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Rhetorical Analysis of Resistance to Environmentalism as Enactment of Morality Play between Social and Ecological Well-Being

Well-being is a goal pursued by many consumer resistance movements. This study contributes to the literature by analyzing the rhetorical appeals and techniques utilized by the Resisting the Green Dragon (RGD) movement that employs the value of social well-being to oppose environmentalism. We integrate prominent consumer resistance discourses and religiously charged nationalistic mythical narratives to interpret the RGD phenomenon using rhetorical analysis. The authors examine the rhetorical structure of the RGD YouTube campaign designed to activate resistance to environmentalism. Results indicate that the RGD campaign portrays environmentalists as morally bankrupt individuals surreptitiously limiting the freedom of all-too-willing mainstream consumers. The results further suggest that the RGD campaign positions environmentalism as an anti-Christian and un-American phenomenon that sacrifices social well-being for ecological well-being. The foundations of the RGD's view are elaborated on and implications are discussed.

From the release of the book *Silent Spring* (Carson 1962) to the screening of Al Gore's (2006) documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, environmentalists' efforts to communicate the detrimental effects of current consumption practices on the ecological environment have substantially impacted contemporary consumer culture and policy decisions, fueling new discourses of ecological responsibility and sustainability. Although environmentalism has undoubtedly impacted cultural narratives, it has historically lacked the potency to drive drastic changes in Western consumption behavior (e.g., Clements, McCright, and Xiao 2014; Kilbourne and Pickett 2008). Nevertheless, broad sociocultural conversations have given rise to the development of adversarial discourses about the appropriate role of environmentalism (e.g., Cherrier, Black, and Lee 2011; Taylor 2013). Such discourses typically center on the hopes and aspirations of

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those involved in the discourse and ultimately produce a platform comprised of perceived problems, potential responses, and proposed solutions that may bring about desired change (Moore 2011).

Resistance discourses are often characterized by anticonsumption practices in various forms, from voluntary withdrawal from certain marketplace activities to using boycotting as an active voice against what are considered morally dubious acts (e.g., Hoffmann 2011; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Pentina and Amos 2011). These actions that typify resistance are often performed in attempts to improve well-being (e.g., Black and Cherrier 2010; Sandikci and Ekici 2009). While resistance conversations are not new, prior resistance research has typically addressed resistance toward the consumption system, specific targets, and/or general practices of the marketplace perceived as oppressive, wasteful, and ecologically unsustainable (e.g., Black and Cherrier 2010; Pentina and Amos 2011; Roux 2007).

However, there is much yet to learn about how emerging, opposing sociocultural resistance conversations confront and intertwine with the established resistance discourses (Hoy 2004). For example, little is known about the rhetorical devices and arguments utilized by religiously themed antienvironmentalism movements to confront the ecological ideology. Likewise, research has yet to investigate the manner in which ethos-, pathos-, and logos-based appeals permeate the discourse of religiously themed resistance movements in their efforts to advocate for alternative responses. As well, research could benefit from fresh perspectives on the unique utility of mythical narratives in revealing religiously themed resistance ideologies and their underlying assumptions. Finally, application of rhetorical analysis is useful for revealing the mythic structure and ideological meanings found in the impassioned arguments of and ensuing tensions between the antienvironmentalism discourse and environmentalism.

To accomplish its central goal, this study uniquely draws from consumer resistance and religious and nationalistic myth literature while answering calls for religiously motivated and nationalistic resistance research (Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard, and Kristensen 2011). Following the theory overview, we perform a rhetorical analysis of 27 Resisting the Green Dragon (RGD) promotional YouTube videos and arrive at emergent themes describing the persuasive rhetorical approach adopted by the movement. Findings indicate that the RGD campaign's rhetorical themes evoke the Manipulation and Enslavement resistance discourse (Izberk-Bilgin 2010) along with the Chosen People, Nature's Nation, and Millennial Nation myths (Hughes 2004). The Manipulation and Enslavement discourse and the religiously fueled nationalistic myths

are used to both construct environmentalists' adversarial character and to position environmentalism as a movement which erroneously sacrifices social well-being for ecological well-being. Furthermore, rhetorical devices are examined within the campaign. We conclude with suggesting implications of our findings to consumer resistance theory and consumer well-being.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Resisting the Green Dragon

Founded by the Cornwall Alliance (CA), the RGD movement advocates consumer resistance to the growing emphasis on preserving the environment and calls consumers to take action to eliminate environmentalism's threat to core capitalistic and Christian values. According to their official Web site (<http://www.cornwallalliance.org>), the CA is a coalition of religious leaders whose goal is to establish balance between the biblical view of stewardship and issues pertaining to the environment and development. The coalition is made up of a select group of clergy, theologians, academics, and policy specialists. The CA launched their RGD video series and YouTube campaign in 2010. The campaign disseminates, in an evangelizing fashion, a message that embraces economic and technological progress as morally superior. It calls for resistance against environmentalism because RGD advocates perceive the environmental movement to immorally center on worshipping the earth, causing people to willingly sacrifice human well-being to restore/preserve ecological well-being.

Environmentalism and Consumer Resistance

The environmentalism discourse has led to a transformation of societal values in Western society. One of the most noticeable transformations that occurred due to the environmentalists' efforts was the advent of the health-conscious and responsible consumer segments, resulting in increased purchases of natural, organic, fair trade, and environmentally friendly products (e.g., Droge et al. 1993; Lyons, Lockie, and Lawrence 2001). Additionally, more drastic consumption behavior changes occurring at the fringes of the dominant social and economic systems and characterized as consumer resistance, have acquired prominence in both popular media and as objects of marketing research (e.g., Izberk-Bilgin 2010). Traditionally, consumer resistance research has examined resistance to market-based exchanges (e.g., Close and Zinkhan 2009; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Penaloza and Price 1993; Pentina and Amos 2011;

Ritson and Dobscha 1999; Ulver-Sneistrup et al. 2011), resistance against specific brands/companies (e.g., Funches, Markley, and Davis 2009; Sandikci and Ekici 2009; Thompson and Arsel 2004), and resistance to advertising (e.g., Rumbo 2002).

Resistance movements often occur in reaction to capitalistic marketplace forces that are perceived as sacrificing well-being for the sake of profit (e.g., Ulver-Sneistrup et al. 2011). Defined as collective, individual, silent, and permanent oppositional responses to perceived influential pressures (Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Roux 2007), resistance strives to restore or improve human well-being (Bagozzi and Lee 1999), whether via influencing the dominant social narrative or by direct engagement in action. In modern times, technology facilitates more organized, agile, and influential forms of resistance (Kozinets et al. 2010; Kristensen, Boye, and Askegaard 2011). Resistance is often propagated through online communities (e.g., Hemetsberger 2006; Mikkonen, Moisander, and Firat 2011; Pentina and Amos 2011) that combine social cohesion with networking effect for a more powerful impact (Hemetsberger 2006). Transcending time, consumer resistance falls into one of two primary discourses (Izberk-Bilgin 2010): Manipulation and Enslavement or Agency and Empowerment.

Consumer Resistance: Two Perspectives

Many perspectives on consumer resistance stem from the writings of Max Weber and Karl Marx (Cherrier 2009). Adorno and Horkheimer (2000); Ewen (1976), and Baudrillard (1970) are seminal consumer resistance studies using this sociological framework within a paradigm labeled Manipulation and Enslavement (Izberk-Bilgin 2010). Mainstream consumers are often viewed in this discourse as passive, mindless creatures who are all too willing to submit to capital-holders' ideology of consumerism as propagated through cultural intermediaries such as advertising, broadcasting, and entertainment industries (Coulter, Price, and Feick 2003; Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Thompson and Haytko 1997).

From the perspective of this paradigm, resistance rarely stems from mainstream consumers, since the effective indoctrination tactics of manipulating and enslaving individuals via consumerism reduces them to "powerless dupes" (Izberk-Bilgin 2010, 306). If resistance is to occur, it will manifest as a mass movement in response to the realization of perceived domination (Hollander and Einwohner 2004). The awareness of the asymmetry in power will lead the oppressed to seize power from the oppressor (Cherrier 2009). At the core of consumer resistance is the oppositional action which occurs against some phenomenon (Pentina and

Amos 2011). For many participating in consumer resistance, the ultimate goal is to overcome deprivation and achieve reclamation of power (Ritson and Dobscha 1999). In a broader sense, the Manipulation and Enslavement discourse views resistance as a mass revolt in opposition to constraints against freedom, where the oppressed are able to seize power from the group that exploits them (Cherrier 2009; Izberk-Bilgin 2010).

A second discourse provides a distinct view of consumer resistance which is substantially different from the Manipulation and Enslavement paradigm. This discourse views consumer resistance as acts of Agency and Empowerment (Izberk-Bilgin 2010). Consumers participate in resistance to achieve goals of affirmation or defiance (e.g., Black and Cherrier 2010; Close and Zinkhan 2009). A dynamic power struggle exists among social classes to legitimize tastes and practices (Cherrier et al. 2011; Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Luedicke and Giesler 2008). The pursuit of legitimacy influences all aspects of life including everything from sources of nourishment to lifestyles to worldviews (e.g., Chalamon 2011; Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Roux 2007). When the legitimacy of the dominant consumer culture comes into question, consumers can assume the agents of change role by challenging and contesting the dominant ideology resulting in the negotiation and transformation of social order (Chalamon 2011; Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Mayer 2012). To challenge the dominant consumer culture, individuals must distance themselves from the marketplace and challenge its unquestioned assumptions (Holt 2002; Ozanne and Murray 1995).

The Agency and Empowerment perspective has been successfully applied to explain culture jamming (Sandlin and Callahan 2009), boycotting (Hoffmann 2011; Hoffmann and Muller 2009; Kozinets and Handelman 2004), and voluntary simplicity (Shaw and Newholm 2002). Similarly, Freeganism, a consumer resistance movement embracing anti-consumption activities such as dumpster diving and the consumption of disposed goods as ethical acts of consumer agency, fits within the Agency and Empowerment discourse (Nguyen, Chen, and Mukherjee 2013; Papaoikonomou, Cascon-Pereira, and Ryan 2014; Pentina and Amos 2011). Freegans deviate from social norms in defiance of perceived immoral unsustainable consumption practices (Nguyen et al. 2013; Pentina and Amos 2011) and actively support alternative lifestyles consisting of dumpster diving, squatting, foraging, and so forth. Furthermore, Freegans have engaged in reflexive resistance, which is characterized by enduring both physical hardships of providing for themselves and the social costs associated with living by a distinct cultural code (Izberk-Bilgin 2010). In part, Freegans' resistance behaviors convey social distinctions from

mainstream consumers. However, they are still market bound since they rely on waste produced by consumerism for their own livelihood.

While the Agency and Empowerment perspective has been predominantly used to analyze consumer resistance, it is unclear whether this paradigm can offer an explanation to the phenomenon of opposition to consumer resistance. Consumer resistance (including environmentalism) posits that consumer well-being can only be enhanced by societal navigation away from the current wasteful dogma of consumption and considers sustainable consumption as a moral obligation for enhancing ecological and human well-being. The antithetical RGD movement, on the other hand, makes a counter-moralistic argument by suggesting that economic and technological progress are the primary ways for enhancing human well-being. Like other resistance movements, it focuses on consumption as a system of moral choice based upon prominent mythologies (e.g., Kristensen et al. 2011; Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010; Papaoikonomou et al. 2014; Ulver-Sneistrup et al. 2011). However, the movement is unique in that it explicitly grounds its counter-resistance moralistic arguments in religious doctrine.

Religion-Based Nationalistic Myths

Unspoken religious assumptions have long shaped nationalistic values, attitudes, and behaviors in the United States (Hughes 2004). This study builds on recent research, which highlights the role that religious ideology and corresponding nationalistic mythical narratives play in consumer resistance and anticonsumption discourses and practices (e.g., Izberk-Bilgin 2012a, 2012b; Luedicke et al. 2010). Myths are the basic form of intellectual expression and represent a dramatic assertion of ideological beliefs and attitudes (Kristensen et al. 2011; O'Dea and Aviad 1966). Mythic symbolic constructs are prominently adapted to signify given social interests and to echo contemporary issues (Wilson 1979). Such adaptation can result in the application of morality plays (biblical accounts of good vs. evil) to venerate and validate ideological beliefs while opposing antagonists with a contrasting moral order (Luedicke et al. 2010). In modern consumer society, the morality play has been extended beyond religious accounts of good vs. evil to contemporary issues of consumption and its denunciation (Baudrillard 1970). Mythology plays an important social function as it is conveniently used to defend consumption choices while simultaneously allowing people to condemn the disparate choices of antagonists (Baudrillard 1970). Therefore, myths often work as rhetorical tropes in the form of figurative

expressions that serve as a basis for justifying normative claims upon others (Yar 2008). Hughes (2004) proposes that there are several myths that shape the moral fabric of Americans, including three prominent religious myths that have fueled nationalistic American discourses such as the Chosen People, Nature's Nation, and Millennial Nation myths (Hughes 2004).

The timeless Chosen People myth, also known as American Exceptionalism, was pervasive among early Protestants and stems from the belief that the citizens of the United States were chosen by God for a special mission in the world. Consistent with this myth is the belief that if God's commandments were obeyed, the nation would be blessed. This belief was carried over to the New World by New England Puritans who drew parallels between their situation and ancient Israel because they found themselves geographically and spiritually isolated in a new world (Hughes 2004). This myth perpetuated itself into the City Upon the Hill myth that as a nation founded by God's chosen people, the United States would be a shining example to the rest of the world (e.g., Hughes 2004; Luedicke et al. 2010).

Second, the Nature's Nation myth prominent in the United States suggests that free enterprise capitalism is a self-evident truth of God's way and is the path to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (Hughes 2004). This myth is rooted in the propagation of deism during the colonial period to unite the population despite competing Christian traditions. Deism was promoted in influential writings of Thomas Jefferson and other national leaders. It postulated that God is apparent to all human beings in nature and the moral order is self-evident. It further propagated the belief that the United States reflected the way God intended things to be (Hughes 2004). Consequently, Americans began viewing free enterprise capitalism as God's way and the natural order of things. They believed that the adoption of free enterprise capitalism by other nations would bring forth the final Golden Age of prosperity and tranquility.

Corresponding to the Nature's Nation myth, the Millennial Nation myth stems from a belief that the United States was a radically new nation with a moral obligation to spread Christianity and capitalism so that all humanity could be blessed with the final Golden Age (Hughes 2004). Under the Millennial Nation myth, spreading free enterprise capitalism to other nations is seen as an act of Christian charity. Hence, the United States had a duty to facilitate the coming of the Golden Age by both serving as a moral example and using justified forceful actions which helped to spread Christianity and capitalism.

To deepen our understanding of oppositional conversations, a rhetorical analysis is conducted to examine the mythic structure and ideological

meanings of the polemical tensions (Luedicke et al. 2010) between the RGD discourse and environmentalism.

METHOD

Most studies examining YouTube content have used content analysis (e.g., Paek, Kim, and Hove 2010; Vraga et al. 2014). However, content analysis is deficient in describing the complex relationships of meaning across an entire promotional campaign (e.g., Barton and Gregg 1982; Bush and Boller 1991). In accordance, we conducted a rhetorical analysis of the RGD promotional videos as an effective means of exploring the harmony (e.g., Bush and Boller 1991; McGuire 1984) among the YouTube promotional videos associated with the RGD campaign. Selzer (2004) defines rhetorical analysis as “an effort to understand how people with specific social situations attempt to influence others through language” (p. 281). Rhetoric in this instance does not denote disingenuousness but rather the art of persuasive communication (Yar 2008). Rhetorical analysis is particularly appropriate due to the overtly and intentionally persuasive nature of the videos. Further, a primary focus of rhetorical analysis is on interpretation of language regarding its use for the purpose of influencing others (Bush and Boller 1991; Finell and Liebkind 2010; Norrekliit 2003).

The method of the rhetorical analysis of persuasive communications traces its origin to Aristotle’s rhetorical theory (Feltham 1994). According to this theory, persuasion can be achieved by three means: the credible characteristics of the speaker (ethos), affective or emotional appeals (pathos), and presenting evidence for a given truth (logos) (Feltham 1994). Hence, persuasion can occur through speaker ethos, by arousing emotions that are capable of modifying judgments, as well as by the logic of the argument itself. The goal of rhetorical analysis is to identify verbal and nonverbal elements of a communication artifact and to evaluate their roles in the persuasive effort. In literature, rhetorical analysis has been creatively extended beyond the traditional rhetorical devices (ethos, pathos, and logos) to examine rhetorical themes and tropes (e.g., myths) (Bush and Boller 1991; Yar 2008).

Rhetorical analysis is particularly relevant in situations where storytelling, metaphors, and authority arguments are used in persuasive communication (Norrekliit 2003). Such an analysis is particularly appropriate for the present investigation in that it is used to develop an understanding of how each promotion collectively functions to further a campaign’s rhetorical purpose (Bush and Boller 1991). It offers the opportunity to explore a communicator’s ideology and the assumptions and psychological

processes behind ideological assumptions (Bush and Boller 1991; Finell and Liebkind 2010). This investigation employs methods, which examine the thought processes behind the persuasive communication from both the form and content perspective while also examining the strength of the argument (Norreklit 2003). To the best knowledge of the authors, this is one of the first applications of rhetorical analysis to a YouTube campaign despite calls for research examining the rhetorical capacities of the YouTube platform (Pace 2008). Rhetorical analysis has been previously used in marketing for evaluating the impact of rhetorical elements in advertising on its persuasiveness (Deighton 1985; McQuarrie and Mick 1999), for assessing their roles in conveying brand meaning (Allen, Fournier, and Miller 2008), and affecting consumer beliefs (Phillips and McQuarrie 2009).

The focus on rhetoric for the analysis of the RGD promotional campaign can provide an opportunity to study the use of language and nonlanguage artifacts and their role in constructing the antienvironmentalism discourse. Identifying and categorizing the major rhetorical elements utilized in the promotional videos can assist in determining the resistance perspective adopted by the antienvironmentalism movement, as well as in ascertaining the most effective combinations of rhetorical elements utilized by the movement.

As the main analytical lens of the current study, the foundational framework of rhetorical theory, comprised of the classical trilogy of ethos, pathos, and logos, was incorporated. This framework was applied to the RGD promotional videos posted on the CA's YouTube channel (27 in total). Textual and visual data from the movement's Web site, <http://www.cornwallalliance.org>, was also utilized to help interpret the videos.

Rhetorical analysis is an interpretive approach and in accordance with other rhetorical analyses, there is not a claim of one and only one interpretation (e.g., McQuarrie and Mick 1999; Norreklit 2003). However, care was taken to examine commonalities in interpretation across multiple transcribers (Luedicke et al. 2010). The first author and two trained graduate assistants independently viewed each video individually several times. Each individual analyzed instances of the videos as characterizing one or several rhetorical themes (see the five themes below) reoccurring across the campaign. The analysis process and subsequent discussion among the authors solidified the following rhetorical themes encompassing both the argument and the emerged expressive elements augmented by traditional rhetorical devices:

1. The Twisted Worldview of Environmentalists: Un-American and Anti-Christian

2. An Attack on Truth: Environmentalism's Bad Science
3. The Morally Bankrupt: Treasuring the Earth More than Human Life
4. The Moral Protagonists: Protectors of American Values and Defenders of the Poor
5. Proper Action in Society Is Focused on Social Well-Being, not Ecological Well-Being

Within these themes, content was analyzed and reanalyzed by the first author to uncover the myth-based tropes (Chosen People, Nature's Nation, and Millennial Nation) fueling the morality play tone of the videos. Further analysis revealed that while some themes were holistically presented in a given video, others were scattered across the entire campaign. In accordance, both amalgamated text excerpts (shown in quotations throughout the results section) and more comprehensive narratives are presented where appropriate. Excerpts presented in the results section are directly attributed to the corresponding video from the YouTube promotional series (see Appendix S1, Supporting Information). The following results section is arranged around the five emergent rhetorical themes. Pertinent myths and rhetorical devices are discussed as appropriate within the themes (see Table 1). These elements were embedded in rhetorical theme content and the argument enhancement capabilities of these elements were analyzed in relation to the themes. In addition, meaning is further derived from the audio and visual elements in the videos.

RESULTS

The Twisted Worldview of Environmentalists: Un-American and Anti-Christian

RGD proposes that the environmentalists' worldview is to protect the earth at the expense of humankind by stopping technological and economic development. Several alleged objectives to achieve this goal emerged from the data and include: (1) adoption and promotion of antidevelopment policies, (2) advancement of antilife policies, (3) promotion of greater governmental control at the expense of individual freedom, (4) indoctrination of children through propaganda and scare tactics, and (5) infiltration of the Christian community to spread the twisted worldview.

The RGD campaign indicates that environmentalism's ubiquitous sustainable development mantra poses a major threat because it promotes antidevelopment policies as conveyed in RGD video excerpts such as "sustainable development means no development or negative development (video 22)," "[environmentalists] look at progress as something that is going to deteriorate the creation (video 18)," and "the economy is

TABLE 1
RGD Campaign Themes

Rhetorical Theme	Nationalistic Myths Rooted in Religion	Rhetorical Devices
The Twisted Worldview of Environmentalists: Un-American and Anti-Christian	Confluence of Chosen People, Nature's Nation, and Millennial Nation to position environmentalism as both un-American and anti-Christian	Polemical against environmentalism as un-American and anti-Christian intertwine pathos and logos appeals. Speaker ethos and background stimuli add credence to argumentation
An Attack on Truth: Environmentalism's Bad Science	Environmentalists' deny capitalistic blessings evoking the Nature's Nation myth	Logos appeals (e.g., facts and figure) are prominent and augmented by speaker ethos. Pathos is evoked by linguistic acts regarding the perceived one-sided nature of the science behind environmentalism
The Morally Bankrupt: Treasuring the Earth More than Human Life	The global focus of environmentalists is portrayed as denying America's greatness evoking the Chosen People and Nature's Nation myths	Pathos-laden demonization tactics are used to construct environmentalists' immoral identity. Visual and audio cues further reinforce this identity. Logos appeals are used to reinforce environmentalism as un-American and an immediate threat. Speaker ethos augments arguments
The Moral Protagonists: Protectors of American Values and Defenders of the Poor	Nature's Nation and Millennial Nation myths are evoked as the protagonists construct their hero identity around championing social well-being.	Logos appeals (e.g., facts and figure) highlight environmentalism's destructiveness. Pathos appeals are evident in discussions of environmentalism and the impoverished. Speaker ethos, visual, and audio cue augments arguments
Proper Action in Society is Focused on Social Well-Being, not Ecological Well-Being	Proper action is constructed on social well-being and intertwines the Chosen People, Nature's Nation, and Millennial Nation Myths	Pathos appeals highlight the despair of the poor and logos appeals support a dire need for economic growth. Speaker ethos augments arguments

viewed as something bad because it affects the ecology (video 8).” These descriptions are used to concretely illustrate environmentalists’ perceived desire to inhibit and reverse economic and technological development, thus establishing that environmentalist views are incongruent with the notion of progress and American values. Similar to Hummer owners’ view of Prius owners (Luedicke et al. 2010), such views are the epitome of un-American attitudes because they convey a failure to embrace capitalism and core values.

The American Exceptionalism rhetorical trope is explicitly expressed in video 3. This video designates, “we are the most successful nation in the history of the world” and calls the United States a “unique nation.” In contrast, video 3 poses that environmentalism fails to embrace the values that make America great and instead embraces the poststructuralist philosophy that we are all part of one globe, failing to pay homage to America’s greatness. Common with American Exceptionalism views, the material success of the United States is seen as evidence of God’s blessing of a perfected society that should be imitated by other human societies (Wilson 1979). This is evident in the statement, “prosperity makes environmental protection and restoration affordable (video 18).”

Corresponding to this myth, early colonial Americans believed that Satan ruled the wilderness and only through subjugation by God’s chosen people could the wilderness be redeemed (Hughes 2004). Capitalistic consumption as divine blessings and redemption has been alluded to by other research on religion and consumption behavior (Bonsu and Belk 2010; Gerde, Goldsby, and Shepard 2007). RGD appears to embrace the stance that the success of capitalism and the consumption opportunities provided through capitalistic endeavors are symbols of divine blessing and that remonstrating capitalistic consumption activities is against the will of God. This message is underscored in a statement below video 5, “man cultivates the earth making it productive, safe and clean; nature is wild, unproductive, dangerous, and disease-ridden.” The RGD campaign implies that environmentalists are ruled by Satan as they fail to embrace the blessings provided through capitalistic consumption and instead worship the wild things as alluded to in video 5.

Conveyed in the YouTube campaign, the perceived foundation for environmentalism’s disdain toward economic and technological development is environmentalists’ belief that humans are here to serve the earth and the apparent innate desire environmentalists have to worship and serve nature. Such declarations are peppered across the campaign. For instance, in video 4 the speaker advocates that environmentalism is a religion since, “environmentalists look at the environment as everything that guides and directs

their lives.” The view of environmentalism as a movement so strong that it takes on religious characteristics and thus is a competing religion and antithetical to Christianity is emphatically propagated by the RGD movement. The declaration in video 5 that “radical environmentalism is a false religion” and terms used by the campaign such as “pantheistic (video 19)” and “oneism (video 6)” reinforce that not only is environmentalism incongruent with Christianity but also that it is a mutually exclusive competing religious philosophy rooted in sin.

RGD appears to draw parallels for environmentalism as a false religion from Taylor’s (2009) work on environmentalism and religion that also portrays environmentalists’ fervor for the natural world as containing religious elements (Beisner 2011). However, Taylor (2011) commented below one of the RGD campaign YouTube videos that while there is a spiritual element to the global environmental movement, it is neither politically nor ethically perilous. However, it may be perceived as a threat to the religious hegemony of Abrahamic religions (Taylor 2011). The RGD campaign emphatically poses environmentalism as a competing religion that has a substitute, mutually exclusive religious doctrine with perilous consequences for society because it is pantheistic and thus morally reprehensible (Beisner 2011). RGD’s condemnation of environmentalism reflects a view held by many conservative Christians who feel that society is equating God with nature and thus is perceived to be in opposition to many Christian views on the relationship between man and nature (Taylor 2013).

A foundation for categorizing environmentalism as a false religion is the belief that environmentalism places the earth above man (Taylor 2013). This argument is pervasive throughout the RGD YouTube campaign and is used as a rhetorical allegory to convey the truth of environmentalists’ moral weakness. The following excerpt from video 23 underscores the opponents’ immoral priorities: “environmentalists’ view of what is wrong with the world is that humans are what is wrong with the world. There are too many of us, we’re a cancer, we’re a virus on the earth.” Video 27 indicates that “the environmental movement sees humans as enemies of the earth” and “sees babies just for their carbon footprint.” Such statements are used to reinforce the immoral antilife policies RGD perceives widespread among environmentalists.

The rhetorical strategies used in describing environmentalism’s antilife policies are similar to those used in describing their economic antidevelopment policies, thus positioning environmentalism as anti-Christian in addition to un-American. The assertion “environmentalism really is a complete counter-narrative to the true ideas that we find in scripture (video 19)” reinforces the perceived incompatibility between environmentalism

and Christianity. Much of the language used to position environmentalism as incongruent with Christian values is based upon the cultural mandate (Genesis 1:28), which indicates that mankind should be fruitful and multiply, subdue the earth, and have dominion over every living thing on Earth. In traditional pathos (appealing to feelings and emotions) rhetorical form (Feltham 1994), the campaign focuses on environmentalists' perceived disregard for human life by focusing on women, children, and babies in an attempt to appeal to emotions and facilitate a more visceral reaction (e.g., Sandlin and Callahan 2009). Positioning environmentalism against the cultural mandate also serves as a logos appeal (logical arguments for a given truth [Feltham 1994]) to affirm to the audience the everlasting truth of Christian theology and environmentalism's falsehood.

Furthermore, asserted in video 22, "rather than being a drain on our limited resources, children represent the potential or the future." Such declarations correspond to the Millennial Nation postmillennial view in the United States, which stemmed from the advances in scientific progress as described by Hughes (2004). For much of history, humans were merely casualties of natural disasters and disease. As scientific progress created the possibility to combat and transform environmental forces, American Christian mindsets shifted to viewing human initiative, not Jesus' second coming, as the facilitator of the Golden Age (Hughes 2004). By emphasizing population-control policies, environmentalists are perceived to be interfering with the progression toward a Golden Age, perpetuated by the application of human creativity to capitalistic endeavors. This interpretation is affirmed by the statement, "we need to look for [environmental] policies that not only treat people as creative and in God's image and worthy of being respected but also the solution to environmental problems (video 27)."

Another confirmation of un-American environmentalist attitudes is promulgated by statements emphasizing environmentalists' desire to place greater limits on personal freedom. In video 3, it is asserted that "if you do not believe your rights come from God, then they have to come from man. And if they come from man, he has the right to control and regulate whatever he does." In a video promoting the RGD campaign, it is indicated that as environmentalists propose that everything we do has environmental consequences then everything we do needs to be regulated by someone (e.g., the water output of a showerhead, what kind of light bulb people may use, etc. [The American Vision 2011]). This is a central pathos theme through the RGD campaign, with persistent references to environmentalism's influence on government control and policies and environmentalism's support for greater restrictions on American's freedoms and references to

environmentalism as being a primary agenda for institutions such as the United Nations. Government infiltration rhetoric is used to establish that environmentalism is not just an ancillary threat to the American way of life, but an ideology that permeates government institutions at all levels. Resistance is perceived as virtuous because RGD is fighting a good fight and attempting to bring light to the surreptitious objective of environmentalists to increase governmental control and provide greater limitations on personal freedom.

Pathos-laden claims of indoctrination of children to the environmentalist worldview are explicitly evident in video 17. This video includes excerpts such as, “schools have drummed the environmentalist worldview into students for decades,” “has hundreds if not thousands of sites (Web sites) designed to attract children to the Green Dragon worldview,” and “we’ve got television and movies like *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, and of course the blockbuster *Avatar* all telling our children the same story.” Other videos suggest that environmentalists stoop to using scare tactics to indoctrinate children and desire to create compulsory environmental education. In particular, the RGD campaign proposes in video 20 that the United Nations’ Convention of Rights of the Child is an effort to spread environmentalism’s agenda and that their efforts are distorting children’s views even in church schools and home schools since the treaty prevails wherever there is a child. A cornerstone of the Manipulation and Enslavement discourse is the proliferation of capital-holders’ ideology through cultural intermediaries (e.g., Coulter et al. 2003; Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Thompson and Haytko 1997). In accordance with the Manipulation and Enslavement resistance rhetoric, the RGD campaign claims that the environmentalism movement uses Hollywood movies, TV, Internet, and school curriculum to indoctrinate children.

Similarly, further pathos-laden discussions are provided on environmentalism’s perceived efforts to indoctrinate the Christian community to the morally subversive environmentalist worldview. Concern is expressed in video 27 that “evangelical groups are jumping full board into the environmental movement,” “adopting and even promoting antilife policies,” and “adopting policies that would consign the poorest people of the world to grinding poverty, to disease, and premature death.” Implicit in the RGD campaign is the contagious nature of corruptive influences of infidels (environmentalists) as often portrayed in morality plays (Hughes 2004; Izberk-Bilgin 2012a). According to RGD, by indoctrinating both children and other Christians to the environmentalist worldview, environmentalism inhibits the spread of the truth that lies with a perfected Christian society. Thus, they invoke the latent Nature’s Nation myth of America construed in

terms of individual rights to liberty and property as a model society for all nations (Hughes 2004; Wilson 1979). This is implied by the video 1 statement, “what most Christians do not understand is that environmentalism is a whole worldview.”

In summary, the Chosen People, Nature’s Nation, and Millennial Nation myths transpire in this rhetorical theme. In addition, RGD uses a pathos appeal by focusing on infiltration rhetoric and suggesting that environmentalists have a complete disregard for human life. Positioning environmentalism as un-American and anti-Christian appears to utilize ethos, pathos, and logos. While the videos possess an overall pathos tone, attempting to evoke fear, contempt, and anxiety, un-American and anti-Christian arguments are used to reinforce RGD’s polemic against environmentalism, at the same time referring to the authority of the God and scripture. To amplify ethos (believability, credibility, and trustworthiness based on message source [Feltham 1994]) in the persuasive messages, official titles and associated organizations appear (e.g., President and CEO, Honorable, Dr., Rev., etc.) directly below speakers as a case is constructed against environmentalism. This ethos appeal is also underscored by the professional appearance of the speakers (typically dressed in formal business wear) and background stimuli (e.g., professional setting). Such tactics are prevalent throughout the campaign.

An Attack on Truth: Environmentalism’s Bad Science

To invalidate the environmentalist worldview, the RGD movement proposes that environmentalists work assiduously to get broad-based support for bad science to support their cause. In video 6, it is asserted that the “sins of lying and carelessness about the truth lie at the root of many false environmental scares” and that many environmental problems “are rooted in the sin of thinking only of ourselves and not others.” Hence, the environmentalist agenda is perceived to be erroneously perpetuated by faulty myth-based science as portrayed by linguistic acts throughout the videos. Such examples include the description of the science behind environmentalism as “half-truth (video 5),” “myths (video 13),” “bad science (video 17),” “a political campaign (video 15),” and “faulty (video 21).” The choice of words throughout the videos creates an image of environmentalists as self-serving, misguided individuals who odiously attack the Nature’s Nation self-evident truth of capitalism as the natural order of things. As evident by the many terms provided above, the perceived fraudulent activities and denial of truth by environmentalists is a recurring theme throughout

the promotional videos. One prime example of overwhelming use of the logos rhetorical tactic is the excerpt below (video 13).

Environmentalists have a long history of believing and promoting exaggerations and myths. Like America's use of DDT caused the cancer epidemic. It might kill all of the birds in North America, causing a silent spring. In fact there is no evidence that DDT, the most effective way to combat Malaria carrying mosquitos, ever caused cancer anywhere. Such exaggerated or baseless fears lead to unreasonable policies that can do far more harm than the things feared. For instance, the World Health Organization tells us that approximately one million people a year die from malaria, 90% of them children, mostly in Africa. These children would not die if we could spray the walls of their homes with DDT.

Video 13: Featured speaker Dr. Richard Land, President of the Southern Baptists Conventions "Ethics and Religious Commission"

In traditional ethos rhetorical fashion, the video employs an individual of high standing within the religious community to provide expert substantiation (Kristensen et al. 2011) regarding the perceived myths promoted by environmentalists at the expense of mankind. Compatible with the Nature's Nation myth, DDT is used as an exemplar blessing of capitalistic activities that environmentalists erroneously oppose due to their earth-worshipping worldview. Using a logos rhetorical device, statistics of the number of people dying from malaria are provided to add concreteness to the detrimental effects of the environmentalist worldview. Anecdotal evidence is provided based on life experiences to further demonstrate DDT's redeeming benefits. The construction of this counter-mythology is important for substantiating the cultural legacy threatened by environmentalism and to provide moral opposition.

Likewise, it is attested in video 8 that "our oceans here in California have never been cleaner, our air has never been cleaner. Yes, right here in Southern California." The provision of such anecdotal evidence by a reputable figure as an ethos rhetorical device is used to discredit environmentalists and persuade viewers that environmentalism conceals the truth that capitalism ultimately enhances the ecological environment for human habitation. Furthermore, in video 7 it is asserted that "there are a lot of environmental scientists at universities who are not politicized, who are not way out on the left wing fringe, who do very good work. You do not ever hear about them on the news because the people who make news are the people who say crazy things, radical things." This excerpt further reinforces the perceived pervasiveness of un-American (left wing fringe) environmentalist attitudes in culture as seen in the rhetorical account of indoctrination and government infiltration. That environmentalism perpetuates myths through

cultural intermediaries to hide the truth is evidence of the unscrupulousness of environmentalists in their manipulation and enslavement efforts.

In conclusion, with regard to the science behind environmentalism, the Nature's Nation myth is evoked as the campaign implies that capitalistic blessings are denied by environmentalists. In attempts to discredit environmentalists, logos appeals are prominent and augmented by speaker ethos. While the pathos tone is less ubiquitous in these discussions, linguistic acts imply the unscrupulous nature of environmentalists as they are perceived to only provide one-sided support for their cause.

The Morally Bankrupt: Treasuring the Earth More than Human Life

Ideology is a foundation that fuels and strengthens collective action (Hemetsberger 2006). In an effort to undermine the opposing ideological discourse and validate one's own consumption behavior, counter-ideologies are established using oppositional cultural codes directed toward the outside adversary to generate revolutionary energy (Hemetsberger 2006). In traditional morality plays, the ends are dictated by the means (Godshalk 1974; Luedicke et al. 2010). Often in morality plays, deviant individuals or cohorts are denounced as demonic foes threatening to tear the social fabric of innocent society (Critcher 2006). The RGD campaign demonizes environmentalism by metaphorically referring to environmentalism as the "green dragon" and denigrating environmentalists in the campaign as "radical (e.g., video 1)," "twisted (video 2)," adhering to a "false doctrine (video 2)," "misguided (text below video 10)," and "pantheistic (video 19)," with a "lust for political power (video 1)," and "destructive control (video 1)."

Using the pathos rhetorical device, it is implied that the demonic character of environmentalists leads them to prey on the innocent (children) and disregard the helpless (impoverished). Demonization is a cultural code which is a constituent element of an oppositional discourse (e.g., Hemetsberger 2006; Izberk-Bilgin 2012a; Luedicke et al. 2010; Yar 2008). To emphasize the demonic character of environmentalists, the RGD YouTube videos use ominous tones and unnerving visual imagery. In the demonization rhetorical approach, it is critical to emphasize the distinctions from the evil adversaries to normalize the "us" vs. "them" dichotomies (Critcher 2006; Finell and Liebkind 2010). Thus, it establishes the divergent identities of the morally righteous protagonists, the innocent prey, and the oppressive morally bankrupt antagonists.

While the RGD campaign never explicitly refers to environmentalists as socialists or communists, several statements are made that give insight

into the RGD's construction of the environmentalist identity. The campaign makes persistent references to radical environmentalism while implying that the views of radical environmentalists are pervasive within the environmentalism movement. Terms used in the campaign such as "left wing fringe (video 7)," "inherently socialist (video 20)," and "progressive left (text below video 4)," rhetorically construct environmentalists' adversarial identity. Such identity largely coincides with the notion of environmentalists as tree-hugging socialists (Luedicke et al. 2010), commonly referred to as eco-socialists (Pepper 1993).

Eco-socialists are often referred to as environmentalists who are green on the outside and red on the inside (Pepper 1993). Eco-socialists blame capitalism for ecological degradation, as well as social injustices. For instance, some Freegans take this type of anticapitalistic stance (Pentina and Amos 2011) and fall under the umbrella of eco-socialists. The RGD campaign implies that such views lie not only in fringe groups such as Freegans, but, as indicated in video 23, are "mainline within the environmental movement." The perceived correspondence between political ideology and views on environmentalism has created preconceived notions about environmentalists and their motives as evident in the following RGD campaign excerpt.

As I've watched issues come and go like fads, I have noticed a common pattern, a common strategy that is used. Claim that there is a crisis and we need to marshal all of our forces together to pass laws and treaties. But it always ends up with the same result, greater government control. Federal government control, or ultimately international control and I see this happening again with the environmental movement. That the solution to these various problems is always more restrictions on our freedom, greater government authority over every aspect of our lives, and more power being given these global bureaucrats and global leaders to decide what we can and cannot do. Our founding fathers restrained our government because they understood that a powerful government will end up taking away our liberties and even restricting our ability to follow God.

Video 26: Featured speaker Wendy Wright, former President of Concerned Women of America

In this account, the RGD movement symbolically articulates environmentalist adversaries by the rhetorical use of accusations, presumptions, and amplifications (Hemetsberger 2006). As articulated by "claim that there is a crisis," the videos often refer to environmentalists as doomsdayers, who attempt to manipulate the general population by inducing fear about potential ecological disaster. Video 22 makes reference to Paul Ehrlich, the author of the controversial book *Population Bomb* (Ehrlich 1968), and appears to position him as an exemplar of the environmentalist

community who cry wolf about a crisis that does not really exist. The language used in the above account and the use of Paul Ehrlich as an exemplar reinforces the doomsdayer label given to environmentalists. The excerpts insinuate that environmentalists want to instill fear that will result in a willingness to embrace a more socialist government.

Environmentalists' perceived irrational fear is also conveyed in video 13 statements that environmentalists present, "hysterical predictions and doomsday scenarios," and promulgate "exaggerated or baseless fears." Implying that environmentalists are ruled by fear contributes to the construction of an ungodly identity, since if they had faith, fears would be cast out (Walton 2012). The statement in video 26, "that the solution to these various problems is always more restrictions on our freedoms," along with the repeated references to government, is further used to distance environmentalists from possessing the core American value of freedom. The ethos appeal to the authority of God is exemplified in video 3, "the creator gives to man certain guaranteed inalienable rights" which are at risk due to environmental policies and environmentalist desire for government control. Hence, the desire for government regulations threatens the certain guaranteed inalienable rights summoned by the Nature's Nation myth. Furthermore, the portrayed socialistic undercurrents of environmentalism augment demonization as socialism has long been portrayed as a Godless system in the United States (Hughes 2004).

Further distancing environmentalists from capitalist democracy, the government infiltration rhetoric indicates that environmentalists have penetrated the highest levels of government as indicated by the use of "global leaders (video 2)," "global bureaucrats (video 26)," "international control (video 26)," and "extends to the highest global level (video 1)" across the RGD campaign. At the same time, the general population sits idly, in Manipulation and Enslavement fashion, as powerless targets. Such a conclusion is supported by the juxtaposition of logos and pathos appeals (video 1) embedded in accusations that millions (logos) are falling prey to environmentalism and the mainstream population is allowing environmentalists to seduce (pathos) their children. RGD video 1 implies that a mass revolt is needed to overthrow environmentalism as exemplified by the phrase "the time is now to stand and resist." The emphasis on environmentalism as a global phenomenon is also attuned to the American Exceptionalism and Nature's Nation myths. Because the United States is the City Upon the Hill for all to emulate (e.g., Luedicke et al. 2010; Wilson 1979), environmentalism is in conflict with the myth of the United States as a chosen nation that sprung from the hand of God. Resistance is necessary to renew purity of a

perfected society as perpetuated by the Nature's Nation mythology through the social fabric of the United States (Hughes 2004; Wilson 1979).

Urgency in resistance to an un-American, anti-Christian force is augmented through the omnipresent music of the symbolic rhetorical vehicle (Scott 1990). This is highlighted by the presence of a ticking clock coinciding with the words "now is the time to stand and resist." By using pathos-laden visual and musical cues, in addition to verbal cues, the RGD campaign positions environmentalists as an immediate disruptive force, not to be underestimated. For example, when portraying environmentalism's baseless fears and efforts to manipulate, occasionally fast-paced dissonant music plays in the background. The music reinforces urgency and the perceived disharmony of environmentalism while images of a dragon with a flaming eye symbolically conclude the depiction of the fundamentally demonic nature of environmentalists.

To conclude, regarding the perceived moral shortcomings of environmentalists, the Chosen People and Nature's Nation myths are evoked, as the focus of environmentalism is global, denying America's place as the City Upon the Hill. A robust pathos appeal is inherently evident in the demonization tactics used to construct environmentalists' immoral identity. Ethos appeals are used to further position environmentalism as incongruent with American values and to solidify the threat environmentalism poses as its infiltration of American culture is explicated.

The Moral Protagonists: Protectors of American Values and Defenders of the Poor

Environmentalism has methodically led to changes in societal values regarding what constitutes morally appropriate consumption. This challenges more traditional views on consumption. In opposition to environmentalism's stance on morally appropriate consumption, the RGD purports that environmentalists have succumbed to a life of sin and worship of the false idol of Mother Nature. In the morality play convention (Luedicke et al. 2010), members of the RGD movement view themselves as enlightened heroic protagonists whose goal is to restore freedoms threatened by ubiquitous environmentalists. Video 21 asserts, "we must reject the false worldview, the faulty science, and the counterfeit gospel that threatens to corrupt society and the church," and "we must defend freedom, human life, and the poor," to reinforce their enlightened hero identity. Consonant, not dissonant, music is often employed as a pathos rhetoric element and typically reinforces a perception of normalcy and security (Scott 1990). It also reinforces the contention that the enlightened individuals behind the RGD

campaign have a solution to environmentalism's destructive forces which defile Christian truth and American freedom. Enlightenment is expressed through statements claiming that they are able to see the truth. Thus, it is their duty to expose the deception, half-truths, and manipulation which corresponds to environmentalism.

The RGD campaign proposes that environmental policies hinder the impoverished and fail to provide them with the resources necessary to enhance their well-being. Video 11 indicates that "we need to stop the war on the poor." RGD incorporates a logos rhetorical approach to build consensus about its moral superiority because it champions social well-being over ecological well-being. For instance, the earlier excerpt regarding DDT implies that if environmentalists embraced social well-being in the same manner as RGD, millions of people (logos) would be saved from malaria by the use of DDT in the homes of the impoverished. Additional excerpts further highlight how the RGD campaign constructs the moral superiority of a social well-being centered worldview.

Economic growth delivers the poor from the tragedies of premature death and debilitating disease. And yet environmentalists think that growing human wealth is somehow bad for the planet. And you know what, they are simply wrong. The worst environmental problems are caused by poverty not by wealth.

Video 18: Featured speaker Janet Parshall, Author and National Radio Host

Based on sensationalism, we are doing things to force conservation that will drive up the cost of energy for everyone domestically in America and around the world. Unfortunately, many people above the poverty level, even at levels of \$35,000 to \$65,000 a year annual income get stuck with a regressive tax that really, really eats away at their income. By regressive tax I mean that they have a larger percentage of their income that will be affected by the taxes or the rate increases that we bring.

Video 11: Featured speaker Bishop Harry Jackson

As shown in the polemic conveyed above, environmentalism is blamed for diminishing access to resources, which are necessary for the enhancement of the poor's social well-being. In particular, environmentalism is blamed for factors such as elevated prices of gas or other fossil fuel-based resources. Other logos rhetorical messages such as video 18's assertion that "two to three million people die every year from unsafe water and sanitation" suggest that environmentalists are to blame for poor sanitation and pollution in developing countries. These messages imply that environmental policies limit Third World nations from reaping the benefits of economic and technological progress (viewed by RGD as key to addressing sanitation and pollution problems).

Altogether, the construction of RGD's protagonist identity completes the morality play. Members of RGD morally defend the God-given rights bestowed upon Americans in the Nature's Nation myth and declare that the embracement of environmentalism erodes social well-being, prohibiting the progression toward a Golden Age of prosperity (Millennial Nation) and well-being for the world's poor. Explicit logos appeals are used to highlight the perceived destructive effects of environmentalism on the impoverished as seen through the eyes of the protagonists. RGD protagonists' concern for the poor (in contrast to environmentalist disregard) serves as a viable pathos appeal and reinforces their hero identity. The final theme concerns further construction of RGD's view of proper action in society.

Proper Action In Society Is Focused on Social Well-Being, Not Ecological Well-Being

Given that the RGD campaign postulates that environmentalism actually diminishes well-being, proper action in society is rhetorically constructed in an attempt to authenticate their claims. Using national moralistic structures, the campaign builds on the Chosen Nation mythology by suggesting that the rest of the world could be enlightened by America's example. It also builds on the Nature's Nation myth by proposing that the path of free enterprise capitalism as established in the United States reflects the way that God intended things to be (Hughes 2004). Such a path will marshal a Golden Age of prosperity and tranquility for the world's poor. Correspondingly, the RGD's view of proper action in society centers on social well-being. Social well-being is defined as "an end state, in which basic human needs are met and people coexist in peaceful communities with opportunities for advancement" (United States Institute of Peace 2014). The choice of phrases such as in the statement from video 6, "we need to turn our attention back to humanity's ultimate problems; not landfills, pesticide residues, or greenhouse gases," indicates that these issues are moot compared to problems of social well-being that could be alleviated by spiritual enlightenment and the spread of free enterprise capitalism.

While discussions of solutions ambiguously describe spiritual needs as a foremost need, the campaign also focuses on the urgent needs of one particular cohort, the impoverished. RGD proponents advise that moral action focuses on making the world a better place for human habitation. Intertwining both logos and pathos appeals, in video 24 it is stated that "last night 15,000 mothers around the world woke up with a dead baby next to them. Poverty around the world is still such an enormous problem." It is further asserted in video 24 that "radical environmentalism advocates

a kind of creation care that will devastate the poor and leave more and more dead babies at their mothers side than there are even today” and that we should “look at progress as something that is going to bring the poor into the kind of life where they too can think about their creation stewardship obligations and not have to worry about whether they are going to live and die tomorrow.” These statements reinforce the belief that economic development is essential for improving social well-being and actually enhances the ecological environment for human good. Additional statements, “the creation is incomplete without human activity to shape what God himself has created (video 19),” “God told us to subdue the earth and so farming is a good thing (video 5),” and “the earth is meant to be cultivated and populated by the people (description below video 22),” all evoke the Nature’s Nation myth. This myth propagates that settlement, cultivation, and improvement of land for human habitation is the very heart of the natural order (Hughes 2004). As written in the early 1800s by American newspaper editor Horace Greeley, “God has given this earth to those who will subdue and cultivate it, and it is vain to struggle against His righteous decree” (Hughes 2004, 114).

The RGD campaign constructs proper actions in society as actions that embrace progress and population growth as a means for elevating the poor’s social well-being. According to the CA Stewardship Agenda, “sound environmental stewardship must attend both to the demands of human well-being and to a divine call for human beings to exercise caring dominion over the earth” (Cornwall Alliance 2008, 1). The document indicates that the alliance is not opposed to environmental stewardship but is opposed to the idea that humans must minimize activities and withdraw from the earth to save it.

In the agenda, the Alliance promotes multiple actions, which it feels will enhance social well-being around the world. The following are examples of advocated actions, which largely reinforce innovations resulting from free enterprise capitalism. First, it promotes the use of high-yield, pest- and disease-resistant food crops and suggests that bioengineering has the potential to greatly reduce hunger. Next, the CA advocates the creation of reservoirs to improve water supplies and create hydropower opportunities. They support prudent use of DDT along with medical and additional antimosquito tools to manage malaria. They endorse many activities to improve access to clean water (e.g., removal of microorganisms, water purification, and desalination). They also endorse efforts to help generate, transmit, and distribute abundant supplies of dependable and affordable energy to those in poverty. Finally, the Alliance endorses trash and refuses

activities that include compensating residents for trash collection, recycling, reuse, and proper disposal.

In summary, RGD's focus of proper action in society for improving social well-being intertwines the Chosen People, Nature's Nation, and Millennial Nation Myths. These myths shape proper action in society around capitalistic endeavors that are perceived to elevate the poor. Pathos appeals explicitly focus on the despair of the poor and logos appeals reinforce the dire need for economic growth to alleviate the suffering of the impoverished.

DISCUSSION

This study answers calls for religiously motivated and nationalistic consumer resistance research (Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Ulver-Sneistrup et al. 2011) by investigating a counter-ideological consumer resistance movement. Specifically, the research explores the rhetorical structure and arguments utilized by the RGD movement against environmentalism, perceived as a threatening and growing influence in American culture.

Ethos, pathos, and logos appeals permeate the RGD campaign in their construction of the us vs. them dichotomies. A pathos tone dominates the campaign and is augmented by logos arguments and speakers' ethos. As shown in other research (Norreklit 2003), when a pathos tone dominates, ethos and logos appeals are used not to spur intellectual debate, but to facilitate acceptance of a claim without further deliberation. Furthermore, in the persuasive efforts to discredit environmentalism, the RGD campaign uses a demonization rhetorical tactic manifested in language, auditory, and imagery cues to present the environmentalist movement as archinfidels (Hughes 2004) out to manipulate, control, and eliminate the freedoms of people in Western society. Ultimately, it is the identity construction of this un-American nefarious cohort that leads to the call for resistance, the ultimate goal of the RGD campaign. RGD's perceived immorality of environmentalists is constructed from the portrayal of their desire to place the needs of the earth above human needs, the defiance of the cultural mandate with antilife policies, and their failure to recognize the self-evident truth that free enterprise capitalism is God's way. The pathos-laden demonization tactics are consistent with other anticonsumption research which indicates that it is common to appeal to emotions that generate negative emotions among antagonists but likewise fuel positive energy within supporters (Sandlin and Callahan 2009). As in other anticonsumption and consumer resistance movements (e.g., Cherrier 2009), RGD constructs

their hero identity around their ability to expose environmentalist exploitations.

Environmentalists are discerned as un-American because they are depicted as wanting to limit capitalistic progress, impose greater restrictions on freedom, and fail to embrace American Exceptionalism by displaying a global emphasis. As a consequence of the tenets of the environmentalist worldview, social well-being is sacrificed for ecological well-being, adding to the suffering of the poor by inhibiting their ability to reap the spiritual and material benefits of free enterprise capitalism. The RGD campaign suggests that social well-being supersedes ecological well-being and that marshaling ecological resources to meet human needs in a capitalistic manner is divine.

In the call for resistance, the campaign particularly advocates anti-consumption of media promoting environmentalism and green marketing, such as mainstream movies and TV (e.g., *Avatar*, *An Inconvenient Truth*), along with opposition to what RGD considers expensive alternative energy sources. Specifically, appropriate actions include closely monitoring what children are exposed to in school and the media. This advice is currently disseminated through such homeschool Web sites as The Homeschool Leadercast (Jesenovec 2014). Beyond censoring environmentalism content from children and opposing environmental policies, the YouTube videos provide little concrete direction on what specific incremental actions should be taken. They implicitly suggest that people take political action by lobbying against any governmental policies influenced by the environmentalist agenda (e.g., carbon tax).

Explicit in the campaign is the call for a mass movement against environmentalism as the only means for eradicating the immoral influence of environmentalists and re-establishing marketplace independence, which the RGD perceives as enhancing society through improvements in social well-being. Thus, it appears that unlike most consumer resistance movements that promote market-bound, incremental acts of resistance, the RGD movement can be better characterized from the Manipulation and Enslavement resistance perspective. It does not offer any solutions within the dominant proenvironmental cultural narrative. Instead, it calls for complete destruction of this narrative and its substitution with the opposing, proconsumption narrative rooted in the values of capitalism and Christianity. Environmentalism is pictured as an enslaving and manipulating ideology, which uses propaganda to produce the symbolic code and cultural logic aimed at diminishing the free and sovereign consumer to an obedient powerless slave. Theoretical and practical implications are subsequently discussed.

Theoretical Implications

This study uniquely combines three literature areas: consumer resistance discourse, religious ideology, and mythical narrative in a rhetorical analysis. The study also provides support for and extends past research in these three literature streams. Consistent with Izberk-Bilgin (2010) Manipulation and Enslavement discourse, the RGD campaign suggests that the underlying motives of environmentalists are to propagate their worldview and shape a society that impedes behavioral freedom. This interpretation is explicit in a review comment for the RGD book and full DVD series sold on Amazon, “eco justice, social justice, green energy are a hoax to enslave man and take God out of our culture” (Logan 2011). Evident in the rhetorical account of environmentalism is the Protestant legacy of American Exceptionalism, Nature’s Nation, and Millennial Nation myths. Other research has highlighted the influence of the American Exceptionalism myth in consumer resistance behavior. Luedicke et al. (2010) found that American Exceptionalism was evident among Hummer owners and that un-American immoral rhetoric was used to cast Hummer owners as moral protagonists and Prius owners as morally suspect socialists. The RGD campaign embodies a morality play in a classic good vs. evil style. In a classic morality play myth, the moral protagonist must defend sacrosanct virtues and ideals from the morally bankrupt adversary (Luedicke et al. 2010). Much like resistance to environmentalism by Hummer owners (Luedicke et al. 2010), the RGD campaign attacks with vigor the science supporting environmentalism. By evoking the Nature’s Nation and Millennial Nation myths, RGD claims that proenvironmental arguments are half-truths perverting the self-evident truth of free enterprise capitalism, which is God’s way and the path to the Golden Age.

As noted by Izberk-Bilgin (2012a) in an examination of how Islamic ideology forms resistance to infidel brands, the path toward the Golden Age appears to be a staple of religious-based resistance movements. Emotionally laden subversive codes are used to describe the symbolic opponents and uphold the demonic foe’s adversarial character. Environmentalists are portrayed as conspirators whose odious worship of nature threatens Christian values set forth by the cultural mandate. Environmentalists do not wish to harness nature in capitalistic endeavors to advance social well-being. Instead, they are perceived as wishing to preserve ecological well-being while ensuring human suffering. In contrast, the arguments for the moral superiority of RGD stems from its prolife stance and the embracement of human creativity through free enterprise capitalism as a solution to alleviating suffering and enhancing social well-being for the world’s

impoverished. Such a position intertwines the American Exceptionalism, Nature's Nation, and Millennial Nation myths. It does so by mythicizing economic expansion as both God's way and an act of Christian charity and by showing it to be an integral part of the redemptive process that will usher us into the Golden Age (Hughes 2004). Interestingly, the acculturation of Christianity to nationalistic values through the perpetuated myths conflicts with the traditional Puritan views held in the 1800s where material pursuits were perceived as dangerous since they distracted man from spiritual pursuits and were perceived to defile God's creation through the pollution of land, air, and water (Droge et al. 1993). This research reinforces the previously proposed adaptation of mythic symbolic constructs to signify contemporary issues and social interests (Wilson 1979).

Hence, this research extends research on religious and nationalistic mythical structures (Hughes 2004; Izberk-Bilgin 2012a; Luedicke et al. 2010) to counter-ideological resistance movements and also demonstrates that the Manipulation and Enslavement discourse can be employed in defense of consumerism. For RGD, manipulation and enslavement stems from the freedom-eroding policies that creep upon unwary citizens as environmentalists infiltrate the government and use cultural intermediaries (e.g., mainstream media) to indoctrinate the innocent (children and Christians) to the false Green Dragon (eco-socialist) worldview while condemning the helpless (the world's poor) to a life of suffering.

Finally, this research illustrates a consistent confluence of rhetorical tropes (myths) and rhetorical devices (ethos, pathos, logos) into a cohesive campaign. Past research has typically either examined the rhetorical tropes (e.g., Yar 2008) or the rhetorical devices (e.g., Feltham 1994). Given the historical nature of rhetorical strategies (Feltham 1994), it is interesting that many of the tactics uncovered from the RGD campaign are consistent with Gilbert's (2007) PAINful model used to explain peoples' perception of threats. Gilbert (2007) asserts that due to the historical conditions humans lived in (had to focus on subsistence and immediate threats), people are still generally sensitive to threats that are perceived as Personal, Abrupt, Immoral, and occurring Now. Explicit or implicit in the RGD campaign are how: environmentalism is inconsistent with American values (Personal), the effects of poverty are easier to detect than environmental issues (Abrupt), environmentalism is inconsistent with Christian values (Immoral), and how poverty is an immediate problem (Now). Future research should examine the PAINful model in relation to rhetorical strategies and examine the perceived threat people feel when messages contain these elements.

Implications of the Tension between Ecological and Social Well-Being

The tensions between RGD and environmentalism highlight the often complex and divergent views of morality in the marketplace (Miller 2001; Ulver-Sneistrup et al. 2011). Environmentalists have long reinforced the idea that moral actions involve the anticonsumption creed “reduce–reuse–recycle” while indicting that “buy–use–dispose” is an immoral activity (Droge et al. 1993, 41). For environmentalists, morality is based on the condemnation of wasteful consumption evident in developed Western societies and some environmentalists have charged the Christian doctrine with immorally legitimizing ecological irresponsibility (Hughes 2004). As a consequence, environmentalism has underestimated the complexity of human motivation and alienated some of those whose behavior it seeks to change (Jackson 2005; Killingsworth and Palmer 1995). While environmentalism posits that we could reduce consumption significantly without sacrificing social well-being, consistent with other critiques of environmentalism (e.g., Jackson 2005; Wenz 2007), RGD morality is based upon the ability of material resources to enhance the social well-being of the impoverished and consumption is essential to social well-being.

Interestingly, from opposing worldviews both RGD and environmentalists perceive materialistic consumption and environmentalism as inharmonious. The present research highlights the dialectical tension that plagues the on-going debate about whether consumption is “good for us” (Jackson 2005, 21). A focus on materialistic consumption to achieve social well-being is often portrayed as inherently evil and detrimental to both environmental and psychological well-being by environmentalists (e.g., Jackson 2005; Miller 2001). In contrast, a focus on ecological well-being to preserve the natural world and its resources is seen by RGD as a defiance of God’s will. This will is set forth in the cultural mandate and the self-evident truth of capitalism as God’s way and a model for other nations as perpetuated by both the myth of American Exceptionalism and Nature’s Nation. RGD’s stance on environmentalism’s impact parallels Miller (2001) and Morrison and Dunlap’s (1986) suggestion that immoral actions of environmentalists include turning a blind eye to human suffering of the impoverished in the name of ecological responsibility, violating the Millennial Nation myth. The incompatibility is fueled from the anticonsumption dogmatism of the environmental discourse and the consumerism dogmatism of the consumption culture which has dominated Western societies (Droge et al. 1993) and is embedded in religious and nationalistic myths (Hughes 2004; Luedicke et al. 2010). These opposing discourses are positioned as

mutually exclusive, limiting progress in the advancement of both human and ecological well-being (Jackson 2005).

While the views of RGD might be considered extreme, past political science research suggests that the undercurrents of RGD's thesis are ubiquitous in theologically conservative Protestants which, historically, have been the least receptive to environmentalism (Guth et al. 1995). This opposition and resistance to environmentalism likely stems from the mastery-over-nature orientation explicit in the mythic structures of Protestant ideology (Hand and Van Liere 1984). This may explain why self-identified Christians still report lower levels of environmental concern than both non-Christian and nonreligious Americans (Clements et al. 2014). However, the ubiquity of the perceived disharmony between environmentalism and nationalistic values is also evident through other nonreligious environmentalism resistance movements such as the *Rolling Coal* movement where individuals modify their diesel trucks to blow "Toyota Prius repellent" in the form of black smoke (Grenoble 2014).

Independent of the opposing discourses, activities such as recycling and clean commuting have tremendous implications for human health (e.g., respiratory problems and cardiovascular disease [Semenza et al. 2008]) as well as quality of life by removing pollutants from the air, land, and water (Jackson 2005). Human health is a cornerstone of well-being. In materially comfortable environments, people take for granted that good health is not only derived from prudent consumer choices and behaviors but also healthy ecosystems (Royne, Levy, and Martinez 2011; World Health Organization 2005). Given that consumption and anticonsumption are portrayed as either moral or immoral actions based on divergent views, a new discourse of well-being is needed to bridge these narratives much the same way Deism united religiously diverse cohorts during the initial development of the United States (Hughes 2004).

In line with this proposition, Miller (2001) suggests that wealth and ecological responsibility are not mutually exclusive and proposes that society begin embracing forms of sustainability that champion efforts to increase wealth without harming the planet. Other research promotes a similar position using social sustainability as a realistic barometer of moral consumption by focusing on simultaneously enhancing social and ecological well-being (Rogers et al. 2012). Social sustainability proposes that human well-being and environmental well-being go hand-in-hand and that well-functioning societies (from a social, political, and economic standpoint) are needed to address contemporary ecological challenges (Rogers et al. 2012). Social sustainability proposes that there is a consumption equilibrium where human needs are met and ecological harm

is minimized. Evidence suggests that material production and consumption do contribute to social well-being, but beyond a certain threshold have negative consequences for ecological and psychological well-being (Beddoe et al. 2009). Beyond this threshold, human materialistic consumption behaviors result in unnecessary ecological degradation, as evidenced by polluted land and rivers and the plastic garbage patch in the Pacific Ocean (Kaiser 2010). In turn, the degradation of the ecological environment has negative implications for health and child development (Jackson 2005). Likewise, the world's richer populations are less vulnerable to adverse health consequences of consumption due to stricter environmental policies and the displacement of dirty industries (World Health Organization 2005).

The challenges we face regarding ecological and social well-being are often framed around consumption. Sadly, this consumption focus has traditionally led to an asymmetry where improvements in one society's well-being have led to the deterioration of well-being in other societies (Rogers et al. 2012) and limited progress toward sustainable consumption (Jackson 2005). Forty percent of Americans still doubt climate change (Hanson 2014), this dialectical tension appears to be a foremost issue. Given that a focus on whether consumption is good for us has also fueled deeply rooted oppositional discourses, future conversations centered on consumption are likely to be futile. While social sustainability has been proposed as an approach which embraces both social and ecological well-being, the term sustainability connotes consumption (Black and Cherrier 2010). We propose that shifting the focus away from consumption and toward human health, as an outcome of both social and ecological well-being, may serve as the unifying theme that antienvironmentalists and environmentalists alike can embrace as a measure of morally just actions.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations, which provide opportunities for future research. First, this research uses an interpretive methodology to examine one particular religion-based counter-ideological resistance movement against environmentalism. Given that past research has highlighted differences in environmental views based on religious affiliation (e.g., Hand and Van Liere 1984), future research could further examine whether differences in antienvironmental resistance sources or rhetoric can be observed based upon religious denomination. Second, the mythical narratives used in this study were largely based upon the work of Hughes (2004), while other mythical narratives (e.g., myth of happiness, myth of

equality, etc.) may also contribute to the understanding of resistance to environmentalism in the United States. In addition, future research could examine whether similar mythical narratives influence environmentalism resistance in other nations with a colonial past (e.g., Australia). Third, this research focuses on one particular environmentalism resistance movement. Future research could compare and contrast the RGD campaign with other emerging nationalistic antienvironmentalism campaigns such as the *If I Wanted America to Fail* campaign, which is a politically grounded collaboration between *Americans for Limited Government* and *Citizens for Lower Taxes*.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article:

Appendix S1. RGD YouTube Video List

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