

WHY IT'S NOT RIGHT TO BE GREEN:
AN ANALYSIS OF FUNDAMENTAL INCOMPATIBILITIES
BETWEEN CONSERVATIVES AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL
MOVEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in Politics – Environmental Studies.

Whitman College
2014

Certificate of Approval

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Professor Phil Brick

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May 14, 2014

A man can contemplate and explore, respect and love, an object as substantial as a farm or a native province. But he cannot contemplate nor explore, respect nor love, a mere turnover, such as an assemblage of "natural resources," a pile of money, a volume of produce, a market, or a credit system...It means the dehumanization of his life.

JOHN CROWE RANSOM, CONSERVATIVE SCHOLAR
1930

To me it seems that it is more important to the leadership of these [environmental] groups to turn their once laudable movement into a political machine by sending out their partisan snake-oil salesmen and misleading the American public regarding their purely politically partisan agenda under the guise of environmental protection.

SENATOR JAMES INHOFE (R-OK)
2004

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The Paradox of “Conservatism”

Most members of the modern environmental movement assume a clean Democrat voting record to be a prerequisite for reputable environmental citizenship. Considering the heated rhetoric of conservative Senator James Inhofe’s quote on page two, many members of the modern Republican Party would likely agree. But such assumptions fail to tell the whole story, because both men quoted on page two would self-identify as emphatically “conservative.” Needless to say, their apparent predilection towards green ideas differ drastically, but despite the immense ideological schism between the two, both may justifiably claim to be representing contemporary conservative viewpoints of their respective eras. Clearly then, some extreme ideological shifts have taken place since Ransom made his observations.

Indeed, at its traditional ideological and etymological core, conservatism places great value on environmental stewardship. Many of the signature environment policies in the United States – from the Antiquities Act of 1906 to the Endangered Species Act of 1973 – were enacted by Republican presidents. Both Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the United States Forest Service, and fellow forester Aldo Leopold, credited by many modern environmentalists as the patron saint of environmental ethics and even their movement at large, were registered Republicans. Modern environmentalism, however, is almost exclusively the domain of progressives and is increasingly bedeviled by strong Republican Party opposition. The division is quantifiable: only eight Republican Members of Congress in the House of Representatives currently have higher “Lifetime Scores” on the League of Conservation Voters’ “National Environmental Scorecard” than

the lowest scoring Democrat. Therein lies the central paradox of conservatism that I hope to untangle this paper.

By tracing the departure of modern conservative doctrine from the environmental movement, this project seeks to understand how environmental issues became divisive and politicized. During the 1960s and 1970s, green ideas and policy preferences surged to the forefront of America's political conscience on a wave of bipartisan support. Within the span of one decade, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Wilderness Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and virtually every other significant piece of environmental legislation in place today all were passed into law. However, the bipartisanship that facilitated those early successes came to a crashing halt during President Ronald Reagan's administration, leaving the environmental movement struggling to recreate even a modicum of their previous achievements. Without strategic thinking, the environmental movement will be doomed to flounder indefinitely in a Congress that passed fewer laws than ever before. Worse, this futility will bear devastating repercussions in light of the growing crises presented by global climate change, ocean acidification, and a host of other issues.

My research entails an attempt to piece together the puzzle of how and why contemporary conservatives and environmentalism seem so mutually exclusive. After all, the environment is as ubiquitous a cause as any; so why do so few conservatives identify with the environmental movement in its present form? To begin to unpack this question, it is first necessary to explore the fluid meaning of conservatism, even as defined by conservatives themselves. Conservatism, originally, firmly embedded itself in the agrarian tradition and Jeffersonian democracy, epitomized by Russell Kirk in part as a

belief in a transcendent moral order with naturally occurring inequality, an unbreakable bond between private property and freedom, and the principle of prudence. Indeed, conservatism was perhaps best understood by its opposition to rampant industrialization and progressivism— an ideology rooted in two key ideas: frustration with “messy, inefficient, and inequitable American society” and firm belief that “scientific expertise, technical skill, and large doses of government regulation” could set the nation back on track (Drake 10). As indicated above, many of these early American conservatives harbored some distinctly pro-environment philosophies, particularly concerning land conservation. Not so with later conservatives, whose affinity for free market economics found receptive ears in President Reagan’s administration. Even these two categories, however, are messy and imprecise. Significant overlap exists in both individual examples and overall political influence, and the rise of the Tea Party in recent years has added further complication to already muddled definitions of conservatism. Consequently, the widespread, often conflicting appropriation of the conservative moniker renders the term almost meaningless. However crude though it may be, I contend that the “conservative” label yet maintains some utility for the purposes of this paper for two reasons. First, its prominence in popular political dialogue, usually in reference to the Republican Party, necessitates its continued use for practical academic analysis. Second, blaming the political separation between those on the right side of the political spectrum and the environmental movement on mere obfuscation of whom exactly qualifies as authentically conservative ignores more complex factors of the apparent incompatibility between the two ideologies. With those caveats in mind, in the following pages I shall endeavor to carefully employ the term “conservative” to demarcate those whose right-of-center

ideologies would generally find shelter under a large umbrella of the Republican Party, especially when compared with their contemporaries.

The term “environmentalism” is equally amorphous and therefore problematic. For many, the term calls to mind Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* and the subsequent flurry of landmark environmental legislation during the 1960s and 1970s. However, the notions of natural resource conservation and careful land management certainly predate the inaugural Earth Day celebration. Early conservationists, such as Ransom, concerned themselves with a far narrower conception of environmental ideology – generally restricted to issues of agrarian stewardship – than do most contemporary environmentalists. Modern greens also value conservation, but add environmental justice, renewable energy, and a wide range of other issues into their collective *raison d’être*. Even where their issues overlapped, conservationists and environmentalists sought different objectives. According to Samuel Hays, the conservation movement principally sought “more efficient development of natural resources,” while the environmental movement “stressed the quality of human experience and hence of the human environment” (Hays 13). Put simply, conservationists advocated prudent use of nature, while environmentalists preferred to protect nature from use altogether. Once again, however, I submit that the ideological distance between conservatives and the environmental movement cannot be explained away with mere semantics. After all, self-described “conservatives” such as President Nixon supported definitively “environmental” legislation like the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. Recognizing the inherent difficulty in pursuing comparative analysis of two “moving targets” in conservatism and environmentalism, I shall proceed to use the term

“environmentalism” to refer to policy ideas and ideological expression characterized by a deliberate prioritization of environmental concerns.

As in virtually every question of political history, no single explanation sufficiently encompasses the myriad of contributing factors of contemporary conservative environmental ideologies. However, my analysis of both environmentalism and conservatism has led me to contextualize those ideologies in light of three key (interrelated) developments: 1) reactionary dismay at the expansion of the federal government during the Civil Rights and environmental movements; 2) the increasing stranglehold of identity politics on environmental discourses; and 3) the proliferation of neoliberal economic philosophy throughout the modern Republican Party. Certainly other influences play a role, but I argue that virtually every explanation of contemporary conservative environmental ideologies occurs within the greater context of federalism, identity politics, and neoliberalism. Together, they can provide answers to my central puzzle: why is it not Right to be Green?

I. Conservative Reaction to Expansions of Federal Power

Federalism in the American civil rights movement

The civil rights movement might at first seem a strange place to begin a discussion of environmental ideology, particularly conservative ideology. The historical timeline of the civil rights movement, however, lends insight regarding the important context into which the modern environmental movement was born. The struggle to dismantle Jim Crow policies in the South during the late 1950s and early 1960s immediately preceded the genesis of the modern environmental movement. Beyond and perhaps in part because of its chronological adjacency to the civil rights movement, the environmental movement adopted many of the selfsame structural goals and implementation strategies. These goals and strategies were – by and large – manifestations of a federalist system. Simply put, federalism is defined as a system of governance where the balance of power is shared between a central authority and constituent political units. For the purposes of this argument though, I employ the word to at once refer to a strong national government maintaining clear supremacy over state and local governments *and* support for or advocacy of this arrangement. Traditional conservatives – advocates for state sovereignty and local democracy since the days of Thomas Jefferson – naturally resisted shifts of power towards this conception of federalism in whatever form they took, civil rights and environmental issues very much included.

While both the Civil War and subsequent Reconstruction marked major victories for advocates of federalism, it was “not until the 1960s and 1970s can we say that the central government had superseded the states as the premier center of political authority

in America” (Gerstle 29). Clearly, those are the same decades that encapsulate the fever pitch of both the civil rights movement and the modern environmental movement. Indeed, Gerstle specifically admits that “the civil rights movement triggered this change. The association between white supremacy and... ‘states’ rights,’ ran so deep that a frontal assault on one was bound to generate and assault on the other” (Gerstle 33). Countless other iconic examples, perhaps most notably President Kennedy’s federalization of the Alabama National Guard to assist with the federally-ordered desegregation of the University of Alabama while the state’s defiant Governor George Wallace physically blocked the entry of two black students, illustrate the central role of the federal government in promoting civil rights. However, the reflexive disgust of progressives towards Wallace’s barefaced racism overshadows potential recognition of his chief concern. Even conservatives who refused to subscribe to Wallace’s call for “segregation now, segregation tomorrow and segregation forever” detested the latest flexing of federal muscle. Such conservatives likely felt that this imposition of federal will was just the latest example of their value set being strong-armed into submission, much like Reconstruction almost 100 years earlier. John Crowe Ransom, a staunch Southern conservative, observed with frustration early in the 20th Century that “immediately after Appomattox it was impossible for the South to resume even that give-and-take of ideas which had marked her ante-bellum relations with the North. She was offered such terms that acquiescence would have been abject” (Ransom 17). From the conservative point of view, federal activation of the Alabama National Guard hardly signified a give-and-take of ideas.

The progressive penchant for federalism

From the progressive perspective, all that federal muscle flexing signified results. From the abolition of slavery to the economic recovery programs of the New Deal, the hallmarks of progressive policy success relied on exercises of federal power to come to fruition. These “successes” reinforced progressives’ faith in employing the federal government to achieve policy goals. As Gerstle notes, numerous federal court cases asserted the supremacy of the federal government on issues such as voting rights, welfare, redistricting, marriage, and others. By the time the modern environmental movement sprung onto the scene during and immediately after the prime years of the civil rights movement, it was abundantly clear what type of strategy progressives would utilize—and how conservatives would likely react.

However, the predisposition of progressives to seek government intervention to further their causes predated even the conception of the civil rights movement. Indeed, what we today refer to as the environmental movement cannot truthfully be described as the first time progressives delved into issues of land stewardship and environmental health through centralist action. As early as the first decades of the 19th century, New England “proto-conservationists appealed to legislatures and courts as the only effective counterweights” to face down “formidable opponents like the textile-magnate Boston Associates, paper mill owners, commercial fishermen, and incorporated timber interests” whose manufacturing operations would bring destruction to regional rivers and forests (Drake 9). In the urban environments, progressives similarly demanded government regulation to curtail air, water, and waste pollution posing mounting threats to public health. Progressives despised inequity and waste – both were anathema to the modern

scientific approach they so cherished – and thus took up a clarion call for more effective stewardship of watersheds and forests imperiled by “inequitable and wasteful resource use” (Drake 10). They saw the central government as an excellent medium through which to pursue such stewardship.

Foreshadowing their current internal political tensions, those on the right were split into two camps on the question of conservation. Old School conservatives like Ransom or Allen Tate categorically rejected the devolution of the natural landscape into “an assemblage of natural resources” in need of government management as an incomplete – if not entirely backwards – understanding of the value of nature. The titans of industry on the new Right also rejected government intervention, but did so instead on grounds that an unfettered free market better served economic interests—principally their own. In either case, though, the memories of open hostility between federal and state governments during the Civil War, Reconstruction, and later during the civil rights movement as described above heightened conservative antagonism to progressives leveraging the power of the federal government. When the modern environmental movement burst onto the scene in the 1960s and 1970s, so obviously mimicking the structure and strategy of progressive campaigns preceding it, a bitter taste rose in the mouths of many conservatives. Even those who espoused some pro-environment ideas expressed hesitation regarding the movement’s structural goals.

Individual examples of this phenomenon are plentiful. As a member of the Wyoming State House of Representatives, Republican Alan Simpson “was an active sponsor of state air quality legislation generally considered to be among the strictest in the country” (Ward 10). Yet over his eighteen-year career in the United States Senate,

Simpson earned a dismal 19% Lifetime Score on the League of Conservation Voters' "National Environmental Scorecard." In explaining this apparent discrepancy, one needs look no further than Simpson's own words: "We tire of the paternalism that is rendered to us in the West, because we got off our asses and did something about clean air and clean water 10 years ago." For conservatives like Simpson or the agrarian thinkers before him, environmentalism at the state or local level was about preserving the place you called home. At the federal level, however, environmentalism was at best a failure to recognize the effectiveness local environmental protections and at worst a blatant usurping of state sovereignty. Fifteen years before Simpson completed his first term in the Senate, Arizona republican Barry Goldwater published his third book, *The Conscience of a Majority*. Brian Allan Drake notes that "much of the book was classic Goldwateresque criticism of liberals, labor, and the press, but the chapter 'Saving the Earth' was different. Its gist was simple: environmental problems were real, they were serious, and now was the time to solve them" (Drake 588-589). According to Goldwater, it was "scarcely possible to claim that man's ability to destroy his environment has any serious limitations." But only five years earlier when the Senate was considering the Wilderness Act of 1964 – arguably one of the keystone efforts to protect the environment from man's inexhaustible ability to destroy it – Goldwater "was one of only twelve senators to vote against it... Like many in the West, Goldwater fretted about federal wilderness protection 'locking up' resources and denying tax revenue to the states" (Drake 596). Goldwater would later temper his position considerably, but his deep mistrust of the federal government was and continues to be a perspective shared by many conservatives. Indeed, as the next section will discuss, this fear of the central government has in some ways come define modern

conservatives—even those who harbor pro-environment views. They recognized that the environment needed protection but rejected the role of the federal government in providing it.

Environmental federalism at work

Given considerable conservative animosity towards the federal government's involvement in environmental protection, it is worth spending some time investigating exactly what how that involvement manifests itself. The federal government partners with its constituent states with to implement and enforce environmental policy through three primary methods. The first, sometimes referred to as a “partial-preemption legislative strategy” begins with Congress requiring a “federal oversight agency (usually the EPA) to set national environmental quality standards and then allows the agency to delegate day-to-day programmatic responsibilities to states with approved programs” (Scheberle 8). Recent attempts by the Obama administration to update the pollution standards for power plants are an excellent example of this approach. While this technique reserves the right for each state to tailor the exact design of environmental programs to fit its specific needs and characteristics, it also raises issues of accountability. If a state is unable or unwilling to effectively meet implementation standards set by the federal oversight agency, the federal government assumes the role of primary regulatory agent. Thus, the locus of power remains firmly rooted in national control. The second method is direct statutory order. As the name implies, this strategy commands states to undergo specific tasks dictated by Congress or another federal agency. Unlike partial-preemption, if a state failed to fulfill its obligations “the federal agency would not assume responsibility for implementation” (Scheberle 10). Instead, states might “face sanctions in other programs”

or “be compelled under court order to perform their duties” (Scheberle 10-11). This strategy clearly succeeded a few years earlier to force the integration of the University of Alabama. In that case, a federal court issued an order to desegregate and President Kennedy leveraged military force when the state was noncompliant. The third principal strategy of interaction on environmental policy between federal and state governments is for Congress “to establish voluntary relationships and rely on grant monies as incentives for state participation” (Scheberle 11). Again, clear connections to the structure of civil rights movement can be identified: “Title VI of the Civil Rights Act made that act the first federal law specifically to prohibit the use by states of racially discriminatory criteria in distributing federal grants-in-aid monies” (Gerstle 33). Though this approach inherently leaves more authority to pursue (or not pursue) environmental protection at the state level, it is limited both by state willingness to participate and by the amount of federal funding available for allocation.

With Scheberle’s assessment of federalism at work for environmental policy, we can clearly see the lingering influences of federalism during the civil rights movement, as described by Gerstle. Both movements relied heavily on federal regulatory laws – such as the Voting Rights Act of 1964 or the Clean Air Act of 1970 – to firmly assert the supremacy of federal standards above those of potentially deviant states. Both also relied heavily on federal courts to enforce these standards. And while it might have been reasonable, even strategic, for those on the Left to pursue governmental recourse to ensure environmental stewardship considering their historical political success with such a strategy, it seems almost inevitable that the utilization of that very strategy was fated to alienate those on the Right. Considering the partisan divide that so frequently seems to

pollute (and sometimes derail) environmental policy discussions, it seems likely that a more balanced approach to federalism would be appropriate where local or state governments assume a greater share of environmental management responsibilities. But as Scheberle notes, the stories or narratives behind the design and implementation of environmental policy carry far greater weight for the success of that policy than the superficial text of the policy itself. Likewise, the federalist structures and strategies of the modern environmental movement explain but a portion of story behind the conservative backlash it generated. To that end, we must turn our attention to the identity discourses that define and demarcate conservatives and environmentalists, both to each other and to themselves.

II Identity Politics: Conservative vs. Environmentalist

Environmental culture wars

While much has been said on the subject of culture wars as they relate to issues such as abortion and gay rights, less focus has been devoted to the culture war engulfing environmental politics. In fact, the deep-seeded antagonism surrounding environmental politics hints at the “different and opposing bases of moral authority and the world views that derive from them” at the heart of cultural conflict (Hunter 43). How, then, did it come to be this way? Amid all the initial policy success at the federal level, environmentalists faced little pressure to develop and maintain an effective political strategy. Instead, green thinkers preferred to rely on what they perceived to be the self-evident moral righteousness and scientific objectivity of their cause, thus allowing green political identity to become paradoxically apolitical. In claiming to rise above the political fray, environmentalists unwittingly planted their flag in the midst of a culture war. Not only did their moralization and rationalization politicize collective identities of conservatives and restructure the social landscape into entrenched groups of opponents and allies, it also neutered any political response environmentalists might hope to take to reconcile the division.

The story of the environmental movement’s inadvertent entry into the culture war begins with its willingness to promote scientific expertise as the antidote to political bickering. As Brian Allen Drake notes in his recent book *Loving Nature, Fearing the State*, “a modern scientific approach offered new hope” to environmentalists who believed “the future belonged not to crass partisanship but to highly trained, objective, amoral government officials working for the greater good” (Drake 10). Setting aside for

the moment the moral judgment necessary for determining what exactly the “greater good” might be, this preference for scientific rationalization permitted environmentalists a sense of knowing the “correct” answers to political questions. This Cartesian sensibility lent the environmental movement “its authority to speak on behalf of nature, its self-image of a unified, science-based, universal code for the relationship of humans with nonhuman nature” (Chaloupka 121). However, science alone cannot provide the political strategy needed to steer the policy through a divided Congress; one needs look no further than the politics of climate change to recognize the woeful inadequacy of this strategy. Worse, if and when pro-environmental legislation actually does become law, scientific purity offers about the same amount of political savvy as President George W. Bush’s premature “Mission Accomplished” banner. Passing science-based legislation is one thing. Enacting it is something else altogether, and the smug certainty of the “correctness” of environmentalism backfires horribly when it encounters conservatives.

Many on the political right viscerally reject what they perceive to be a haughty, cavalier “green” identity stemming precisely from that certainty. As Chaloupka notes, this green identity can be cynically “summarized by granola, the hugging of trees, outdoor recreation, and specific genres of popular music” (Chaloupka 134). Stereotype though this identity may be, it nevertheless rings true to many people. Conservatives in particular revile the self-righteousness implied by environmentalism, for reasons that will be discussed below. Indeed, the current narrative of the environmental movement allows conservatives to perceive it as an affront on their lives and livelihoods waged by “privileged folks with an elevated sense of their own recreational rights”, and thereby internalize anti-environmentalism as part of their very identity (Chaloupka 133). Blind to

this development, many contemporary environmentalists tragically continue to employ rhetorical strategies that only serve to further alienate this conservative identity.

Chaloupka uses the example of greens suggesting loggers and miners pursue a new economy “driven by guided fishing trips, dude ranches, and ski lodges” (Chaloupka 134). However, since “dude ranches might replace copper smelters in the macroeconomy, but smelter workers are seldom the dude ranchers,” such suggestions only serve to prove environmentalists do not understand the “intensely personal, even intimate ground of identity” (Chaloupka 134).

For a more contemporary example of identity clash between environmentalists and conservatives, take the case of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy. In 1993, Bundy stopped paying required fees to graze his estimated 900 cattle on 1,200 federally-owned acres overseen by the Bureau of Land Management. After more than two decades of court injunctions, unpaid fines, and conflict between Bundy and various federal bureaucracies, the BLM finally began to physically round up the cattle itself—only to find its agents quickly confronted by a bevy of heavily-armed, anti-government protestors threatening violence. Bundy’s story makes evident two important lessons of the culture war surrounding environmental politics. The first stems from the reason he ceased payments in the first place: according to Christi Turner of High Country News, “the BLM modified the terms of Bundy’s Bunkerville grazing allotment to protect the [desert tortoise] after it was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act,” at which point he refused to comply with the new terms (Turner). For Bundy – much like loggers in the Pacific Northwest during the so-called “Spotted Owl Controversy” – a way of life he and his family had enjoyed for decades faced a potentially mortal threat from a small,

nondescript creature that “environmentalists” had determined “scientifically” deserving of protection. The second lesson is conveyed in the incredible firepower – literal and emotional – of the protestors that rallied to Bundy’s side. High-powered assault rifles complete with expensive sniper scopes hung from the shoulders of more than one Bundy supporter, and they brought the rhetoric to match. In an interview with Reuters, one man confidently asserted he was “ready to pull the trigger if fired upon.” Another explained to CBS that protestors were “actually strategizing to put all the women up at the front” because “if they’re going to start shooting, it’s going to be women that are going to be televised all across the world getting shot by these rogue federal officers.” Clearly, the passion resident in the environmental culture war – and the animosity it provokes – cannot be understated. Furthermore, this fervent repugnance towards the green identity is subsequently integrated into an ever stronger conservative identity, thus perpetuating the vicious cycle of identity politics. As long as they perceive the environmental movement as anti-conservative, their identity remains anti-environmentalist.

Competing discourses of morality

The passion that fuels the culture war roots itself in issues of morality. By invoking the apolitical certainty of science for prescriptive policy ideas, environmentalists necessarily insinuate that ecological science sufficiently answers moral questions regarding what is “right.” Science very effectively answers questions about how cattle grazing might impact desert tortoise habitat. For many environmentalists, these answers naturally imply that it is also ethically correct to take measures to protect tortoises at the expense of cattle grazing. In his analysis of culture wars, James Davison Hunter explains the epistemology of this version of moralism:

Not only are the nature of reality and foundations of knowledge established by the adequacy of empirical proofs uncovered and the quality and coherence of the logic applied, but in this frame of reference, autonomous rationality and the empirical method become the decisive criteria for evaluating the credibility and usefulness of all moral claims as well. (Hunter 125)

Evaluating morality with human logic does not sit well with conservatives, who since Kirk have acknowledged a transcendent moral order external and superior to our human capacity to rationalize. For them, the measures to protect tortoises overstep that order. Using science to answer questions of cultural value displays hubris distasteful to such conservatives, worsened still by environmentalism's dismissive treatment of non-scientific foundations of morality. Instead of uniting groups around technocratic solutions, green identity politics appears patronizingly sanctimonious towards conservative understandings of moral authority, thereby generating a powerful backlash from conservatives.

The division in moral discourses presents other problems as well. Recent analysis suggests that cognition of moral environmental messaging depends on the precise moral values of a particular group. Take the case of climate change. The moral rhetoric surrounding climate change is particularly ill-suited to motivate action in conservatives because it appeals to primarily liberal moral priorities. The University of Oregon's Ezra Markowitz elucidates these moral distinctions as follows:

Liberals tend to base their moral priorities on two foundations of individual welfare – harm and fairness – whereas conservatives supplement these with three additional foundations focused on in-group loyalty, authority respect, and purity/sanctity. The moral framing of climate change has typically focused on only the first two values: harm to present and future generations and the unfairness of the distribution of burdens caused by climate change. (Markowitz and Shariff 244)

The result is that “climate change messages remain focused on the moral priorities of liberals at the expense of those resonant to conservatives” with many conservatives left “not just uninvolved in action on climate change, but morally hostile to it” (Markowitz and Shariff 244). In essence, conservatives and progressives speak different moral languages. Thus, the moral imperative for action on climate change – as it is currently framed for liberal audiences by the environmental movement – is fundamentally incompatible with conservative understandings of morality. Stressing the injustice of the unequal distribution of climate impacts simply does not resonate with conservatives the way emphasizing carbon pollution’s violation of perceived environmental purity might. But the discordancy between conservative and environmental identities runs deeper even than discourses of moral rectitude.

Conservative identity construction and the politics of paranoia

Cliven Bundy is hardly the first conservative to claim his way of life under threat from the opposing formulations of moral authority that characterize the culture war. In a now famous essay in the November 1964 edition of *Harper’s Magazine*, historian Richard Hofstadter described “The Paranoid Style of American Politics” in which the radical right wing perceives immediate, apocalyptic threats perpetrated by government elites against their “way of life.” According to Hofstadter, Republicans “feel dispossessed: America has been largely taken away from them and their kind, though they are determined to try to repossess it and to prevent the final destructive act of subversion.” Beyond just the bizarre delusions themselves, however, a paranoid conservative identity has “more to do with the way in which ideas are believed than with the truth or falsity of their content” (Hofstadter). In that regard, and especially relevant

for the purposes of this paper, Hofstadter notes that the paranoid conservative “does not see social conflict as something to be mediated and compromised, in the manner of a working politician....This demand for total triumph leads to the formulation of hopelessly unrealistic goals, and since these goals are even remotely attainable, failure constantly heightens the paranoid’s sense of frustration.” Whatever the subject, a paranoid conservative consistently seeks to draw a line in the sand. Whatever may be said by those on the other side of that line, be they imagined communists or admitted environmentalists, it was to be rejected as insidious falsehood and resisted tooth and nail.

Though 1960s-era Republicans were concerned with a communist takeover, their deep distrust of the federal government – and by proxy the environmental movement – pervades conservative language to this day.¹ The rhetoric surrounding the recent federal gun control debate, and particularly the 2008 Supreme Court decision in *District of Columbia vs. Heller*, centered heavily on the idea of protecting individual gun ownership specifically as a safeguard against tyrannical abuses of government power. Indeed, conservative Justice Anthony Scalia – writing the Court’s majority opinion – argued that “the militia” of the Third Amendment, which he defines as “all able-bodied men,” was “necessary to the security of a free state” because “when the able-bodied men of a nation are trained in arms and organized, they are better able to resist tyranny.” Thus, according to Scalia, the right to bear arms preserves the option of violent insurrection should citizens start to feel their individual liberties were being threatened. Frighteningly, more

¹ The one exception to this fear of a powerful central government might be the hawkish national defense policies advocated by the so-called “neoconservatives” who rose to prominence during Republican presidential administrations beginning in the early 1970s. Indeed, neoconservatives were perfectly content with massive expansions of the federal government (and the accompanying debt) so long as those expansions focused on military spending and asserting American interests abroad.

and more Americans believe that to be the case. A Pew Research Center poll last year found increasing numbers of conservatives sympathize with insurrectionist perspectives:

The growing view that the federal government threatens personal rights and freedoms has been led by conservative Republicans. Currently 76% of conservative Republicans say that the federal government threatens their personal rights and freedoms and 54% describe the government as a ‘major’ threat. Three years ago, 62% of conservative Republicans said the government was a threat to their freedom; 47% said it was a major threat. (Dimock 1)

Violent rebellion might seem a gross overreaction to some, but Hofstadter explains that the paranoid conservative “sees the fate of conspiracy in apocalyptic terms—he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values.” If the scales of the paranoid conservative’s dire prognoses seem almost comically dramatic, it is because they are. Perhaps the most telling example of this paranoia directed towards the environmental movement comes from Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) – a senior member of the House Science Committee – during a rant on climate change at a town hall meeting this past summer:

Just so you know, global warming is a total fraud and it is being designed by— what you’ve got is you’ve got liberals who get elected at the local level want state government to do the work and let them make the decisions. Then, at the state level, they want the federal government to do it. And at the federal government, they want to create global government to control all of our lives. That’s what the game plan is. It’s step by step by step, more and bigger control over our lives by higher levels of government. And global warming is that strategy in spades.... Our freedom to make our choices on transportation and everything else? No, that’s gotta [sic] be done by a government official who, by the way, probably comes from Nigeria because he’s a UN government official, not a US government official. (Fang)

Under this framework, environmental intervention at any level – especially federal – becomes a mad power-grab designed principally to limit personal freedoms and submit the American people to tyrannical global governance. While it may be easy to dismiss

Congressman Rohrabacher as a fear-monger losing his grip on reality, it is worth considering that more moderate versions of these perceptions likely pervade more mainstream conservative thought. As Hofstadter estimates, “there are highbrow, lowbrow, and middlebrow paranoids, as there as in any political tendency.” Besides, Congressman Rohrabacher has been reelected 11 times since he first joined the House of Representatives in 1989—clearly enough of his constituents share his paranoia, or at the very least appear perfectly content to tolerate it.

Apart from infamous Wisconsin Senator Joe McCarthy, Barry Goldwater perhaps typified Hofstadter’s “paranoid style” more than any other individual. Brian Allen Drake describes the Arizona senator’s personal ideology in vivid language:

Goldwater’s own political beliefs were like a hundred-proof shot of conservative antistatism. For him, the federal government was a barely necessary evil, limited by the Constitution to a handful of activities, and its growth in the twentieth century suggested a national slide toward socialism...His mistrust of communism was total...No compromise was possible, and victory the only road to peace; talk of peaceful coexistence was treason born of ‘a craven fear of death.’ (Drake 21)

Despite his vehement hatred of the federal government and a predilection to fear a communist takeover behind every corner, Goldwater “had serious concerns about the environmental issues of the time: wilderness preservation, pollution, sustainable energy, overpopulation, and the general ecological quality of life” (Drake 22). Indeed, he eventually would come to be a vociferous advocate (admittedly less accomplished in action than in diction) for federal environmental protections, positing that “it is my belief that when pollution is found, it should be halted at the source, even if this requires stringent government action against important segments of our national economy” (Drake 589). In this way, Goldwater serves as a fascinating case study of “a man trying to serve

two masters, pulled by loyalties and sentiments that did not always complement each other” from which can be gleaned at least two important lessons (Drake 23). First, when it really mattered to the environmental movement, the “antistatist, market-worshipping, growth-loving, boosterish Barry Goldwater” (Drake 23) won out over the Goldwater who believed “in the right of our people to live in a clean and pollution-free environment” (Drake 82). He voted against the Wilderness Act and for the Glen Canyon Dam (an ironically massive federal reclamation project that devastated riparian ecology on the Colorado River that Goldwater later regretted facilitating), and vocally supported the Sagebrush Rebellion and President Reagan’s pro-logging and mining Interior Secretary James Watt—a man “almost universally despised” by environmentalists (Drake 106). Fear of the state overpowered Goldwater’s love of nature more often than not, indicating the relative strength of antistatism among even the most ardent of environmentally-minded conservatives. Second, his brand of conservative environmentalism is now virtually extinct given the dramatic turn towards neoliberal libertarianism discussed in section three. Indeed, Goldwater himself lamented late in life that he and his friend Bob Dole had become “the new liberals of the Republican Party” and that “the radical right has nearly ruined our party” (Murphy).

As mentioned above, Hofstadter clarifies that the “paranoid style” derives from how ideas are perceived, as opposed to the ideas themselves. He supposes that “nothing really prevents a sound program or demand from being advocated in the paranoid style,” implying that rational (presumably progressive) policy proposals could just as easily utilize paranoid rhetoric to build public support (Hofstadter). But is that actually true? Recent research suggests that the strength of a reaction to aversive stimuli significantly

correlates to support for specific policies. Two fascinating studies, both conducted in part by the University of Nebraska's John Hibbing, seem to indicate that conservatives experience greater physiological reactions to fear than do progressives:

Individuals with measurably lower physical sensitivities to sudden noises and threatening visual images were more likely to support foreign aid, liberal immigration policies, pacifism, and gun control, whereas individuals displaying measurably higher physiological reactions to those same stimuli were more likely to favor defense spending, capital punishment, patriotism, and the Iraq War. Thus, the degree to which individuals are physiologically responsive to threat appears to indicate the degree to which they advocate policies that protect the existing social structure from both external (out-group) and internal (norm-violator) threats. (Oxley et al. 1667)

It appears, therefore, that the "paranoid style" is symptomatic of a heightened attunement to fear-inducing stimuli, such as political rhetoric implying looming threats to established order. Interestingly, "those on the right not only respond more strongly to aversive images but also devote more attention to aversive images... This responsiveness and attentiveness, in turn, is consistent with the fact that right-of-center policy positions are often designed to protect society from out-group threats and in-group norm-violators" (Dodd et al. 646). Environmentalists advocating for systematic changes to society's fossil fuel or consumption economy can quickly be portrayed as in-group norm-violators, while the government regulations they propose become out-group threats. That such responsiveness and attentiveness to perceived threats is unique to conservatives suggests a biological predisposition towards a paranoid style of politics.

Intriguingly, this paranoid conservative identity has been increasingly hijacked by those on the far right seeking to instigate free-market, neoliberal economic policy (often meaning fewer and weaker environmental regulations, as described in the next section). Such policy, however, often adversely impacts the same conservative base that propelled

the neoliberal advocates to power in the first place. Thomas Frank pursues this paradox in his bestselling book *What's the Matter with Kansas*. Frank catalogues how wealthy business interests carefully capitalize on the political influence of so-called “social issues” – like abortion or gay marriage – to attract conservative voters. After the election, however, social issues take a backseat to the systematic deregulation of markets and reduction of taxes that benefit wealthy corporate CEOs at the expense of middle class conservatives. Frank cites Christopher Lasch’s analysis of Ronald Reagan, who “made himself the champion of ‘traditional values,’ but there is no evidence he regarded their restoration as a high priority. What he really cared about was the revival of the unregulated capitalism of the twenties: the repeal of the New Deal” (Frank 6-7). In short, social conservatives fall for an old-fashioned bait-and-switch—drawn in by passionate rhetoric on abortion while instead politicians work to deregulate financial markets. As Hofstadter discovered in his exploration of paranoid politics, however, the truly nefarious dimension of this imitation conservatism is its predisposal to imagine a myriad of conspiracy theories to explain why virtually none of the social objectives are ever accomplished. Necessarily, the culprits are always “the liberal media, the atheistic scientists, [and] the obnoxious eastern elite,” and therefore conservative identity voters respond by doubling-down on conservative candidates (Frank 7). Thus, the modern conservative movement’s “response to the power structure is to make the rich richer; whose answer to the inexorable degradation of working-class life is to lash out angrily at labor unions and liberal workplace-safety programs; whose solution to the rise of ignorance in America is to pull the rug out from under public education” (Frank 7). It is this paradox that marries the paranoid conservative identity with the wave of neoliberal

economic policy promoted by corporate business interests via the Republican Party, which will be discussed in greater detail in section three. While vocal libertarians continued to draw mainstream conservatives farther to the right, growing political polarization dissuaded them from all manner of compromise.

Political polarization and congressional restructuring

There is quantifiable evidence that the makeup of Congress in general – and the Republican Party in particular – has shifted to the right since the Reagan Administration. Political scientists Howard Rosenthal and Keith Poole have developed statistical algorithms to measure political polarization by estimating ideological positions of members of Congress based on their voting records. Spanning the past 30 years or so, their analysis lays the blame squarely on the shoulders of conservatives on the far right:

Polarization has increased sharply despite rhetoric about ‘compromise,’ ‘working together,’ and ‘compassionate conservatism.’ This polarization has been mainly the result of the Republican move to the right during the past thirty years. Conservative Republicans have replaced more moderate Republicans outside the South, and moderate and conservative Democrats in the South. The effect has been a rightward movement on the liberal-conservative dimension of the Republican Party as a whole. (Poole & Rosenthal 106)

The best-known anecdotal evidence of this trend is the story of former South Carolina Congressman Bob Inglis. Inglis, a lifelong conservative, lost his reelection bid after expressing support for a carbon tax policy to limit greenhouse gas pollution contributing to global climate change. As Inglis explained, “the most enduring heresy that I committed was saying the climate change is real, and let’s do something about it.” Unfortunately for Inglis, the more radical members of his conservative party perceived any recognition of climate change – given the threat to neoliberal order most mitigation measures inherently

pose – as contemptible capitulation to the environmental movement and progressives. That polarization appears to be replicated in the electorate at large.

The scope of political polarization and the media coverage that has accompanied it necessarily compel individuals to consider their own political identity. This perfectly natural response, however, might actually be contributing to worsening polarization. A study by Columbia University’s Michael Morris presented research subjects with investment options labeled either “conservative” or “risk-tolerant.” Importantly, the labels bore no relevance to the actual financial risk level of the investment—a fact clearly discernable with even minor analysis by research participants. Prior to selecting an option, participants were asked to declare their political allegiances. The results indicate the power of that awareness: “When political identities were made salient, Republicans (but not Democrats) became more likely to choose the gamble or investment option labeled ‘conservative.’ This shift did not occur in a condition in which the same options were unlabeled” (Morris et al. 1154). In short, the mere consciousness of self-identifying as politically conservative significantly increases the likelihood of supporting ideas also demarcated as conservative, even when those decisions may not be conservative at all. This phenomenon has been detected in other studies as well. In the discussion of his findings, Yale University’s Jamie Luguri explains that “when participants were reminded of their political selves, liberals and conservatives were *more* polarized about political issues” such as corporate tax rates and military spending (Luguri & Napier 976). Thus, being aware of political identity leads to increased polarization and in turn even more cognizance of political identity. In other words, political polarization reminds conservatives to be ever more conservative at all times on all issues.

This cycle certainly affects the perception of environmental issues. For instance, if a conservative were watching Fox News – highly likely, considering a 2012 Pew Research Center survey that found “fully 60% of Fox News viewers describe themselves as conservative” – he or she would very likely find constant reminders of his or her own conservative identity. This could simply stem from knowledge of Fox News’ reputation as a conservative media outlet, but it could also derive from explicit coverage of news events—another 2012 Pew study found that 46 percent of Fox News stories about President Obama during the 2012 campaign exhibited a clear negative tone, compared with just 12 percent of stories about Republican candidate Mitt Romney. With conservative identity fully salient, the Fox News viewer would more readily judge stories on climate change or other environmental issues with an even more conservative bent. Not helping matters is the fact that “of the Fox segments that mentioned climate science, 28 percent were entirely accurate, while 72 percent included misleading portrayals of the science...Fox hosts and guests were more likely than those of other networks to disparage the study of climate science and criticize scientists” (Huertas & Kriegsman 4).

Amid the partisanship fanned on by media flames, the notion of polarization seems rather monolithic—the “right” is moving farther “right.” However, such a perception obviates the specific, nuanced ways in which certain conservative ideologies have trended toward certain neoliberal policy preferences. As it happens, environmentalism makes for a particularly visible target in this shift, given its preference for strong federal regulations, publically managed resources, and other strategies specifically bemoaned by this new brand of neoliberal conservative. The third pillar of conservatism’s enmity to the environmental movement is arguably not a conservative

principle at all – at least in the traditional sense of conservatism. How, then, did neoliberalism gain and maintain the influence necessary to reshape conservative ideology in almost complete opposition to the environmental movement?

III. Neoliberalism as the New Conservative Modus Operandi

Dismantling environmental regulation and the cult of neoliberalism

As conservatives were pushing away from the modern environmental movement for its structure and narrative, they were simultaneously being pulled farther away still by the rising influence of neoliberal economic policies within their own ranks. Concisely summarized as “an exclusive system premised upon the logic of property rights and the expansion of these rights, all the while maintaining that the free market is self-regulating, sufficiently and efficiently working to establish individual and collective well-being” (Parr 5), neoliberalism abhors the perceived “inefficiency” of environmental regulation by the federal government. Instead, neoliberal philosophy prefers to perceive environmental challenges as “opportunities to privatize solutions; manage certain class expectations; offer market based instruments to support environmental change and provide opportunities to demonstrate the capacity for ‘win-win’ environmental solutions” (Andrew & Cortese 400). For an environmental movement that cheers and often demands government intervention on behalf of environmental causes, such attacks seem misplaced at best and potentially catastrophic at worst. For journalist Naomi Klein, relying on the free market to sort our environmental problems is akin to putting the Ku Klux Klan in charge of implementing civil rights reforms. As Klein wrote in an online magazine article last fall, “our entire economic paradigm is a threat to ecological stability. And indeed...challenging this economic paradigm – through mass-movement counter-pressure – is humanity’s best shot at avoiding catastrophe.” In spite, or perhaps in part because of, the outcry against neoliberalism among many environmentalists, the ideology has gained considerable traction among conservatives.

This development is rather counterintuitive. After all, early conservatives like Ransom and Kirk resisted the grandiose dynamism of massive industrial projects championed by capitalist boosters. The shift – which coincides with the polarization described in the previous section – seems to have been catalyzed by the free market principles championed by Milton Friedman. At the beginning, connections to traditional conservatism still seemed relatively evident. Friedman famously endorsed “starving the beast” specifically to reduce the size of the federal government, even recommending tax cuts which would incur budget deficits because the “resulting deficits will be an effective – I would go so far as to say the only effective – restraint on the spending propensities of the executive branch and the legislature” (Niskanen 553). Even before Friedman’s free market teachings found traction in Reagan’s administration, however, corporate business interests were strategizing to recapture political power that had been trending towards social welfare since WWII. In a 1971 memo circulated among the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other corporate interest groups, soon-to-be Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell warned that “government regulations, consumer activism, and politically powerful trade unions” threatened “to ‘fatally weaken or destroy’ America’s free enterprise system” (Smith 6). To rectify this distressing development, Powell suggested leveraging corporate coffers to advocate neoliberal policy ideas on college campuses, in the media, and on Capitol Hill. His rallying cry propelled the business community into action and ultimately success.

Interestingly, corporate business interests exploited some fascinating components of conservative identity politics to amass political power. Indeed, California State University’s Daniel McClure posits that business elites, frustrated by the Keynesian

wealth redistribution and regulatory policies of post-WWII America, worked to capitalize on “the idea of rugged individualism and the populist distaste for government bureaucrats and regulatory laws” that pervades rural American – and particularly conservative – cultural identity (McClure 36). In effect, these interests sought to mobilize “frontier” tropes that resonated strongly with conservatives who perceived American exceptionalism to be rooted in notions of a self-reliant and risk-taking spirit. McClure quotes a 1968 edition of *Business Week* magazine that attempted to counter the prevailing anti-corporate sentiment with just such a strategy:

At its best, the conglomerate style harkens back to the entrepreneurial spirit and daring that typified the early days of U.S. capitalism...Creators rather than curators, the conglomerates often revive competition in settled industries by picking up marginal producers and energizing them with new capital, uninhibited ideas, and fresh expertise...Shrewd, aggressive, and often charismatic, they excite and sometimes inspire the men around them. (McClure 33)

Thus for conservatives, the rise of neoliberal market structures came to be equated with ideas of hardworking American settlers bolderly creating a livelihood for themselves on the Western frontier.

To understand the dramatic influence of such viewpoints, one needs look no further than the success of Libertarian-turned-Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul during the 2012 Republican primaries. Paul’s platform was characterized by neoliberal economic policy far beyond what most mainstream conservative candidates were proposing, including sweeping reductions in federal spending, corporate tax cuts, and the elimination of the Federal Reserve. Nevertheless, Paul “won the majority of the eighteen-to-twenty-nine vote and 43 percent of independent voters” in the Iowa caucuses, and remained influential enough to press his policy ideas at the Republican Convention

(Bums 47). Paul's prominence is emblematic of the pressures currently being applied the old guard of the Republican Party, who must now contend with Tea Party primary challengers running on policy platforms even farther right than their own. In an article analyzing the phenomenon of the American Tea Party, Benjamin Cunningham asserts that the "movement has concluded that unfettered markets work...In fact, much of the Tea Party movement is angry at the Republican party for not supporting even greater deregulation and less equitable economics" (Cunningham 24). Conservative Members of Congress seeking reelection have thus been obligated to take notice: embrace neoliberalism or move over for someone who does.

Conservative think tanks and free market environmental policy

Conservative policy-makers are also being pressed towards neoliberalism by peculiar, yet immensely powerful, political institutions known as think tanks. Leading the charge on this front is "the emergence of conservative think tanks as vociferous advocates of market fundamentalism" (Smith & Marden 699). Think tanks inhabit a privileged position in public discourse – through easy access to both media and politicians, as well as through an appearance of independent expert opinion – that affords them the unique ability to promote seemingly academic policy solutions as means to reshape political values. In recent years, conservative think tanks in particular have utilized this highly influential position to specifically champion neoliberalism economic policy in a manner well explained by RMIT University's Marcus Smith:

Conservative think tanks act as an echo chamber for very particular ideas and values, creating the appearance of informed public debate devoid of politics whilst overwhelming alternative ideas and values. While alternative voices are attacked specifically to undermine their credibility and challenge the legitimacy of their participation in public debate, the echo chamber not only crowds existing political spaces, it also creates the impression that alternative voices are minority

views, justifying further marginalization from debate. Amplifying the actualization of neoliberal orthodoxy through the think tank echo chamber has had the subtle effect of mutually reinforcing the standing of neoliberal prescriptions and the designation of expertise. (Smith & Marden 714)

Environmental issues are no exception to the rule of neoliberal prescription. In my research of the websites of ten of the most prominent conservative think tanks the United States² (a task tantamount to a game of neoliberalism Bingo), I discovered that two (Claremont Institute and, ironically, Goldwater Institute) did not even list the environment as one of their areas of study. Seven of the ten demanded an expansion of new fossil fuel energy markets, especially in natural gas. Six called for rapid dismantling of EPA regulations under the rationale that they limited job creation. The American Enterprise Institute did include one commentator who expressed hesitations over the construction of the Keystone XL tar sands oil pipeline—on the grounds that private property rights might not be properly respected. Only the far less influential Energy and Enterprise Institute (run by former Congressman Bob Inglis) proposed limiting carbon pollution in any way, and even it recommended following existing neoliberal market structures by implementing a carbon tax. Similarly, the Property and Environment Research Center recently published a report “debunking” eight “myths” about recycling. The report challenges the assumption that “without recycling mandates, there wouldn’t be recycling” and instead argues that “the free market system is eminently capable of providing both disposal and recycling in an amount and mix that creates the greatest wealth for society” (Benjamin 31). Perhaps Cato’s Energy and Environment “Bottom Line” best articulates the views bouncing around in the conservative think tank echo

² The following think tanks were analyzed: American Enterprise Institute, Cato Institute, Claremont Institute, Energy and Enterprise Initiative, Goldwater Institute, Heartland Institute, Heritage Foundation, Hudson Institute, Manhattan Institute, and Property and Environmental Research Council

chamber: “Cato’s energy and environment studies are devoted to explaining how energy markets work and promoting policies that leave questions regarding energy consumption, environmental standards, market structure, and technology to the market rather than government planners.”

Unsatisfied with merely celebrating explicit neoliberal policies, many of these think tanks also specialize in generating skepticism about potential threats to the neoliberal world order. By casting doubt on environmental science, they help paralyze the electorate – and policy-makers in particular – in a state of uncertainty about the severity of environmental issues. A report led by Peter Jacques asserts “that skepticism is a tactic of an elite-driven counter-movement designed to combat environmentalism, and that the successful use of this tactic has contributed to the weakening of the US commitment to environmental protection” (Jacques et al. 349). Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway’s 2010 book *Merchants of Doubt* chronicles the conscious, deliberate efforts of certain scientists – usually on the payroll of conservative think tanks – to “attack science and scientists, and to confuse us about major, important issues affection our lives—and the planet we live on” (Oreskes & Conway 7). My own rough analysis corroborates these more academic findings. Half of the conservative think tanks I observed disputed the science or severity of climate change, with the Heartland Institute proudly citing a description of itself in *The Economist* as “the world’s most prominent think tank promoting skepticism about man-made climate change.” Suspiciously, many corporations – such as ExxonMobil and the American Petroleum Institute – that benefit from the lack of government intervention on environmental issues also contribute significant funding to

conservative think tanks, which in turn have been linked to over 92 percent of the books which promote environmental skepticism (Jacques et al. 349).

Clearly, then, discussions on conservative ideology are dominated by conservative think tanks. Those think tanks are dominated by a fervent adherence to the neoliberal canon, which in turn is dominated by anti-environmentalist sentiment for the reasons outlined above. To the degree that they subscribe – or are compelled to subscribe – to neoliberal ideology, conservatives necessarily become bitter adversaries of any and all opponents to neoliberal order. Modern environmentalism, commonly defined by strong federal regulations and other impediments to the neoliberal order described in the preceding pages, inevitably became one such adversary.

Implications for Reconciliation

Given such extensive analysis of the three-sided wedge of federalism, identity politics, and neoliberalism driving modern conservatives and environmentalists apart, one might reasonably despair that nothing can be done to reverse such an inevitable trend. I would argue that, to the contrary, it is precisely because of the long history of their schism that hope remains to once again reunite conservatism with its fundamental concern for conservation. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the organization of this paper, I recommend three areas of focus for those interested in pursuing a happier union between conservatism with environmentalism.

First, concentrate energies on projects that maintain local input and management – as opposed to centralized command structures – over the environment they inhabit. Grassroots ecosystem management projects and local water conservancy boards are good examples of this strategy. This will help reconnect “conservationists” with the environmental movement. After all, environmental conservatives like John Crowe Ransom, Barry Goldwater, and Alan Simpson were not concerned with abstract calculations of the parts per million of carbon dioxide somewhere in the atmosphere. They cared about their homes.

Second, activate a conscious awareness of our common nationality, as a means to also activate a common passion for protecting our national heritage. Recall Jamie Luguri’s study on political polarization discussed in section two: “When participants were reminded of their political selves, liberals and conservatives were *more* polarized about political issues” (Luguri & Napier 976). But researchers also discovered that when reminded of their national identity; both liberals and conservatives were *less* polarized

about those exact same political issues. Appeals to in-group loyalty and patriotic duty may find conservatives particularly receptive.

Third, and perhaps most important, decouple neoliberalism from conservatism. It is likely that doing so is not possible without first limiting the huge sums of corporate money currently injected into elections every year. The influence of campaign donations tips the scales in favor of the neoliberal policy that concentrated wealth in the hands of the donators in the first place. If that money is removed from the equation, the scales will tip back towards democratic representation and environmental bipartisanship.

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