was conducted to bring some of these problems and the benefits to light, and to lend credence to efforts to assure legitimate equal access to the power of electronic research. The Policy Caucus is pleased to present these results to the community, at least in the hope that we may yet avoid the totality of one debater's response to the survey: "Lexis/Nexis owns me! I would kill to support it!"



Appendix 1. Table of Survey Results

Question	N	Mean	SD
1. ER negative effect on library and research skills	106	3.49	1.33
2. ER reduced research burden	105	2.63	1.43
3. ER freed up time for academic and other pursuits	105	2.49	1.29
4. ER causes information overload	105	2.95	1.27
5. ER increased quality of research	105	2.78	1.24
6. ER made researchers lazy in research habits	105	3.33	1.22
7. ER results in "overresearching" and hurts academics	104	2.43	1.13
8. ER made it easier to participate in policy debate	104	3.22	1.26
9. Database access not equal across schools	105	4.07	1.11
10. ER unfair to schools without accounts	104	3.58	1.36
11. ER hurts small schools	104	2.83	1.38
12. ER unfair to schools lacking computer and database money	104	3.50	1.37
13. Illegal access to databases is widespread	103	3.84	1.09
14. Fostering illegal access teaches wrong values	102	3.25	1.41
15. Illegal access jeopardizes debate programs	103	3.13	1.19
16. Illegal access jeopardizes the activity of debate	102	2.88	1.20
17. Illegal access jeopardizes careers	103	3.01	1.18
18. ER leads to more on-point case evidence and clash	102	3.69	1.11
19. ER increased access to foreign affairs information	102	4.09	1.13
20. ER puts premium on recency in deciding debates	102	4.10	.92
21. ER made it easier to defend against new cases	102	3.85	1.01
22. ER increased the quality of arguments	102	2.81	1.21
23. ER increased fabrication and distortion of evidence	100	2.3	1.16
24. ER decreased exposure to and use of academic sources and books	101	3.69	1.25
24. ER access to current/foreign events worth equity and skill problems (researcher error in repeating numeral 24)	99	3.51	1.23
25. Equity concerns more important than access and ease of research	100	2.82	1.31
26. ER has had a negative effect on debate	100	2.55	1.27
27. Over time, ER will be a significant benefit to debate	100	3.66	1.16
28. NDT should negotiate with database company to gain account access	100	4.37	1.03
29. NDT should disallow ER from debate rounds	100	1.65	1.11
30. NDT should establish standards for ER evidence	100	2.96	1.40
31. Debate community should take no action at this time	100	2.43	1.32

Appendix 1. Extended.

Strongly Disagree (N/%)	Disagree (N/%)	Neutral (N/%)	Agree (N/%)	Strongly Agree (N/%)
11/10.4%	18/17.0%	14/13.2%	34/32.1%	29/27.3%
28/26.7%	33/31.4%	11/10.5%	16/15.2%	17/16.2%
29/27.6%	32/30.5%	18/17.1%	16/15.2%	10/9.5%
12/11.4%	36/34.3%	18/17.1%	23/21.9%	16/15.2%
15/14.2%	38/36.1%	19/18.1%	21/20.0%	12/11.4%
7/6.7%	25/23.8%	20/19.0%	32/30.5%	21/20.0%
24/23.0%	36/34.6%	24/23.0%	15/14.4%	5/4.8%
12/11.5%	22/21.11%	17/16.3%	37/35.6%	16/15.4%
5/4.8%	6/5.7%	13/12.4%	33/31.4%	48/45.7%
10/9.6%	17/16.3%	16/15.3%	25/24.0%	36/34.6%
23/22.1%	23/22.1%	23/22.1%	18/17.3%	17/16.3%
11/10.6%	15/14.4%	16/15.3%	29/27.9%	32/30.8%
5/4.8%	5/4.8%	26/25.2%	32/31.0%	35/34.0%
17/16.7%	12/11.8%	20/19.6%	29/28.4%	23/22.5%
8/7.8%	27/26.2%	27/26.2%	25/24.3%	16/15.5%
11/10.8%	34/33.3%	27/26.5%	16/15.7%	14/13.7%
10/9.7%	28/27.2%	28/27.2%	24/23.3%	13/12.6%
4/3.9%	17/16.7%	8/7.8%	50/49.0%	23/22.5%
1/.1%	9/8.8%	7/6.9%	54/53.0%	30/29.4%
2/2.0%	6/5.9%	9/8.8%	48/47.0%	37/36.3%
1/.1	14/13.7%	13/12.7%	45/44.1%	29/28.4%
13/12.7%	36/35.3%	21/20.6%	21/20.6%	11/10.8%
28/28.0%	31/31.0%	26/26.0%	8/8.0%	8/8.0%
7/6.9%	12/11.9%	12/11.9%	39/38.6%	30/29.7%
9/9.1%	11/11.1%	25/25.2%	29/29.3%	25/25.2%
19/19.0%	26/26.0%	23/23.0%	18/18.0%	14/14.0%
25/25.0%	29/29.0%	22/22.0%	14/14.0%	10/0.0%
8/8.0%	6/6.0%	24/24.0%	36/36.0%	26/26.0%
4/4.0%	3/3.0%	8/8.0%	22/22.0%	63/63.0%
64/64.0%	22/22.0%	5/5.0%	3/3.0%	6/6.0%
23/23.0%	17/17.0%	15/15.0%	31/31.0%	14/14.0%
33/33.0%	23/23.0%	22/22.0%	12/12.0%	10/10.0%



## Appendix 2. Written Commentary

Key: pd = Program Director, c = Coach, d =Debater, o = Other

**What effects do you think electronic research is having on the activity of policy debate? Are these effects on balance positive or negative?**

1c. More ev less interactive arguments within the round—closer rounds, tougher to judge.

6d. I think that electronic research definitely has a positive impact on rounds in which both teams have the opportunity to use it. It provides recent evidence, which helps in establishing true or more realistic scenarios, and it provides opportunities for a wider range of resources/periodical research. A large newspaper in one region is not necessarily available in another.

8c. 1. I think it provides schools w/bad libraries an opportunity to find evidence they would otherwise not have access to.

2. Greatly expand the possible argumentation ground. Debaters need to be taught to read evidence and analyze it if it is so poor.

3. Recency of evidence has become a very popular claim. Usually there is no reason for most of the claims.

9d. ER makes it easier to debate new cases at the tourney they are broken and makes it easier to find good uniqueness evidence. However, good debate is still premised on an understanding of the issues one is advancing and targeted ER is insufficient for that—particularly at the beginning of a topic when one has to read huge chunks of topic literature to even know what to ER. Given this the inefficiency in terms of cost and download time for large research assignments v. copying, I think good debaters continue to rely on “paper” research, supplemented by ER. I have debated for 4 years at a huge program and cut lots of cards but the NDT was the first time I’ve used Lexis. I’ve never used telnet to get evidence.

10c. ER has contributed to a lack of qualified sources with recency often as the only standard of evaluation. This, though, will be rectified soon. More and more academic literature is becoming available and the breadth of info available online has vastly expanded. ER (with full text searches) also allows access to info which other indexes or footnote searches might not produce. It provides a great check on these more traditional methods.

12d. I think ER destroys analytical skills that are obtained from reading primary source material. It should be limited to a supplemental uniqueness, etc. role and force people to think.

13d. It has substantially decreased students research skills in the library. Additionally, the quality of evidence has reduced. A majority of cards from ER are repetitive (i.e. one AP report republished by different newspapers). Also, they often contain claims that lack warrants.

14c. Much less debate on the quality of evidence, short term but substantial equity drawbacks. But let’s face it, electronic information is the future, and as more scholarly work gets added to the database, and as we learn to handle the info deluge, the benefits will be enormous. And if the information highway becomes a reality, that will substantially ease equity problems.

15c. It's eliminating/decreasing the analytical aspect of evidence; evidence off of current databases is to the point and conclusive rather than providing reasons for the facts.

16d. ER turns debate into an activity based on the immediate acquisition of evidence and not one based upon educational development attainable through the use of higher level literature. The effect of this is to make good debaters out of wealthy, computerized students instead of intelligent students.

17d. People are concentrating more on current increasing and decreasing arguments versus researching substantive issues. In the short term, this is hurting the educational value of the activity, but I think that in the long term, the benefits of ER will be substantial.

19c. On balance positive. There is always "access" discrepancies. G-Town has immediate access to Congress and Library of Congress. Small rural schools don't. ER equalizes this inequality.

23d. It drives people away from the library in pursuit of "postdate." It prompts blippy, popular media sources. It undermines stability of "good" arguments as the literature changes from day to day and makes the shifts relevant. It prompts reliance on a currently prohibitively expensive resource. This may or may not be good depending on how fast L/Nexis becomes commonplace.

27. 1. Attributing causality to ER undercuts the values of debate—debaters utilize access to ER and are individually responsible for the uses to which it is put.

2. If ER has been used as a crutch, that provides a competitive disadvantage to those teams/debaters, which means they won't do well. To do well, teams must use ER well.

30d. 1. Experience using the latest career-related research tools. 2. More access to journals found in large university libraries. Both of these effects are entirely positive, and so the net balance falls heavily to the benefit side.

32d. On balance, the effects are positive. Easier access to information makes most debates better, especially at the NDT where new cases are whipped out frequently.

33d. It is equalizing research burdens between small and large schools—everyone gains access to the same database even if their school library is small. It also makes sure you have some evidence on almost everything in this now-evidence driven activity.

34c. As with any tech, there are trade offs. But if the NDT could negotiate a deal with Lexis—then smaller schools would have a better shot at breaking into the inner circle.

37d. On balance—ER allows debaters to have more recent and on point evidence, which is good. It also increases database research skills which are helpful for lawyers/accountants etc. ER, however, has decreased the value of new arguments, people just Lexis up a file in 20 minutes!

39d. ER makes evidence in rounds more recent and specific. It also bypasses the team with more resources. However, I think ER helps debate in the long run because the arguments are more true and small teams w/money can get better research.



40pd. We get short evidence without context (b/c there is no context to get). Debaters are rapidly losing contact with the library. This is disheartening since it means we are losing in-depth analysis in books and non-electronic journals.

On-balance this is bad.

41d. While ER has improved the recency and quality of uniqueness answers, it definitely has shifted the focus of research. Debaters will frequently do nothing but ER on a case, which is insufficient. You don't get the quality of analytical argument in the evidence, you don't get the entire context many times and it just doesn't help increase research skills.

42d. Increase amount and quality of arguments.

46d. On balance positive effects, but it probably does decrease the amount of academic research. That's fine with me though, since I will continue to do academic research and the evidence produced will be better than from Lexis. However ER also has access to law reviews and Court decisions, which produce quality evidence, Lexis is also expanding to include some academic journals.

51pd. The use of ER is in its infancy. The problems associated with the advent of this technology models the problems that are facing society with the information age. There is a definite rich-poor gap with certain schools having access and others who don't. The technology is not inherently bad but some of the issues about the use need to be addressed by the debate community.

53pd. With proper educational controls, access to the "information highway" would be a good thing. We could teach students computer application that will be mainstream in a few years. But right now, Lexis abuse is "outta control." We're teaching our students all about fraud, theft, copyright infringement, etc.

54c. ER helps small schools with access but crushes small schools without it.

55d. ER makes policy debate more dynamic, exciting, and challenging. It serves to make research more useful and support the analysis that can be gained from sources like books and govt. documents.

56pd. Potential to equalize access/balance disadv. of smaller library. Encourages, esp. at Nationals, a huge number of research drones.

57d. The benefits outweigh the drawbacks for our squad—with a limited access to many periodicals, ER allows us to acquire evidence on topics that we might otherwise lack. It's difficult for me to comment on the effect it has on other schools, but I think it is on the whole advantageous.

60c. Increased frequency of case switching.

61pd. It's killing our program.

63d. I believe there are potential problems with ER b/c it increases the likelihood that a debater will not adequately develop effective research skills, will become too dependent on ER and many times it lessens the quality of the evidence i.e. most is staffwriters rather than policy journals, experts, etc.

64c. I think the benefits outweigh the negatives—esp. if the equity problems are resolved. ER is the best alternative for small/medium sized programs

to compete with programs with grad asst., more than one coach, etc. I think these electronic programs bring uniqueness debates into the real world—obviously some mags and even newspapers don't cover certain issues except for once every 2 months.

65d. Great cards. Equalizer between big and small schools. Better quality debates.

69c. Quality of evidence is substantially decreased. As a judge it makes it very difficult to evaluate source quality and credibility. Widens the gap between the "have" and "have not" programs which I believe makes it very difficult to create new programs or to draw in programs from competing debate options.

72d. It acts as an equalizer for small schools who do not have access to all the opportunities large schools do.

73pd. What I've noted is that we are moving to shorter cards. The community had just moved to "long" cards, which made for better quality argumentation, it moved us away from blip arguments. Lexis is moving us back to the one-liners. ER does allow our small school to keep up with the bigger squads.

74d. It's impossible to tell. This is really only year 3 of the explosion as far as I can tell.

76c. A school with a smaller library (or a geographically remote school) can still gain access to major law journals and govt docs. I see ER as being of more benefit to smaller schools. Schools with big libraries don't have to have Lexis, schools with little libraries do.

77c. Too research (i.e. card) oriented—not enough analysis of evidence or issues in the debate. Analysis of research becomes "we post-date" with no discussion of its relevance.

81d. Negative—A. Establishes a nearly unbreakable hierarchy in rounds between those with access and those without. B. It has greatly diminished use of academic journals, since they provide fewer flaming cards and tend to be more cautious in tone.

82c. Without Lexis/Nexis our crappy library does not allow us any chance of keeping up with evidence demands. ER has actually decreased the amount of money we have to spend on copying, etc.

83d. I think its put an inordinately high standard on current information and has dissuaded debaters from getting better, more analytical evidence from books and magazines. It has increased the neg's ground by giving more foreign policy and political disads. Ultimately the effects are neither positive or neg just different.

86d. ER is making debates lazy, tense and unfriendly. It causes debate to consume peoples lives. People are more concerned with what a specific piece of evidence says than the educational value of research. The war room is straight out of "Clockwork Orange."

89c. Good on the spot stuff. Some good research overall. Bad effects include diluting library experience; very shallow, conclusionary and unqualified cards on pivotal issues like solvency and internal links.

90c. Pos—can expose debaters to new types of sources, it can equalize



the access to legal info. (great on privacy topic for schools without law libraries). It can also make it easier to compete—info is more accessible and research can be done quicker—the best thing to do about the problem of too much time spent is to have narrower topics. It also provides debaters w/a set of skills essential for success in almost any field.

Neg—these are obvious. Access costs, ethics of stolen codes. The other problem is that ER is almost a god-term. Debaters and judges are infatuated with the wiz of ER and I find that they are less critical of the ev.

93pd. The rich continue to get richer.

95d. ER is increasing the range of information for debate. As we move into the information age we should encourage stricter access to all available events. We need to resolve questions about access, but this can only improve the information we discuss.

97d. In the status quo, ER has to lead to a premium on recovery and “flamin” rhetoric. The judging community and many debaters refuse to accept the argument that “They’re cards are on fire because the author’s are on drugs.” Debater’s tend to use specific limiting searches such as only find word occurrences and the 50 words around it. Thus, the context of the evidence and the assumptions behind it are ignored. Only conclusionary cards are cut. At least with a hard-copy of the research, debaters gain the educational benefit by analyzing the logic and conclusions of the research. Without that study, the only educational benefit of debate is the keystroke commands of the database.

102c. Not much real effect. Gets some cards faster but is never enough.

103d. ER kicks ass. It’s especially useful at the NDT when new cases come out. It helps small schools too b/c they get access to materials they normally could not get.

105d. I think it makes debaters work too hard at tournaments. They become unfeeling and manic when they should be enjoying themselves and the opportunity to make new friends. The “war room” at the NDT is like a bad science fiction movie, everyone just stares at their screens and doesn’t socialize.

### **What actions should the community consider, if any, to deal with electronic research?**

1c. Negotiate with Lexis/Nexis for access

6d. Policy option #28 is very appealing, but may still hurt smaller schools if the negotiations cannot attain a price reduction.

9d. I am generally opposed to rules in debate, since they tend to be unresponsive to the needs of much of the community. I would support promoting equal access to all schools.

8c. Negotiate a contract for the community to equalize access.

10c. The community needs to get a panel together to represent NDT schools in negotiating grants/discounts for Lexis, etc. Lexis is available free to law schools so they can hook the lawyers early. Given the propensity of debaters to achieve after school; either as lawyers, college professors, or

political thinkers/doers, the Lexis people might well agree that providing free access or large discounts would be an excellent investment.

12d. 1. Financial limit on monthly ER budget. 2. Explanation of limits of ER research on indepth argumentation to all new debaters. 3. Require full cites on Lexis articles.

13d. Stop using other people's accounts!

14c. Let's be blunt about it, and admit the truth—dozens of debaters and coaches are committing grand larceny by running up thousands of dollars worth of searches on law student accounts. For now, this poses real ethical and legal threats to at least the future of the willing law students. Having said that, I'm skeptical that the NDT community should force the issue—in part because I don't think Mead will negotiate a policy debate deal.

16d. Lexis would unquestionably support a negotiation w/NDT.

17d. First, the NDT could bargain with ER companies to make it accessible to all schools. It could also set a limit if the amount of ER that can be done by any one school w/a financial cap.

19c. Negotiate for greater access for schools that don't have it now.

27. The "community" is not a being. Irrespective of that, limiting larger, better funded teams because they are larger and better funded is absurd.

30d. Free competition is a good balancer.

34c. NDT needs to negotiate with Lexis to obtain accounts for NDT schools. This would help to close the "North-South gap" in ER across the spectrum. The rationale would be that many debaters go on to Law schools and this access would increase their company's exposure. Debaters know how Lexis works so well that they can also help other law students learn once they get to Law School.

39d. 1—Full cite on all evidence. 2—Gain access for all debate schools.

41d. I don't think there's anything that can be done. Any restrictions on ER use are easily circumvented.

46d. Should try to establish equal access, and nothing else. I would prefer that the activity itself be banned than to ban the use of ER. To prevent the use of research would establish a bad precedent. The next thing we might see is ADA rules nationwide.

51pd. 1. How to increase the access to all schools. 2. Set normative standards for the use of ER.

52d. Standards for situation, quality and use.

53pd. 1. A well-placed, virulent virus. 2. An invitation to a Lexis/Nexis rep to visit the next NDT. 3. Certify programs eligible to use L/Nexis—the school or someone connected with debate may use L/N only if there is a legit acct. in the school's name. 4. Require that all evid. have full cite or else it can't be evaluated in the decision. 5. Stipulate that oral evidence transcribed on Lexis is illegit always: only published material may be quoted.

54c. Really do #28.

55d. The community should establish standards for sites on ER including identifying that it came from ER and perhaps the search words used to get the article so that it can be located by other teams. Further, cites should



reflect who is speaking in a transcript instead of just the program that the quote appeared on. Transcript numbers should be required when applicable.

56pd. Ban the Nexis room at NDT. Try to spread access to smaller programs. Do the research necessary to substantiate existence of problems alluded to in 13-17 and 23.

61pd. A fair way to allow all schools the chance to obtain ER.

62pd. Deal directly with the database companies to: 1. Pursue equity in access. 2. Police abuses. Help them pursue curbs on abuse.

64c. Equity and emphasis on qualifications of evidence. I think the NDT could either get some Lexis accounts for schools w/o Lexis access, either at tournaments or at some rotating basis. More likely, some committee could be set up to help small schools hook up w/law firms or other NDT connections to help schools find Lexis support. The emphasis on qualifications is important in that 10 lexis AP press cards may not be as good as piece of evidence from prof emeritus at Georgetown.

65d. This is how research will be done in the future. It doesn't preclude the need to read book literature. That gives us other types of arguments equally important. We should learn how to use technology. It's what we'll need to do so when we graduate. Gaining Lexis access teaches resourcefulness.

69c. Equity should be the main objective—ideally, all programs should either have access to ER or no one should. A ban on such evidence is realistically impossible to institute.

72d. If ER produces bad cards then debaters could argue that. If there is a post date of a week but there is no explanation of what has changed then that is an argument. Attempts to eliminate ER cards is impossible and a bad idea. Proving a card was researched somehow is extremely difficult, especially considering that many of the sources are available through alternate means.

73pd. You can not deny people access to any info that's available. All coaches and judges can do is increase emphasis on source qualifications/quality of evidence to exert any control.

74d. I like #28.

76c. None. The NDT committee's attempts to regulate the activity are replete with failures. I'm not aware of a problem with ER, so I don't want the NDT committee to "fix" anything.

77c. "Reward" argument analysis instead of cards in research rounds with wins and points.

81d. A. Prohibit use at tournaments. B. Prohibit use altogether or perhaps at the NDT. C. Ensure equal access for all schools.

82c. Not allow research assistants at the NDT (or in general)—actually upholding the AFA rule of research being done primarily by competitors.

85d. The "War Room" at the NDT is wacked. Ban it, a. Small schools are at a severe disadvantage without extra staff to use the terminals during the rounds, b. It kills between round inter-community interaction, debaters are on the machine rather than chatting with friends, c. it makes debaters glassy-eyed and tired.

86d. We should turn the war room into a nap room. It would cause debaters to chill out and have more fun at the tourney. If not a nap room, it should be an e-mail room or a video game room.

89c. Take Berube out and shoot him.

90c. We must find some way to ensure access for all programs—two things should be done. 1. Negotiate w/Lexis debate subscriptions for a reasonable rate. Lexis is concerned about illegal use of codes (lawyers using student codes) and the tying up of the system. Perhaps we could negotiate to get access from 5pm to 5am and only for certain databases w/in Lexis (need law journals) also only for certain months. There is quite a market, Lexis could make some money. 2. An indepth study of databases needs to be done, what the Internet has to offer, what other private databases are out there. If some alternatives are made available, we might be able to resolve some of the inequities.

93pd. More access for all might help as well as direct contact with Lexis/Nexis to alert them to abuse by some schools—use of private codes illegally ought to stop.

94pd. Equity is crucial! Provide access by the tournament for schools w/o access—perhaps 2–3 terminals per tournament; access could be a great equalizer; particularly for those schools w/small libraries. NDT, CEDA, HS-NFL, should jointly negotiate for best rates, college level should use this for high school outreach. Inner city/rural areas could benefit. Larger pool for college debate pays back and makes everyone healthy and a strong social utility function. Not a place to be a debate chauvinist—there's strength in negotiating larger numbers to include the various levels.

95d. We need to find a legal mechanism to encourage/allow all schools to an information system.

97d. The community should mandate full citation—Author, Qual, Source, Date—for ER, to enhance the quality of debate. Moreover, use of foreign sources should be banned. Thirdly, Lexis, and other ER databases should be disallowed, unless the NDT or debate community can guarantee equal access to small schools/programs. They are inherently at a disadvantage because of poor library resources, and ER can help rectify this—but should not be based on budgetary liaisons. Finally, use of internet research should be banned because of the ease with which anyone with an access code can post anything. If it is allowed, it should be solely be open to archived ev and a full cite should include the I-net address of the archive site.

102c. Get everyone easy access.

105d. Ban the “war room.” Turn it into a lounge for sleeping.

#### **Other comments:**

8c. I don't mean to be argumentative, but the survey seems biased.

10c. I am concerned that technophobes are itching to promote soon to be obsolete library research skills. Once the databases expand, the Net expands, etc., going to the shelves to get books/journals will be pointless. While I understand the nostalgic pains the electronic age will cause for those of us who have always combed the stacks in search of new books/ideas, I think I can deals with these pains in the interest of progress toward increased access to diverse ideas.

12d. I understand the efficiency and adaptability Lexis has to debate, but I think people need to be aware that it cannot replace traditional work.



Going to the library and researching the hard way teaches you more valuable skills.

27. Questions were biased.

42d. Lexis/Nexis owns me! I would kill to support it!

51pd. The policy debate community needs to begin immediately to deal with these issues. The sooner we act, the more likely we are to minimize and solve the problems now facing us.

52d. I do worry about increasing fabrication and context.

62pd. You really should be more rigorous in randomizing your sample.

72d. While ER is not accessible to all schools, and hence, unfair, so are many aspects of debate. Things like team size, access to libraries, travel budget, and number of coaches are only the beginning of a list of inequities that exist between schools. To enforce equality through rigid standards is ridiculous.

76c. Quite a few loaded questions. The answers you'll get depend on the questions you ask. I see more negative questions here than positive ones.

82c. Many of the questions here don't address the real issue (in my mind) which is emphasis on quantity of evidence vs. quality of evidence. This is an academic problem—ER does magnify these problems, but as long as we have that mind-set ER at least can help level the field. Not allowing research assistants would be a first step in reducing this quality vs. quantity problem.

85d. Lexis is inevitable, equalize out of tournament access, ban in tournament use.

86d. L/Nexis should be banned. (I'm very bitter).

90c. My biggest concern is with the info rich/poor gap in debate. This has to be dealt with, but not by limiting ER use in debate. The info age is here, we can't shut it out, and while it exacerbates the inequities that exist in debate, it only does so by reflecting society. ER has much to offer, and I don't admit that I am as infatuated with new tech as everyone else. The debate community must get beyond this infatuation with ER and develop some methods for use and evaluation. If this is not done, we'll only remove critical evaluation from debate, and push more schools out of the community.

101d. Illegality is rampant—codes are "borrowed" and stolen on a regular basis. It could have serious implications for all parties involved. Small budget schools can't keep up; w/o access to ER a school is at a huge disadvantage considering the changes that have occurred this year and last. In order to compete you need equal access or at least the opportunity to do so. Q#28 is a necessary option.

102c. Hi, Star!!



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