WALKING AWAY FROM KYOTO:
A CRITICAL RHETORIC OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEBATE
A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS
BY
JAMES COLEMAN MCGUFFEY
ADVISOR: DR. BETH MESSNER
BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
MUNCIE, INDIANA
JULY 2010
DEDICATION

To Lizzy for her love and support.

To my parents for their love and friendship.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has taken me many places, and forced me to look at the world in new ways. If it weren’t for the help of so many people, I fear I would have been lost in the woods a long time ago. Thankfully, the community at Ball State University has provided me with the guidance and support to keep me on path.

First, I would like to thank Dr. Beth Messner for her hard work and advice in compiling this project. She has been patient and valuable in helping me find clarity in my writing. As a teacher and advisor, I have learned so much from her, and I know that future generations will also benefit from her presence in the department.

I must also thank Dr. Kristin McCauliff for her help in navigating me through the unfamiliar territory of rhetorical theory that informs this project. I am also honored to have the opportunity to share research with her. Our Tuesday conversations have been one of the highlights of my two years at Ball State.

I appreciate the insightful voice that Mike Bauer has offered throughout the course of a project. You challenged me to never overlook anything. Without your help, I am not sure that this project would be as coherent or complete.

My experiences at Wabash College provided some of the most important lessons that have helped me advance my study of Rhetoric. I would like to thank Dr. David
Timmerman and Dr. Jennifer Abbott for challenging my writing, and pushing me to pursue the difficult path. I would also like to thank Dr. Todd McDorman for introducing me to the challenges and the thrills of rhetorical inquiry.

I would like to thank my family, who has been a constant source of love and support. My father has always been my role model, I have never known anyone to work so hard and care so much. My mother has always been a source of inspiration for me, showing me that there are many worlds out there to be explored. My sister, Heather, has always been there with her love and support, and I know she will be a great mother. Amy has become one of my greatest friends, and I know she will always be there for me. Shelby (Vince) has been a great little brother, and has proven that he will be a great man.

Finally, I thank my partner, Elizabeth Wagoner, for her love, support, and care throughout my graduate study. Your kindness and compassion does not go unappreciated. I only hope that I can return the favor some day.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</th>
<th>v</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of the Kyoto Protocols</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of the Environmental Movement</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying Environmental Communication</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives on Environmentalism</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 THE CRITICAL ORIENTATION</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmodernism and Subjectivity</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texts in a Postmodern Society</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Critical Practice of Resistance</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ideograph</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating Articulation Theory</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 &lt;KYOTO&gt; AS AN IDEOGRAPH</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting the Stage: Kyoto, Media, and Debate</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster Narratives: Competing Interpretations of &lt;Kyoto&gt;</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictions and the Question of “Evidence”</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;Kyoto&gt;, Cost-Benefit Analysis, and Re-Articulation</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questioning Fairness: Treaties and Carbon Trade…………………71
Exposing “Discourses of Domination”…………………………73
Conclusion………………………………………………………79

5 RETHINKING <KYOTO> AND <ENVIRONMENTAL>ISM……81
Dismissing the Whackos: Revisiting Ecocentrism………………81
Theorizing Voice: Recovering Nature’s Potential to Speak……84
Re-voicing Communities: The Case of the Maldives………….88
Re-visiting the <Kyoto> Ideograph……………………………92
Implications for/of Critical Rhetoric…………………………95
Borders and Future Directions for Study………………………97
Conclusion………………………………………………………100
REFERENCES…………………………………………………………103
CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

In June of 1988, amidst a draught that had plagued much of North America, NASA climate Scientist James Hansen testified before the Senate about the human effect on our environment. With “ninety-nine percent confidence” Hansen declared, “the greenhouse effect has been detected, and it is changing our climate now” (Sarewitz & Pielke, 2000). From that moment on, the issue of global climate change could no longer be ignored because the statements made by Hansen resulted in considerable media coverage, and drove the issue of global warming to the center of environmentalist’s policy agenda (Cooper, 2001). Today a simple mention of the words “global warming” or “climate change” within the media can trigger a debate that has been played out many times before. The issue of climate change seems to always turn to the question of evidence. Do the events we see as proof of global warming actually reflect human-caused climate change, or are they simply natural cycles over which humans have no control? The question of policy, in both the national and international arenas, seems to rely on answering this question.

Since 1988, the United Nations has worked to create policies designed to limit the potential devastation of climate change by reducing the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere. These actions represent a worldwide environmental
movement designed to protect nature from the destructive actions of humanity. However, in the 22 years since Hansen’s testimony, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. While climate change has become a central fight for environmentalists, the progress of the fight is apparently minimal.

The environmentalist movement as a whole has endured a long battle and faced considerable controversy in seeking to stop the destruction of the earth. In this battle, environmentalism is often poised against the capitalist-industrialist tenets of progress. Unfortunately, any attempt at achieving sustainability may require limiting the use of “natural resources” that have brought technological change (Killingsworth & Palmer, 1992; Herndl & Brown, 1996; Deluca, 1999; Kendall, 2008). Despite this tension, there appears to be an emerging recognition of humanity’s environmental impact. It has become more and more difficult to deny the effects of climate change caused by greenhouse gases. Globally, this recognition has manifested itself in international climate change treaties. The Kyoto Protocols (1998) have emerged as the most often referenced treaty generated in the international arena. As with much of the environmental movement, the Kyoto Protocols were also controversial. Even as the United States became a signatory of the protocols, the Senate made it clear that the treaty would never be ratified. Senator Chuck Hagel emphatically remarked, “There is no way, if the President signs this, that the vote in the United States Senate will even be close. We will kill this bill” (Bennett, 1997, p. A1).

While controversy over the Kyoto Protocols was clear from the outset, much of this controversy was not associated with a belief or disbelief in global warming. Rather,
there was considerable dispute over their economic implications. Throughout negotiations over the treaty, it was difficult to find any discussion that did not return to the topic of the market. In fact, many of the mechanisms operating within the Kyoto Protocols were designed to function within a market-based system.

The juxtaposition of the earth and the marketplace serve as the fuel for this current study. Operating from a critical rhetoric standpoint, I observe the limits of discourse and how American society’s understanding of the environment was made clear in the debates surrounding the Kyoto Protocols within the public sphere of the United States. This study, first, begins with the justifications for this study. I then move into a review of relevant literature. The literature review begins by exploring the rise of environmental groups and the study of environmentalism. This review then examines a shift in the rhetorical study of environmentalism from a study of groups to a study of mass consciousness. Specifically, I look at differing perspectives that embody the environmental movement. From here I move towards a discussion of critical rhetoric, the approach used to guide this study. Specifically, I look at the postmodern conceptions operating within a critical rhetoric orientation. For the purposes of this critique, I explore the combination of ideographic analysis with articulation theory as a way of understanding how language functions as a material power in constituting the meaning of discourse. This conceptual combination does not represent a specific method, but it helps explain how I entered into my analysis.
In operating from a critical orientation, I looked through media discourses in America’s debate over the Kyoto Protocols and identified dominant articulations of ideographs that have a material impact. There are two questions that guide this study:

1. What ideographs are circulating within the American media’s discussion of the Kyoto Protocols?
2. How are the articulations of these ideographs functioning as a dominant discourse of power?

This study concludes by examining one final question.

3. What are the possibilities for performing a critique of environmental discourse through the debate over the Kyoto Protocols?

**Justification**

As the Kyoto Protocols were set to expire, the United States entered the worldwide negotiation for a new environmental treaty at the fifteenth conference of the UNFCCC parties (COP-15) in 2009. Despite widely held hope for a positive outcome, the agreements in Copenhagen “left many people deflated, even disgusted” as it fell short of bringing nations together to make the cuts needed to reduced greenhouse gas emissions (Harrabin, 2009, para. 8). The way that we think about the environment certainly had significant implications for the COP-15 meeting. Many of the environmental issues that needed addressed were tabled. As Cooper (2009) reported “President Obama and other world leaders…. decided to put off the difficult task of reaching a climate change agreement” (p. A6). This reflects an outcome similar to that
associated with the Kyoto Protocol. It has been in place for over a decade but has failed to produce any change in the world-wide increase in greenhouse gas emissions (Victor, 2004; Strong; 2009).

As international treaties continue to fall short of expectations, it is increasingly important to understand the discourses surrounding their predecessor, the Kyoto Protocols. However, this study does not seek to understand how the Kyoto Protocols have failed to prevent climate change in and of itself. Rather, this study looks to the deep-seeded problems in our discourse that may inhibit the development of a strong treaty that would create real material change in the future. That is to say, this study focuses on the problematic conditions embedded in discourses of power that restrict the way that the protocols may be constructed and interpreted. The study of these conditions of consciousness can highlight the conditions at play in developing a new treaty in the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

A second significance for this study is revealed by focusing on problems that stem from ignoring the relationship between humanity and the world. Much of the previous rhetorical scholarship on the environment focused on understanding and overcoming the forces that have created inequality and violence between different activist groups (Deluca, 1999a; Peeples, 2005; Deluca & Peeples, 2002; Grumbine, 1994; Gottlieb, 2005). Unfortunately, these studies have examined the relationship of humans to other humans, and discussions of the earth tend to be overshadowed. Yet as the effects of climate change become more real, it is increasingly clear that the world serves as a web connecting us all (Clark, 2006; National Academy of Sciences [NAS], 2001; NAS 2006).
Pollution in the United States can lead to draughts in Africa and Asia (Clark, 2006; NAS, 2001). Hurricanes and tropical storms are becoming more severe, devastating coastal cities (Anthes, Corell, Holland, Hurrell, MacCracken, & Trenberth, 2006). Melting polar ice caps result in rising sea levels again impacting coastal cities (Nielsen & Clemmsen, 2009). Trash and other waste have collected in the Pacific Ocean as a mass estimated to be twice the size of Texas (Hoshaw, 2009). Therefore, it is important to understand how the discussion of the environment in the public sphere reveals the ways in which the continued abuse of the earth has been not only justified, but worse, ignored. As the climate crisis becomes a more recognizable phenomenon, the limits of discourses depicting humanity as separate from the world are revealed. New discourses must be developed that embrace humanity as part of the world.

A final argument for the significance of this study lies in the need for continued examination of the relationship between communication and the environment. As Stephen Depoe of the University of Cincinnati noted at a divisional meeting held at the 2009 National Communication Association (NCA) conference, “all communication is environmental communication.” The way that we talk about the world and to each other embodies an environmental perspective, a way of understanding our relationship to the world. There is a need to further the study of Environmental Communication. As a field, it is relatively young and underexplored. While progress is suggested by the emergence of the Environmental Communication journal and textbooks that teach the basic tenets of environmental communication, such as Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere, there is considerable work that can be done. After all, Environmental
Communication has only been recognized as a division in NCA for approximately thirteen years. This study expands the field by continuing a critique of dominant discourses within American society. By understanding how discourse orients society towards the world, we can better understand the forces that continually pressure us to ignore our connection to the environment (Smith, 2001, Kinsella, 2007). With this in mind, this study of the Kyoto Protocols continues a vein of research that is developing at a time when the importance of understanding the environment is crucial.

**History of the Kyoto Protocols**

International environmental treaties have become commonplace since the beginning of the 21st century. As the interconnectivity between countries becomes increasingly realized in the age of globalization, international treaties have and will continue to play an important role in forging global policies. The United Nations (UN) represents the strongest and most respected body through which multilateral environmental treaties are formed. The UN solidified its role in environmental diplomacy in 1972 with the formation of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) (Cooper, 2001). Since then, it has taken on an increasingly organized and important role in doing so. Indeed, the UN now leads the effort to bring together its global membership to confront environmental issues.

In 1992, 179 UN delegations came together for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Cooper, 2001). At this conference, commonly called the Earth Summit, representatives developed a treaty known as United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
The UNFCCC served as a response to the then recent discovery of a link between greenhouse gas emissions and global climate change. The Earth Summit concluded that there was a need for international mandates to lower greenhouse gas emissions (Yamin, 1998). Unfortunately, the outcome of the UNFCCC’s deliberations was a weak international policy that held little promise to create actual change because of its emphasis on soft targets, use of convoluted language, and the delegations’ obfuscated interpretations of the policy (Campbell, 1998).

Regardless of the weak internal structure of the 1992 treaty, the UNFCCC put forth a global mandate to act upon what was increasingly being perceived as an impending climate crisis. In 1995, the UN adopted the Second Assignment Report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The report outlined predicted increases in temperature as well as the possible global fallout resulting from the climate change (Campbell, 1998). This scientific report renewed the members’ commitment to act upon the mandate outlined in the 1992 treaty. Consequently, the Kyoto Protocols were developed and signed in December of 1997. The Protocols outlined the policy mechanisms that would be put in place to enforce the UNFCCC mandate to lower greenhouse gas emissions. The purpose of the protocols was to implement “a foundation for much more concerted action on the part of governments and much greater public awareness and support” (Strong, 2009, p. 26). This was considered to be “one of the most complex multilateral negotiations of modern times” (Yamin, 1998).

The negotiation process through which the Kyoto Protocols were formed was one of the greatest centers of debate for the implementation of greenhouse reduction...
mandates. Designing a framework for such a global effort is at the very least problematic and tedious. Several countries further complicated the process, including the United States. As a participant in the construction of the protocols, the U.S. had considerable influence over its architecture (Yamin, 1998). In fact, all of the policies of the Kyoto Protocols were developed from a model lobbied by the U.S. The central tenet behind the Kyoto Protocols is that “it encourages recourse to the market to achieve environmental objectives at the least economic cost” (Cutajar, 2004, p. 61). In other words, the treaty enacted capitalistic environmentalism by using the market as a means of regulation.

One provision enabled many developing countries, China and India most importantly, to avoid being held accountable for the reduction of greenhouse gases despite their significant contributions to climate change (Yamin, 1998). Another provision made it possible for countries to purchase emission credits from other countries, a provision the U.S. supported and the European Union rejected (1998). This would have allowed countries to maintain current emission levels, while claiming to reduce overall emission via the countries that sold their credits. Finally, there was debate over the viability of carbon sinks in reducing greenhouse emissions (1998). Carbon sinks are sites where trees are planted as a means of offsetting the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This process is an inexact science, however, and the overall benefit of carbon sinks is uncertain (Cooper, 1998).

The United States refused to ratify the treaty. While the United States was a signatory to the Kyoto Protocols, the treaty was never ratified in the Senate because several of its provisions were a source of disagreement for both the Clinton Administration as well as the Senate (Victor, 2004). Specifically, there was significant
concern over the exclusion of India and China from the Protocols, and because the treaty faced significant opposition from domestic interest groups (Cutajar, 2004). As a result, the United States was never subjected to the rules of the Protocols (Purvis, 2004).

Although the Kyoto Protocols became a weak international mandate because the U.S. withdrew from the treaty, it did receive some praise. Through it, a number of policies, mechanisms, and arrangements were developed and introduced that allowed for a more globally concerted effort to minimize climate change. For example, one of the central contributions of the Kyoto Protocols is the establishment of greenhouse gas reduction targets (Ott, 1998). The reduction targets were established on a per country basis, with the majority of countries accepting a 5% reduction in greenhouse gasses from their 1990 levels; however, some countries agreed to a greater reduction percentage, including Britain, Germany, and Japan (Cooper, 1998; Ott, 1998). Any country that participates in the Kyoto Protocols and fails to meet their targets is subject to penalties.

A second contribution is the development of flexibility mechanisms, such as the ability to purchase emission credits. This enables countries to better transition into meeting their reduction targets. Member countries also are required to produce reports on their progress that are submitted to expert groups, coordinated by the secretariat of the Conference of the Parties, for review (Yamin, 1998). The production and circulation of these reports allows for better communication, as well as analysis of potential shortcomings of member nations’ policies.

Given all of the progress and the huge multilateral effort that came together for the Kyoto Protocols, its impact has been disappointing, to say the least. More than a decade after the conclusion of the Kyoto Summit, numerous criticisms have been leveled
against the Protocols. One major criticism points to research that shows that the actual impact of the Kyoto Protocols is modest, even compared to no international action (Page, 2007). Critics point out that developing nations remain exempt from the reduction target penalties. For example, China, which is now the leading emitter of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere, was not subject to the same emissions restrictions as developed countries (Rosenthal, 2008). India also continues to increase its emission levels as well. More importantly, the United States’ refusal to ratify the Kyoto Treaty dealt a serious blow to the overall legitimacy of the protocol. Finally, critics note that the complexity of the Kyoto Protocols has made it possible for countries to evade their commitments through loopholes (Page, 2007). These shortcomings make it clear that there is considerable variance in international commitment for the UN mandate to prevent unsustainable climate change.

With all the concern that has emerged over the Kyoto Protocols, emphasis is no longer placed on improving it, but on the formulation of the next treaty to replace Kyoto, an issue tabled at COP-15. Maurice Strong, the first director of the UNEP, pointed to several areas that need particular attention. To him, several factors are critical to reducing the impact of climate change, including working towards sustainable development, creating oversight organizations, globalizing scientific improvements, and ensuring that the United States and China are committed to change (Strong, 2009). The next step is to reopen the Kyoto treaties (Victor, 2004). By developing a stronger system for monitoring emissions, creating international institutions, and reworking the overall architecture of the Kyoto Protocols, a positive step forward may be made (2004). Some
progress has been made in the international arena, as countries such as China and India signed and ratified the treaty in 2002. Despite this development, the United States remains opposed to the treaty. Furthermore, signatories continue to struggle to meet their emissions targets. As a result, the treaty needs reworked. A key to this is the reworking of the overall protocols and a return to the mechanisms that encourage sustainability.

As environmental treaties continue to lack the strength for successful action it becomes important to recognize the connections between environmental treat and environmentalism, and specifically how environmentalism becomes a priority in the public sphere. Studying environmentalism requires recognizing the complex and diverse nature of the movement. Indeed, environmentalism is a movement devoted to developing an ethic of human relations towards the earth. With this in mind, the study of environmentalism is a study of the shift in how humans orient themselves to nature. The following literature review provides a reading of American environmentalism as developed from early environmental groups into diverse perspectives that have created an environmental ethic. The history and perspectives of environmentalism established the conditions from which the Kyoto Protocols emerged. The protocols are a product of history, environmental perspectives, environmental treaties, environmental groups, counter-environmental groups, and an increasing concern for the consequences of environmental impact in the scientific community. The Kyoto Protocols serve as a formation created by the environmental movement and as a trajectory through which the environmental movement will travel. Therefore, it is critical to understand how the Kyoto Protocols have influenced the way that individuals may see the world.
CHAPTER TWO: 
LITERATURE REVIEW

Environmentalism is a complex subject, rich with diversity, history, and meaning. Many individuals and groups operate under the banner of environmentalism. At its core it is a movement, a shift away from the destruction of our surrounding world. Environmentalism is an ethic that defines the relationship between humanity and the earth. However, when dealing with the environmental movement, it becomes very clear that there is not a uniform approach. Therefore, it is important to understand the historical development of environmental groups and the rich perspectives from which these groups operate. This review of literature first discusses the emergence of environmentalism in the American tradition. Following this is an exploration of different ways of viewing the relationship between humanity and the earth.

History of the Environmental Movement

Environmental organizations have a long history within the United States. The late 19th and early 20th century saw the rise of the first environmentalist groups, the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society. These groups were established to protect an environment encompassing “the external, the out-of-doors, that which surrounds, the margins of civilization, and, above all, the wilderness [emphasis in the original]” (Killingsworth & Palmer, 1992, p. 31). As the 20th century unfolded, many other
environmental groups emerged in the United States. These groups vary widely in their structure and interests, from small groups of nuclear waste protesters to large organizations of litigators such as the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) (Gottlieb, 2005). These groups enjoyed a boost in support from President Theodore Roosevelt. During his Presidency, he made many efforts to promote conversation. Widely held as “the nation’s first conservationist president” he developed legislation to protect the environment, and sparked national interest in the “conservation of wild life and the larger movement for the conservation of all our natural resources (Environmental hero, 2003).

As the 20th century waned, a mainstream environmental movement was well under way. This movement was comprised of ten organizations, also known as “the Group of Ten.” The group consisted of the National Wildlife Federation, Izaak Walton League, Council for Environmental Quality, National Audubon Society, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, NRDC, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Environmental Policy Center (EPC), and Friends of the Earth (Gottlieb, 2005). Beginning in the 1970’s, these groups benefitted from considerable public support (Peeples, 2005). As their popularity rose, they also enjoyed an increase in their collective resources (Gottlieb, 2005). Many of these groups also attempted to situate themselves as part of the policy-making process. Specifically, the Group of Ten sought an increased presence in the legislative arena. To accommodate their new lobbying role, they began to undergo a process of professionalization and institutionalization that required them to develop and provide expertise for the government (Gottlieb, 2005). The Group of Ten, taking on a
mainstream approach, began serving as an informative resource in guiding congressional action. Given their increasing impact on public policy, mainstream environmental groups also started to meet resistance from other environmental groups. Specifically, the Group of Ten opened itself up to “criticism by those who have come to define environmentalism in broader social terms as a response to urban and industrial change” (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 217). Consequently, a struggle developed between different factions of the environmental movement.

As the criticism received by the Group of Ten suggests, the environmental movement is a disharmonious collective of disparate voices. In fact, the movement features little unity beyond the basic concern over an environment in peril. Although the groups operate under the banner of environmentalism, they have been “competitive and territorial” (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 181). Some of this discord can be traced to the different foci of the groups, their differing rhetorical strategies, as well as their competition for the resources needed to carry out their agendas. Activist organizations, such as Greenpeace and Earth First!, operate via direct action, rather than through legislative lobbying (Deluca, 1999; Gottlieb, 2005). They embody a message-oriented approach to social change, challenging dominant discourses through rhetorical image events that serve as “crystallized philosophical fragments, mind bombs” that open up the realm of discursive opportunities to new perspectives (Deluca, 1999, p. 6).

This message-oriented approach revolves around events that inject themselves into circulating discussions of the environment. One such example is Greenpeace’s efforts to stop illegal whaling by driving small rafting boats between massive Soviet
whaling vessels. While seeking to save an individual whale, they caught on film a harpoon being fired over them within a few feet of their Zodiac boat. This event became embedded in the national consciousness through its constant recirculation in the public sphere (Deluca, 1999). This antagonistic image contradicted a common portrait of humanity fighting an untamable wild. Now the wild (i.e., whales) were being easily harvested as humanity became the dangerous force that nature had to fight against.

The actions of Earth First! and Greenpeace, in combination with the legislative role of the mainstream groups, have prompted the rise of a powerful counter-movement to environmentalism (Peeples, 2005). Many of these counter-movement groups are concerned with the invasion of environmentalism into the realm of private property; they argue that no one outside of the property owner should control property (Grumbine, 1994; Peeples, 2005). One powerful voice leading the counter-movement was former United States Secretary of the Interior James Watt. He sought to delegitimize the environmental agenda by “creating a conception of the environmentalist character that would repel the ordinary citizen” (Killingsworth & Palmer, 1992, p. 37). He portrayed environmentalists as socialists pursuing a socialist agenda, thereby reorienting the counter-movement as pro-democracy, and more importantly, pro-capitalism (Killingsworth & Palmer, 1996). This approach became the cornerstone of the reactive “wise-use” movement. This movement, most prominent in the 1980’s, consisted of a collection of “natural resource industries, outdoor recreation groups, and landowners,” (Peeples, 2005, p. 1). These groups were highly suspicious of environmentalists. This suspicion revealed itself through high levels of threatening language and even violence.
(Seneca, 1997). Since its inception, wise-use has become a symbol of the increasingly challenged voice of the environmental movement and the complex struggle over influencing public consciousness.

The challenge to traditional lobbying by mainstream environmental groups also points to a struggle that scholars face when studying the environmental social movement. Environmental groups often do not employ traditional organizational structures and policy procedures to evoke change. Rather, change occurs through the messages circulating in the public sphere. Given their failure to prevent or even slow climate change, it is clear that the battle is rooted in attempts to influence publics and to define and to shape how society views the environment. More specifically, the battleground determines how individuals are directed to see what the environment means and the way in which they define their relationship to it. Therefore, more attention must be paid to the interplay between discourse and public consciousness.

Overall, environmentalism appears to be struggling with a crisis of modernity (Smith, 2001). The crisis of modernity is a crisis of nature. Nature disappears as the modernist narrative of progress, a faith in the ability of progress through reason to create a better world, reaches its logical end. This end relies upon categorizing and appropriating the earth in the name of modernity’s progress (Deluca, 1999). The study of environmentalist groups then requires refocusing to better understand environmentalism as a social movement as well as observing the forces that resist any shift. Rather than exploring the nature of how these groups organize themselves, it is important to attend to
how the rhetoric of these groups challenges and shifts public consciousness (Deluca, 1999).

**Studying Environmental Communication**

In a wider context, the study of environmentalism takes place in the realm of communication. For scholars of rhetoric, the environment serves to inform scholarship as a site for “conversations about complicity and implication, power and argumentation, theory and practical implementation” (Plec, 2007, p. 50). Scholars have taken many different approaches to understand the complex relationship between communication, consciousness, policy, and the environment (Killingsworth & Palmer, 1992; Sandmann, 1996; Peterson, 1997; Deluca, 1999; Peeples, 2005; Kinsella, 2007). Environmental communication transcends politics, entering the arena of the personal as well. For example, a green ideology has emerged within American popular culture. Green lifestyle programming is an increasingly common phenomenon on television and internet video (Lewis, 2008). These shows generally offer only a light critique of modernism’s impact on the environment, simultaneously restoring the image of environmentalists, while promoting green consumerism (Slawter, 2008). This phenomenon indicates that environmentalism has attained its role in the public sphere. However, the question becomes: “What form of environmentalism?”

Rhetorical scholars have responded to this question, in part, by seeking to determine how environmentalism is defined. More importantly, rhetorical study of the environment has sought out the philosophical underpinnings that inform the differing modes of environmentalism. For example, Peterson (1997) explored the 1992 United
Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Rio de Janeiro via Burke’s terministic screens. In investigating the debate and definitions forged in the declaration, Peterson determined that the 1992 Rio agreement constructed sustainable development as a central element to environmentalism in a way that “privilege[es] individuality and independence over community and interdependence” (1997, p. 75). Further, he asserted that humans become implicated at the center of sustainable development, privileging it over nature (1997).


Kinsella (2007) dug beneath the symbolic attempts to define environmentalism by exploring the underlying philosophical assumptions that guide attempts to understand and define environmentalism. Kinsella utilized a phenomenological approach to study the Hanford Reservation, a site of nuclear and chemical waste materials. The author attempted to understand the reservation in terms of Heidegger’s views on being-in-the-world, and more specifically his conception of technology. For Heidegger, technology is
“manifested in modes of thinking, language, and action” (Kinsella, 2007, p. 196). It traditionally is defined as both a “means to an end” and “a human activity” (Heidegger, 1977, p.4). However, this conception is incomplete. Far from being a means towards an end, technology is “a way of revealing” (1977, p. 12). It is the mode by which definitions of environmentalism can be constructed. Emerging from this underlying mode of thought is a practice where “institutional, political, and scientific discourses have worked together to foster instrumental relationships between humans and nature, as well as between humans and humans” (Kinsella, 2007, p. 198).

Kinsella’s work indicates that technology controls the possible definitions of environmentalism. Viewing “technology” as inherently tied to “progress” reveals how modernist discourse has restricted the possibilities of understanding the relationship between humans and nature. Technology disposes humanity to utilize its faculties to solve the environmental crisis. All the while, humans are placed as the central focus and nature is conceptualized as separate.

**Perspectives on Environmentalism**

With the proliferation of environmental groups came a wide variety of messages and approaches towards the environment. Each of the environmental groups builds their strategy upon a set of ideological assumptions that guide the way they act, and more importantly, the way they think about the world. Ultimately, most environmental groups, whether they are the Sierra Club or Earth First!, play a role in challenging the dominant societal consciousness that they perceive has led and even encouraged the exploitation of the environment without regard for its sustainability. Yet the differences between environmental groups are far greater than their similarities. These groups are quite varied
in the size of their organization, as well as the scope of their environmental efforts.

Further, the approaches they use may operate within or outside of the dominant system.

Given these differences, scholars began to classify environmental groups based on their ideological approaches to the relationship between humanity and the world. For example, some environmental groups operate in the realm of anthropocentric and ecocentric ideologies (Devell & Sessions, 1985; Spangle & Knapp, 1996). Anthropocentric thought places humans as the focal point through which all human actions should be considered. The anthropocentric perspective is rooted in the modernist tradition, which has developed from an economic view of the world. It places earth as a resource for human consumption (Devell & Sessions, 1985). Environmentalists operating from this perspective, sometimes called technocentrism, believe that the solution to environmental struggles lies in human technology in combination with sustainable development, and requires attention to moderation (O’Riordan, 1981). Counter to this perspective is ecocentrism, the reverse of anthropocentrism. It places the ecosystem or earth as the focal point for making decisions. Ecocentrism does not remove humans as a central point, but rather characterizes humanity as part of the greater ecosystem of the earth. Therefore, the whole of the earth must be taken into account when engaged in decision-making (Smith, 2001). Ecocentrism no longer views the earth as a resource, instead shifting towards a model that depicts humans as caretakers of the earth.

Taking note of the shortcomings of this approach, Killingsworth and Palmer (1992) offered an alternative that expands upon the dualist perspective. Rather than
categorizing environmentalist discourses in a binary form, Killingsworth and Palmer
developed a continuum of perspectives on nature in which “nature as resource”
(anthropocentrism) lies in the center. “Nature as object” and “nature as spirit” extend in
opposite directions from this middle ground. “Nature as object” operates from a
traditional scientific perspective, emphasizing objectivism. From this viewpoint, humans
are rational observers of the earth. “Nature as spirit” sees nature as consecrated and
asserts that humans should avoid interference (Killingsworth & Palmer, 1992). This
approach is akin to deep ecology, an effort “to defend nature’s intrinsic value” (Smith,
2001, p. 110). The benefit of this continuum is that it does not classify
“environmentalists into conservationists and preservationists [, which] is no longer
realistic” (Spangle and Knapp, 1996, p. 6). However, the continuum failed to account for
the role of scientific data in each of the perspectives (Spangle & Knapp, 1996).

To account for this limitation, Spangle and Knapp identified four perspectives that
explain how “rhetors view knowledge, the central issues, and opponents in its discourse”
(1996, p. 6). The four perspectives are radical functionalism, resource functionalism,
resource environmentalism, and radical environmentalism; they resemble the continuum
developed by Killingsworth and Palmer. Further, Spangle and Knapp reduced these into
three groups, each of which represents one or a combination of the perspectives:
business (radical and resource functionalism), environmentalists (resource
environmentalism), and radical-environmentalists (radical environmentalism) (1996).
Similarly, Herndl and Brown (1996) developed a triad model that resembles Spangle and
Knapp’s three groups, while also drawing upon Killingsworth and Palmer’s continuum to
map the underlying discourse of environmental groups. This model defines the three different perspectives as ethnocentric (ethos), anthropocentric (logos), and ecocentric (pathos). By combining the insights that each of the models have to offer, Herndl and Brown’s model provides a powerful heuristic tool. This tool can be used to explore how rhetoric is used to define environmentalism, and more importantly, what the underlying assumptions are that direct given perspectives on environmentalism. Ultimately, the model serves to help understand the “variety of discourses on the environment, their cultural importance, and the array of rhetorical techniques available to the critic or the writer” (Herndl & Brown, 1996, p. 11).

Anthropocentric discourse portrays the human as an observer of nature. Within this perspective lies a faith in the human’s ability to understand nature and to overcome its destruction by unlocking its secrets through science (Herndl & Brown, 1996). This perspective also requires that we develop knowledge about nature in regards to the damage that humans have caused and what is needed for its repair (Spangle & Knapp, 1996, p. 7). Conversely, ecocentrism explores nature “as a sacred entity that demands to be revered and respected as much as humans” (Spangle & Knapp, 1996, p. 7). The shape of this discourse typically reflects the aesthetic and spiritual value of nature (Herndl & Brown, 1996, p. 12). Finally, ethnocentrism defines nature in terms of its utility and as an economic resource. As a resource, it operates as “one among many others, to be managed for the greater social welfare” (Herndl & Brown, 1996, p. 10).

Each of these perspectives suggests an orientation towards the environment. However, these perspectives are by no means mutually exclusive; they have a great
tendency to overlap in discourse (Herndl & Brown, 1996). Each can clash and compete with one another as ways to understand the relationship between humanity and nature, and consequently, the meaning and purpose of environmentalism. By exploring where these perspectives collide, we arrive at the intersection of conflict within the environmental debate. Environmentalism is at a crossroads. Deeply engaged in conflicts over modernity, post-modernity, and the nature of progress and technology, environmental rhetoric operates as the guiding force for the material impact of defining environmentalism and thus guiding the actions of environmentalists. Environmental rhetoric takes a number of forms, each embodying a different way of talking about the relationship between humanity and the earth. Given this, it is important to understand the dominant discourses that serve to illuminate a given perspective while simultaneously constraining human action. These dominant discourses are made readily available in the debates surrounding public policy. Consequently, the debates over environmental treaties provide a rich ground for exposing the dominant discourses operating within the public sphere.
CHAPTER THREE:
THE CRITICAL ORIENTATION

This environmental study of the Kyoto Protocols employs a critical rhetoric orientation. We begin with an exploration of the challenges of postmodern thought and its implications for rhetorical criticism. We then move to an explication of what critical rhetoric is and what rhetorical scholarship looks like from this orientation. Specifically, the critical scholar views texts as mere “fragments” of an unending text. Drawing from this critical rhetoric orientation, we shift to a discussion of ideographic analysis and articulation theory as models for analyzing fragments. The goal of this study is to understand what ideographs are circulating within the American debate over the Kyoto Protocols. Secondly, how are the articulations of these ideographs functioning as a dominant discourse of power? Finally, what are the possibilities for performing a critique of environmental discourse through the debates over the Kyoto Protocols?

Postmodernism and Subjectivity

The ambiguity of the postmodern condition poses difficulties for rhetorical scholars. As postmodernism moves to de-center its subject as the source of production and resistance, it is increasingly difficult for rhetorical scholars to navigate the waters of their own practice. Important new questions emerge that demand serious consideration. What constitutes a text? What, if anything, is the telos of the rhetorical scholar? How
does one go about analyzing a text? To address this postmodern condition, many in the rhetorical community have turned to the work of Michael Foucault (e.g., McKerrow, 1989; Biesecker, 1992; Muckelbauer, 2000).

Foucault’s works, specifically his concern for power, introduce potentially vexing problems for those who view rhetoric from a traditional perspective. Yet, in drawing from and adapting to his thought, a greater potential for critical rhetoric emerges. Foucault’s conception of power represents a critical shift in the way we perceive power operating in society. Power has traditionally been seen as a purely oppressive force that restricts free thought. For Foucault, power is not merely a repressive force that serves to marginalize thought. Rather, “power produces knowledge” and becomes the formative force for all human action (2001, p. 27). No longer is power the point of attack for rhetorical scholarship. Foucault suggests that the role of the scholar is not to transcend the bounds of power in pursuit of truth. Rather, the rhetorical scholar is implicated in a system of power and is even constructed as subject within the web of power relations. The subject (i.e., critic) is a product of power, “the effect of a subjection more profound than himself [sic]” (2001, p. 30). Thus, the power to resist or transform the trajectories of discourse, or frameworks through which we see the world, does not come from the rhetorical scholar. Rather, the position of the subject “must not be understood as the origin proper of transgression” (Biesecker, 1992, p. 357). The subject is not the source of power and resistance, but is already always a product of it.

Given the decentralized character of rhetorical criticism, a new means of challenging power must take place. The telos of rhetorical scholarship moves past the
deconstruction of power towards a refocusing of the grids of intelligibility or ways of viewing the world created by power. By refocusing available grids of intelligibility, the limits of discourse may be exposed and ultimately transformed. Adopting this new paradigm, Raymie McKerrow (1989) and Michael McGee (1990) began to explore new modes of rhetorical practice. Responding to Wander’s (1983) call for an “ideological turn,” McKerrow developed critical rhetoric. For McKerrow, critical rhetoric represents an “orientation toward a postmodern conception of the relationship between discourse and power” (1989, p. 109). Critical rhetoric asserts that there is no recourse to action and thought outside of power. Therefore, the critical scholar must operate within and recognize the ubiquity of power. No longer does the rhetorical critic seek to dismantle power to create free thought. The liberation from power comes from a shift in power, allowing for new modes of thought. McKerrow’s approach emphasizes invention for critical practice. However, this invention relies on pulling together modes of thought made available by the structures of power governing our social world. Single texts are no longer completely enclosed systems of thought, but are mediated by the wide array of power structures shaping knowledge. Before one may engage in the analysis of a text to determine what it may tell us about our social world, the critical rhetorician must first “construct addresses out of the fabric of mediated experience” (1989, p. 101).

**Texts in a Postmodern Society**

The construction of texts is crucial to the rhetorical scholar in the face of the postmodern condition. According to McKerrow, rather than analyzing individual texts as if they are complete works, the critical scholar should be looking towards “formations of
texts” (1989, p. 101). Within the conditions of post-modernity, texts are no longer singular entities, but fragments. In a subsequent essay, McGee (1990) more clearly defines how scholars should look towards “formations of texts” in the face of an increasingly heterogeneous society. For McGee, the shift in the conditions of our culture has greatly transformed the educational landscape in the last century. No longer are all individuals educated under a singular body of knowledge (McGee, 1990). 20th century shifts in education have created a world with vastly different bodies of knowledge and worldviews. Simply put, “however we got there, the human condition has changed,” and in this new human condition, texts can no longer be seen as “complete” (McGee, 1990, p. 286). Today’s “texts” are merely fragments of a larger, unfolding discourse. The new human condition is analogous to Burke’s metaphor of an “unending conversation.” As Burke (1941) stated,

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your
opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance.

However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you
must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still
vigorously in progress. (pp. 110-111)

Everyone enters the social arena with varying perspectives of the world, and we take part in conversations that are never fully complete. Our contributions to these conversations are merely fragments. These fragments are “disparate scraps of discourse which, when constructed as an argument, serve to illuminate otherwise hidden or taken for granted social practices” (McKerrow, 1989, p. 101). Herein lays the first task of the critical rhetorician.

Biesecker (2002) illustrated this well in her discussion of how modern popular culture representations of World War II construct a view of individual responsibility and discounts the “marks of structurally and institutionally supported social inequalities” (p. 406). To conduct her analysis, she pulled together four popular memory texts: the WWII memorial, the film Saving Private Ryan, the book The Greatest Generation, and the Women in Military Service for America Memorial. She did not conduct an exhaustive analysis of these texts, but pulled from popular media receptions of the texts, comments from politicians, and from the texts themselves to develop an argument for analysis. Her strategy was to use the four memory texts and the discourse surrounding them as fragments of a larger, unfolding text.

For McKerrow and McGee, the critical rhetorician must invent a text from the discursive fragments floating through society to begin criticism. However, given that
subjects in critical rhetoric are no longer believed to be the autonomous and original creators of discourse, “invent” is no longer appropriate. This term carries modernist connotations that imply thought derived from an inner self. Deluca (1999) proposes that we modify this misnomer, and focus on “gathering fragments” and “assembling a text” rather than inventing one.

In arranging “fragments” rather than observing a “text” the possibilities of an individual as author of resistant practices is repositioned. Yet despite the shift in the definition of power from an oppressive force to a productive force, this does not mean that we should abandon the rhetorical practice of resistance. This new conception of power still begs the question: what are the possibilities for resistance? Even with power as ubiquitous and impermeable, resistance is still possible. Indeed, for Foucault (1995), resistance is a possibility wherever there is power. However, the critical rhetorician does not rely upon “a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power”; instead, resistance is made possible by looking towards “the processes and struggles that traverse [power] and of which it is made up” (Foucault, 2001, p. 28). Resistance becomes possible not in breaking free of the oppressive bonds of a power system, but through an opening up of power to new power structures that create knowledge. With this in mind, individual fragments should not be thought of as a “corpus” that provides the materials for resistance. Instead, the collection of fragments offers a glimpse of the dominant structures of power as well as new possibilities for interpreting the surrounding world.
The Critical Practice of Resistance

The possibility of gathering fragments to assemble a text for critiquing power is determined by the convergence of discourses in a society. The role of the critical rhetorician is to mark “sites” of resistance. Resistance emerges as the “convergence of multiple and conflicting powers” (Muckelbauer, 2000, p. 79). The possibility of resistance is rooted in the opening up of “virtual breaks” in discourse at the point of convergence between power systems (Biesecker, 1992, p. 357).

Deluca (1999) provided a rhetorical account of where these “virtual breaks” occur in his description of antagonisms. Antagonisms represent the opening of a discourse for the intervention of the rhetorical scholar so that the scholar can assemble a text and develop a criticism of dominant power structures. More specifically, the antagonism makes “possible the questioning, disarticulating, and rearticulating of a hegemonic discourse” by exposing the limitations of a discourse and showing “the impossibility of the discourse constituting a permanently closed or sutured totality” (Deluca, 1999, p. 40). One example of an antagonism is the discourse of the American Dream in the face of a discourse of segregation (Deluca, 1999). Converging discourses reveal troublesome contradictions in society where the promise of the American Dream is faced with a disenfranchised class of people, such that you have separate water fountains for “whites” and “coloreds.” This image suggests a limitation of the American Dream discourse. It also requires a re-articulation of the American Dream and segregation. With this in mind, the critical rhetorician should not start by merely assembling texts for criticism, but by
assembling texts from fragments of shattered discourses at the point of convergence, thereby revealing antagonisms.

This does not mean, however, that the critical rhetorician must simply wait around for the occasional antagonism to emerge. Rather, the presence of antagonisms is recognizable at the moment that power structures come into play. The trajectories of discourse do not converge as “simple oppositions,” but as an infinite multitude of power systems colliding and revealing antagonisms (McKerrow, 1989, p. 95). Therefore, the critical rhetorician must rely on the “assumption that any articulatory practice may emerge as relevant or consequential- nothing can be ‘taken-for-granted’ with respect to the impact of any particular discursive practice” (1989, p.96). The possibility of practicing critical rhetoric then emerges at the point of intersection between any competing discourses. Assembling fragments of converging discourses generates a resistant discourse that can move beyond a given antagonism and highlight the struggle of a discourse to explain “the surrounding lifeworld” (DeLuca, 1999, p. 40).

The critical rhetorician then is not situated outside of discourse, but directly involved in it. To be sure, the critical rhetorician operates from an orientation that “maximizes the possibilities of what will ‘count’ as evidence for critical judgment” (McKerrow, 1989, p. 102). Antagonisms direct critical rhetoricians towards “not a rejection of ethical values, but a reordering of the perspective to one in which transformation (or at a minimum, the delineation of the possibilities for transformation) is the ultimate aim” (p. 103). The resistance provided by the assembly of fragments by a critical rhetorician fosters transformation through the possibility of influencing a shift in
the grid of intelligibility. The meaning of fragments then may be interpreted through a variety of orientations. The critical rhetorician is involved in a polysemic critique that will uncover dominant and resistant discourses (McKerrow, 1989). Specifically, McKerrow noted that the critical rhetorician is involved in “twin critiques of domination and freedom” (p. 92). Drawing from Foucault’s notions of discourse and power, McKerrow defined the critique of domination as a critique of “the discourse of power which creates and sustains the social practices which control the dominated” (p. 92). Conversely, the critique of freedom is “one of never-ending skepticism, hence permanent criticism” (p. 96). The goal of this critique is to “guard against ‘taken for granteds’ that endanger our freedom—our chance to consider new possibilities for action” (p. 97). Thus, the task of the critical rhetorician is similar to that of Foucault’s “specific intellectual” (McKerrow, 1989; Biesecker, 361; Deluca, 1999).1 Deluca (1999) stated it best when he described the task of the critical rhetorician as “one of context construction, changing not people’s ideas but the conditions of possibility for thinking, of transforming terministic screens, intellectual grids, paradigms. This is a particularly crucial task in a postmodern age” (p. 152).

This conception of critical rhetoric creates potential tools for analyzing the discursive structures of power manifest in language. This study follows Deluca’s (1999) suggestion by using McGee’s (1980) concept of ideograph in combination with Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) articulation theory as a means of constructing a text from fragments.

---

1 Foucault discusses two types of intellectuals, a universal and a specific. The universal intellectual concerns himself with the truths for everyone, and operates in a realm of the universal. The specific operates within the “precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them” (Foucault, 1984, p. 68). I point to this to emphasize that the critical rhetorician is embedded in a specific situation and may only use the materials of that situation to make claims about it.
available at the convergence of an antagonism. Combining the tenets of ideographic analysis with articulation theory exposes the opposing discourses of environmentalism as they are articulated as well as how they are left open for re-articulation by the critical rhetorician.

**The Ideograph**

Michael Calvin McGee (1980) defined ideographs as “one-term sums of an orientation, the species of ‘God’ or ‘Ultimate’ term” serving as containers of other lower-end ideographs whose connection builds a definition for the individual ideograph and shapes the values of those operating under the ideographic linkages (p. 7). He developed the ideograph as a means of bridging the gap between myth and ideology. The concept can enable one to uncover the symbolic power structures that serve to inform and constrain the public consciousness. The ideograph serves as a theory operating within the critical perspective of communication, axiologically guiding the scholar towards revealing the power systems that operate within society. The crux of McGee’s ideograph is the epistemic force through which it demands subjectivist viewpoints to acknowledge that mass consciousness is “empirically manifested in the language which communicates it” (1980, p.4). In bridging the gaps of realism and subjectivism, the ideograph operates to strategically assess how language floods the consciousness of the public and serves to constrain thought within a power system.

Given their power, ideographs are embedded in the political language of narratives and debates that make up culture (McGee, 1980; McCann, 2007; Delgado, 1995; Palczewski, 2005). The ideograph is not a hidden figure, masked within language.
Rather, ideographs are the specific terms that tend to orient and guide our thoughts within the discourse. Ideograph theory draws from “bounded network theories of language, which assumes that all terms are intertwined and thus defined by each other within a language, and that this definition is restricted by past usage (Railsback, 1983; Lucaites & Condit, 1990). From this perspective, ideographs gain their meaning from “collective interpretations of the recursive relationship between the objectively material and symbolic environments in which they operate” (Lucaites & Condit, 1990). Not only is the ideograph an important influence over knowledge, but it also influences the way that people are oriented as beings in a society. More specifically, ideographs are an important link to the construction of identity and represent a means of constituting a people (Charland, 1987).

In its original delineation, ideograph theory encourages investigation of specific ideographs in two ways: diachronically and synchronically. A diachronic analysis consists of studying the historical lineage of an ideograph to understand the projected possibilities of its usage. In other words, diachronic analysis is the study of an ideograph in its conceptual form (Black, 2003). One example may be how the ideograph <rule of law> has been developed through court decisions, political speeches, and even popular culture (McGee, 1980).² By examining this historical development, one may discern the rhetorical possibilities for the usage of <rule of law> in modern application.

² It is important to note at this point, that I will follow other studies of the ideograph in utilizing the “<>” to bracket out the ideograph (Lucaites and Condit, 1990; Moore, 1996; Delgado, 1999; Black, 2003). I make this choice “to denaturalize the terms, to designate these signs as sites of political debate” (Butler, 1992, p. 19).
Synchronic analysis refers to the present usage of an ideograph. It deals with conflicting constructions of ideographs or observes how current discourse reinforces them. That is to say, synchronic analysis reflects the observation of an ideograph’s usage in its grounded situation (Black, 2003). For example, Moore (1996) discussed how the debate over cigarette usage has articulated <cigarette> as an ideograph where the terms <life> and <liberty> become conflicting terms when linked to <cigarette>. The debate is sparked when anti-smoking campaigns associate cigarettes with death and thus contradict the American value of <life>, while pro-smoking groups suggest that restrictions placed on cigarettes interfere with the value of <liberty>. The ideograph of <cigarette> directs the public consciousness towards a gentler perception of what a cigarette represents when <life> and <liberty> become its defining terms.

Early expansion of ideograph theory focused primarily on the development of diachronic analysis. For example, Railsback (1984) explored the social movements occupying the discursive realm of the abortion debate. She observed the development of <life> and <choice> as ideographs through the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The diachronic study of ideographs as the material of social movements within language operates as a means of explaining social change. This approach to the ideograph privileges history as the source for analysis of ideographs. The possibilities for future definitions of ideographs are constrained by its historical usage. Additionally, Lucaites and Condit (1990) explored the possible usages of <equality> through the civil rights movement, particularly following the veins of usage spread by Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Lucaites and Condit’s (1990) study emphasized the historical path that brings rise to the
possibility of change through discourse. The first is culture-typal discourse, which encourages rhetoric to “rearrange and revivify the culturally established vocabulary” (Lucaites & Condit, 1990, p. 9). The second path is counter-cultural rhetoric which challenges the definitive public vocabulary. These two approaches are possible based on the historical conditions serving to define an ideograph. They represent the difference at play between a social campaign (culture-typal) and a social movement (counter-culture), both of which seek a social change.

The conceptual or diachronic analysis of ideograph terms also has a material power in constituting a people. Ideographs gain their discursive power from aligning a mass of individuals into a unified identity via the ideals and rules projected by an ideograph. For example, Delgado’s (1999) analysis of the rhetoric of Fidel Castro shows how the usage of the <revolutionary> ideograph places the people of Cuba in a role defined as revolutionaries. Within the framework of <revolutionary>, Castro was given the architectural capacity to further define the roles occupied by individual groups in society such as intellectuals and laborers (Delgado, 1999). Unity or adherence to the powerful conceptions of ideographs guides the interplay between symbolic and material, thereby giving force to the symbolic.

Burke’s concept of synecdoche also has been incorporated into diachronic analysis to explicate how an ideograph serves to symbolically represent a greater whole of linked ideographs. Moore explored how the rhetorical trope of synecdoche operates in the conceptualization of ideographs. He examined how a number of different ideographs within society have become representational of the United States’ commitment to <life>
and <liberty> (Moore, 1993; Moore, 1994; Moore, 1996). For example, the historical debate over handgun control led to the construction of <handguns> as a representational ideograph symbolizing <life> and <liberty> (Moore, 1994). While the <handgun> ideograph may be challenged, it is given material strength by its linkage to the powerful American ideographs of <life> and <liberty>.

Despite the historical importance of diachronic analysis, restricting a study to the conceptual development of an ideograph ignores the tangible influence of operating vocabularies upon current realities. Deluca asserted that diachronic analysis is incomplete because it “yields merely a formal grammar devoid of the force and currency of a synchronic analysis” (1999a, p. 37). Diachronic analysis does not explore the current material impact of ideographs. The first step in synchronic analysis involves determining when an ideograph is being used or challenged in discourse. The manifestation of an ideograph within discourse, whether being reinforced or challenged, operates as a structure of power that creates a way of viewing the world. These usages of and challenges to an ideograph represent a moment of synchronic significance when “an ideograph contracts or expands” (Black, 2003, p. 315). While an explication of the conceptual status of ideographs provides useful insight into how history has operated, it only possesses a limited capacity to deal with the power structures that operate at temporal specific moments. By honing in on the diachronic structure and placing the synchronic structure in a diminished role, scholars reduce the materialist roots of ideograph theory, and constrict its capacity to operate as a critical theory (Johnson, 2007).
This is due in part to the difficulty in providing a means of identifying and analyzing the synchronic operations of ideographs.

Finally, it is important to understand how it is possible to bring McGee’s (1980) notion of an ideograph in line with McGee’s (1990) conception of the fragmentation of culture. To do this, the ideograph has to be reconceived in terms of the fragmentation caused by the postmodern condition. Saindon (2008) attempted to do this by introducing the “ideographic fragment” which works to “transform the ideograph from a linguistic indication of a dominant culture’s power to manipulate the consciousness of society to an appeal generated by the desire to reconstitute a single vision of society in the face of growing fragmentation” (pp. 90-91). No longer is the ideograph conceived as the “one-term sum” of an ideological orientation, but rather, it is a container of power that is present in discourse. This shift mirrors Deluca’s (1999a) description of Laclau and Mouffe’s shift of emphasis on ideology to discourse. Ideology is a troubling term; it constrains the conception of the ideograph because it suggests that ideology and thus ideographs are “a mere epiphenomenon of material reality” (Deluca, 1999a, p. 341). The call for a turn to discourse falls more in line with a society fragmented. The ideograph as “ideographic fragment” is not an epiphenomenon but “operates like a sound bite, its influence no longer determined by the truth it posits, but instead performed through its repetition or iteration” (Saindon, 2008, p. 109). The ideographic fragment embedded in discursive transactions escapes troubling platonic visions of rhetoric, moving towards its conception as “constitutive of the meaning of the world” (Deluca, 1999a, p. 342).
An ideographic fragment remains a container. However, the thing contained is no longer ideology, but discourse conceived through transaction. The ideograph now becomes “a medium of exchange between speaking subjects” (Saindon, 2008, p. 109). As terms floating through media, ideographic fragments are rich sources for rhetorical inquiry infused with discourse, and constantly serving as a discursive force of power. Saindon (2008) reminds us that “discourse fragments are to be the building blocks of textual construction by critics” (p. 111). Ideographs then are not determined by ideology, but discursive fragments, floating-signifiers articulated in the convergence and divergences of discourse.

**Integrating Articulation Theory**

To better understand the where and how of ideograph-driven discourse, Deluca (1999a) suggests an integration of elements from articulation theory. Articulation theory can lend insight into how ideographs may be linked or broken apart as means of reinforcing or shifting hegemonic power. Articulation theory explores the role of language as a way of “understanding the struggle to fix meaning and define reality temporarily” (Deluca, 1999b, p. 334). A key element of articulation theory deals with the exposure of antagonisms in a discourse. An antagonism occurs where the limits to the utility of an ideograph emerge from the collision with another discourse of power (Deluca, 1999a). They point to the failure of an ideograph to capture the whole of a reality, and thus provide a basis for the deconstruction and re-articulation of ideographs (Deluca, 1999a; Deluca, 1999b). Indeed, antagonisms resemble what Biesecker (1992) called “virtual breaks” in a grid of intelligibility. These antagonisms emerge in a given
alignment of ideographs. When converging discourses open to reveal antagonisms within
the utility of a discourse to understand the world, it becomes possible to examine the
terms linked to an ideograph and how they are failing. Deluca used this approach to
uncover how environmental activist groups and industrial groups struggle to articulate
ideographs as a means to gain and maintain power.

In this study, I did not align ideographic analysis with articulation theory as a
means of establishing a method. Rather, I used these approaches to suggest my
orientation towards the examination of the Kyoto Protocols as a case study. It was not
my intent to conduct an intensive analysis of the protocols themselves to determine what
the specific text has to say. Rather, I constructed a text from an array of fragments
related to the protocols. This construction serves as a critical performance, drawing from
a wide variety of fractured texts. The performance of criticism allows me to highlight
how dominant power structures or articulations are operating, and more importantly, how
they might be rearranged.

To gather the fragments used to arrange a text, this study drew from media
portrayals of the Kyoto Protocol debate published by three of the top news magazines in
the United States: *U.S. News & World Report, Time*, and *Newsweek* (Magazine
Publishers of America, 2007). More specifically, I extracted these fragments from
approximately 70 news magazine articles that discussed the Kyoto Protocols and
climate change. These articles were published between July of 1997 and August of
2007, the time period that covered the months leading up to the United Nations’s
summit in Kyoto and extended through the first decade of its existence. Consequently,
this timeframe was representative of the period in which the issue of the Kyoto Protocols was most prevalent in discussions of climate change. As time passed, Kyoto received decreasing attention within the media. I used these sources because they were rich with perspective. The articles from which the fragments were drawn featured a wide-array of discourses that ranged from political debate, scientific analysis, economic analysis, editorials, and reader comments. These magazine articles also provided a wider array of perspectives and more in depth coverage than that available through other common media sources, such as daily newspaper columns. Further, the news articles serve as a collection of discourses in media, public, and political spheres. In particular, the news magazines include references to Presidents Bush and Clinton, congressional action, mission statements within the protocols, other news articles, and editorials. In drawing from these magazines, I was able to note what discourse was driving these articles and where the discourses both converged and diverged. This provided insight into how a worldview of environmentalism was being articulated and re-articulated, thereby reinforcing opposition and problematizing the Kyoto Protocols as an international environmental effort.

From the complex array of discursive fragments that were compiled, I explored where the limits of specific articulations of environmentalism came into play as antagonisms. These antagonisms served to open the field of discursive articulations so that new orientations towards the earth may be specified through re-articulation. Exploring how dominant discourses seek to re-stabilize themselves after an antagonism further revealed the discursive articulations of the dominant discourses themselves. By
recognizing the historical vocabulary within ideographs, I pointed to new articulations, or new synchronic arrangements of ideographs to assemble a new world-view to influence debate.

Conclusion

Environmentalism has emerged as a complex and often controversial social movement in the United States. The term itself often disguises the fragmented approaches and perspectives operating under the banner of environmentalism. The rhetorical study of social movements has also experienced a fragmentation in how to approach these phenomena. In the face of postmodern scholarship, there has been a shift from the study of how specific organizations are affecting change towards how environmental perspectives become embedded in the social consciousness of society. Critical scholarship no longer looks towards the rhetorical strategies of specific organizations, but towards the circulation of discourses within society. This circulation serves to reinforce dominant perspectives of environmentalism. The perspectives guiding this discourse provide a way of seeing the world, but also limit what may be seen.

The critical rhetorician then must look for openings in dominant discourse to explore new possibilities for seeing nature. In operating from a critical perspective, I look towards the way that a dominant environmental discourse, the Kyoto Protocols, is discussed. Not only do we gain insight into the world view and the shortcomings that emerge in the Protocols, but we gain insights into the problems created by the dominant perspectives that guide the U.S.’s understanding of the relationship between humanity and the world we live in. With this in mind, we open the next chapter with a critique of
the dominant discourses circulating in the debate over <Kyoto>. The purpose of this chapter is to understand how <Kyoto> comes together as a discursive force driving environmental debate within the media.
CHAPTER FOUR:
<KYOTO> AS AN IDEOGRAPH

This chapter seeks to answer two questions. First, what ideographs circulated within the American media’s discussion of the Kyoto Protocols? Second, how were the articulations of these ideographs functioning as a dominant discourse of power? To answer these questions, this chapter begins by examining how the Kyoto Protocols circulated throughout the media as a site of environmental debate. The term “Kyoto” itself became a central organizing term. This term articulates a “brand” of environmentalism that occupied a dominant interpretation within the media sphere. This analysis of Kyoto as an ideograph begins with the emergence of debate between two disaster narratives that set the stage for environmental debate. Two prominent discourses clashed to defend and provide “evidence” for the predicted futures offered by these two narratives. These discourses take the shape of scientific and economic evidence. As the media began to hash out the various perspectives created by the discourses of science and economics, a new environmental ethic was reflected within the media. This ethic formed through the media’s assessment of the Kyoto Protocols from a Cost-Benefit perspective. This chapter concludes with a look at the implications of Instrumental Rationality in the formation of environmental ethics.
Setting the Stage: Kyoto, Media, and Debate

Five years after the 1992 Earth Summit concluded with the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the world again came together in Kyoto, Japan, to build an international effort to restrict and reduce the level of greenhouse gas emissions. The international treaty known as the Kyoto Protocols was a hotbed of debate, pitting industry leaders, environmentalists, developing countries, economists, Europe, the United States, China, and Japan in a fierce contest over the content and demands of the environmental agreement. The odds of developing a treaty that would be supported by all parties were unfavorable to say the least (Ott, 1998). However, the debates in Kyoto did not take place simply on the broad international stage. Indeed, there had been considerable quarreling in America about what the nation’s role should be in the Kyoto accords. President Clinton and Vice-President Gore were placed in a particularly troubling predicament. An October 13th, 1997, headline read “no matter what they decide about Global Warming, Clinton and Gore will make lots of people mad” (McCallister & Thompson, 1997, p. 36).

Even before the Kyoto accords began, the Senate started making demands. In a vote of 95-0, the Senate decried that it would not ratify any treaty that excluded developing countries (Kluger et al., 2001). Hostilities were high and opposition was clear. Senator Chuck Hagel remarked that “there is no way, if the President signs this, that the vote in the United States Senate will even be close. We will kill this bill” (Bennett, p. A1). However, as scientists increasingly began reporting the link between human-created greenhouse gases and climate change, President Clinton continued to echo
his concerns to the public: “we would be irresponsible not to try to come to grips with the results of these findings” (McAllister and Thompson, 1997). The battle for public opinion was on. Media attention and support would be critical for the competing parties in the American debate over the Kyoto Protocols.

The arguments for and against the Kyoto Protocols materialized in many forms. One central concern was over the validity of climate change science. Another was the economic implications for participating in such a treaty. Questions of efficacy and the necessity for action against greenhouse gas emissions became dominant themes in the debate over Kyoto. Issues of U.S. sovereignty also entered the discussion. As the debates in the political arena intensified, media coverage of the various viewpoints constantly reframed and restated the opposing arguments. The uncertainty surrounding the impact of Kyoto policies became a venue for widespread scrutiny in American media. Despite the media’s focus, the political controversy had many supporters worried that the Kyoto Protocols would “become a media-age nonevent: dramatic, heated debate about something that never actually happens” (Easterbrook, Jenkins, & Walsh, 1997, pg. 46).

From a policy standpoint, this was in fact the fate of the Protocols. The Kyoto Protocols were fraught with failures. Among the most devastating was the fact that the United States, who is among the world leaders in greenhouse gas emissions, never ratified the treaty, and thus, was not subject to it.

The attention garnered by the debate sparked a wide-scale discussion about more than the Kyoto Protocols as a policy. Questions of environmentalism, economics, sovereignty, and responsibility fueled the debates, and generated a considerable amount of rhetoric from politicians, pundits, and interest groups designed to influence public
opinion and generate support for a number of political stances regarding the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Even in the earliest discussions of the protocols, considerable resources were expended to help shape public opinions: “more than $13 million [had] been spent on ads to block ratification of the treaty by the U.S. Senate” (Thompson, 1999).

Opponents and proponents of the Kyoto Protocols represented a diverse set of interests and a wide array of viewpoints. Critics of the treaty came in the form of climate change deniers, economists, and environmentalists. There were economic and environmental supporters of the treaty as well. Free marketeers opposed the treaty as an infringement upon the workings of an effective market. Green economists saw the necessity of preventing climate change, while recognizing the potential profits in new “green” technologies. Further, environmental skeptics found the policies to be too little, too late. Seeded in these viewpoints are more than debates over the policy specifics of the treaty. Climate change science and the greater questions of environmentalism received media coverage as central issues of concern. Further, the media’s coverage of the debate provided a framework for identifying various stances and arguments for and against the treaty.

The media’s coverage also made the Kyoto Protocols appear to be much more than just an international treaty. The debates in Kyoto went well beyond policy making. Rather, they became a forum for an ideological debate that revealed dominant discourses. The convergence of discourses prevalent in these debates mark an opening for the possibility of a critique of domination. Through the debates circulating in the media, the word Kyoto became an organizing container, a representational term that aligned with
other competing ideological terms. Kyoto’s presence in the discourse demands an articulation of priorities based on the competing interests that find themselves involved in the debate.

More specifically, the Kyoto Protocol reveals itself as an ideograph. Through it, powerful discourses circulating in the American sphere that were not completely connected and not completely in conflict were brought to a clash. Thus, <Kyoto> was a fractured ideology fraught with scientific, economic, political, and environmental tensions. As an environmental ideographic fragment of a discourse, <Kyoto> was a regulating force that interfered with free-market economic discourses, and also created problems for the development of an environmental ethic by marginalizing and silencing alternate discourses concerning the relationship between humans and nature.

<Kyoto> as an ideograph served as a powerful term. It directed public consciousness and its articulation had critical implications not only for the treaty itself, but also for the floating signifiers that are posed in opposition to one another as a result of competing articulations. In its early stages, <Kyoto> emerged as a response, a call to avoid disaster and devastation that could result from human-induced climate change. This response is in part based on the conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which found that “sea levels will rise another six to 37 inches by 2100. The Florida Keys would be obliterated; shorefront houses would become driftwood and inland subdivisions would become beachfront property” (Begley, Breslau, Barthelet, & McGinn, 1997, p. 48). In this call, a rival narrative emerged in American media that cautioned against signing the protocols, as they might cause the United States to spiral

---

3For this project, I use Ideograph and Ideographic Fragment interchangeably.
into economic disaster. Economic complaints were lobbied on behalf of business such as those by Thomas Donahue, President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who argued that Kyoto would “mess up the world’s most prosperous and productive economy” (Easterbrook, Jenkins, & Walsh, 1997, p. 46). The debate was described as “a bewildering array of timetables and targets, some of which gamble with the climate, others with the economy” (Easterbrook & Palmer, 1997, p. 58). As the policy makers and the American media alike began deliberation, <Kyoto> was subjected to the structural instrument of economic rationality, a cost-benefit analysis. Scientific and economic measures of both the costs and the benefits began to dominate the discourses of <Kyoto>. The media introduced these discourses as the two sides of the debate: “depending on whom you listen to, an international treaty to stem global warming will create 800,000 jobs or put 1.8 million people out of work; it will cost the United States nothing or consume 2 to 4 percent of GDP and trigger a massive recession” (Whitelaw, 1997, p. 39). Just as economic measures were in play, scientific predictions of cost were also at work suggesting that in 100 years “the world will be 1.8 to 8.1 degrees warmer” (Begley & Rogers, 1997, p. 72). This mode of reasoning began to dominate what constituted “evidence” for or against the acceptance of Kyoto as a policy, and what would define <Kyoto> as an ideograph.

The pressures of adapting to a quantifiable cost-benefit analysis exposes a privileged and unchallenged discourse dominating the understanding of what environmental action should look like, and under what conditions we as citizens should support this action. Ultimately, the competing narratives and opposing sides of the protocols all subject themselves to the quantifiable reasoning of cost-benefit analysis,
committing any articulation of <Kyoto> and the related term <environmental>ism to an ethic in which humans maintain the Cartesian separation from their surrounding world as *res cogitans*. Rooted in this ethic is an emphasis upon the subject’s faculties of science and objective reason, which are needed to understand, manipulate, and dominate the systems of an objective world. The Cartesian separation of mind and world sees *Res cogitans* as clouded by their senses, and thus, must utilize science as a means of overcoming their subjectivity so that they may observe the objective world. This ethic reinforces a reasoning that demands that humans attribute to nature a value insofar as it serves as a resource.

**Disaster Narratives: Competing Interpretations of <Kyoto>**

As an international environmental project, Kyoto follows up on the conclusions of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro by taking action upon the recognition that the human emission of greenhouse gases is producing climate change. Its roots as a treaty are embedded in a narrative of disaster prevention. Indeed, the treaty itself sets a standard of “consider[ing] what actions are necessary to minimize the adverse effects of climate change” (Kyoto Protocols, 1997). While the treaty sets this standard for international policy, the surrounding media echoed and amplified <Kyoto> as a call to avert crisis. <Kyoto> as an ideograph within the media received its earliest articulations in the form of narratives playing out possible futures that predicted what failure to address climate change meant for humanity. One such narrative opens the door to a doomsday discussion about climate change caused by threats of “melting glaciers, hotter summers and migrations of plants, animals and even deadly microbes” (Lemonick & Kunii, 1997).
These narratives focused on problems caused by climate change that would disrupt our lifestyles, possibly ending them permanently.

Inherent in the media’s circulation of <Kyoto> discourse is a call to action that is understood in terms of avoiding catastrophic change. The negotiation of policy in Kyoto, Japan, centered on what the media described as “a treaty that might at last begin to do something concrete about the looming worldwide threat of global warming” (Lemonick, 1997, p. 22). Indeed, a narrative of disaster provides a compelling case for the need to address climate change. This narrative opens the door to synchronic alignment of <Kyoto> with the tenets of <environmental>ism. The call for action resulting from a narrative of disaster allows both <Kyoto> and <environmental>ism to be reopened for re-articulation by the news media. As such, the terms would mutually define one another. They become floating signifiers linked through the media discourses in which they appear. <Kyoto> under the <environmental>ism aegis is constituted as a form of protection, a required response to the material conditions. The developing media narratives depict a dangerous future for humanity, capturing the vivid details of an undesirable world:

Roughly 12,000 years ago, at the end of the last Ice Age, a natural warming sent freshwater from melting glaciers flowing out of the St. Lawrence River into the North Atlantic, all but shutting down the Gulf Stream and plunging Europe into a 1,300-year deep freeze. The more that becomes known about this period, named the Younger Dryas (after a tundra plant), the more scientists fear that the rapid melting of sea ice could cause the same catastrophe again. Only next time, writes
geophysicist Penn State's Richard Alley in a forthcoming book, *Two-Mile Time*

*Machine*, the effects would be much greater. (Linden, 2000, p. 52)

Media narratives such as this suggest a need for determining and following responsible behavior in terms of the environment. They argue that humans must take action to promote the harmony of the environment. As President Clinton wrote, “We must look well beyond our own cities and countryside, make environment a core foreign policy objective and provide the leadership needed to put all nations on a cleaner, more sustainable path to prosperity” (Clinton, 2000, p. 25).

For those who favor the passage of the Kyoto Protocols, *Kyoto* is revealed as an obligation to attend to the needs of the planet. *Kyoto* suggests a sense of responsibility. This opens the door towards preventing the disasters told in narratives envisioned by climate change experts and their echoes in the media. However, as time passed, so did the hopes that the policies of the treaty would affect real change. This is greatly a result of the failure of the U.S. to sign the treaty, as well as the difficulty that most countries faced in meeting the cuts they had set for themselves. Yet, there is a difference in the effects of Kyoto as a policy and *Kyoto* as a discursive ideograph. The media’s coverage of *Kyoto* creates an investment in narratives that have considerable power in articulating and constructing notions of *environmental*ism. The disaster narratives entrenched in *Kyoto* discourses create the perception of an investment, a need to account for the threats of climate change.

Nevertheless, the Kyoto Protocols also faced severe criticisms. As a policy, its impact focused on capping greenhouse gas emissions in the market place as a means of achieving reduction targets. Within this framework, a fundamental tension emerged in
the articulation of <Kyoto>. Despite the increasing consensus recognized in <Kyoto> discourses for the demands of <environmental> action, an economic challenge emerged. The Kyoto Protocols had significant implications in the economic sphere where both the “economic and environmental stakes are enormous, and every option has powerful enemies” (McCallister & Thompson, 1997). As the media’s <Kyoto> discourse merged <economic> and <environmental> ideographs, another disaster narrative was formed in opposition to the Kyoto Protocols as a policy, and significantly altered the meaning of <Kyoto> as an ideograph. This time the disaster was framed in terms of a collapse of the American economy. This narrative depicted <Kyoto> as an intrusion upon free-market <economic>.

Central to this linkage is the contention by <Kyoto> critics that “making Americans adapt costly energy-saving technology could put the economy into a crash dive” (Lemonick, 1997). Severe economic reservations were levied in the debates, which described <Kyoto> as “an unworkable, draconian regime that would cripple the American economy” (Fineman, 2001). Just as the environmental interpretations suggested the fragility of the earth’s climate, the American economy was afforded the same status by some in the media: “to ratchet down [on greenhouse gas emissions] so far and so quickly would dampen an economy already too weak” (Gergen, 2001, pg. 76).

The <environmental> and <economic> depictions of <Kyoto> are mirrored narratives that provide opposing visions of the future. They are markedly similar in many ways. Both propose that disaster is imminent if their orchestrating term (<environmental> ism or <economic>s) is not protected. Further, each articulation
demands priority, while remaining committed to the opposing term as a secondary term. Ultimately, articulating <Kyoto> becomes a process of articulating its value. In the competing narratives of disaster, each path demands recognition of the dramatic ends that might result from focusing on one signifying term over the other. The opposing interests presented in the media essentially direct the debate to two simple assertions: overvaluing <environmental> commitments will lead to <economic> disaster, or vice-versa. Simply put, the media articulations of <Kyoto> inevitably demand an answer to the question: Which disaster is more likely?

As the narratives of <environmental>ism and <economic> took hold in the debate over <Kyoto>, a drive towards evidence to support these depictions was well underway. Experts from a wide range of disciplines were invited to offer support for and against the <Kyoto> protocol. Vice President Gore was as an advocate for environmental change and invited to contribute essays in Newsweek. Many references were made to the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Furthermore, Richard Lindzen, a climate change skeptic and scientist, suggested that the evidence for climate change was flawed. Economic scholars were made available to provide commentary on the financial benefits and pitfalls in the debate surrounding <Kyoto>. Ultimately, these contributions to the media’s discussion focused on providing evidence to make a determination on what the best course of action was.
Predictions and the Question of “Evidence”

Despite the media’s demands for accuracy in policy debates and in media reporting, the question of evidence in the <Kyoto> debates was central. Because <Kyoto> was shrouded in uncertainty, what counted as “evidence” to support the economic and environmental views of <Kyoto> had been a difficult question to answer. Even before the Kyoto meetings were held, the media’s portrayal of the debate emphasized the need for proof in recognizing the right course of action. A *U.S. News & World Report* article cast the situation in this way: “in the endless pro and con on the subject--rising in crescendo with next week's greenhouse summit in Kyoto, Japan--neither the alarmists nor the naysayers can prove their positions” (Easterbrook & Palmer, 1997, pg. 58).

The assertions made by scientists and economists alike depended upon prediction to determine whether the policies were appropriate. However, the “evidence” offered in garnering these predictions took two separate forms. One form focused on a highly technical, scientific discourse that featured statistics and prediction. The other was an economic-based narrative form of evidence that emphasized the costs to everyday life that may be imposed by international climate change policy. Groups casting <Kyoto> in either a negative or positive light sought “evidence” in narrative and scientific forms, thereby, casting <Kyoto> as something to be attained or avoided. As each of these groups provided a specific vision of the future determined by the acceptance or rejection of <Kyoto>, they tried to reinforce their positions through the production and circulation

---

4 In this respect, the debate surrounding <Kyoto> had many corollaries with the debate over smoking that took place in the last four decades of the 20th century (Moore, 1996).
of varying forms of “evidence.” Common themes for this evidence included descriptions of the world in 100 years based on scientific modeling and descriptions of the financial costs paid by an everyday family as a result of the <Kyoto> Protocols.

Operating within this evidence-focused discourse in the struggle over <Kyoto> were environmental stances, or more specifically, ways of viewing the value of the environment based on the way it was discussed. Generally, the “evidence” provided by those in opposition to <Kyoto> took root in a decidedly narrative form. This is not to say that a scientific approach was not present or used to determine this position. However, the evidence of <Kyoto> opponents does capture the same form that appeals to “proof” took in the media’s spread of the debate. Conversely, the “evidence” introduced by the <Kyoto> supporters emphasized scientific “evidence” that resembles environmental modeling.5

The way that “evidence” was utilized in the debate captures more than just a pro/anti-environmental dichotomy, however. The discourse of evidence also reveals embedded assumptions about the value of the environment as well as the human relationship towards it. The notions of “evidence” circulating in <Kyoto> discourse achieved what Foucault calls “bio-power” by working towards the “subjugation of bodies and control of populations” (1990, p. 140). Bio-power results from the “controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes” (p. 141). Consequently, the

---

5 The question of this project does not focus on whether the usage and presentation of these forms of “evidence” demonstrates an undistorted view, but rather, looks to the “evidence” as a way of demonstrating an orientation towards the environment.
development of “evidence” in <Kyoto> functioned as a discursive force that drives people to regulate and constrain themselves; it becomes a way of directing our priorities. The productive power driving the discourses in <Kyoto> created a system for understanding what proper action was and what it was not. Any discourse that emerged outside of the scientific or economic realms are “disciplined” through attack or disregard as they fail to reach towards the “objective” criteria established by the scientific and economic discourses.

**Pro-<Kyoto>: Scientific “evidence” and the anthropocentric orientation.**

As mentioned above, the Kyoto Protocols hinged upon the scientific conclusion that human emission of greenhouse gasses is affecting climate change. Consequently, <Kyoto> was forged as an ideograph that circulated in the media as a discursive marker of disaster prevention. However, as debate in the public sphere began to ensue about the implications of the Kyoto protocols, <Kyoto> became a marker of either disaster creation or prevention. Pro-<Kyoto> demands an environmental priority to prevent this disaster. In highlighting this demand, a decidedly technical form of “evidence” emerged in the discourses surrounding <Kyoto>. This discourse of “evidence” takes root in providing “objective” assertions from “unbiased calculations” of the surrounding world. For example, in making the case for a need to address climate change, an article from *U.S. News & World Report* from 2000 noted that

---

6 While it is possible to make the case that “evidence” may serve as an Ideograph, I do not make that argument in this project. However, I use quotations to de-naturalize the term so that it may be seen as a term with shifting meanings.
“The weight of evidence is just getting heavier and heavier,” says contributor Tom Wigley of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo. Computer modeling can better distinguish natural from human-caused climate changes. New studies of tree rings, glaciers, and other markers from the ancient climate show that 20th-century warming “is a magnitude of change that hasn’t been seen for thousands of years,” says David Rind of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies. And each of the scorching past five years ranked among the 10 hottest ever recorded. (Appenzeller, 2000, p. 54)

Traditionally, scientific discourses function in a way that “privileges the sensible field in abstraction from sensory experience, and commonly maintains that subjective experience is ‘caused’ by an objectifiable set of processes in the mechanically determined field of the sensible” (Abram, 1996, p. 66). In other words, through the technical practices of science, we can reach objective conclusions, even though they are clouded by our subjective experiences.

The “evidence” of Pro-<Kyoto> discourse distributed in the media generally takes on this highly technical tone. The reverence of the expert is also clear, as credentials become important criterion to validate the scientific “evidence” of the discourse. For example, a central justification for <Kyoto> emerged from the IPCC. This collaboration of nearly 2,500 scientists (Begley, Conant, Stein, Clift, & Philips, 2007) represented a reputable source when introducing its findings that there will be “between 1 deg. C and 3.5 deg. C of global warming by 2100” as a product of the “fact that humanity is pumping somewhere between 20 billion and 30 billion tons of CO[2] into the atmosphere
every year” (Morton, 1997, p. 19). These conclusions were drawn from the “objective” measurement of computer models, which are capable of factoring population, economic growth, changes in technology, effects of other greenhouse gases (i.e., methane), the level of the sun’s energy, and the effect of other particulates in the atmosphere (Lemonick, Bjerklie, Boyle, Dorfman, & Thompson, 2001).

Other scientific “evidence” also was presented from “respected” and “authoritative” scientists and organizations such as the IPCC, NASA, The National Climatic Data center, and the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Among these groups, scientific modeling was the leading form of “evidence” offered in support of <Kyoto>. Considerable emphasis was placed on the findings of these models as well as their accuracy. The findings were developed from “40,000 to 120,000 lines of code for the fundamental laws of physics. They include equations ranging from Newton's laws of motion (how and whether winds pick up) to classical gas laws” (Begley & Rogers, 1997, p. 72). The central premise of these models is that they provide “objective” evidence that allows us to look beyond our sensory perceptions to consider scientifically measureable indicators of climate change, to account for the “limits” of our senses. This, in turn, provided support for predictions of disaster if environmental action is not taken.

Beneath the scientific evidence’s discursive appeal to objectivity lies a commitment to an environmental ethic that cannot be considered objective. As a form of discourse, the scientific “evidence” produced by pro-<Kyoto> supporters underscores an anthropocentric worldview. In its commitment to technical discourse and objective assessment and rationality, this worldview separates the subject from nature, designating
nature as an object. In this orientation, the human is “outside and epistemologically above nature” and nature is “regarded as an object of knowledge constructed through careful scientific methodology” (Herndl & Brown, 1996, p. 11). Under this ethic, the faculties of reason situate the human subject as both superior and in control of nature (Ulman, 1996, p. 69). While the pro-<Kyoto> narratives pushed for action to “protect” the environment, they also asserted an authority over nature that requires an expertise and the human perfection of science to determine appropriate actions. <Kyoto> opened up a debate that relied heavily upon these technical facts. A November 13\textsuperscript{th}, 2000, Newsweek article that reported on these debates found that

The global debate over global warming is getting hotter. Delegates who are gathering at what's officially known as the Sixth Annual Conference of the Parties this week are divided over the impact of global warming. They cannot agree about the measures needed to protect the atmosphere from being further damaged by industrial pollution. They argue about scientific pronouncements on climate change. (Gupte, 2000, p. 2)

The science of climate change is a dominant theme for justifying what policies are appropriate. This passage emphasizes the importance of science in the creation of environmental policy. This anthropocentric perspective closes off the possibility of nature disclosing itself through us as subjects, demanding that only through our
elimination of subjective uncertainties are we able to capture the objective measurements of scientific inquiry.\(^7\)

A second troubling implication emerges in the privileging of scientific “evidence” through anthropocentric discourse. In reducing the environment to an objectively measureable phenomenon, issues of value and morality become increasingly difficult to address through the “evidence” provided by climate modeling. The collision of <economic>s and <environmental>ism under the debates over <Kyoto> reveals this trouble by introducing competing interests. A 2001 *Time* article captures this well by identifying stances from “believers” and “skeptics” from within the White House. The believers were “EPA chief Christie Whitman and Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill [who] wrote to the President urging action on global warming”; the skeptics were “energy Secretary Spencer Abraham and Vice President Dick Cheney [who] are worried more about the economy than the climate” (Kluger, et al., 2001, p. 30). The divisions are drawn clearly in this case among <environmental> and <economic> lines.

As the above excerpt also suggests, the scientific “evidence” of pro-<Kyoto> groups demands a validation of itself, but not of the opposing “evidence” of anti-<Kyoto> interests. Conversely, the narrative “evidence” of anti-<Kyoto> interests demands a response from the scientific “evidence” of the pro-<Kyoto> discourse, a response that acknowledges the necessity of growth and progress that are considered vital to the American way of life. Consequently, the scientific predictions are coupled with assessments of what it would cost to take action. This response deals with benefits,

\(^7\) See Chapter 2 of (Smith, 2001) for a more in depth discussion of anthropocentrism closing off the voice of nature.
rather than the harms on the environment. Indeed, the discussion shifted, such as in a 1997 *U.S. News & World Report* article which suggested that energy conservation has carrots at the end of its stick, since using less fuel saves money. "The greenhouse effect is an interesting intellectual question," says the energy-efficiency advocate Amory Lovins, "but it's irrelevant to energy policy. We should be using less energy simply because we will turn a profit on the savings." (Easterbrook & Palmer, 1997, p. 58)

Ultimately, the science of *Kyoto* is in service to the *economic* ideograph, re-formulating what *environmental*ism represents.

**Anti-*Kyoto*: Narrative “evidence” and the ethnocentric orientation.**

Anti-*Kyoto* discourses results from the inherent difficulties placed on the economy by the policy, but also by prioritizing the environment over the economy. Central to the American *economic* ideograph is free market competition. Much of the *Kyoto* criticism resulted from the exclusion of developing countries from the reduction targets set by the treaty, a position that *Kyoto* skeptics such as President Bush and others argued was "unfair to America" (Lavelle, 2001, pg. 38). Undergirding this assertion is the argument that we must restrict our usage of fossil fuels, a vital resource to economic prosperity. Drawing from the principles of *economic* economics, skeptics began to explain why the economy would be driven to disaster, but not through reporting specific economic indicators. Rather, the anti-*Kyoto* advocates pointed to evidence that impacts the everyday lives of America’s citizens. A report in *Newsweek* illustrated that it was possible that a “greenhouse [gas emission] cut would raise gasoline prices 44
cents a gallon, increase electric bills 48 percent and push up the cost of home heating oil 55 percent” (Begley, Bartholet, & Breslau, 1997). In this excerpt, the authors focused on the everyday economic costs that would prove problematic for the American public.

The discourse related to Anti-<Kyoto> evidence points to a crisis that is not based on startling figures of economic modeling, but upon the impact that greenhouse restrictions would have on the daily lives of everyday Americans, and ultimately, to the economy as a whole. President Bush echoed this sentiment in his refusal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions because “we need a lot of coal to fuel our [power] plants, to make sure Americans have got the ability to heat and cool their homes” (Whitman, 2001, p. 16). The “evidence” for <Kyoto> as a disaster is substantiated by the assertion that <Kyoto> becomes a limitation on the environmental resources that are required to sustain the American lifestyle. As is evident in the following passage, the prioritization of the environment over the economy is demonstrated as reckless:

[F]ossil fuels produce carbon dioxide -- but they also power virtually all economic activity. Opponents therefore warned, as they did for weeks in a $13 million pre-Kyoto advertising campaign, that reducing greenhouse gases by burning less fossil fuel would send the economy into the toilet, push jobs overseas, force drivers out of their Range Rovers and basically condemn Americans to drinking warm beer in a cold house. (Begley, Bartholet, & Breslau, 1997, p. 66)

This narrative of <Kyoto> as a loss of resources plays well into the narrative articulating <Kyoto> as a disaster to the <economic> stability of society.
The material effects of sacrificing the resources required to sustain everyday life depicts a powerful portrait of the dangers of <Kyoto>, dangers that are presented as “evidence” in the discourse of the debates. For those opposing <Kyoto> on the grounds of its economic implications, this approach provides a significant benchmark from which to weigh the costs and benefits of <Kyoto>. The narratives of anti-<Kyoto> discourse tap into the values of American society by providing a look at the way that <Kyoto> will play out in their everyday lives. The potency of anti-<Kyoto> discourse lies in its ability to shift the focus from <environmental> to <economic> concerns. The anti-<Kyoto> narrative “enacts a set of values and …. these enacted values govern the narrative’s audience appeal” (Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 2007, p. 204). By tapping into concerns for the American lifestyle, the <economic> narratives serve to take on the role of a dominant discourse by emphasizing that any action must be economically sound.

These discourses contain more than just a view of the economic implications of <Kyoto>. Underlying the evidence used by anti-<Kyoto> advocates is an ethnocentric discourse that implicitly articulates a clear vision of the value of nature. Anti-<Kyoto> discourse is not inherently anti-environmental. Rather, it depicts nature and the environment as a storehouse. Herndl and Brown describe this discourse as one that “usually regards nature as a resource, on among many others, to be managed for the greater social welfare” (1996, p. 10). This is abundantly clear from the notion and use of the term “natural resources” that has become part of our everyday vernacular. “Natural resource” is a term that emphasizes materials to be used, protected, or conserved. For Gore, the emphasis is on protection, by “protect[ing] our natural resources in a way that
actually creates jobs and makes American industry more competitive” (Gore, 1998, p. 58). This discourse injects a managerial orientation towards the environment. The human subject must make decisions based upon the availability of resources and the costs and benefits of preserving or exploiting those resources. In this system, rational choices are determined by economic cost-benefit analysis.

Narrative evidence in this articulation of <Kyoto> places a burdensome demand upon the evidence provided by pro-<Kyoto> discourse. In introducing the sacrifices that would be made in limiting the use of resources that produce greenhouse gases, the scientific discourses are thrust beyond the standards of an objective reasoning reliant upon the technologies of science to provide. The narrative evidence of anti-<Kyoto> groups determines the standards by which the scientific discourse must also be weighed. As the anti-<Kyoto> discourse enters the arena of debate, it brings with it a decidedly economic conscience, a concern or care for the requirements of society accorded by its use of resources. Pro-<Kyoto> evidence is then subjected to value judgments based on the quantification of nature’s resources and an attempt at predicting and quantifying the potential for disaster. Pro-<Kyoto> evidence is then subjected to a critique on the terms of ethnocentric discourses.

<Kyoto>, Cost-Benefit Analysis, and Re-Articulation

<Kyoto> has served as a controversial sight of struggle for the development of environmental policy within America. In this debate, a clear tension emerges between differing visions of <Kyoto> in terms of <economic> and <environmental>ism. The news media’s focus was fixated on whether the Kyoto Protocols made for good policy.
As a result, the discussion turned towards a comparison of the costs and rewards of implementing such a policy. The “evidence” produced in support of the narrative visions of <Kyoto> was the material content from which to determine whether the protocols were a sound policy. However, more important to the support for the competing disaster narratives within <Kyoto> was the way in which the “evidence” for these narratives was drawn upon by the media. To rationalize whether the treaty was a good choice, the debate over <Kyoto> was reframed economically, taking the form of a cost-benefit analysis. The Bush administration led this effort. As U.S. News & World Report noted, “the Bush administration says it does not want to risk hurting the U.S. economy until it is convinced of how bad the warming will be and whether measures to slow it will work” (Shute & Petit, 2004). Furthermore, the lead into a 1997 U.S. News & World Report article opened with the <economic> questioning of <Kyoto>: “depending on whom you listen to, an international treaty to stem global warming will create 800,000 jobs or put 1.8 million people out of work; it will cost the United States nothing or consume 2 to 4 percent of GDP and trigger a massive recession” (Whitelaw, 1997, p. 39).

As the above passages indicate, the question of <Kyoto> was reduced to a pragmatic comparison, a decision between alternative paths. However, unlike the rationale behind the narratives of disaster, the new debate emphasized perceived costs and rewards based on “evidence.” Framing <Kyoto> through the lens of cost-benefit analysis, the media moved beyond simply offering the competing depictions of environmental or economic impact. Now the question combined the differing perspectives by merging competing articulations of <Kyoto>. For example, in a letter
written to *Newsweek*, Vice President Al Gore called for the necessity of linking the differing perspectives: “The key is not merely to balance the twin goals of economic growth and environmental protection, but to connect them” (1998, p. 58). From this standpoint, *Kyoto* becomes an environmental *and* economic interest. This interest is reframed in quantifiable terms. The efficacy of the protocols as a policy lies in the weight of costs and balances. However, the ideograph of *Kyoto* comes to embrace a balance between *economic*s and *environmental*ism.

The cost-benefit analysis that emerges in the melding of *environmental*ism and *economic* was revealed in attempts to quantify the costs of action. The shifting emphasis on balance emerges as a dominant articulation of the *Kyoto* ideograph. For instance, a *U.S. News & World Report* article noted that while Kyoto failed as a policy, the balance it sought in spirit is possible but “reducing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere will be a long effort, costing trillions of dollars. Still, those costs can and should be managed so that they don't destroy entire economies, kill jobs, and lower our standard of living” (Kovacs, 2009, p. 11). Ultimately, the demands of *Kyoto* as a discursive force require that all costs be covered without significant economic sacrifice. These sacrifices are framed in terms of economic costs. One such example of analysis asserted that the specific policies of Kyoto are irrational because

the best estimates of the cost of implementing Kyoto run between $150 billion and $350 billion a year. The best estimates of the damage from global warming reach about $500 billion annually in 2100. Proponents argue that paying $150 billion to avoid $500 billion in damages is a good deal. But that's not what's on
offer. We still have to pay the $500 billion, only six years later. So the real offer is: we pay $150 billion each year for 100 years to postpone payment of $500 billion annually, starting in 2100. All economic models show this to be, as the Copenhagen Consensus put it, a "bad" deal. (Lomborg, 2004, p. 41)

This passage, which features an economic perspective, points out that the policy of the Kyoto treaty was unreasonable. Furthermore, from an environmental standpoint, the policies of Kyoto are also cast as ineffective. While many saw the treaty as a step in the right direction, the general consensus was that “reversing the planet’s warming trend will take more than a piecemeal change or Kyoto” (Foroohar, Guterl, Lawrence, & Rogers, 2002, p. 50). Simply put, Kyoto as a policy was recognized as deficient. It was considered a policy that would “neither devastate the economy nor rescue the environment” (Easterbrook, Jenkins, & Walsh, 1997, p. 46). Consequently, the media articulation of <Kyoto> in terms of environmental and economic soundness depicted a developing consensus between ethnocentric and anthropocentric discourses. While the policies of Kyoto were considered greatly ineffective and impractical, the rhetorical function of <Kyoto> as an ideograph proved useful in merging competing visions of environmental action. A <Kyoto> ideology forced discourses of <environmental> and <economic> balance into a dialogue. As a result, a space was created for a new discourse that integrates these perspectives.

Yet, despite this move, the articulation of <Kyoto> as a balance between <economic> and <environmental>ism tended to privilege ethnocentric discourses of nature as resource. While scientific discourses became prominent in the discussion of
<Kyoto>, they were subjected to economic reason, subjected to a reduction into quantification in economic terms, and subjected to a cost-benefit analysis. The objective “evidence” of scientific reason functioned as a reduction of the “‘environment’ into an aggregate of ‘data’ or ‘phenomena’ to be understood or ‘objects’ to be manipulated” (White, 1998, p. 147). The “manipulation” occurred through the readjustment of quantified scientific measurement of the “impact” of climate change into a monetary value. <Environmental>ism was subjected to the tests of <economic>s. A privileged reasoning of ethnocentrism rested on the central tenets of economic sustainability. While <environmental>ism emerged as a concern in the debates over <Kyoto>, its possibilities were only framed in terms of economic possibilities. The transitions in <Kyoto> opened up the possibility of environmental action. However, this potential may only by realized through the amalgamation of anthropocentric and ethnocentric discourses, where the view of nature as resource determines the form of reason that takes place. Under these conditions, we are moved towards an environmental action where “economists say we have a ‘rational’ way of making decisions on environmental issues that takes all important factors into account” (Smith, 2001, p. 27).

Consequently, while the discourses defining <Kyoto> worked to eliminate the ethnocentric (i.e., economic) and anthropocentric (i.e., scientific) duality that provides for an incoherent debate, it also established an incomplete critique. The media’s coverage of <Kyoto> served to re-orient opposing definitive terms of environmental debate into a more harmonious arrangement, working toward a plausible framework for environmental action. As the distinction is collapsed, the scientific discourses within <Kyoto> are
subjected to an economic critique where the viability/necessity of action is possible through its news media performance of a cost-benefit analysis.

What <Kyoto> failed to provide is an adequate critique of the ethnocentric rationale guiding the discourses of <environmental>ism. The rationality of environmental action depicted in <Kyoto> only offers American society a means of judging effective environmental action through the lens of its economic expediency. Although scientific discourses provide quantifiable “evidence” for a correlation between human-created greenhouse gases and climate change, they do not provide a framework for critiquing the economic assumptions of nature as resource. Furthermore, the privileging of ethnocentric values is not restricted to the economic rationalization of scientific knowledge. As an international treaty, environmental action is subject to the implications of treaty politics. That is to say, the politics of the treaty restrict conceptions of environmental responsibility in terms of fairness.

**Questioning Fairness: Treaties and Carbon Trade**

Imbedded in the policies and the politics of <Kyoto> was an emphasis on cap and trade. Cap and trade is a system in which the total allowance of greenhouse gas emission are set by policy and countries are given a certain number of credits to “spend” on the emission of greenhouse gas. Those who exceed their credits (i.e., exceed their allotted emission of greenhouse gases) are penalized. To promote flexibility, countries are allowed to trade credits to meet their targets. Thus, the mechanisms of cap and trade focus on trading emissions credits as a means of accommodating countries who fail to successfully meet their targets for emissions reductions. Cap and trade is a mechanism
that “could constitute a full-blown emission trading system that allows firms to shop the world for the least costly ways to reduce emissions” (Victor, 2004, p. 4). Consequently, the conceptualization of <Kyoto> rests in the presence of trade, as both an economic safety net and an environmental balancing mechanism (i.e., an effort to ensure that global greenhouse gas emissions reach their target). <Kyoto> emphasized cap and trade largely because it is “widely accepted as cost-efficient and effective” (Dickey, et al., 2002, p. 30). However, the development of <Kyoto> as a trade-based system introduced a new economic dynamic that struggles with other economic discourses. In the drive for profits, the system of cap and trade is seen as “unwieldy and prone to gaming and cheating” (Zakaria, 2007, p. 94). The question of trading under a cap and trade schema shifts the focus from reducing emissions to a discussion of fairness.

As a trade-based program, the Kyoto Protocols as a policy privilege certain countries by giving them more credits than needed (i.e., Russia), or exempting them altogether (i.e., China, India). Consequently, the debate about <Kyoto> focused not only on its efficacy to stymie climate change, but also on its overall fairness to America as an economic policy. Criticisms of <Kyoto> circulating in the media are formed by emphasizing that fact that “Kyoto unfairly burdens developed nations while letting such growing giants as India and China off the hook” (Shute & Petit, 2004, p. 12). The exemptions provided to developing countries became a justification in the media for a withdrawal from <Kyoto> and thus, justifying why “Bush called Kyoto unfair when he pulled out” (Dickey, et al., 2002, p. 30). In this instance, there was a shift away from the environmental implications of <Kyoto> towards the economic. This emphasis on
fairness reflects a criticism of environmental policy that proves critical to American policy and sovereignty. This is clear in the discourse of <Kyoto> skeptics who perceived it as “a sellout of economic sovereignty” (Isikoff & Gegax, 2001, p. 34). Sovereignty over American economic policy as well as a leveling of the distribution of responsibility for emissions restrictions across the international spectrum became important factors in the media assessment of the efficacy of <Kyoto>.

**Exposing “Discourses of Domination.”**

A significant criticism based upon economic concerns undergirded the discussion of the Kyoto Protocols as an environmental policy. As an ideograph, <Kyoto> served as a productive term used by the media to bring together two critical approaches that respectively emphasized the economic and environmental implications of an international approach to controlling climate change. However, as the media began to meld these two discourses, ethnocentric discourses served to control the rationale for determining the importance and necessity of Kyoto as a policy. Furthermore, the <Kyoto> ideograph was defined by its recourse to economic sustainability.

**Instrumental rationality and <Kyoto>’s <environmental>ism.**

As increasing pressure was placed on developing climate change prevention policies that aligned with a reasonable balance between <environmental> and <economic> objectives, an underlying system of rationality circulated as the unstated, enthymemetic force driving the media analysis of the protocols. Consequently, the question of whether <Kyoto> was a good or bad policy emerged as a central concern.
The media’s subjection of <Kyoto> to cost-benefit analysis took root in a form of rationality designed to objectively determine the best course for <environmental> action. Journalists reporting on <Kyoto> sought refuge in “notions of fairness and objectivity,” carefully crafting words to avoid any hint of assigning a political value to the policy (Begley et al., 2007, p. 20).

<Kyoto>’s emphasis on objective cost-benefit assessments opened itself up as a forum for critiquing the efficiency and efficacy of policies directed toward the desired action of reducing greenhouse gases and preventing climate change. Central to this critique was the economic costs of the Kyoto Protocols. The media continually mentioned that economists were “intensely concerned with least-cost approaches to greenhouse control” (Easterbrook & Palmer, 1997, p. 58) and further focused on “policy options that would slow climate change without harming American living standards” (Begley, Breslau, Batholet, & McGinn, 1997, p. 48). <Kyoto> coverage articulated <environmental>ism in balance with <economic>s. While the catastrophic narratives lingered in the media sphere, the concern shifted to the means needed to achieve an <economic> and <environmental> ends. Consequently, a narrative of future sustainability developed.

The mass media’s discussion of <Kyoto> was thus entrenched in the tenets of instrumental rationality and sought out the best course of action to “promote economic growth and environmental security” as endorsed by the Earth Summit in Rio (Gupte, 1997, p. 2). The moral value of <Kyoto> shifted from an <environmental> policy towards a new ethic of sustainability entrenched in an <economic>-<environmental>
approach. Assessment of <Kyoto’s> value was assigned based upon the “evidence” of human measurement provided by the instruments of science and economics. From here, criticisms for and against <Kyoto> reached full force. Some critics such as Lomborg (2004) found fault with the calculations of proponents, seeing economic costs outweighing environmental benefit.

The sloppy logic of the Kyoto advocates is surprising. The protocol would demand the biggest international financial commitment in history, yet it rests on an elementary fallacy: it compares the total costs of potential damage with the marginal costs of slightly ameliorating the problem. (Lomborg, 2004, p. 41)

Conversely, <Kyoto> advocates saw a reverse in the <economic> and <environmental> calculations. The advocates felt <Kyoto> was a justifiable policy because “reducing greenhouse emissions by 2010 to 10 percent below 1990 levels would save the average household $530 a year in energy bills and generate 773,000 new jobs” (Begley, et al., 1997, p. 48).

Instrumental rationality functions to find the most probable means of achieving a given goal. In the case of <Kyoto>, this goal is described as a “global effort to benefit today’s earthlings, and not only peer into the future” (Gupte, 2000, p. 2). This type of rationality emphasizes action, which is a necessary requirement in the deployment of instrumental reason. More specifically, the function of instrumental reason is to provide a value-free utility that “requires optimal fitness of means to ends” and it is “a best way to achieve an agent’s objectives” (Ellis, 2008, p. 201). The golden ticket according to the media was to find an “an effective program to fight climate change [that] need not
involve huge increases in energy prices or draconian rules that choke industries at the smokestacks” (Kluger et al., 2001, p. 30). To do so, the media turned to analysis focused on scientific and economic measures of the potential outcomes resulting from the implementation of the Kyoto policy. Thus, the media portrayal of <Kyoto> as an ideograph shifted to demonstrate an <economic> <environmental>ism.

However, the media’s dependence on the evidence of human measurement did not assume the objective and value-free role that it sought. The essence of instrumental rationality has embedded within it certain orientations that tend to privilege an underlying and powerful discourse that controls the way that humans may think about <Kyoto> and <environmental>ism as a whole. The calculations made and expressed in the media’s coverage of <Kyoto> were not merely a means of achieving goals, but rather, “formal (instrumental) rationality in alliance with technology becomes an end in itself” (Smith, 2001, p. 48). The scientific models predicted that “over the next 100 years, they could push up the mercury by 2.5 to 10.4 degrees” (Appenzeller, 2000, p. 54). The market predictions suggested that “greenhouse-gas limits will suck $ 350 billion out of the U.S. economy every year” (Begley, Breslav, Bartholet, & McGinn, 1997, p. 48). These predictions are not value-free, but rather, are products of a discourse of hyper-efficiency. The discourse of <Kyoto> as an ideograph adopted these measure in confidence as an objective means of achieving sustainability. Thus, “such discourse presents the material conditions of everyday life as the instrumental application of pure reason. The technologies in which everyday life is clothed are presented as mere tools” (Davison, 2008, p. 196).
Yet, as Heidegger reminds us, “technology is …. no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing” (1977, p. 12). The instruments of reason offered in the media are not simply facts to be used in determining what should be done about climate change. These “facts” have within them a persuasive orientation. By absorbing scientific statements about the environment and economy, the American public is guided towards an ideology of efficiency. These discourses function as a power that does not repress us in the traditional sense, but functions similar to Foucault’s notion of bio-power, a type of power that seeks to “create docile bodies and self-absorbed, deep subjects so as to produce even greater welfare for all” (Dreyfus, 1996, p. 9). <Kyoto> discourse captured this effect, as it worked towards the optimization of our current lifestyle, revealing our world to us in a way that strives for efficiency and protection of our <economy>.

The drive for efficiency underlying <Kyoto>’s inherent instrumental rationality, however, demands more than <economic>- <environmental>ism. Instrumental rationality operating within anthropo/ethnocentric notions of the relationships of humans to the world, not only characterizes humans as separate, but also as superior to nature. Through our application of instrumental rationality, the “abstract reason becomes concrete in the calculable and calculated domination of nature and man” (Marcuse, 1968, p. 205). In employing the faculties of reason, humans are placed in a state of domination, but more importantly, humanity becomes dominated by the faculties of reason. A circle of domination takes place, where both humans and nature are constrained and controlled by a value-laden rationality, a rationality reinforcing hierarchy. <Kyoto>’s rational push gives voice to the technologies of efficiency that dominate the thought of humans, and seek to conquer nature. The actions of humans are dependent upon our interests as
perceived by measurable indicators such as the market. The media reveals this correlation noting that:

A temperate rise in oil prices might cause businesses and consumers to put energy conservation back on their priority lists on sheer market grounds. A serious increase once again could make energy supply a political crisis, triggering efficiency steps taken in the national interest that are stronger than anything climate policy can justify. (Easterbrook & Palmer, 1997, p. 58)

As the above quotation suggests, action becomes possible once people are pressed to move in the market, triggering a response towards nature that seeks to conserve the resources needed to maintain the American lifestyle. These actions are geared towards driving down prices and keeping the market in check based on perceptions of its optimum efficiency.

<Kyoto>’s fixation upon calculation and efficiency places humans in control of their world. Developing technologies are not only designed to measure nature, but also to control it. What emerges is a demand for further production to harness nature and in the case of <Kyoto> to slow climate change. In meeting this call, a *U.S. News & World Report* noted that “much of the needed technology either has already been developed or is in the works….. [T]he first step is so simple it’s known to every third grader: Conserve energy” (Shute, et al., 2001, p. 44). The separations from and domination of nature closes off other possibilities for understanding the world, and more importantly, makes it difficult to consider taking action. Nature is stripped of any value beyond its practicality as a resource. Economic reason makes it difficult to assign a value to nature beyond its use, and thus, inhibits the development of a non-<economic>-<environmental> ethic.
This chapter concludes then with recognition of the mechanisms that impede ways of viewing the world and human involvement with it. <Kyoto> serves as a forum that unites the economic and scientific perspectives in an effort to unite for environmental action. The principle utility of these two perspectives is human measurement. What emerges is an emphasis on the weighing of facts to determine the proper course of action, without the clouding of politics and special interest (i.e., Instrumental Reason). However, the reliance upon these two perspectives as the sole voice of environmental concern overshadows other possibilities, thereby restricting the potential for human action. As the American media privileges these two perspectives, it marginalizes and devoices other interests and perspectives that may serve to open the possibilities for action rather than restrict them.

Conclusion

As we conclude the “critique of domination,” we move towards a “critique of freedom” to explore the possibilities offered by discourses discredited or unheard within the media’s coverage of <Kyoto>. However, the purpose of the next chapter is not to suggest a “proper” course of action. Rather, it is to reveal the possibilities caused by rupturing the logic of dominant discourses via an exploration of troubling antagonisms. These antagonisms reveal that the articulation of <Kyoto> can be problematic and that future events like <Kyoto> may be better served by opening up debate to discourses outside of ethnocentric and anthropocentric perspectives that reinforce the separation of man from nature.

---

8 I should note at this point that these two critiques are not separate, but rather represent “two sides of the same coin” (Ono & Sloop, 1992, p. 50). As Ono and Sloop note, the connection of domination and freedom is important for the critical rhetorician because it helps to “imagine new ways of constructing the world, and to replace the logic of dichotomies with alternatives” (p. 50).
Beyond this privileging of economic discourse in the <Kyoto> debate, a third perspective of environmentalism is ignored altogether in the media’s discussions of environmental ethic. As ethnocentric and anthropocentric discourses dominate what constitutes evidence and controls the form of reason that <Kyoto> as an ideograph provides, there is a lack of recourse to ecocentric ideology. By ignoring this ideology, it suggests that humans are implicitly determined to be separate from nature and the environment. Consequently, these discourses place humans in a role that suggests, if not demands, that they have dominion over their surrounding world. From this perspective, it becomes difficult to perceive human’s vulnerability to our ecosystems. Because <Kyoto> has failed to produce a substantial shift in the mode of public argument of environmental issues in American society, we are challenged to ask what constitutes an environmental ethic. Subjecting an elaboration of environmental ethics to traditional reason à la economic or scientific discourse proves problematic in the media as nature tends to be cast in terms of nature-as-a-resource. Constructing a materiality of environment in terms of a cost-benefit analysis tends to recreate a problem that many are trying to avoid (i.e., the problematic exploitation of those resources). Furthermore, within this framework of economic reasoning, a hierarchy emerges that privileges the tenets of ethnocentric discourse. The task of environmental ethics is to overcome this problem. The next chapter will focus on a “critique of freedom” that explores the possibilities of environmental ethics. The progress of <Kyoto> in melding ethnocentric and anthropocentric discourses is discussed in terms of including ecocentric discourses to complete an environmental ethic guiding public action.
CHAPTER FIVE:
RETHINKING <KYOTO> AND <ENVIRONMENTAL>ISM

This chapter focuses on re-opening media discourses that have served to articulate <Kyoto> as an ideograph in American culture. The results of this study suggest the need to shift from the repressive vision of environmentalism exposed in previous articulations of ideographs within the context of <Kyoto> towards a liberating discourse that can reveal new modes of thought. These new modes of thought will help open up the possibility for new forms of action and the construction of an altered environmental ethic. To move towards this goal, the final chapter of this project begins by examining the marginalized status of ecocentric discourses in the debate over <Kyoto>. The consequences of marginalization are explored in terms of voice, a voice for nature and people alike. The discussion of <Kyoto> as a problematic context for environmental discussion becomes a means of conceptualizing it as an ideographic-fragment-event. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of this study.

Dismissing the Whacko’s: Revisiting Ecocentrism

Deep ecology, radical environmentalism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism all represent an approach to environmentalism that is significantly different than traditional ideologies. While there are nuances both minor and great that separate these groups, they all tend to lead to similar discursive ends. More specifically, they move us past the
Cartesian separation of humanity and nature that has resulted in a dominant narrative of humanity’s dominion over nature. Yet despite the somewhat loose affiliation of these approaches, they share common ground through their dismissal by the mainstream because they are considered radically implausible. The rhetoric of these ecocentric perspectives presents a discursive field occupied by principles of “‘interconnectedness,’ ‘biocentric equality,’ ‘inherent worth,’ ‘intrinsic value,’ and ‘oneness’ with nature” (Delicath, 1996, p. 93). While these principles do not align well with the instrumental rationality that has come to dominate important interpretations of <Kyoto>, they do offer a critique of <environmental>ism within the discussion of <Kyoto>. This critique allows for new insights into the <environmental> struggles that we currently face, as well as those that the future may have in store for us.

There was little emphasis on ecocentric viewpoints in the media’s discussion of <Kyoto>. When evaluating the merits of environmental action, there was a clear measure of economic value and scientific prediction; however, any attribution of value beyond <Kyoto>’s economic worth seemed to be overlooked. Responsibility to the earth was only discussed in terms of finding a means to “protect our natural resources in a way that actually creates jobs and makes American industry more competitive” (Gore, 1998, p. 58). By contrast, ecocentrism retreats from notions of earth as a resource. Discursively, ecocentrism embraces a vision of human and earth as inseparable, opening up a critique of taking action based on “objective” measures of what the world is doing, and what actions should be taken.
The underpinnings of <Kyoto> discourse also reveal a deep skepticism of ecocentric discourses. Any mention of an ecocentric perspective is juxtaposed with suspicion. Those who voice ecocentric discourses are dismissed. For instance, Leo (2001) acknowledges that many skeptics see ecocentrism as “an ersatz Earth religion” of believers who see “humans as the poisonous intruders who shouldn’t be here” (p. 22). As this example suggests, the ecocentric viewpoint is reduced to an untenable extreme, and any discussion of the rationality or insight offered by ecocentrism is absent. The skepticism also tends to cast the ecocentric discourses as alarmist and unrealistically pessimistic. An article in *U.S. News & World Report* finds that ecocentric discourses offer only

wistful laments that developments like zero-emission cars are not really being advanced with the Earth in mind. Rather, the argument goes, they are a conspiracy to sustain the consumer lifestyle by making resource consumption environmentally benign. That is exactly what they are- and it is good news. (Easterbrook & Palmer, 1997, p. 58)

As the above passage suggests, ecocentric discourses are rejected as counterproductive because they do not capture the positive potential that technological progress has to offer.

The absence of ecocentric discourses in <Kyoto> was not merely a problem of overlooking another perspective of environmental action. Through the acts that marginalized these discourses, a problem related to voice also surfaced. This problem posed significant difficulties for the potentiality of our environment to reveal struggles influencing the survival and well being of ecosystems. It also posed problems for human
The demand for objectivity within the media’s coverage of <Kyoto> privileged the instruments of reason, thereby reducing nature to quantifiable costs and benefits. This quantification and calculation reduces voice, ignores struggles, and devalues the importance of nature for human survival.

**Theorizing Voice: Recovering Nature’s Potential to Speak.**

At a very basic level, voice is concerned with the ability to speak. When discussing voice, scholars often point to the struggle of marginalized groups, those silenced or spoken about without the ability to obtain agency within a public sphere (e.g., Appelbaum, 1990; Black, 1978; Campbell, 1991). To some degree, this is insightful in understanding how the dismissal of ecocentric discourses within the media denies agency to nature and communities that are most reliant upon the natural world. However, in this study, “voice” is not synonymous with “agency.” After all, the lessons of postmodernity point out that the ability of a subject to stand up and speak is not the source of change. Rather, the ability of a subject to stand up and speak is a product of discourses converging and speaking through the subject, or as Biesecker (1992) notes, the subject’s ability to speak is a “condition of possibility [that] is always already "inscribed" within the field” (p. 358). However, this does not mean that we should dismiss notions of agency altogether. Deluca (1999b) reminds us that agency as a concept has held “real”

---

9 For a more in depth discussion of subjectivity and the postmodern condition see chapter 3.
power, and consequently, “still must be accounted for, but in a manner that recognizes how [it is] forged in the complex conflux of commercial, legal, property, philosophy, and literary discourses” (p. 340-341).

When developing a theory of “voice,” it is important to recognize that discourses affix themselves to subjects and speak through them. Thus, the relationship of agency to voice is complex. Voice emerges from the same “discourses that make possible a particular form of agency” (Deluca, 1999b, p. 341). Voice “at its root level…. needs only a relational base between beings” (Black, 2003, p. 321). I argue that the most basic function of voice is to serve as an illuminating force in a public sphere that seeks to direct attention toward ethical concern. While this ethical concern is often towards the maintenance of a status quo, it can also expose antagonisms within the discursive field. Watts (2001) states this more clearly by defining voice as a “particular kind of speech phenomenon that pronounces the ethical problems and obligations incumbent in community building and arouses in persons and groups the frustrations, sufferings, and joys of such commitments” (p. 185). Watts’ definition highlights how voice can draw us out of the motions of everyday life and force us to face tensions of our current way of living, whether seeking to reinforce or break it down.

Thus, just as discourses can assign agency and voice to subjects, they can also crowd out, overshadow, dismiss, or deny voice from a population. In studying the anthropo/ethnocentric discourses that dominate <Kyoto>, there is a clear dismissal of a voice for nature and the non-expert because they do not meet the standards of “evidence” sought out by the scientific and economic perspectives. Recovering lost voices requires
the recovery of ecocentrism as a lost discourse. Ecocentric perspectives can offer a voice that restores an “acknowledgement of the obligations and anxieties of living in community with others” and within nature (Watts, 2001, p. 180).

Looking for potential openings for ecocentric discourse or noting the media’s dismissal provide productive starting points, but consideration of what ecocentric viewpoints have to offer over dominant perspectives can help reshape the focus on environmental debate. Ecocentric discourse can provide a new way of listening, of “capturing” our environments. Instead of focusing upon the objective mechanisms of measurement to determine what actions humanity should take, ecocentrism embraces a perspective that sees humans as inseparably embedded in our world. The goal of deep ecological perspectives is

not to explain [our world] but simply to pay attention to its rhythms and textures, not to capture or control it but simply to become familiar with its diverse modes of appearance and ultimately to give voice to its enigmatic and ever-shifting patterns. (Abrams, 1997, p. 35)

The goal is to disengage from the everyday practices promoted by the discourses of ethno/anthropocentrism. Instead of seeking out the most efficient means of achieving our <economic> and <environmental> “progress,” this perspective suggests that we should turn towards the disruptions in nature that are causing distress for nature and humanity alike.
Doing this requires re-evaluating the relationship between humans and nature. This requires a deconstruction of the notion that humans are separate from nature as a result of their superior faculty. Notions that humanity holds dominion over nature also need to be deconstructed. This domination can take many forms, from humans engaged in complete exploitation of natural resources to humans functioning as stewards of nature. Regardless of which form is at hand, there is an emphasis on the separation of human and nature that posits humanity as in control. Ecocentric discourse viewed through the lens of postmodernity have the ability to critique, by enacting “the conceptual tools to contest dominionism at the level of its discursive transactions” (Maltby, 2008, p. 126). These transactions form the fundamental narratives in <Kyoto> and provide interpretive schemas of environmentalism The presence of ecocentric discourses serve as a disruption, a breakdown that exposes the troubles created by our everyday acquiescence to the rationality of ethno/anthropocentrism.

To engage in this critique is to replace conventional approaches by re-orientating the relationship between humanity and nature. Ecocentric discourse promotes “humans’ status as beings that are inherently connected [emphasis added] with all other forms of life” (Delicath, 1996, p. 157). This connection replaces the economic assignment of value to nature with an ethic that requires a new way of seeing the placement of value. The economic approach of instrumental rationality fails to factor in the web of other beings that are tied to human existence. While scientific measurement of shifts in natural phenomenon could still remain important, closer attention may be paid to the disruption of other “beings” within nature.
Antagonisms that lie submerged or in the background of the dominant discourses of <Kyoto> take on new light when ecocentric visions of humanity and nature are made available. By incorporating the notion of <Environmental> value into the discussion, the debate over the value of <environmental> action is opened up. Answers to the important question of “what should be done?” are no longer restricted to a discussion of costs or “possible scenarios” rooted in scientific and economic prediction. From this perspective, photographs that depict nature’s pain, such as those marked “exhibit D” in a 2001 Time story titled “Life in the Greenhouse” which capture the population loss of pacific salmon and polar bears, are not only a subtext in the media’s story of <Kyoto> as a policy debate. Instead, they become central concerns. Furthermore, the photographs are not reduced to “evidence,” but rather, force humans to confront an anxiety over the failure to live harmoniously within our environments. The interconnection of humanity and nature also lifts the blinders that cause <Kyoto> to restrict <environmental> discussion by focusing only on climate change and its impact on humanity. This type of discussion overlooks other issues such as pollution, deforestation, overharvesting, and species extinctions, which all fall under the aegis of environmental ethics. Furthermore, the issues left out of the discussion also serve as sites of potential environmental disaster for the future of humanity.

**Re-voicing Communities: The Case of the Maldives**

The reduction of the environment into quantifiable data through <Kyoto> discourse not only removes nature’s ability to reveal its devastation, but it also silences the voices of the communities most dependent upon and vulnerable to nature. A brief
examination of the way this discourse has framed circumstances facing the Maldivian community provides a case in point. Within the scientific discourses of <Kyoto>, the Maldives, with a population near 300,000 and the majority of its land mass only five feet about sea level is often introduced as a population vulnerable to the effects of climate change (Dickey, Rogers, Meyer, Endt, & Theil, 2002). This vulnerability is, however, framed in terms of a supporting narrative that justifies action based solely upon the scientific “evidence” of climate change.

As scientific discourses dominate the discussion, the geographic areas that would be affected by climate change are only mentioned in passing. The Maldives and other communities simply become examples in statements of quantifiable impact. For example, the following excerpt states:

But if the rise [in sea level] is significantly larger, the result could be disastrous. With seas rising as much as 3 ft., enormous areas of densely populated land--coastal Florida, much of Louisiana, the Nile Delta, the Maldives, Bangladesh--would become uninhabitable. (Lemonick, Bjerklie, Boyle, Dorfman, & Thompson, 2001, p. 24)

Although the Maldives achieve some visibility in illustrations such as this, the community’s stories of struggle, if present, are only secondary to discussions of the science and economics of <Kyoto>. Indeed, the rise of sea levels is only one of many potential environmental disasters that already are plaguing the Maldives. The location of the Maldives makes it particularly vulnerable to shifts in the environment. For instance, the 2004 tsunamis that wreaked havoc upon many countries within the Indian Ocean
caused considerable distress to the island. Water pollution became a major issue as “salt water intrusion, leaking septic tanks and debris contaminated water wells and groundwater aquifers” (Srinivas & Nakagawa, 2008, p. 10).

Another important story that emerges from the Maldives is that nature is not just a force of destruction, but also can provide protection. The tsunami that struck the Maldives had significantly less impact on it than on many other countries for this reason. Despite the fact that most of the islands are less than 1m [meter] above sea level, human casualties were low, which some scientists attribute to coral reefs reducing the strength of the wave. The average height of the tsunami wave was low in all areas of the country. (Srinivas & Nakagawa, 2008, p. 10)

In this quotation, nature is viewed as a safeguard. Without the coral reefs, it is likely that the devastation caused by the tsunami could have been considerably worse. However, the protection provided by the reefs is fleeting due to coral death. Since the 1990’s, there have been a series of warming events that caused coral bleaching and a “90% loss of live coral cover on the reef tops” (Goffredo, Piccinetti, & Zaccanti, 2007, p. 104). As a result of this coral loss, the Maldives are increasingly susceptible to shifts in the environment. The stories of this vulnerability go beyond “evidence” for the occurrence of climate change. The Maldivian stories give voice to a need to reassess our current approach to the environment. Nearly 300,000 people in the Maldives alone depend on the current environmental balance. Without it, Maldivians would become “environmental” refugees.

As long as scientific and economic discourses are privileged in the articulation of <Kyoto> and <environmental>ism as a whole, the voices of communities like the Maldives will remain marginalized. The presence of a Maldivian voice in the public
sphere is altered because such a voice cannot step outside of its conditions and contribute to an “objective” account of climate change. This alteration ultimately discounts any potential that the Maldivian community has to influence the public sphere.

Despite the secondary status of discourse from the Maldives and similar communities, their examples do serve an antagonistic function. Specifically, they reveal the troubles associated with deliberation and delay in taking environmental action. A 2002 *Newsweek* article points to this trouble, noting that climate science is imprecise. But ever since President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's [of the Maldives] car almost got swept into the water by a freak wave in 1987 and he almost drowned, he has been very, very interested in the possibility that man-made pollution is behind the world's warming, the polar ice caps' melting and the sea's encroaching. (Dickey et al., 2002, p. 30)

Unfortunately, these statements can and often may be dismissed on the grounds of the inconclusive science that it supports. These stories and others are not simply evidence or indicators of disaster, but can provide lessons about the vulnerability of humanity to our surrounding world. They can serve a productive function in enabling us to reassess the ethno/anthropocentric discourses that have come to dominate popular discussion of environmentalism. Furthermore, the voices in these stories remind us that our tendency to calculate the costs and benefits of action only places a monetary value on human suffering. The narratives of economic disaster that highlight these costs and demand efficiency are reductive. The appeals to possible disruptions of the American lifestyle cloud the devastation of forests, extinction of animals, and threat that any shift in the environment poses (e.g., tsunamis, hurricanes, drought, and flooding).
Revisiting the <Kyoto> Ideograph.

So what is <Kyoto>? What does it do? What does it represent? How does it influence society? If anything, <Kyoto> represents an event, a fragment, an orientation, and of course a policy. As the media circulates, describes, critiques, and supports or rejects <Kyoto>, it infuses it with other discursive fragments. This process of articulating <Kyoto> has significant implications for the potential ways of viewing <environmental>ism. By honing in on the economic and scientific discussions, the media has reinforced a traditional environmental ethic that relies on humans to control and manipulate nature. This is probably made most clear by the emphasis of <Kyoto> on climate change and the reduction of greenhouse gasses. <Kyoto> begins fracturing the environment depicting its elements as separate from one another. <Kyoto> discourse then employs scientific and economic expertise to determine exactly what the environment is doing and how we can correct it, without significant disruptions to our current way of life.

However, <Kyoto> functions differently than the traditional ideograph. Unlike the linking terms of <economic>s and <environmental>ism, <Kyoto> functions as an isolated event. Its deployment is not heavily invested in a diachronic articulation. <Kyoto> is a term locked in time whose meaning has not changed; it is a fragment with a shelf-life. <Kyoto> serves as an ordering term and assists in the historical articulation of its defining terms. Therefore, unlike terms such as <equality> or <liberty> that reappear and are re-articulated throughout history, <Kyoto>’s power is simply in its synchronic activities, its ability to organize and arrange the definition of other “floating signifiers.”
Specifically, <Kyoto>’s power lies in its ability to transform or reinforce interpretations of <economics> and <environmental>ism. While the media’s articulation of <Kyoto> may have measureable impacts on public perceptions of the Kyoto Protocols as a policy, its real influence is in the articulation of an anthropo/ethnocentric <environmental>ism. Moreover, it postures <environmental>ism as subordinate to <economics>, emphasizing an ethic of sustainability, which maintains humans as separate from nature.

Consequently, as the <Kyoto> ideograph moves toward a state of decay, it passes on its influence to the next environmental media event through the linkage of <economic>-<environmental>ism. The question then turns towards the next event, and whether this event will serve to reinforce this articulation, or if it will serve as a new ordering event that opens up <environmental>ism to re-articulation. Can the antagonisms that are sprinkled through the debate over <Kyoto> take a more prominent role in rupturing the dominant discourses that define our current <environmental>ism? Will the media reveal new stories of struggle and devastation caused by our current approach to the environment? If so, will this be presented as more than support for environmental action, but as a reassessment?

These questions may be answered by the next Conference of the Parties. If the media takes up the discussion of climate change policy as the Kyoto Protocols near expiration, then the next international climate change treaty may become the next ideographic fragment event. Regardless, the next major media discussion will re-open predictive narratives of the future, such as the disaster narratives that have sought to describe the economic and environmental consequences of <Kyoto>. Science and
economics have dominated the media debates surrounding Kyoto and have played a significant role in creating rhetorical visions of the future. Future discussions may raise an interesting question: “Will these narratives continue to be rooted in visions of disaster, or will they shift towards achieving an environmentalist utopian state?” Particularly relevant to this study is the extent to which the next major event will become a source of renewed emphasis on scientific and economic discourses, or if it will instead inject ecocentric discourses that reassess the value of nature and the environment outside of its conception as a resource. Will the stories of communities such as the Maldives or those who depend on mountain snow cap runoff and the species that decrease in numbers every day, become powerful discourses that rupture and re-arrange the grids of intelligibility, the <environmental>ism we currently subscribe to?.

The nature of the next event raises questions about what type of action the discourses circulating within the media will lead us toward. As it stands, our scientific and economic faculties have, in their attempts to strive toward objectivity, led us down a path of efficiency and reductionism that also devalues struggle and the voice of communities and nature. The debate over <Kyoto> was not simply a policy debate. It was a debate about values, who gets to speak and why, what should our future look like, and most importantly, what is the relationship of humans towards our environment. More broadly, the debate over <Kyoto> was a question of the oppressive and productive capacities of discourse. Consequently, we should examine how the oppressive and productive capacities of discourses of power are going to be engaged in the next major environmental media event. Will an ideographic fragment continue the same ordering, or
will the antagonisms that currently plague the viability of current articulations force a re-imagining of an environmental telos?

**Implications for/of Critical Rhetoric**

Plec (2007) noted that “critical rhetoric is implicated in [Environmental Communication] as a crisis discipline” (p. 50). In many ways, the study of environmental communication benefits from the productive capacities of critical rhetoric and its Foucauldian roots. Central to McKerrow’s (1989) project is an emphasis on dual critiques, the “critique of domination” and the “critique of freedom” (p. 91). As the critique of domination seeks to expose the rhetorical forces governing and guiding humans, the critique of freedom seeks “a self-reflexive critique that turns back on itself even as it promotes a realignment in the forces of power that construct social relations” (p. 91). However, the dual nature of this approach and the emphasis on self-reflexive criticism has been vulnerable to critique itself (Biesecker, 1992; Ono & Sloop, 1992). Any attempt to completely separate a “critique of domination” and a “critique of freedom” becomes troubling, because power serves both functions simultaneously. More troubling, however, is the notion of an unending self-reflexive critique. Ono and Sloop (1992) note that “such a position necessarily commits a critic to a self-criticism from which the critic could not escape long enough to provide direction” (p. 52). Consequently, the goal of the rhetorical critic should include a “commitment to telos” in which “they relinquish skepticism and advance their argument for the moment as if the direction chosen by the critic (i.e., a telos) were Truth with a capital ‘T’” (1992, p. 53).
This study generally aligns itself with these criticisms, recognizing that while it is possible to perform a “critique of domination” and a “critique of freedom,” these approaches are really directed toward the same goal because the productive and oppressive capacities of power are inherently tied together. For the study of environmental communication and critical rhetoric, this means that future research should focus on “moving our inquiry close to the communities it affects” (Plec, 2007, p. 54). Furthermore, the focus of environmental critical rhetoric means taking up the critique of domination and freedom as a “commitment toward rhetorical complexity and ecological sustainability” (p. 54).

In this move towards community, this study of <Kyoto> is born. As an international policy and a media forum for the discussion of environmentalism, <Kyoto> has been troubled by its privileging of technical and scientific discourses over community. Yet, when one peers into localized discourses, a reconnection with nature becomes possible. Revealing the connection between communities and nature creates the necessary re-complication of environmentalism that is essential in reducing the marginalizing effects of ethno/anthropocentric discourse. The re-complicating of environmentalism and the localizing of discourse re-orients policy questions. Rather than looking at how many degrees of temperature change would cause a rise in the sea-levels that would put the Maldives under water, the new question emphasizes the struggles caused by a lack of environmental action.

So what does this project say about critical rhetoric? The ultimate goal of this project was to examine the ways in which discourses are closed off in the media as a
result of privileged discourses. We have seen that the deployment of highly technical scientific and economic discourses frame the debate over <environmental>ism as a concern with measurement, placing the struggles of community and nature as secondary. The answer then involves listening. While science and economics have provided new ways of seeing the world and listening to it, they have closed off others. This has troubling implications for community and nature as a whole. This study suggests that critical rhetoric should be used to explore new possibilities for listening. If we are to move toward a focus on communities to achieve freedom from dominant discourses, then critical rhetoric is the faculty through which to recognize distress and to understand how and where it fits as an antagonism of dominant discourses. Antagonistic voices are “differences, limits, in a hegemonic discourse that must be articulated by groups in order to subvert or disarticulate the hegemonic discourse” (Deluca, 1999b, p. 337).

Furthermore, these voices must be taken up by critical rhetoricians as tools to re-opening the articulation of ideographs guiding dominant discourses for new interpretations (Deluca, 1999b, p. 337).

Borders and Future Directions for Study

Observing the media’s circulation of <Kyoto> as an ideograph reveals the power that some words possess. Specifically, it reveals their function as containers that delineate a discourse. However, this study views them as more than containers. It looks towards their ability to organize, alter, shift, expand, contract, reinforce, and challenge a discourse through processes of articulation. The strength of this study lies in its ability to recognize that some terms, specifically ideographs, t are introduced into a culture’s
vernacular as simple labels but can become so much more. These terms are infused with power, carrying with them the weight of a given discourse. Just as power lives through humans, discourse surges through us via our everyday usage of terms.

The emphasis of this project has been on the limits of our current environmental discourses and how our understanding of the environment is made clear in the debates surrounding the Kyoto Protocols within the media. Furthermore, this project has explored how discourses become the vehicles that spark or stagnate a “movement of consciousness.” This study reveals that Kyoto is anything but a radical shift in our sense of an environmental ethic. It also shows that Kyoto brought together two separate discourses in an effort to forge a policy, and more importantly a demand for action. Thus, this study indicates how “taken-for-granted” are a powerful force that guide thought and action. More importantly, this study critiques the points where these assumptions have restricted what it means to be a “human-in-the-world.” Through the twin critiques of “domination” and “freedom,” the telos of this study is disclosed as a move towards a need to reflect on the forces that define our environmental politics, and more importantly, to rethink our orientation towards the environment.

However, this study does avoid an issue that is central to any discussion of the media and the public sphere. There is a lack of any reference to notions of public opinion, or the will of the public. Therefore, this study opens itself to criticism regarding the effects that the media’s discussion of Kyoto has had on the public. In the face of these criticisms, this study seeks to provide a means of understanding how the media might impact the public, and thus provide a basis for further research into the
manifestation of discourse into the consciousness of the public. By uncovering the deep-seeded assumptions that are present in our texts and other institutional structures, this study looks towards the possibility of measuring exactly where discourses of power have directed the minds of the masses. Mapping the discourses present within ideographic-fragment-events can help determine what discourses are guiding public opinion, and furthermore, what discourses have been marginalized.

Another limitation of this study relates to the struggle faced in selecting discourse fragments for analysis. While this study’s focus on ideographic fragments was useful, there is a constant tension that coincides with selecting fragments. What should be included? What should be excluded? What is relevant? I attempted to address these concerns by identifying unity within fragments across news magazine’s coverage of Kyoto. Unfortunately, my search for unifying fragments also had to be tempered by my need to work with a manageable number of artifacts. The discussion may also have become too restricted in an effort to provide for manageability, although this project did find unity across fragments, and was able to compose a text for critique. Nevertheless, by focusing only on news magazines, opportunities to explore other forms of discourse and voice may have been missed. For instance, by missing the more ideologically grounded magazines (e.g., The New Yorker, The New Republic, The National Review) there is a greater chance of missing discourses from the political margins. Furthermore, excluding television and newspaper coverage misses a glimpse at everyday discussion, which may have included more details about certain events, or may have also provided more prolific fragments in the form of sound bites.
A third limitation also is apparent. While this study offers a powerful critique of the current dominant discourses, its ability to provide remedies or directions for change is limited. Indeed, the ultimate suggestion made by this study is the need to incorporate ecocentric perspectives into the media’s discussion of <environmental>ism. This study has set a much more ambitious goal than it can practically obtain. Breaking down the Cartesian divide that defines our current <environmental> ethics requires much more than a critique of the current system. It requires the powerful collaboration of inventive rhetoric that can re-orient the way we see the world. Consequently, an important direction for future research is in exploring the possibilities created by introducing ecocentric perspectives into the public sphere, in both policy and media discussion. For example, looking at the stories of the Maldives is only a starting point in recognizing that communities and nature itself can provide powerful lessons about the relationship between humans and the environment.

Conclusion

I close this study by returning to where I started, by addressing the three questions guiding this study:

1. What ideographs are circulating within the American media’s discussion of the Kyoto Protocols?
2. How are the articulations of these ideographs functioning as a dominant discourse of power?
3. What are the possibilities for performing a critique of environmental discourse through the debate over the Kyoto Protocols?
This examination of popular news magazines makes it apparent that <Kyoto> has functioned as much more than a label for a policy. Indeed, it took on a role as an ideographic fragment event, serving to synchronically align notions of <economic>s and <environmental>ism. As ideographs, these three served powerful functions as containers of discursive perspectives. Furthermore, the articulation of <Kyoto> through <economic> and <environmental>ism, revealed the dominance of ethnocentric and anthropocentric perspectives of the relationship between humans and the world. In drawing together fragments to compose a text for criticism, my goal was to draw insights into the way that ideographic-fragments serve as discourses of power within the context of environmentalism. This study hopes to take the first slice in dissecting the discourses that run through us, live through us, and ultimately guide us. Thus, this study elaborated upon <Kyoto>’s ties to narratives of <economic> and <environmental> disaster, the dominant discourses of power that emphasized the potential of instrumental reason to prevent these potential disasters. Guided by human faculties rooted in “evidence” and “objective” observations of policies to present these disasters, the media reinforced Cartesian notions of mind and the surrounding world.

It is from this notion that the potential of critiquing the environmental discourse within the debates over <Kyoto> arises. While the media draws upon considerable ethnocentric and anthropocentric perspectives within <Kyoto>, there is a distinct absence of ecocentric perspectives. Exploring ecocentric viewpoints problematizes the ideal of “objective evidence” because it breaks down the notion that nature can be reduced to a sum of separate parts, and that humans can be separated from these parts. Ecocentrism’s
holism presents a new way of understanding the <environmental> ethical obligations in the face of global environmental crisis. The decline of coral reefs is more than a problem for the fish or humans alone; it is an ecological problem. Consequently, <Kyoto>’s emphasis on greenhouse gas emissions misses the bigger picture in forging ethical <environmental> action.

Despite the critique of ethnocentric and anthropocentric dominance in the media debate, I do not want to suggest that science and economics are irrelevant. In fact, they are critical if humanity is to devise a practical approach to preventing environmental disaster. However, relying solely upon these perspectives tends to reinforce notions of human dominance that are at the root of our exploitation of the natural world. This study hopes to provide an argument (a telos) for the importance of introducing ecocentric perspectives that point to the interconnection between all living things (and even the non-living). Listening for the voice of those most vulnerable and reliant upon stable ecosystems provide one way of reaching this goal. These stories can also force Americans to face the anxiety of our vulnerability to the environment. What we perceive as a conquering of the elements is a radical misreading. We can never truly conquer what we depend upon most, nor should we. Rather than holding dominion over the earth, humanity is inextricably dependent upon it. By denying the voices that point this out, we are only turning a blind eye to what may become the greatest problem humanity has ever faced.
References


_Quarterly Journal of Speech_. 66, 1-16

_Western Journal of Communication_, 54, 274-289.


Zakaria, F. (2007, April 16). The case for a global carbon tax; options: The only way to slow climate change is to make coal more expensive and alternatives cheaper.  

*Newsweek:* 94.