GREEN BEYOND REASON:

THE AFFECTIVE RHETORIC OF GREEN CONSUMPTION

by

LISA SLAWTER VOLKENING

(Under the Direction of Celeste M. Condit)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the possibility for green consumption to function as a rhetoric of environmental change. The major focus is the rhetorical significance of affective feeling in addition to ideological meaning. Rather than reject the environmentalist potential of green consumption due to its ideological and representational shortcomings, this project takes the popularity and attractiveness of the practice seriously and tries to understand why it resonates with so many consumers and why this resonance might matter for environmental change. Through a dual rhetorical analysis of the ideological and affective capacity of three case studies, this project reframes the polarized debate over green consumption into a question of how the potentials of the practice may be directed and amplified in support of a more sustainable future. In the case of Brita and Nalgene's corporate *FilterForGood* campaign, much of the affective capacity of the rhetoric of green consumption is captured by an ideological perspective that is limited for systemic environmental change, but the feelings of connection and agency with respect to a specific environmental problem may also be significant for long-term environmental sustainability. In the case of the environmental

advocacy campaign, *GreenMyApple*, Greenpeace appropriated the affective resources of the Apple brand to transform Apple consumers into e-waste activists. Although the *GreenMyApple* campaign did not push individual consumers or governments to change, it did successfully pressure a corporation to green its products. Finally, in the case of *No Impact Man*, Colin Beavan's public performance and narrative of no impact consumption promotes both an ideological and affective awareness of the possibilities and limitations of green consumption as a form of environmental action and a way of life. These analyses rely on an examination of the discourse surrounding the practice of green consumption, as well as the practice itself, as rhetorical. In analyzing the multiple rhetorical dimensions of green consumption, this project is thus as much a study of rhetoric as it is of green consumption. It relies on and seeks to advance a materialist theory of rhetoric by analyzing the ideological and affective capacity of green consumption as a rhetoric of environmental change.

INDEX WORDS: Affect; ideology; green consumption; environmental rhetoric; rhetoric of social change; emotion; FilterForGood; Brita and Nalgene; GreenMyApple; Greenpeace; No Impact Man; Colin Beavan

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CHAPTER 1

ADDING AFFECT TO IDEOLOGY:

A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF GREEN CONSUMPTION

Introduction

Over the past several years, green consumption has become an increasingly visible and widespread practice. In 2007, the *New York Times* reported that an estimated "35 million Americans regularly buy products that claim to be earth-friendly."[1] A 2009 marketing analysis from *Mintel* described the "green marketplace" as "one of the fastest growing, most dynamic sectors of the U.S. economy," and projected that "locally grown food, green personal care, green household cleaning products and green building" were all "well-positioned to weather this economic crisis."[2] Beyond quantitative measures that document the growth of a "green market segment," qualitative evidence of the rise of green consumption has begun to permeate our everyday experiences. A trip to the grocery store presents consumers with expanding options to buy organic food or purchase reusable bags at the check out. A variety of television advertisements tout the green characteristics of their products.[3] An organic vegetable garden now occupies the

[1] Alex Williams, "Buying into the Green Movement " *The New York Times* (2007, July 1), http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/01/fashion/01green.html.
[2] Mintel, "Green Living - Us - January 2009," (via Galileo, http://www.galileo.usg.edu, 2009).
[3] For examples, see Apple, "Apple Macbook Pro - the Greenest Family of Notebooks," *YouTube* (2008, November 24), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqJl6huz4y0, Clorox, "Clorox Greenworks Commercial," *YouTube* (2008, October 10), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mac8reC5O8U.

quintessential American lawn at the White House.[4] Today, options for green consumption are seemingly endless: "commute in a hybrid, sip fair trade coffee, swaddle your tyke in organic cotton, spend vacations saving rain forest, bank your retirement on socially responsible investments, even power your home from a low-pollution utility."[5]

While many consumers (and businesses) have been receptive to the greening of consumption, the response from many environmental advocates, organizations, and scholars has been overwhelmingly negative. Critics of green consumption fault the practice for providing individuals with a privatized solution that minimizes the perceived scope of the environmental crisis, fails to solve environmental problems, and distracts from the need for more systemic reform. A recent article in the *Washington Post* titled, "To really save the planet, stop going green," captures this sense of critique with its plea to:

> Stop "going green" Just stop it. No more compact fluorescent light bulbs. No more green wedding planning. No more organic toothpicks for holiday hors d'oeuvres… Instead of continuing our faddish and counterproductive emphasis on small, voluntary actions, we should follow the example of Americans during past moral crises and work toward large-scale change.[6]

As this article suggests, critics view green consumption not as a productive form of environmental activism, but as a superficial distraction from the real work of environmental change.

This dissertation project begins with a simple question: How can we make sense of the increasing presence of green consumption in light of such criticisms? Are green

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[4] Marian Burros, "Obamas to Plant Vegetable Garden at White House," *The New York Times* (2009, March 19), http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/20/dining/20garden.html.
[5] J.M. Hirsh, "It Is Easier to Be Green, but Does It Matter?," *Associated Press*, August 22 2006.
[6] Mike Tidwell, "To Really Save the Planet, Stop Going Green," *Washington Post* (2009, December 6), http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/04/AR2009120402605.html.

consumers just cultural dupes blind to the limits of individual consumer changes? Or is there something more going on?

In this dissertation, I explore the possibility for green consumption to function as a rhetoric of environmental change. While I am not blindly optimistic about the capacity for green consumption to resolve our environmental crises, I do—in the tradition of cultural studies—recognize the political and resistive potential of green consumption to be "more than the site of ideological manipulation and capitalist production."[7] Rather than rejecting the environmentalist potential of the practice due to its ideological and other shortcomings, I take the popularity and attractiveness of green consumption seriously and try to understand why it resonates with so many consumers and why this resonance might matter for environmental change. Through close analysis of three particular instances of green consumption rhetoric, I consider the possibilities and limitations of the practice in helping to build a more sustainable future.

As a rhetorical project, my analysis focuses not only on green consumption as a method of environmental change, but as a *rhetoric* of environmental change. To consider the rhetoric of green consumption, I examine the discourse surrounding the practice in advertising campaigns, media coverage, consumer narratives, and elsewhere, but I also examine the practice itself as rhetorical. As a material practice with economic, cultural, and environmental impact, the act of green consumption is a communicative practice with rhetorical significance. Like the physical bodies of Earth First! activists, which Kevin DeLuca suggests mobilize "signs, images, and discourses for the articulation of identities, ideologies, consciousnesses, communities, publics, and cultures," the material

[7] Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 2.

practice of green consumption functions rhetorically to do things like send a message to businesses, reconstitute human-nature relationships, support a free-market ideology, and otherwise persuade, constitute, or move audiences. [8]

In analyzing the multiple rhetorical dimensions of green consumption, this project is thus as much a study of rhetoric as it is of green consumption. While green consumption provides the context for my analysis, it is my hope that the form and content of this analysis might contribute to the ways rhetorical scholars conceive and analyze rhetoric. Specifically, this dissertation relies on and seeks to advance a materialist theory of rhetoric by analyzing the ideological and affective capacity of green consumption as a rhetoric of environmental change.

My analysis of the rhetoric of green consumption is grounded in a materialist perspective of rhetoric in two ways. First, like Greg Dickinson, John Sloop, Joan Faber McAlister, and others who analyze the material practices of everyday life as rhetorical, my analysis of the physical act of green consumption assumes the rhetorical significance of "banal, everyday, material practices."[9] Second, my interest in the impact of green consumption as a rhetoric of environmental change points to the capacity for rhetoric to have material import as "a palpable and undeniable social and political force."[10]

It is primarily this second notion of the materiality of rhetoric as impact that I attempt to develop with my analysis of green consumption. Rhetorical scholars are

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[8] Kevin Michael DeLuca, "Unruly Arguments: The Body Rhetoric of Earth First!, Act up, and Queer Nation," *Argumentation & Advocacy* 36, no. 1 (1999): 10.

[9] Greg Dickinson, "Joe's Rhetoric: Finding Authenticity at Starbucks," *RSQ: Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2002): 23, John M. Sloop, "People Shopping," in *Rhetoric, Materiality, and Politics*, ed. Barbara A Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), Joan Faber McAlister, "Material Aesthetics in Middle America: Simone Weil, the Problem of Roots, and the Pantopic Suburb," in *Rhetoric, Materiality, and Politics*, ed. Barbara A Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009).

[10] Barbara A Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites, eds., *Rhetoric, Materiality, and Politics* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing,2009), 3.

perhaps most familiar with ideological criticism as a way to analyze and evaluate the material impact of discourse, as the ideological turn in rhetorical studies paved the way for locating ideological meanings in the ideographs and personae present in a discourse.[11] As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, many of the critiques of green consumption are based on the ideological impact of the practice. While the ideological meaning of a text contributes significantly to its material impact, a materialist theory of rhetoric encourages us to consider impact more broadly. As Carole Blair and Neil Michel suggest in their analysis of the Astronaut's Memorial:

> Discourse *does* construct meanings symbolically; that is one kind of work that it does, but only one. If we limit critical effort to focus on meaning, we will miss the additional work that a discourse does...[12]

Lawrence Grossberg uses the word "effectivity" to emphasize the "multidimensionality of effects… physical, economic, cognitive, semantic, affective, desire, etc," and he suggests that ideological effects are rarely the "plane of primary effectivity" in popular culture artifacts.[13] Celeste Condit's theorization of a "modal materialism" similarly emphasizes the multiple dimensions of materiality which may impact and be impacted by various kinds of discursive matter—physical, biological, and symbolic.[14]

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[11] Michael Calvin McGee, "The "Ideograph": A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66, no. 1 (1980), Edwin Black, "The Second Persona," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 2 (1970), Philip C. Wander, "The Third Persona: An Ideological Turn in Rhetorical Theory," *Central States Speech Journal* 35 (1984).
[12] Carole Blair and Neil Michel, "Commemorating in the Theme Park Zone: Reading the Astonauts Memorial," in *At the Intersection: Cultural Studies and Rhetorical Studies*, ed. Thomas Rosteck (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 70.
[13] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 50, 398, 74.
[14] Celeste Condit, "Race and Genetics from a Modal Materialist Perspective," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94, no. 4 (2008).

One type of material effectivity that has recently drawn the attention of rhetorical scholars is the affective or emotional capacity of rhetoric.[15] As I will discuss later in this chapter, affect refers to the embodied emotional response that exceeds the meaning of linguistic content, yet accompanies all our communication and social experiences. Affect plays an important role in shaping the impact of rhetorical events, but it has been largely neglected by rhetorical scholarship that focuses primarily on the meanings, representations, and ideologies presented by rhetorical artifacts. In calling attention to the affective capacity of the rhetoric of green consumption in addition to its ideological impact, this project joins a number of voices in rhetoric, cultural studies, and other fields that have begun to proclaim the importance of affect to political projects and the need to include "affective dimensions" in our critical analyses.[16]

Nearly two decades ago in an analysis of "rhetoric and environmental politics in America," Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline Palmer noted the connection between the "political effectiveness of environmentalist rhetoric" and a "discourse's ability to create valences, open links that attract individuals among the general public."[17] Yet, as they observed just a few years later:

> while ideological environmentalism may have created a reservoir of commitment within the American public, it may have not given sufficient attention to

[15] Jenny Edbauer Rice, "The New "New": Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94, no. 2 (2008), Barbara A. Biesecker, "Forum: Introduction," *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2 (2009).
[16] Celeste Condit, "Pathos and Ideology: From Edwin Blacks's "2nd Persona" To Humans," in *University of Georgia's, Department of Speech Communication Colloquium Series* (2010, January 19), Jenny Edbauer, "Executive Overspill: Affective Bodies, Intensity, and Bush-in-Relation," *Postmodern Culture* 15, no. 1 (2004), Joshua Gunn, "On Speech and Public Release," in *Bi-Annual Public Address Conference in Madison, WI* (2008, September 27), Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002).
[17] M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer, *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 25.

> providing a mechanism of transition whereby old habits are transformed into new habits of action.[18]

The severity of the current ecological crisis demands that activists and critics alike take seriously the need for concrete plans and attractive rhetorics that may help guide human habits, energies, and cultures onto a more sustainable path. Rather than simply rejecting the resources of consumerism and individual action, this dissertation project begins by considering the "affective productivity" of practices like green consumption for creating a more inhabitable planet and way of living.[19] As Christine Harold suggests, the way forward may involve considering "what possibilities for political action are afforded *within* the logics of postindustrial capitalism."[20]

The remainder of this chapter provides a more detailed introduction to the environmental and communicative issues at stake in this investigation of the rhetoric of green consumption. I begin by discussing the connection between consumption and environmental problems and presenting green consumption as a controversial response to those problems. As I have already suggested, many environmental advocates, organizations, and scholars are highly critical of green consumption, but the practice does attract supporters as well, and I map the key points of contention to provide a sense of the debate over green consumption. In the second section I reframe this controversy in terms of the rhetorical capacity of green consumption as a mode of environmental change. Rather than positioning myself neatly on one side of the debate, I reposition the terms of the controversy to consider the *ideological* and *affective* impact of green consumption.

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[18] _____, "Liberal and Pragmatic Trends in the Discourse of Green Consumerism," in *The Symbolic Earth: Discourse and Our Creation of the Environment*, ed. James G. Cantrill and Christine L. Oravec (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 227.
[19] Misha Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 5.
[20] Christine Harold, *Ourspace: Resisting the Corporate Control of Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xxvii.

Building on the work of rhetorical and environmental scholars who (implicitly) note the importance of affect, I introduce my perspective of the dual ideological and affective rhetorical significance of green consumption.

In the third section I discuss the concept of affect in more detail, situating my use of the term with respect to a larger body of scholarship. Although affect has a varied history of usage, I employ the term to focus on the embodied, social, extra-linguistic intensity of green consumption. Having established the important characteristics of affect, the fourth section of this chapter provides more insight into how I use the concept to inform my rhetorical analysis. Although affect is in many ways an elusive concept for rhetorical scholars due to its extra-linguistic, nonrepresentational character, there are a number of ways we may begin to analyze its rhetorical effect. I suggest that an affective rhetorical analysis, in conjunction with a more conventional ideological analysis, may provide a more complete account of the potential of green consumption as a rhetoric of environmental change.

The final portion of this chapter introduces the three case studies that form the bulk of this dissertation project: Brita and Nalgene's *FilterForGood* campaign, Greenpeace's *GreenMyApple* campaign, and Colin Beavan's *No Impact Man* project. While each of these case studies will be explored in depth in later chapters, this final introductory section explains how these particular instances of green consumption rhetoric may contribute to a broader understanding of the practice of green consumption.

I turn now to consider the connections between environmental problems and (green) consumption. These connections provide an important backdrop for

understanding the debate over green consumption as a potentially productive mode of environmental change.

Consumption and the Environment

According to the WorldWatch Institute's *2010 State of the World* report, consumerism is *the* environmental problem faced by society today.[21] While this may be surprising, given seemingly larger crises like global warming, loss of species diversity, and the ever increasing pollution of our air, water, soil, and even bodies, WorldWatch positions consumerism at the heart of all of these concerns. To understand why, it is helpful to consider the ways that consumption may be connected to environmental problems. First, as material practice, consumption frequently involves the unsustainable extraction, use, and disposal of natural resources. Second, as a mode of relations, consumption mediates much human contact with the environment.

The negative environmental consequences of our "consumer society" have been widely documented. Alan Durning of the WorldWatch Institute suggests that "the consumer society's exploitation of resources threatens to exhaust, poison, or unalterably disfigure forests, soils, water, and air," noting that "[o]nly population growth rivals high consumption as a cause of ecological decline."[22] *Cradle to Cradle* authors and ecological design advocates Michael Braungart and William McDonough similarly describe our current system of production and consumption as one that "puts billions of pounds of toxic material into the air, water, and soil every year… results in gigantic amounts of

[21] The WorldWatch Institute, "State of the World: Transforming Cultures: From Consumerism to Sustainability." (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010).
[22] Alan Thein Durning, *How Much Is Enough?: The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth*, 1st ed., The Worldwatch Environmental Alert Series (New York: Norton, 1992), 23, 21.

waste… [and] erodes the diversity of species and cultural practices."[23] In the face of such consumption-caused environmental devastation, environmental studies professor David Orr expresses a common sentiment among proponents of environmental change: "sustainability will require a reduction in consumption … changes in the kinds of things consumed."[24] As the driving force behind a range of environmentally destructive activities, consumption poses a serious environmental problem in today's world.

In addition to leaving a material environmental footprint, consumption further impacts the environment by shaping how humans relate to the natural world. Practices of consumption are central to our culture and way of life, influencing not only how we spend our time, but how we view ourselves, others, and the environment. As Durning suggests, "consuming has become both our primary means of self-definition and our leading pastime."[25] Environmental writer Bill McKibben describes consumerism as a "most powerful ideology."[26] Because consumer products—such as cars—are no longer "apart from our lives—they *are* our lives," economic and consumer concerns seem "real" and "concrete," while environmental problems and the Earth seem "abstract."[27] Environmental historian Jennifer Price suggests that most of our encounters with nature are mediated by consumption today because "[c]onsumerism, since the turn of the century the nation's economic foundation, has increasingly evolved into a way of moving

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[23] William McDonough and Michael Braungart, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, 1st ed. (New York: North Point Press, 2002), 18.
[24] David W. Orr, *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect*, 10th anniversary ed. (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2004), 62.
[25] Durning, *How Much Is Enough?: The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth*, 8.
[26] Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature*, Random House trade pbk. ed. (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006), xxii.
[27] Ibid., 144, xxiii. McKibben writes: "the physical world is no longer as real to us as the economic world—we cosset and succor the economy; our politicians gear every decision to speeding its further growth. So if someone says, 'Ending our reliance on fossil fuels will harm the economy,' that settles the issue. By contrast, if someone says, 'Relying of fossil fuels is wrecking the planet,' it seems almost an irrelevant objection—the Earth has become abstract, and the economy concrete, to us."

through the world… we approach the natural world, just like everything else, instinctively as consumers."[28] From the products that fill our homes and stores to the advertisements that flood our lives, we are immersed in consumer practices and messages that direct us to relate to the environment as a commodity.[29]

Whether consumption is critiqued for its physical environmental consequences or its mediation of human-nature relationships, it is widely agreed that our current system of consumption is not environmentally sustainable, and this dissertation project does not dispute that fact. As both a material practice and a mode of relations, today's consumption is at the root of many environmental problems. However, despite widespread agreement about the environmental problems associated with consumption, there is no consensus on how to best resolve those problems. Recently green consumption has emerged as one controversial response to the environmental concerns of consumption and consumerism.

Broadly defined, green consumption is any act of consumption that attempts to decrease the environmental impact of conventional practices of consumption. Green consumption may involve the substitution of a "green" product or service for a conventional one, such as choosing to purchase an environmentally-friendly and energy-efficient computer instead of one made from toxic, environmentally-harmful materials. Green consumption may also involve a decrease in consumption as purchases shift toward durable products with less environmental impact, such as using one refillable

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[28] Jennifer Price, "Looking for Nature at the Mall: A Field Guide to the Nature Company," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995), 201, 197-98.

[29] Julia B. Corbett, *Communicating Nature: How We Create and Understand Environmental Messages* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006), 148. In Corbett's overview of "advertising and the natural world," she explains how in many ads, "the environment becomes a commodity" to be consumed.

beverage container instead of countless disposable ones.[30] Some forms of green consumption may also require behavioral changes, such as changing eating and cooking habits to consume more local food. In Robert Cox's textbook on environmental communication, he defines "the discourse of *green consumerism*" as "*marketing* that encourages the belief that, by buying allegedly environmentally friendly products, consumers can do their part to protect the planet."[31] Because the concept and practice of green consumption overlaps with the "greening" of related activities, I include some literature on green marketing, green advertising, green consumerism, and natural capitalism in the following discussion of green consumption.[32]

While "green consumption" is a relatively straightforward concept to understand—modify consumption to reduce its environmental impact—its effectiveness as a form of environmental change is controversial. In Cox's overview of green consumerism as a "mode of environmental advocacy," he concludes with a reference to the debate over "whether green consumerism can be a real force in the marketplace or a subtle diversion from the questioning of our consumer society."[33] Despite widespread agreement about the environmental problems created by conventional consumption, the

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[30] In this respect, my understanding of green consumption differs from those that exclude a focus on reducing consumption. For example, James Gustave Speth suggests "green consumerism does not stress reducing consumption overall" and he locates a "focus on reducing consumption" as "beyond green consumerism." James Gustave Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 150, 56.

[31] Emphasis added. Robert Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), 368.

[32] In Julia Corbett's textbook, *Communicating Nature*, she draws connections between advertising, capitalism, and consumption, describing "*[a]dvertising*, as a primary support system for a *capitalist* economy… [that] has played an enormous role in instilling a materialistic, *consumer* way of life." In a the introduction to a special issue of *Ethics & the Environment* that focuses on "Consuming Environments," Christine Harold describes "[a]dvertising, branding, [and] public relations" as "important environmental conditions of consumer culture." Corbett, *Communicating Nature: How We Create and Understand Environmental Messages*, 174-75, Christine Harold, "Ethics of Seeing: Consuming Environments," *Ethics & the Environment* 9, no. 2 (2004): 2.

[33] Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, 247, 385.

practice of modifying that consumption to solve those environmental problems attracts both critics and supporters.

Critiques of the capacity of green consumption to serve as a catalyst for environmental change have emerged from a variety of sources. Communication scholars Mark Meister, Kristen Chamberlain, and Amanda Brown reproach AVEDA's "green commodity form" and "consumer-based behaviors" for reinforcing the status quo of consumerism and failing to "encourage a personal shift toward a conservation or preservation ethic."[34] Sociologist Andrew Szasz describes the mass consumption of organic food and other green products as "the opposite" of a "politically engaged, social movement/activism response"—referring to it as "a resigned, fatalistic environmentalism" that focuses on the health of the individual, rather than the environment.[35] Two recent reports from international conservation organization World Wildlife Fund (WWF) outline "the inadequacy of the current responses" to environmental challenges, especially those relying on "green consumption," the use of "marketing techniques to encourage the purchase of environmentally-friendly products," and other attempts to "sell" behavioral changes by appealing to audience members' self-interest.[36] The graphic novel, *As the World Burns: 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Stay in Denial*, inverts the popular "50 simple things you can do to save the Earth," adding a

[34] Mark Meister, Kristen Chamberlain, and Amanda Brown, "Rejuvenating Nature in Commercial Culture and the Implications of the Green Commodity Form," in *Environmental Communication Yearbook* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 99, 110.
[35] Szasz uses the label, "inverted quarantine," to explain the practice of "buying consumer products that promise to reduce… exposure to harmful substance" because such consumption inverts the structure of a classic quarantine by isolating healthy individuals from a diseased collective environment. Andrew Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 2-3.
[36] Tom Crompton, "Weathercocks & Signposts: The Environmental Movement at a Crossroads," *World Wildlife Fund* http://www.wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/campaigning/strategies_for_change/ (April 2008): 5, Tom Crompton and John Thøgersen, "Simple & Painless? The Limitations of Spillover in Environmental Campaigning," *World Wildlife Fund* http://www.wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/campaigning/strategies_for_change/ (February 2009).

humorous voice to the criticism of green consumption as a form of environmental activism.[37]

In contrast to these skeptics of green consumption, a number of sources are more hopeful about its potential as a mode of environmental change. In a rhetorical analysis of "green how-to books… like the best-selling *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth*," Killingsworth and Palmer recognize the "strong contribution to cultural environmentalism" made by green consumerism, concluding:

> The green consumer movement has hit upon a provocative alternative in the attempt to create ritual signs out of household items and actions, to redirect the symbolic energy as well as the practical activity of householder by relating ordinary work to environmental values.[38]

Marketing consultant John Grant expresses hope about the possibilities for green marketing and consumption, challenging those critics who view environmental and business interests as "necessarily contradictory."[39] *TreeHugger.com*, a popular environmental blog and leader in green media, touts green consumption as key to a "bright green future" where "the interests of technology, ecology, and commerce overlap."[40] A growing number of green how-to books also enthusiastically endorse green consumption as a way to "use your spending power to create a cleaner, greener, world."[41]

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[37] Derrick Jensen and Stephanie McMillan, *As the World Burns: 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Stay in Denial*, 1st ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007), 4.
[38] Killingsworth and Palmer, "Liberal and Pragmatic Trends in the Discourse of Green Consumerism," 220, 37, 38.
[39] John Grant, *The Green Marketing Manifesto* (Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 10.
[40] Graham Hill and Meaghan O'Neill, *Ready, Set, Green: Eight Weeks to Modern Eco-Living from the Experts at Treehugger.Com*, 1st ed. (New York: Villard, 2008), 5.
[41] Diane MacEachern, *Big Green Purse: Use Your Spending Power to Create a Cleaner, Greener World* (New York: Avery, 2008). Other examples of green how-to books that emphasize green consumption include: Michael Brower, Warren Leon, and Union of Concerned Scientists., *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices: Practical Advice from the Union of Concerned Scientists* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999), Josh Dorfman, *The Lazy Environmentalist: Your Guide to Easy, Stylish, Green Living* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2007), Starre Vartan, *The Eco Chick Guide to Life: How to Be Fabulously Green*, 1st ed. (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2008).

Across these criticisms and praises of green consumption, there are three main points of debate. First, are environmentalism and consumerism fundamentally opposed, or can environmentalism work through consumerism? Second, is green consumption an insufficient step or is it an important part of a larger shift toward a sustainable future? Third, do the positive actions and feelings of green consumption distract from the need for environmental change or do they make that environmental change palatable? The remainder of this section provides more details on these points of debate.

Green Consumption: Environmentalism Versus or Through Consumerism?

In Killingsworth and Palmer's discussion of the debate over technological solutions to environmental problems, they identify a question that is also important in the debate over green consumption: "Can the system be adjusted ... or must the system be thoroughly overhauled if not replaced?"[42] While proponents of green consumption "embrace capitalism as an ideology that can further ecological causes," critics reject the possibility for a "green" adjustment of our current system and argue for environmental change that challenges consumption and capitalism.[43]

Critics of green consumption see the concept as a contradiction in terms due to an underlying opposition between environmentalism and consumerism. They view capitalism, advertising, marketing, and other practices related to consumption as inherently anti-environmental, or "fundamentally brown."[44] Communication scholar

[42] Killingsworth and Palmer, *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America*, 1, 6.
[43] Meister, Chamberlain, and Brown, "Rejuvenating Nature in Commercial Culture and the Implications of the Green Commodity Form," 102.
[44] Julia B. Corbett, "A Faint Green Sell: Advertising and the Natural World," in *Enviropop: Studies in Environmental Rhetoric and Popular Culture*, ed. Mark Meister and Phyllis M. Japp (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002), 143.

Brenden Kendall exemplifies this oppositional perspective with his suggestion that: "a central goal of today's environmentalism ought to be making the capitalist world-system less relevant to everyday life."[45] Environmental advocate James Gustave Speth similarly suggests, "[w]orking only within the system will, in the end, not succeed when what is needed is transformative change in the system itself."[46] Many critics reject green consumption as an environmental solution due to its continued reliance on a major source of environmental problems: consumption. Because critics see environmentalism and consumerism as ideologically incompatible, they deny the possibility that environmental reform may occur through consumption. Any attempt to "green" consumption is thus viewed with suspicion, labeled "an oxymoron," "greenwashing," or mocked as a ridiculous contradiction such as "sustainable overconsumption."[47] For example, media scholar Andy Opel dismisses green marketing as a corporate attempt to "redirect" the "powerful threat" of rising "environmental consciousness" back into a "consumer impulse."[48] Opel's skeptical interpretation of green consumption as the co-optation of environmental advocacy by corporate interests demonstrates an underlying assumption about the opposition between environmentalism and consumerism. Green consumption practices are perceived as an insufficient form of environmental advocacy because they do not overhaul, replace, or oppose the system of consumption.

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[45] Brenden E. Kendall, "Green Herring: Resisting the Cooptation of Environmental Ideologies and Anti-Systemic Movements," in *National Communication Association* (San Diego2008), 3.
[46] Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*, 86.
[47] Corbett, "A Faint Green Sell: Advertising and the Natural World," 143, Jensen and McMillan, *As the World Burns: 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Stay in Denial*, 24.
[48] Andy Opel, "Monopoly the National Parks Edition: Reading Neo-Liberal Simulacra," in *Enviropop: Studies in Environmental Rhetoric and Popular Culture*, ed. Mark Meister and Phyllis M. Japp (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002), 42-43.

In contrast to the critic's view of environmentalism *versus* consumerism, supporters of green consumption highlight the possibility for environmental change to take place *through* consumption. They see consumerism not as the opposite of environmentalism, but as a powerful system that may be used for environmental reform, and they exhibit faith in the possibility for reforming the system of consumption according to sustainable environmental principles. Rejecting the green consumption critic's ecospeak-type "oversimplified dichotomy"[49] of environmentalism versus consumerism, Killingsworth and Palmer suggest green consumerism is compatible with a variety of ideological perspectives as it "perpetuates an issue-oriented approach to environmental protection."[50] In Grant's endorsement of green marketing, he recognizes a number of ideological and cultural obstacles to the alliance of environmentalism and consumerism, but he remains optimistic about the possibility for practices that are "both commercial *and* environmental; a win:win."[51] In my analysis of *TreeHuggerTV* as a form of environmental activism, I also recognize the possibility for "harnessing the logic of capitalism and consumption to advance environmental initiatives" through green consumption.[52] Like proponents of "natural capitalism" who are hopeful that the "nonsustainable aberration" of contemporary capitalism may be corrected through modifications emerging from within the capitalist system, proponents of green

[49] The polarized opposition between environmental and consumer interests closely resembles the "oversimplified dichotomy" of environmentalist vs. developmentalist that Killingsworth and Palmer label "ecospeak." They critique "ecospeak" as a discursive frame that "stops thinking and inhibits social cooperation," suggesting that ecospeak's "tendency to divide into two narrowly defined parties often leaves a huge population untouched or confused by the debate and the ensuing actions." Killingsworth and Palmer, *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America*, 9-10.
[50] ———, "Liberal and Pragmatic Trends in the Discourse of Green Consumerism," 220.
[51] Grant, *The Green Marketing Manifesto*, 11.
[52] Lisa D. Slawter, "TreeHuggerTV: Re-Visualizing Environmental Activism in the Post-Network Era," *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture* 2, no. 2 (2008): 222.

consumption are optimistic that modifications to consumption may be used to shift the system into more sustainable environmental relationships.[53]

Green Consumption: Insufficient Step or Important Part of a Larger Solution?

A second question in the debate over green consumption centers on the adequacy of the type of environmental change facilitated by the practice. Is green consumption an insufficient, small step or does it provide a valid path toward a sustainable future? Many critics emphasize the necessity for a significant shift in environmental actions, values, and policies and question the ability of green consumption to facilitate such reform. On the other hand, proponents of green consumption discuss a variety of ways that the practice may begin transforming our environmentally troubled system.

Critics fault green consumption practices for failing to resolve environmental problems, instill individuals with ecocentric values, or mobilize public support for policy change. They point to the insufficiency of the cumulative impact of greener consumer choices. For example, Speth suggests, "the benefits of improved, greener consumption will tend to be overwhelmed by the increased growth of consumption itself."[54] WWF argues, "the direct additive impact of large numbers of individuals changing their behaviour in ways that lead to small reductions in their personal environmental impacts will be a small reduction in overall environmental impact."[55] That is, even if *all* consumers made greener choices, the direct environmental impact "wouldn't be

[53] Paul Hawken, Amory B. Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins, *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1999), 5.
[54] Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*, 154.
[55] Crompton and Thøgersen, "Simple & Painless? The Limitations of Spillover in Environmental Campaigning," 6, 10.

enough."[56] Szasz provides the specific example of how "the growth in organic food consumption will slow and stop long before it reaches the point where most of agricultural production or even a significant fraction of it is transformed."[57] The inadequacy of the additive impact of green consumption on the environment leads WWF to call for government intervention and Szasz to reject the green consumer's "individualized acts of self-protection" and call for "systemic solutions" and collective "political action aimed at reducing the amounts or the variety of toxics present in the environment."[58]

In addition to the failure of greener consumer choices to solve environmental problems directly, critics argue green consumption does not lead to value changes or increased support for reforms in environmental policy. Meister, Chamberlain, and Brown critique green marketing for facilitating "a consumption ethic, rather than an environmental ethic predicated on interconnectedness with the diversity of nature."[59] Identity campaigning proponents Tom Crompton and Tim Kasser suggest green consumption problematically embraces and reinforces "self-enhancing, materialistic values" that are associated with anti-environmental behavior.[60] WWF criticizes green consumption's "piecemeal," "have your cake and eat it environmentalism" that does "not

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[56] Jensen and McMillan, *As the World Burns: 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Stay in Denial*, 37.
[57] Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*, p. 207.
[58] Crompton and Thøgersen, "Simple & Painless? The Limitations of Spillover in Environmental Campaigning," 9, Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*, 2-3.
[59] Meister, Chamberlain, and Brown, "Rejuvenating Nature in Commercial Culture and the Implications of the Green Commodity Form," 111.
[60] Tom Crompton and Tim Kasser, "Meeting Environmental Challenges: The Role of Human Identity," *World Wildlife Fund-UK* http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/meeting_environmental_challenges___the_role_of_human_identity.pdf (2009): 31.

question the dominance of today's individualistic and materialistic values."[61] Because many advocates of green consumption do not emphasize the environmental benefit, but instead tout the economic or personal health benefit of "green" products, WWF suggests most green consumption practices do not "spillover" into "public support for government interventions."[62] Szasz argues that individual acts of green consumption usurp more collective forms of activism so "the process of politicization never starts."[63] Crompton and Kasser suggest that emphasizing green consumption "risks fuelling a reluctance to confront other policy interventions," and Speth sees the focus on "individual consumer decisions" displacing "bigger issues."[64]

In contrast to critics who fault green consumption for failing to directly solve environmental problems, change individual values, or facilitate public policy changes, supporters of green consumption are hopeful that the environmental problems embedded in the consumerist system can be reformed through green consumption. They acknowledge the need for major environmental reform and systemic change, but see green consumption as a key part of that change. Proponents emphasize a variety of ways green consumption may aid the transition to a more sustainable society. Some praise green consumption for its capacity to influence public behavior directly. In Killingsworth and Palmer's analysis of "the discourse of green consumerism," they discuss a number of direct effects, suggesting green consumption: "inspires readiness for action… creates a ritual foundation for identity… encourages critical awareness… [and] directs individuals

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[61] Crompton, "Weathercocks & Signposts: The Environmental Movement at a Crossroads," 8, 5.
[62] Crompton and Thøgersen, "Simple & Painless? The Limitations of Spillover in Environmental Campaigning," 8.
[63] Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*, 211.
[64] Crompton and Kasser, "Meeting Environmental Challenges: The Role of Human Identity," 2, Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*, 154.

toward communal action."[65] They describe the formation of ritual practices and habits of action as the "vital function" of green consumption: "Instead of attempting to impose sweeping changes upon government, industry, or culture, consumer-based environmental concern quietly transforms civil society from the inside out."[66] Grant similarly celebrates green consumption's capacity "to make green alternatives seem normal and acceptable (as opposed to greenwash, the process of making normal stuff seem green)."[67] He suggests that green marketing and consumption are capable of contributing to big environmental change because they involve what he labels "first-handedness" or "a directness, authenticity and personal relationship" that connects people to products and their environmental impact.[68] Such attention to the important micro-political impact of green consumption challenges those who criticize green consumption as a small, insufficient step.

In addition to those who celebrate the direct impact of green consumption on public behavior, others look optimistically at the capacity of green consumption "[t]o use consumers' purchasing power to influence corporate behavior."[69] For example, in *Big Green Purse*, Diane MacEachern advocates using "consumer clout to pressure companies to save energy, protect forests, use safer ingredients, and otherwise become more responsible environmental citizens."[70] Regardless of the specific contribution of green

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[65] Killingsworth and Palmer, "Liberal and Pragmatic Trends in the Discourse of Green Consumerism," 230, 31, 33, 35.
[66] Ibid., 220.
[67] Grant does acknowledge that some green marketing initiatives may involve only "cosmetic" or "marginal improvements" and be subject to greenwashing critiques. Grant, *The Green Marketing Manifesto*, 10, 27.
[68] Ibid., 280-81.
[69] Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, 247. Durning suggests: "As shoppers bring environmental considerations into stores, consumer product companies have little choice but to take ecology more seriously than in the past." Durning, *How Much Is Enough?: The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth*, 125.
[70] MacEachern, *Big Green Purse: Use Your Spending Power to Create a Cleaner, Greener World*, x.

consumption to environmental change, it is frequently recognized as an important *part* of a larger process of change. McDonough and Braungart view green consumption as a productive alternative only when accompanied by a shift toward sustainable cradle-to-cradle product design.[71] Grant suggests that "for the greenest marketing," we need more than "a few specific green behaviors, such as not keeping TVs on standby, not accepting carrier bags and so on"; we also need to revise the "myths of consumerism."[72] Such revisions may occur through the mainstreaming of alternative modes of consuming such as sharing, treasuring, or collecting.[73] While critics question the ability of green consumption to bring about major shifts in environmental relations, values, and policies, supporters of green consumption recognize its capacity for accomplishing a variety of different types of environmental reform.

Green Consumption: Positive Action as a Distraction or a Way to Expand Environmentalism?

A final point of contention over green consumption as a mode of environmental advocacy concerns the significance of the affective experience of green consumption. Do the positive actions and feelings involved in green consumption distract from the need for environmental change or do they make that environmental change palatable? Critics and

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[71] McDonough and Braungart, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*.
[72] Grant, *The Green Marketing Manifesto*, 47, 247.
[73] Ibid., 253. Grant briefly discusses some forms of green consumption that require substantial revisions of consumption behaviors. There are many other examples of efforts to extend the life of products by treasuring or cherishing objects. For example, in *Home Ecology*, Karen Christensen suggests: "Instead of consuming things we should cherish and value them." *Eternally Yours*, a Dutch Industrial Designers' Association, provides another example of an organization that advocates strengthening the bond or attachment between consumers and their consumed objects, suggesting, "When human beings have such a bond with products… they are less inclined to throw products away prematurely." As cited in Durning, *How Much Is Enough?: The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth*, 140, Peter-Paul Verbeek, *What Things Do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 24.

supporters agree that green consumption promotes a positive feeling of agency and accomplishment as individuals take action through consumption. They disagree, however, in their evaluation of this positive feeling. Critics suggest the positive action of green consumption distracts from the need for unpleasant forms of environmental reform that require significant sacrifices. They argue that individuals need to feel at risk from an urgent and overwhelming threat in order to commit to environmental change. Conversely, supporters of green consumption celebrate the positive feelings as a way to attract more individuals to environmental reform. They suggest that the fun and hopeful form of green consumption is a necessary supplement to more conventional modes of environmental advocacy.

According to critics, green consumption not only falls short of enacting effective environmental reform, but also serves as a distraction from the kind of change required to address our current environmental crises. Szasz criticizes green consumption for its tendency to change the way we feel about environmental problems. He suggests that the purchase of green, organic, and nontoxic products "changes people's *experience*," "alters their perception," and reduces their "sense of being at risk."[74] Because green consumption "reduces the perceived, subjective urgency of the situation," the environmental crisis "continues to feel abstract, unreal, and far away."[75] Szasz describes "this reduction in urgency, this sense of having taken care of the threat," as a form of "political anesthesia" because it "impedes the development of public sentiment that would support a broader reconsideration of the toxic mode of production in general."[76]

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[74] Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*, 195.
[75] Ibid., 221.
[76] Ibid., 195, 209.

Kendall's description of green consumption as a "green herring" offers a similar view of green consumption as a discursive "diversion that reinforces or hides capitalist (or other) ideologies that buttress certain environmentally harmful practices."[77] WWF also suggests that "the opportunities offered by 'green consumption' distract attention from the fundamental problems inherent to consumerism."[78] Along the same lines, Derrick Jensen and Stephanie McMillan mock the "give people a message of hope, give them something they can do" green consumption approach as an "illusion" that "keep[s] us from doing what we all know needs to be done."[79] While many of these critics recognize the potential for minor benefits from green consumer choices, these marginal improvements are outweighed by a concern over the potential of green consumption practices to cause complacency, "deflect pressure," "relieve obligations," and decrease a sense of urgency for environmental policy change.[80] By channeling feelings of environmental concern into individual positive action, critics fear green consumption drains support away from more challenging and systemic types of environmental reform.

Proponents of green consumption view its positive affect not as a distraction, but as essential to a sustainable future. Although critics dismiss the idea that "doom and gloom doesn't sell," some supporters of green consumption take the importance of positive feelings seriously, attributing the shortcomings of previous environmental

[77] By fusing the concepts of "greenwashing" and "red herring" Kendall theorizes "green herring" as the substitution of one fraudulent or incomplete environmental response for "thoroughgoing systemic change." Kendall, "Green Herring: Resisting the Cooptation of Environmental Ideologies and Anti-Systemic Movements," 13, 9.
[78] Crompton, "Weathercocks & Signposts: The Environmental Movement at a Crossroads," 6.
[79] Jensen and McMillan, *As the World Burns: 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Stay in Denial*, 64, 37, 72.
[80] Crompton and Thøgersen, "Simple & Painless? The Limitations of Spillover in Environmental Campaigning."

advocacy to a lack of attention to positive affect and action.[81] Killingsworth and Palmer observe:

> For all of their accomplishments in issuing a forceful critique of developmentalism, reform environmentalists, scientific activists, deep ecologists, and environmental radicals have offered few concrete plans to help the public map a reasonable course for future action.[82]

In the space of this gap, green consumption provides a positive, concrete action to take, "something the environmental enthusiast can experience locally and feel with the body."[83] Because conventional environmentalism relies on negative actions and negative feeling, Grant asserts "[w]e actually can't leave green to the old greens any more."[84] He writes: "global gloom isn't helpful," warning against "a fear-fuelled fatalism" that can "create a culture of pessimism and inaction" and lead to feeling "hopeless."[85] Grant suggests more people will choose environmental sustainability if it feels positive, "like simplicity, smart living and so on," not like "restraint."[86] He argues that we need to "create new myths and codes which are utopian and joyful and fun, rather than seeming like unpleasant medicine to avoid a dystopia," and he praises green consumption for its capacity to make green "inviting—a positive choice not a hair shirt."[87] In contrast to critics who view negative feelings, such as fear, as necessary for activating the public to action, proponents of green consumption like *TreeHugger.com* suggest "apocalyptic predictions tend to paralyze the masses instead of mobilizing them."[88]

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[81] Jensen and McMillan, *As the World Burns: 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Stay in Denial*, 64.
[82] Killingsworth and Palmer, *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America*, 242-43.
[83] ———, "Liberal and Pragmatic Trends in the Discourse of Green Consumerism," 228.
[84] Grant, *The Green Marketing Manifesto*, 290.
[85] Ibid., 10, 31, 290, 10.
[86] Ibid., 291.
[87] Ibid., 53, 52.
[88] TreeHugger, "About," http://www.treehugger.com/about/.

Whether the efficacy of green consumption is discussed in terms of its systemic, physical, valuative, political, or emotional impact, its capacity as a mode of environmental change is widely debated. The next section reframes this debate to consider the rhetorical capacity of green consumption to function both ideologically and affectively.

Reframing the Debate: Green Consumption as Ideological and Affective Rhetoric

Rather than universally accepting or rejecting green consumption as a form of environmental change, WorldWatch's Alan Durning bridges both sides of the debate with his observation that:

> At its best, green consumerism is a potent new tactic for environmental advocates, allowing them to bypass the halls of parliaments and send their messages directly to boardrooms. At its worst, green consumerism is a palliative for the conscience of the consumer class, allowing us to continue business as usual while feeling like we are doing our part.[89]

While Durning leaves out many of the possibilities and limitations of green consumption in this statement, I value his refusal to identify solely with one side of the debate. Like Durning, I maintain a sense of ambivalence about the promise of green consumption as a rhetoric of environmental change. My purpose in this project is not to proclaim a definitive verdict on green consumption, but rather to provide a closer examination of the practice's possible modes of rhetorical effectivity. If my overall perspective seems to lean toward favoring green consumption as a mode of environmental activism, that is because I see this project as a corrective to what I think is the too-quick dismissal of the practice. Unlike many of the above sources which wholeheartedly embrace or reject green consumption as a mechanism of environmental reform, I question the usefulness (and

[89] Durning, *How Much Is Enough?: The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth*, 125.

feasibility) of a judgment that applies universally to all green consumption. The bulk of my dissertation provides a close analysis of three specific cases of green consumption rhetoric because I believe the particularities of each individual case require a contextualized evaluation based on the situation at hand.

To assess the possibilities and limitations of green consumption, I begin by unpacking the issues at stake in the above debates. Although the previous section presents three main points of controversy, my larger project focuses on two underlying issues that shape the rhetorical effectivity of green consumption: ideology and affect. The ideological implications of the practice of green consumption form a major point of contention that courses through the above debate, as critics and proponents discuss (both explicitly and implicitly) the connection between green consumption and the ideologies of consumerism, capitalism, free-market neoliberalism, materialism, individualism, and (anti)environmentalism. Equal, if not more significant, to the controversy over green consumption is the affective capacity of the practice to make consumers feel responsible, protected, involved, powerful, inspired, or capable, and to make environmental problems feel small and manageable rather than daunting and impossibly large. While none of the conversations about green consumption explicitly use the word "affect," the language of feeling and emotion in the previous section points to the significance of this capacity of the rhetoric of green consumption.

Because the significance of affect remains in the background of the green consumption debate, one contribution of this dissertation project is to bring the importance of affect to the foreground. As Misha Kavka suggests, part of what an affective analysis can do is to "reveal the affective basis that has always been at work in

cultural products and political positions."[90] While the controversy over the efficacy of green consumption as a mode of environmental change shows an implicit understanding of the significance of affect, analyzing affect explicitly may help us better assess the rhetoric of green consumption.

References to the relationship between affect and environmental change are not limited to the green consumption debate. Affect is often (implicitly) cited as an important factor in consumption, environmental activism, and human-environment relations. Nigel Thrift describes the practice of consumption as "a series of affective fields" exploited by corporations that identify "possible emotional pressure points" and seek to "affectively bind" consumers to products.[91] He suggests that corporations attempt to "increase the commodity's stickiness… by appealing to registers of the senses… stimulating the emotions connected with things, and so generally producing more affective grip for those things."[92] In Kristin Swenson's analysis of the "affective potency" of Viagra commercials, she, too, highlights the significance of affect in contemporary capitalism.[93]

Outside the context of consumption, some environmental writers have also recognized the importance of feeling in motivating environmental reform. In McKibben's germinal book *The End of Nature*, he laments the waning of "confidence in the environmentalists" that occurs with "every unfulfilled apocalyptic projection" and suggests that "[a] voluntary simplification of life-styles is not beyond our abilities, but it is probably outside our desires."[94] He writes: "it's easier, and thus 'more fun,' to use oil

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[90] Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters*, 7.
[91] N. J. Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 37.
[92] Ibid., 39.
[93] Kristin Swenson, "Capitalizing on Affect: Viagra (in)Action," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 1, no. 3 (2008): 321.
[94] McKibben, *The End of Nature*, 197, 93.

for almost everything… easier to continue hoping that the pie is or will be large enough for all of us to have two slices; that way our enjoyment is impaired by neither limit nor guilt."[95] McKibben's explanation of the persistence of environmentally destructive habits further highlights the importance of affect in facilitating environmental change.

While some environmental advocates attribute a lack of environmental change to a lack of the necessary affect toward the act of environmental reform, affect is also implicated in discussions of human-environment relations. For example, a theme that permeates much environmental literature is the loss of a feeling of connectedness to the environment. Al Gore blames our "addictive relationship" to consumption and technology for distracting us from "the pain of what we have lost: a direct experience of our connection to the vividness, vibrancy, and aliveness of the rest of the natural world."[96] He suggests that:

> Because we feel closer to the supermarket than to the wheatfield, we pay far more attention to the bright colors of the plastic in which the bread is wrapped than we do to the strip mining of the topsoil in which the wheat was grown.[97]

Although Gore does not use the language of "affect," his discussion of environmental apathy and lost connection implies that environmental problems persist due to a lack of affective connection to the environment. In Szasz's sociological analysis of the environmental justice movement, he similarly suggests that if environmental problems "do not connect with something in people's immediate life sphere, if there is no material,

[95] Ibid., 199, 202.
[96] Albert Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 220.
[97] Ibid., 207.

experiential basis for the opinion formed, one will believe that a problem, an issue, exists without being more than momentarily upset about it."[98]

These examples demonstrate an implicit awareness of the importance of affect in facilitating environmental awareness and change. However, this implicit awareness falls short as this attention to affect disappears when the above sources begin suggesting solutions. For example, even though McKibben locates human *feelings* at the root of environmental problems, he argues human *reason* is the solution:

> [O]ur reason could also keep us from following blindly the biological imperatives toward endless growth in numbers and territory. Our reason allows us to conceive of our species as a species, and to recognize the danger that our growth poses to it, and to feel something for the other species we threaten.[99]

In positioning reason and logic as key to environmental change, McKibben drops his earlier attention to the importance of affect and experience. Although affective concerns are often discussed in environmental literature, the lack of a close analysis of the rhetorical significance of affect leaves a gap in our knowledge of environmental change. By explicitly focusing on the affective component of green consumption, my dissertation develops this attention to the role of affect in environmental reform.

Although my attention to the affective capacity of green consumption in addition to its ideological impact provides a novel way to frame the debate over its effectiveness as a mode of environmental change, this dual approach is not completely new to the study of rhetoric. In Jenny Edbauer (Rice)'s analysis of the affective body of George W. Bush, she discusses the "doubleness," or dual nature of rhetorical events.[100] Drawing from

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[98] Andrew Szasz, *Ecopopulism: Toxic Waste and the Movement for Environmental Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 64.
[99] McKibben, *The End of Nature*, 214-15.
[100] Edbauer, "Executive Overspill: Affective Bodies, Intensity, and Bush-in-Relation," 4.

Brian Massumi's work on affect,[101] Edbauer (Rice) identifies two levels of rhetorical efficacy: qualification and intensity.[102] While qualification works according to a logic of signification that assigns meaning, ideology, and "representational processes" to rhetoric, intensity refers to an affective order of "corporeal thought: sensual thinking that exceeds cognitive capture."[103] Joshua Gunn points to a similar dual notion of rhetorical effectivity with his suggestion that speech "has both a semiotic and affective character."[104] He argues that the field of rhetorical studies has, in recent years, repressed the significance of the "affective or emotional dimension" of rhetoric that was previously acknowledged in Aristotle's discussion of pathos, the "elocutionary approach" to speaking, and the twentieth century study of public address and oratory.[105] As a corrective to this neglect of the affective function of rhetoric, Gunn and Rice suggest rhetorical scholars attend to speech as a "meeting place of the human body and language, of *both* affect and the word, of *both* feeling and meaning."[106] Unlike rhetorical analyses that focus solely on political or ideological content, Edbauer (Rice) calls critics to "begin to read the event in its doubling, and not merely in its signifying dimensions."[107] Such a dual or doubled approach would go beyond analyses of the ideological meanings of green consumption to consider the material feelings and bodily responses that accompany these meanings.

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[101] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*.
[102] Edbauer, "Executive Overspill: Affective Bodies, Intensity, and Bush-in-Relation," 3.
[103] Ibid.: 17.
[104] Gunn, "On Speech and Public Release," 15-16.
[105] Ibid., 31, 19.
[106] Joshua Gunn and Jenny Edbauer Rice, "About Face/Stuttering Discipline," *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2 (2009): 216.
[107] Edbauer writes: "An affective reading of Bush's (rhetorical) body, therefore, must begin not with any ideological or cognitive effects (although a complete reading necessarily involves these lines), but in a space prior to cognition. It begins in relationality, with the body-in-relation… Affect—and what we might properly call thought—is prior to emotional, ideological, or cognitive indexing." Although I disagree with Edbauer's location of affect before signification, I borrow from her attention to the doubleness of rhetorical events to consider affect as alongside meaning. Edbauer, "Executive Overspill: Affective Bodies, Intensity, and Bush-in-Relation," 13, 20, 18.

In addition to recent work that explicitly addresses affect, the field of rhetorical studies is certainly not devoid of work that acknowledges the capacity for rhetoric to have impact beyond representation, signification, and meaning. Even a review of the discipline's literature on ideological criticism reveals at least a tacit acknowledgement of the affective capacity of rhetoric. For example, Maurice Charland ends his article on constitutive rhetoric with a reference to two levels of rhetorical work:

> the level of the constitutive narrative itself, providing stories that through the identification principle shift and rework the subject and its motives… [and] the aesthetic level of what Williams terms the "structure of feeling" and Grossberg describes as the "affective apparatus."[108]

In recognizing capacity of rhetoric to work at the level of both meaning and feeling, Charland implies that the constitutive nature of rhetoric expands its significance beyond ideological meaning. In Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frentz's article on "Integrating Ideology and Archetype in Rhetorical Criticism," they suggest "the ideological perspective cannot by itself generate a *complete* set of moral standards for the critical act," concluding that:

> [I]f the ideological approach is allowed, through the default of alternative voices, to coopt the moral territory as exclusively its own, rhetorical criticism will be impoverished by what it ignores—namely, the role of the interior world of the psyche in the visualization of a cultural ideal.[109]

Rushing and Frentz's discussion of the rhetorical relevance of the "cultural unconscious" provides further recognition of the capacity of rhetoric to have impact outside rational, cognitive meanings. More recently, Joshua Gunn and Shaun Treat revisit the capacity of ideological rhetoric to interpellate and constitute subjects, and they critique the tendency

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[108] Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Québécois," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987): 148.
[109] Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frentz, "Integrating Ideology and Archetype in Rhetorical Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77, no. 4 (1991): 403.

of rhetorical critics to "align—if not collapse—the 'conscious, intentional, and rational elements' of discourse with the 'rhetorical dimension.'"[110] Although Gunn and Treat, like Rushing and Frentz, rely on a psychoanalytical perspective and a discussion of the unconscious that is not addressed by my project, their recognition of a text's rhetorical significance beyond ideological meaning provides evidence of a broader perspective on the multidimensionality of rhetorical effectivity. In Celeste Condit's ongoing project on pathemics as a mode of rhetorical criticism, she too, draws connections between the ideological and pathetic capacities of rhetoric.[111]

While the affective capacity of rhetoric has not gone unnoticed by rhetorical criticism, it has too often been relegated to a secondary, if not invisible, status. Because the bulk of our field's critical analysis is still grounded in a perspective that privileges meanings over feelings, part of the contribution of this dissertation project is to bring the importance of affect to the foreground in the study of rhetoric as well as environmental advocacy. Additionally, in approaching the analysis of the rhetoric of green consumption from both an ideological and affective perspective, this project is working to further develop a material theory of rhetoric that recognizes multiple modes of effectivity.

Because my interest in affect coincides with both recent trends in academic research and the traditional canons of the field of rhetoric, there is an overwhelmingly large body of literature from which to draw. The next section synthesizes some of this literature to provide further background on my understanding and usage of the term affect.

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[110] Joshua Gunn and Shaun Treat, "Zombie Trouble: A Propaedeutic on Ideological Subjectification and the Unconscious," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91, no. 2 (2005): 161.
[111] Condit, "Pathos and Ideology: From Edwin Blacks's "2nd Persona" To Humans."

Understanding Affect

"Who can truly say that they fully understand the forces we tag as 'affect'?"[112]

The study of affect is on the rise in disciplines ranging from cultural and rhetorical studies to geography, neurobiology, and genetics. Barbara Biesecker introduces the recent *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* forum on affect as an effort to "extend and enrich the already vital and trans-disciplinary conversation on affect and the variety of (ab)uses to which affects may be put."[113] In Deborah Thien's review of "geographical work on affect," she notes: "as the academies of the twenty-first century take shape, an increasing attention to emotion is rippling through the forefront of critical thought, bringing questions of affect to the forefront.[114] In an analysis of "the *affective* geographies of building," Peter Kraftl and Peter Adey highlight the importance of exploring "how affects should and could be achieved… through particular materials and particular design practices."[115] Neurobiologist Antonio Damasio documents the connection between emotion and consciousness in his study of the neurological component of affect, presenting laboratory observations that demonstrate how "emotion is integral to the processes of reasoning and decision making."[116] Jennifer Slack and Greg Wise argue cultural studies scholars must begin to "acknowledge the everyday *affective* dimension to the embodied nature of technological culture," and they criticize those who neglect "[t]he power and significance of the embodied emotion, the affective

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[112] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, 19.
[113] Biesecker, "Forum: Introduction," 193.
[114] Deborah Thien, "After or Beyond Feeling? A Consideration of Affect and Emotion in Geography," *Area* 37 (2005): 450.
[115] Peter Kraftl and Peter Adey, "Architecture/Affect/Inhabitation: Geographies of Being-in Buildings," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 98, no. 1 (2008): 228, 15.
[116] Antonio R. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 41. Damasio's use of the word "emotion" more closely corresponds to my understanding of affect as a material, extra-linguistic experience.

response."[117] Melissa Gregg focuses on the affective component of academic writing, suggesting, "cultural studies' particular investment and commitment to scholarly practice, its sense of vocation… is communicated through a contagious 'affect' in the forms of address adopted in its writing."[118] Ellen Townsend emphasizes the significance of the "role of affect in the formation of attitudes towards, and risk perceptions of, [Genetically Modified] GM food," and she argues that "researchers should investigate affective responses and affective states in relation to perceptions of GM food."[119] Recognizing this widespread growth of affect as a "topic within academic discourse," Jenny Edbauer Rice encourages rhetorical scholars to attend to theories of affect that "may inform more complex understandings of rhetorical issues."[120]

Although the past decade has witnessed a renewed attention to the significance of affect and emotion, "affect has arguably been on the philosophical register for many centuries."[121] Damasio points to Charles Darwin, William James, and Sigmund Freud as predecessors to his neurological study of emotion, as they "had written extensively on different aspects of emotion and given emotion a privileged place in scientific discourse."[122] Caron Lipman traces the study of affect back to a variety of theoretical traditions as she describes the "emotional 'turn' in geography" as "an outgrowth of a number of well-established ideas and practices: humanism, phenomenology,

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[117] Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. Macgregor Wise, *Culture + Technology: A Primer* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 140.
[118] Melissa Gregg, "Communicating Investment: Cultural Studies, Affect and the Academy," *Review of Education, Pedagogy & Cultural Studies* 30, no. 1 (2008): 43. Gregg emphasizes the importance of the "affective voice of empathy and care" employed by cultural studies.
[119] Ellen Townsend, "Affective Influences on Risk Perceptions of, and Attitudes toward, Genetically Modified Food," *Journal of Risk Research* 9, no. 2 (2006): 126, 33.
[120] Rice, "The New "New": Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies," 201, 09.
[121] Thien, "After or Beyond Feeling? A Consideration of Affect and Emotion in Geography," 450.
[122] Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, 38-39.

performativity, feminism, psychoanalysis, non-representational theory."[123] Teresa Brennan suggests that today's "taxonomies of the emotions and affects have descended from three branches. One is ancient [Aristotle's *Rhetoric*]; another is identified with Darwin, and a third stems from James and Lange."[124]

Brennan's identification of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as the "ancient" forerunner of affect studies is particularly significant for rhetorical scholars interested in the study of affect. In Book II of *Rhetoric*, Aristotle identifies the impact of emotion on action: "[t]he Emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure."[125] In Aristotle's discussion of "the means by which the several emotions may be produced or dissipated, and upon which depend the persuasive arguments connected with the emotions," he recognizes the significance of affect for rhetorical appeals.[126] Appeals rooted in emotion impact our actions by making us physically feel sentiments such as anger or fear. As a foundational figure in the study of rhetoric, Aristotle's early recognition of the connection between rhetoric and affect is important for justifying further rhetorical study today.

Later rhetorical scholars added additional dimensions to Aristotle's initial consideration of the role of emotion and "the passions." For example, in George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, he provides further insight into the connection between affective communication and embodied response. Campbell explains that "there is no persuasion without moving [the passions]"[127] For him, passion "animates" ideas and

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[123] Caron Lipman, "The Emotional Self," *Cultural Geographies* 13, no. 4 (2006): 622.
[124] Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 4-5.
[125] Aristotle, "Rhetoric, Book II," in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1990), 161.
[126] Ibid., 175.
[127] George Campbell, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, ed. Lloyd F. Bitzer (Carbondale,: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963/1776), 77.

plays a key role as "the mover to action."[128] Effective communication is felt, as ideas are made to "resemble" sensation "in luster and steadiness."[129] He suggests that "affecting lineaments must be so interwoven with our argument, as that, from the passion excited our reasoning may derive importance, and so be fitted for commanding attention."[130] By connecting affective communication to sensory impressions, Campbell's work advances an understanding of communication as having affectively material effects experienced directly through embodied sensations.

While rhetorical cannons like Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* lay the foundation for the rhetorical study of affect, in my analysis of the affective component of green consumption I draw on scholarly work from a variety of fields. This presents a challenge of vocabulary, for, as Nigel Thrift notes, "there is no stable definition of affect. It can mean a lot of different things."[131] This meaning varies depending in part on which "school of thought" it is coming from—phenomenology, hermeneutics, social interactionism, psychoanalytic drives, biological, psychosocial, naturalistic, and the theories of Darwin, Deleuze, Freud, Spinoza and James-Lange are just some of the traditions identified by Thrift.[132]

Since there are a number of ways of defining and using the concept of affect, in the remainder of this section I identify my approach, understanding, and use of the term. My interest in "affect" is as a material, extra-linguistic, and social feeling that may impact or be impacted by rhetorical events. Because this conception of "affect" overlaps with what some scholars refer to as emotions, feelings, pathos, passions, and mood,

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[128] Ibid., 77, 78.
[129] Ibid., 81.
[130] Ibid., 5-6.
[131] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, 175.
[132] Ibid., 223.

among other words, I rely on the work of scholars who may define the term "affect" differently, but, from my perspective, are talking about the same concept. In the following pages I elaborate on what I define as the important qualities of affect and what I mean when I use the word. First, I understand affect as the material, embodied experience that we often think of as accompanying emotion. Second, affect describes an extra-linguistic intensity that operates in excess of the signifying or representational capacity of language. Third, affect functions beyond the personal realm of emotion to impact social relations.

Affect as Materially Embodied

The word "affect" is used in this dissertation project to signify a *material* experience. Affect is the physical feeling that accompanies our communication and other experiences. As Patricia Clough suggests, "affect refers generally to bodily capacities to affect and be affected."[133] Although "emotion" can also be understood as a material part of our bodies' "chemical and neural responses," as Slack and Wise note, "we often think of emotions as purely mental constructs in the brain."[134] In contrast, "*affect* is an embodied physical response *of the body*."[135] While emotion suggests "[t]he mental realization that one is angry," affect suggests "the embodied experience of anger."[136] Brennan defines affect as the "material" and "physiological thing" that accompanies

[133] Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean O'Malley Halley, *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 2.
[134] Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, 51, Slack and Wise, *Culture + Technology: A Primer*, 140.
[135] Slack and Wise, *Culture + Technology: A Primer*, 140.
[136] Ibid.

judgments and actions.[137] Massumi describes affect as an "intensity" that is "embodied in purely autonomic reactions" and materialized through physiological responses such as changes in heart beat, breathing, and skin resistance.[138] Grossberg discusses affect as "the strength of the investment which anchors people in particular experiences, practices, identities, meanings and pleasures."[139] He goes on to suggest affect has a perceivable impact that "determines how invigorated people feel at any moment of their lives, their level of energy or passion."[140] Nigel Thrift refers to affect as "a sense of push in the world" that influences people, perceptions and actions; for him, it is the "corporeal sense of the communicative act."[141] As a felt investment or embodied intensity, affect has a material presence and impact that may be physically experienced.

As one of the key "topoi" of critical affect studies, the material and physical nature of affect plays an important role in my rhetorical analysis of green consumption.[142] Although, as critics point out, the physically material impact of green consumption on the environment may fall short of resolving environmental problems, I suggest that the affectively material impact of green consumption on consumers may prove to be important for creating an environmentally sustainable future. In this way, acknowledging the affective materiality of green consumption may provide an important counterpoint to critiques of the physical environmental shortcomings of green consumption as a mode of environmental change. This sort of attention to the affective materiality of green consumption, in addition to its environmental materiality, illustrates the possibility for

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[137] Brennan further suggests "the transmission of affect, if only for an instant, alters the biochemistry and neurology of the subject… Physically and biologically, something is present that was not there before." Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 6, 5, 1.
[138] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 25.
[139] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 82.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, 182, 208.
[142] Rice, "The New "New": Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies," 204, 02.

affective analysis to enact the kind of modal material analysis theorized by Celeste Condit.[143]

Affect as Extra-Linguistic

In addition to using the word "affect" to signify an *embodied* emotional response, I also use the term to refer to an *extra-linguistic* experience that operates in excess of the processes of representation and signification. Like Massumi, I understand affect as an intensity that cannot be "captured," "fixed," or "qualified" by sociolinguistic processing.[144] As Grossberg describes, affect involves the experience of emotion that is not "structured narratively" or organized by language.[145] In this sense, affect is extra-linguistic because it operates *in addition* to the meaning signified, controlled, or represented by the content of language.[146] It is, as Kavka suggests, "a kind of mattering which is not the same as meaning."[147] It is a "physiological language" that operates according to a different logic than the signifying language of emotion.[148] Although we may use emotional labels to talk about affective experiences, emotion is only a "most intense (most concentrated) expression" of the "capture" of affect, "and of the fact that something has always and again escaped…"[149]

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[143] Condit, "Race and Genetics from a Modal Materialist Perspective."
[144] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 35, 28.
[145] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 81.
[146] Rice suggests that in addition to the "representational and expressive" function of language, "[t]here is an affective investment that goes beyond the content" of communication. Rice, "The New "New": Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies," 209, 11.
[147] Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters*, xii.
[148] Brennan describes affect as a "fleshly language." Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 141-42. Massumi suggests: "emotion and affect—if affect is intensity—follow different logics and pertain to different orders." Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 27.
[149] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 35.

It is important to emphasize that describing affect as "extra-linguistic" does not mean it is separate from language.[150] On the contrary, affect often accompanies and is created through language. As Grossberg explains, "texts may have effects other than meaning-effects"—they may have affective influence.[151] Rice provides an example of deliberation that "generates affects that do not neatly conform to the signifying elements of that civic discourse":

> Public participants get something from deliberation *beyond* deliberation. This is why some people get energized from a public debate about a political issue…what underscores civic or rhetorical deliberation is arguably an affective element.[152]

Drawing from Denise Riley, Rice characterizes this affective element as the work of "language beyond official content."[153] I discuss affect as *extra*-linguistic because as beings immersed in a linguistic culture, we cannot process experiences outside of our language and cultural constructions. The capacity for language and culture to shape our affective experiences is well illustrated by Robert Hariman's account of the public's "failure" to appreciate the music of premier violinist Joshua Bell when he played outside a Washington, DC subway stop.[154] Without the social construction of the concert hall, expensive tickets, and the name of "Joshua Bell," the music stimulated a different affective experience in a public that was not moved by the music or musician.

As I discuss further in the upcoming method section, analyzing affective experience beyond what is captured by the language of emotion presents a special challenge for rhetorical scholars, as our field of study often centers on linguistic content.

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[150] Unlike those who describe affect as "prepersonal" or "prelinguistic" I prefer the understanding "extralinguistic" since humans cannot be outside of our linguistically structured reality. See Eric Shouse as cited in Lipman, "The Emotional Self," 618.
[151] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 45.
[152] Rice, "The New "New": Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies," 211.
[153] Ibid.: 208.
[154] Robert Hariman, "Cultivating Compassion as a Way of Seeing," *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2 (2009): 199.

However challenging, the rhetorical study of affect is significant for its attempt to attend to the effect of language beyond meanings and ideologies. Although we know from experience that our actions and responses are not solely determined by rational processing of message content, our rhetorical analyses do not always reflect this assumption. While the rhetoric of green consumption may represent an ideological meaning, it also has significance beyond that signification.

Affect as Social

The final important feature of affect to note is its *sociality*. As an embodied, extra-linguistic intensity, affect has the capacity to influence social relations and facilitate "investments in social norms."[155] Unlike the "subjective content" of individualized emotion, "affect is not a personal feeling, but is instead the means through which bodies act in context with each other."[156] Brennan emphasizes the social significance of affect in her discussion of the "transmission of affect" as energies move from one person to another.[157] Kavka locates affect on "a cusp between the individual and the collective psyche, that shared pool of feeling whose production and recognition glues individuals into a particular social body."[158] This understanding of the sociality of affect overlaps with Raymond Williams' discussion of a "structure of feeling" as:

> a social experience which is still *in process*, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies."[159]

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[155] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 56.
[156] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 28, Rice, "The New "New": Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies," 203.
[157] Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*.
[158] Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters*, xi.
[159] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Marxist Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 132.

Rice also highlights the social significance of affect as she lists "social production" as one of the key functions of the "realm of affect."[160]

In analyzing the affective capacity of the rhetoric of green consumption to function on a social level, this project contributes to scholarship that examines how affect may be used to (re)articulate relationships and investments, interrupt previous structures of feeling, and provide space for change. A number of scholars have begun to explore a variety of ways affect functions socially. Swenson traces the circulation of affects through media representations of potency in Viagra commercials.[161] In one essay Lauren Berlant tracks the rhetorical function of an enduring form of affective attachment she labels "cruel optimism," and in another work she describes compassion as "a particular kind of social relation."[162] Ahmed investigates how our language affectively "articulates" or "invests" us in particular belief structures.[163] Rice suggests Ahmed further understands affect as "an orienting device that shapes the political contours of our social imaginaries."[164] Clough's edited volume on affect explores not only affective interactions among bodies, but also the significance of "affective articulations on global scales of circulation and transmission."[165] Kraftl and Adey suggest "affect can be understood as the property of relations, of interactions, of events."[166] Although this range of scholarship reflects the disagreement among scholars about the precise function of affect, it also demonstrates the assumption about the social significance of affect. The affective relations and intensities of green consumption have the potential to influence not only

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[160] Rice, "The New "New": Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies," 208.
[161] Swenson, "Capitalizing on Affect: Viagra (in)Action."
[162] Lauren Berlant, "Cruel Optimism: On Marx, Loss and the Senses," *New Formations* (2007). ———, *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 19.
[163] As cited in Rice, "The New "New": Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies," 205.
[164] Ibid.: 206.
[165] As cited in Ibid.: 207.
[166] Kraftl and Adey, "Architecture/Affect/Inhabitation: Geographies of Being-in Buildings," 215.

individual feelings, but also more collective human-nature relations and the process of social change.

In Judith Hamera's discussion of the "emotive potency of animals" in the context of industrial modernity, she notes, "[t]he affective turn in critical studies examines relationships between bodies, language, and the public sphere."[167] With this statement, Hamera references what I have identified as the three key characteristics of affect. Affect is an embodied experience that impacts social relations through extra-linguistic means. Although Rice suggests that "[t]erms like 'emotion' and 'affect' are often conflated to the point of being nearly synonymous," and Thrift describes emotions as "everyday understandings of affects," in this project my use of the word affect carries a sense of materiality, extra-linguistic processing, and sociality that I believe words like "emotion" lack.[168] When I use the words "emotion" or "feeling" in my analysis without using qualifiers like "embodied," "intensity," or "social," I do so to refer to a personalized and cognitively-processed experience of affect.[169] The next section explains further how I utilize this conception of affect to inform my analysis of green consumption.

Analyzing Affect

As an embodied, extra-linguistic intensity that resides in and influences social relations, affect presents a number of obstacles to rhetorical study. In many ways the concept seems elusive for scholars who typically study language, codes, and signification. How can rhetorical critics analyze something that is "amorphous, diffuse,

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[167] Judith Hamera, "Feeling with Fish," *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2 (2009): 195.
[168] Rice, "The New "New": Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies," 201, Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, 221.
[169] Of course, at times in my analysis, I may also be guilty of conflating the words in the name of varied diction.

unowned, and nonideological"?[170] How can critics "'really know' what people are feeling?"[171] Although affect is not any more "present" in a text than meaning is, rhetorical critics are not used to the practice of "reading" affect from a text.[172] In addition to the challenges of its extra-linguistic character, affect is also a difficult object to pin down for analysis because it is "a social experience which is still *in process*…"[173] Because the affective capacity of a rhetorical artifact is connected to a sense of present-ness that is hard to capture or identify determinately, it can be difficult to analyze. A number of scholars have recognized the challenges of analyzing affect. Grossberg describes it as "a notoriously difficult topic for cultural critics who often try to explain it as if it were merely the aura of ideological effects."[174] Phaedra Pezzullo admits that "structures of feeling are hard to identify, even when one is living in their presence."[175] Massumi expresses the difficulty of working without a "cultural-theoretical vocabulary specific to affect," and Edbauer alludes to the "problem" of "invent[ing] an affective cultural theory as we go along."[176] While previous rhetorical scholarship provides important clues for how to proceed with affective analysis, it leaves a number of

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[170] Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters*, 44.
[171] Celeste Condit, "How We Feel with Metaphors for Genes: Implications for Understanding Humans and Forming Genetic Policies" (paper presented at the Towards a Lingua Democratica for the Public Debate on Genomics sponsored by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, Utrecht, 2008, October 9-11), 14.
[172] Ibid., 14-15. Condit provides a useful response to the concern of textual evidence for affect and feeling with her suggestion that "affect-based analysis is no different from the now well-entrenched ideological analysis… Multiple audience based studies have shown that what critics think texts mean is not always the same as what audiences think texts mean… The problems of interpretive evidence are therefore no different for affective and ideological criticism, they are just more obvious and less veiled in the case of affective analysis."
[173] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 132.
[174] He goes on to suggest that such approaches "cannot explain why certain practices elicit strong emotive effects while others do not." Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 79.
[175] Phaedra Pezzullo, "Articulating "Sexy" Anti-Toxic Activism on Screen: The Cultural Politics of a Civil Action and Erin Brockovich," in *The Environmental Communication Yearbook, Volume 3*, ed. Stephen P. Depoe (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 23.
[176] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 27, Edbauer, "Executive Overspill: Affective Bodies, Intensity, and Bush-in-Relation," 4.

methodological questions unanswered. What exactly is affective analysis and how does it differ from other modes of rhetorical analysis? What specifically does an affective analysis analyze? The remainder of this section outlines my approach to affective analysis in this dissertation project.

To analyze the affective capacity of the rhetoric of green consumption, I use a variety of approaches. I begin by examining how the message content or meaning of green consumption rhetoric arouses affective modes of response. Although this approach to affective analysis closely resembles conventional rhetorical analyses that examine message content, it provides a good starting point. To further capture a sense of the social feelings circulating by and through green consumption rhetoric, I also examine how metadiscourse about the practice—such as media coverage or consumer responses—depicts the emotions and feelings associated with green consumption. Finally, to access the affective significance beyond signifying content, I analyze how affective responses may be created by the medium or mode of green consumption.

One way I begin analyzing the affect of green consumption is by considering how the message content of green consumption discourse uses appeals to pathos that may provoke an affective response. As Grossberg suggests, "affect can be articulated through the mediating effects of ideological narratives to produce different forms of emotional response and involvement."[177] Examining the emotional appeals present in discursive content provides an initial understanding of the capacity of signification to have effects beyond message transfer. Pezzullo performs this type of analysis as she unpacks the narrative plot lines of environmental movies to suggest how they create an experience of

[177] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 81.

"feeling sexy."[178] For example, in her description of John Travolta's performance of "a sexy life for a man, including happiness, camaraderie, money, power, persuasive moves, and smooth talking," Pezzullo begins interpreting the affective significance of the meaning of the film content.[179] Because this type of analysis relies primarily on examining the signifying content of a discourse, it alone is not sufficient for describing affective intensity that operates in excess of meaning.

To provide a more complete picture of the affective capacity of green consumption rhetoric, I also consult the metadiscourse about the practice. That is, I examine what feelings, actions, and responses are described in linguistic commentary about green consumption in order to further develop my account of the affective experience the practice creates. A number of rhetorical analyses provide examples of this approach to analyzing affect. In Pezzullo's examination of a sexy structure of feeling, she relies in part on metadiscourse that uses the label "sexy." From film critics to environmentalist websites, Pezzullo cites a variety of media coverage as evidence for her analysis of the "sexiness" of her rhetorical artifacts.[180] In Edbauer's affective analysis of Bush's nonverbal delivery, his "dunce" image, the "Bushisms" of his incoherent speech, and the public's visceral reactions to the general failings of his body, she also relies on popular media and news coverage as evidence.[181] Gunn similarly cites media commentary on the sounds and tone of tennis grunts, the "Dean Scream," Obama's eloquence, and Clinton's "quivering voice" in his discussion of the affective character of

[178] Pezzullo, "Articulating "Sexy" Anti-Toxic Activism on Screen: The Cultural Politics of a Civil Action and Erin Brockovich," 25.
[179] Ibid., 39.
[180] Pezzullo cites a variety of film reviews, media appearances by the stars, and other media coverage. Ibid., 45-46.
[181] Edbauer, "Executive Overspill: Affective Bodies, Intensity, and Bush-in-Relation," 2, 21.

public speech.[182] By examining the affect or emotion that is pointed out in language, these scholars bolster their own observations about affect.

Although the preceding approaches help to identify the affective investments fostered by green consumption, the affective intensity of a discourse cannot be captured by language alone. In addition to relying on representational meanings of green consumption rhetoric and discursive representations of emotions as signifiers of affect, I also try to consider how the medium and experience of green consumption may foster an embodied intensity in excess of representational meanings. Like other material rhetorical analyses that consider the *form* of rhetoric to be as important as the message *content*, my analysis of the affective intensity created by the medium of green consumption moves beyond the representational significance of the emotional or ideological meaning to consider the extra-linguistic rhetorical effectivity of the practice.[183] Again, a number of rhetorical scholars working on the question of affect provide tentative models for this analytical approach. Gunn suggests that a renewed study of "the canon of delivery" will enable us to "stop ignoring public feelings" and map "the body's rhetorical dimensions."[184] Through an analysis of the audio clips of speeches, Gunn demonstrates how tone and voice offer insight into affect. He suggests, "the measure of eloquence is not so much in the choice of words, but in delivery, in how those words are carried aloft by modulations in tone that tease the auditor with the safe threat of involuntary speech."[185] Edbauer similarly looks beyond the content of Bush's words and pays

[182] Gunn, "On Speech and Public Release," 26, 29.
[183] Kenneth Rufo, "Shades of Derrida: Materiality as the Mediation of Differance," in *Rhetoric, Materiality, and Politics*, ed. Barbara A Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), 246. Rufo suggests that rhetorical critics must go beyond examining what the content of a text represents to "engage the artifact as itself an argument… productive of a symbolic order as effect or affect."
[184] Gunn, "On Speech and Public Release," 32.
[185] Ibid., 31, 33-34.

attention to his body, which "cannot contain the linguistic flaws, grammatical blunders, wild malapropisms, and visible confusion that are present."[186] Even as she points to the "incorrect statements" or "mispronunciations" of his words, her focus is the affective form of this content.[187] Although Grossberg does not provide an in-depth affective analysis in his article on affect and postmodernity, he identifies elements of form—"the color, texture, or tone"—as indicative of affective states.[188] He also suggests that "style, timbre, and appeal," rather than "substantive" issues, are the dimension of affect.[189] Grossberg's attention to the affective significance of "media and pop culture" techniques and the "branding" logic adopted by political campaigns further highlights the importance of form in constituting affect.[190] My analysis of green consumption attempts to build on such attentions to the affective significance of the mode of delivery and form of rhetorical address.

One reason that rhetorical scholars have recently begun to wrestle with the challenges of analyzing affect is because an analysis based solely on representational meaning "flattens the possibilities of cultural relations and effects."[191] As Grossberg notes, "[w]hile such researches into the field of ideology and ideological struggles in contemporary society need to be carried forward, they are no longer sufficient."[192] He describes affect as "the missing term in an adequate understanding of ideology… which would explain how and why ideologies are sometimes, and only sometimes, effective,

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[186] Edbauer, "Executive Overspill: Affective Bodies, Intensity, and Bush-in-Relation," 1.
[187] Ibid.: 5.
[188] Lawrence Grossberg, "Affect and Postmodernity in the Struggle over 'American Modernity'," in *Postmodernism. What Moment?*, ed. Pelagia Goulimari (New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), 177.
[189] Ibid., 181.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 44.
[192] Ibid., 47.

and always to varying degrees."[193] Edbauer turns to affective analysis because "Bush's persuasiveness and rhetorical efficacy may not be locatable in his qualified, indexical meanings."[194] She concludes: "Bush's ineptness contains something affective that turns out to be more than its symbolic or meaningful form."[195] My own interest in affective analysis stems from a similar dissatisfaction with the adequacy of ideological analyses of green consumption to fully account for the rhetorical effectivity of the practice. Like popular culture artifacts which are "always more than ideological," rhetorics of green consumption may also provide "sites of relaxation, privacy, pleasure, enjoyment, feeling good, fun, passion and emotion."[196]

In analyzing the affective capacity of the rhetoric of green consumption, this project does not seek to discount other modes of rhetorical effectivity. In particular, I do not believe the ideological significance of the practice of green consumption can be ignored. Since the "ideological turn" in rhetorical criticism, scholars have effectively used a variety of methods to identify and evaluate the ideology present in rhetorical texts. Edwin Black's discussion of "second persona" as a link between rhetorical discourse and ideology helped create a trajectory of scholarship attentive to the "pull of ideology" present in rhetorical discourse.[197] Michael McGee's theorization of "ideographs" as "the basic structural elements, the building blocks of ideology," further supported the development of criticism that tracks the ideology present in "rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behavior."[198] Philip

[193] Ibid., 83.
[194] Edbauer, "Executive Overspill: Affective Bodies, Intensity, and Bush-in-Relation," 8.
[195] Ibid.: 2.
[196] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 79.
[197] Black, "The Second Persona."
[198] McGee, "The "Ideograph": A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology," 5, 7.

Wander's argument about the evaluative responsibility of rhetorical critics to "go beyond assessing the efficacy of political discourse" to "openly challenge rhetorical purposes if they are corrupt" helped solidify the significance of uncovering and evaluating a text's ideological meaning.[199] Since these early attentions to the ideological significance of rhetoric, rhetorical critics have developed numerous sophisticated analyses that identify and evaluate the truth, accuracy, and implications of the ideological content of rhetorical artifacts, and this dissertation project does not dispute the importance of ideological critique. As the opponents of green consumption demonstrate with their criticism of the ideological limitations of the practice, the rhetorical significance of green consumption is shaped by ideological, not only affective, capacities. As Thrift notes, the analysis of affect becomes "highly questionable" when it "omits, ignores or diminishes many of the negative and obvious links to the exercise of power."[200]

Any critical approach that focuses too narrowly on one mode of rhetorical effectivity risks overlooking important features of the discursive function. By analyzing both the ideological and affective capacity of the rhetoric of green consumption—the meaning and the feeling of the practice—I attempt to provide a more complete account of its potential as a rhetoric of environmental change. My dual analysis further works to flesh out the contradictions and overlaps of the two modes of analysis. Even critics who discuss the "doubleness" of rhetorical events often stop short of reflecting on the link between the two modes of analysis.[201] While my analysis separates the ideological and

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[199] Philip C. Wander, "The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism," *Central States Speech Journal* 34 (1983): 2.
[200] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, 221.
[201] Grossberg admits that "while focusing on affect, I have too often ignored its link to particular ideological and libidinal codes." Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 29.

affective capacity of green consumption rhetoric for the purpose of methodological clarity (and to avoid falling back into the habit of rhetorical criticism based on meaning), in practice, these two modes of effectivity are intertwined.

In many ways my conception of affect and its role in rhetorical analysis is still a work in progress. This dissertation project is thus as much an exploration of the possibilities for conducting affective analysis as it is a demonstration of the relevance of affect in the rhetoric of environmental change. By grounding my understanding of affect theory in an analysis of specific case studies, the next three chapters attempt to advance our understanding of affect and the rhetoric of green consumption. In the final chapter I return to many of the theoretical and methodological issues I have introduced here to consider how my analysis has elaborated, contradicted, or developed these positions. Before I begin using affective analysis to examine the rhetoric of green consumption, the next section provides a brief introduction to the three case studies I will analyze.

Chapter Outlines

As suggested earlier in this chapter, my use of a case study method demonstrates my belief in the importance of specific, contextualized analysis. I do not claim these case studies are universally representative of all green consumption rhetoric, but I believe they provide three different possibilities for understanding how the practice may or may not work for environmental change. In selecting these cases, I tried to choose three very different contexts and uses of green consumption to show the range of possibilities for the practice to function as a rhetoric of environmental change. To that end, these cases span a range of sources, media, purposes, and practices.

Brita and Nalgene's "FilterForGood" Campaign

In chapter two I analyze the *FilterForGood* campaign, a partnership between Brita and Nalgene which encourages consumers to switch from disposable plastic water bottles to a Brita filter and Nalgene bottle. This campaign began in 2007 with the launch of the website www.filterforgood.com, and it continues today as television commercials and corporate partnerships continue to direct consumers to the campaign website.[202] The homepage of the *FilterForGood* website features a video of water pouring in the background as the following text is displayed on screen:

> Welcome to FilterForGood, a campaign to reduce bottled water waste. Americans send 38 billion water bottles a year to landfills, the equivalent of 912 million gallons of oil. The environmental impact of plastic bottle waste is truly staggering. Reduce Bottled Water Waste. Do a World of Good. Brita and Nalgene teamed up to create the FilterForGood pledge to reduce bottled water waste. Together, filtered water and a reusable bottle are an ideal solution for going green at home and on the go. Take the pledge and fill your reusable bottle instead of a landfill.[203]

At the website, viewers are encouraged to "Improve the environment one bottle at a time!" and "Go Green Save Green. Take the pledge to get your coupon. Buy a FilterForGood bottle."[204] In addition to the website, a series of print and television advertisements promote Brita, Nalgene, and the *FilterForGood* campaign.[205] The print ads display images of individuals with oil spilling out of their mouths, accompanied by

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[202] Brita and Nalgene, "Take the Filterforgood Pledge to Help the Planet: Brita and Nalgene Partner to Challenge People to Make a Difference," marketwire, http://www.marketwire.com/press-release/Brita-And-Nalgene-NYSE-TMO-760088.html, FilterForGood, "Partners," Brita and Nalgene, http://www.filterforgood.com/partners.php, NBC, "Brita Videos," http://www.nbc.com/The_Biggest_Loser/exclusives/sponsors/brita/videos.shtml.

[203] FilterForGood, Brita and Nalgene, http://www.filterforgood.com/.

[204] Ibid.

[205] The advertisements were created by DDB, San Francisco. Although only the television ads were selected for use by Brita, the print ads circulated online and attracted attention from a number of advertising and environmental blogs. DDB San Francisco, "Brita," http://www.ddbsf.com/, Ads of the World, "Brita Water Filtration Pitchers / Nalgene Refillable Bottles: Blonde," http://adsoftheworld.com/media/print/brita_water_filtration_pitchers_nalgene_refillable_bottles_guy_blonde.

the text: “Last year 16 million gallons of oil were consumed to make plastic water bottles.” The television commercials feature different scenes where disposable plastic water bottles are commonly used: in the car, at the gym, at work, and even at home. In each commercial the following written text appears on the video screen to frame the visual scene: “45 minutes in traffic,” “30 minutes on the treadmill,” “1 hour on the court,” “2 hours in a meeting,” “40 minutes with a book,” or “8 hours of sleep.” After a pause, the words “Forever in a landfill” appear beneath the water bottles, and the background scenes fade away to leave only an empty water bottle against a white background. The commercials close with the sound and video of water pouring from a Brita pitcher into a Nalgene bottle, accompanied by the following written text on the screen: “Please, drink responsibly. Brita Responsible water. filterforgood.com.” The *FilterForGood* campaign further circulates through its “partnerships” with the *Sundance Film Festival*, eco-products manufacturer *Preserve*, NBC’s reality television show *The Biggest Loser*, country band *Lady Antebellum*, and *The Lazy Environmentalist* author Josh Dorfman, among others.[206]

As my first case study, the *FilterForGood* campaign provides an example of green consumption rhetoric originating from a corporate source. To consider the affective capacity of “filtering for good,” I analyze the campaign’s message, form, and resulting practice of green consumption. While the affective relations fostered by the campaign may help consumers feel connected to an environmental problem and capable of taking action, in many ways the campaign captures the affective potential of green consumption for an ideology and purpose not conducive to collective environmental reform. Indeed, when compared to the larger anti-bottled water movement among environmentalists, city

[206] FilterForGood, "Partners."

governments, restaurants, and tap-water enthusiasts, the *FilterForGood* campaign seems to "filter out" public and collective environmental concerns. Despite these limits, I suggest that the affective experience of participating in the campaign may still offer some important resources for long term environmental change.

Greenpeace's "GreenMyApple" Campaign

In chapter three I analyze Greenpeace's *GreenMyApple* campaign. From 2006-2007 Greenpeace used a variety of forms of consumer-based activism to pressure Apple to "green" their products. The *GreenMyApple* campaign encouraged Apple consumers to send emails, design campaign materials, blog, create videos, and otherwise take action to convince Apple to go green. The bulk of the campaign took place online, with a *GreenMyApple* website "designed to look like Apple's own site, with in-jokes that only Apple fans would get, and a single unifying theme: 'We love our Macs. We just wish they came in green.'"[207] The website provided a variety of resources designed to activate Apple consumers to demand "free 'take-back'" programs and the removal of "the worst toxic chemicals from all [Apple] products and production lines."[208] The *GreenMyApple* campaign ended mid-2007 when Apple incorporated a green Apple logo on their website and CEO Steve Jobs released a statement about the company's environmental policies

[207] Greenpeace, "Green My Apple Bears Fruit," *Greenpeace* (May 31, 2007), http://www.greenpeace.org/international/news/greening-of-apple-310507. The majority of the *GreenMyApple* campaign initiatives took place online, but participants also made appearances at a MacExpo, various Apple stores, and across college campuses to promote the campaign.
[208] ———, "About the Campaign," http://www.greenmyapple.org/about.html.

and plans.[209] Today Apple advertises some of the same green credentials this Greenpeace campaign once pushed them to adopt.[210]

As my second case study, the *GreenMyApple* campaign provides an example of green consumption rhetoric originating from an environmental organization. In this chapter I analyze the potential for environmental advocates to use the affective resources of a corporate brand for environmentalist ends. Like many e-waste advocacy campaigns, the *GreenMyApple* campaign presented information about the material problems associated with Apple's electronic communication technologies. However, in addition to encouraging a rational cognitive processing of information about the toxic substances found in the iPod nano or MacBook, Greenpeace also pushed consumers to see and feel the problem of Apple's e-waste. By appropriating the aesthetic of the Apple brand and consumers' attachment to that brand, the campaign transformed the distant and abstract problem of e-waste into a more directly perceivable problem of iWaste. In this way Greenpeace encouraged Apple consumers to feel connected and responsible for Apple's e-waste problem, and it channeled those feelings into consumer pressure on Apple. Despite the limitations of an approach that attempts to resolve the e-waste crisis one company at a time, the campaign's appropriation of the affective resources of the Apple brand for environmental reform is a significant contribution in a context where consumers often feel more connected to a brand than they do to the environment.

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[209] _____, "Greenpeace Comments on the Statement of Steve Jobs," *Greenpeace* (May 7, 2007), http://www.greenpeace.org/international/news/tasty-apple-news-020507/greenpeaceonjobsstatement.
[210] Apple, "Apple Macbook Pro - the Greenest Family of Notebooks."

Colin Beavan's "No Impact Man" Project

In chapter four I consider yet another form of the rhetoric of green consumption with an analysis of Colin Beavan's *No Impact Man* project. In 2007 writer Colin Beavan began a blog about his attempt "to live in the heart of New York City while causing no *net* environmental impact" for one year.[211] In addition to the blog, the *No Impact Man* project was also documented through Beavan's book:

> *No Impact Man: The Adventures of a Guilty Liberal Who Attempts to Save the Planet, and the Discoveries He Makes about Himself and Our Way of Life in the Process*,[212]

and a documentary film:

> *No Impact Man* (subtitled: *A Guilty New York Liberal Decides to Practice What He Preaches for One Year Turns Off the Electricity Stops Making Garbage Gives up TV Taxis & Take Out and Becomes a Walking Bicycling Composting Tree Hugging Polar Bear Saving Local Food-Eating Citizen All While Taking His Baby Daughter & Caffeine Loving Retail-Obsessed Television-Addicted Wife Along with Him*).[213]

Beavan's project also received attention in mainstream media coverage from the *New York Times* to the *Colbert Report*.[214] While some media representations of the project presented it as laughably extreme—"the year without toilet paper"— Beavan described the project as:

> a search for what each of us can do to end our environmental crisis, make a better place to live for ourselves and everyone else, and hopefully come up with a happier way of life along the way.[215]

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[211] Colin Beavan, "What You Need to Know," *No Impact Man* (2007, February 22), http://noimpactman.typepad.com/blog/2007/02/what_you_need_t.html.
[212] ———, *No Impact Man*, 1st ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2009).
[213] Laura Gabbert and Justin Schein, "No Impact Man," (Impact Partners & Oscilloscope Laboratories, 2009).
[214] Penelope Green, "The Year without Toilet Paper," *The New York Times* (2007, March 22), http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/22/garden/22impact.html, Colbert Report, "Colin Beavan,"(2007, April 9), http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/84653/april-09-2007/colin-beavan, ———, "Colin Beavan,"(2009, October 8), http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/252016/october-08-2009/colin-beavan.
[215] Colin Beavan, "Home," *No Impact Man* (2007), http://noimpactman.typepad.com/blog/.

Although Beavan's year of "no impact" living ended in 2007, he continues to blog about the project and encourage other consumers to try the "No Impact Experiment," which is a one-week version of Beavan's year long project.[216]

As my final case study, Beavan's *No Impact Man* project provides an example of green consumption rhetoric originating from an individual consumer. It also differs from the preceding case studies in that Beavan takes the "greening" of the consumer to the extreme. Over the course of one year, he and his family radically alter their consumption (and ultimately their way of life) in order to reduce their negative impact on the earth and increase their positive impact through involvement with environmental organizations. In many ways Beavan's *No Impact Man* project is a typical rhetoric of green consumption that focuses on the environmental significance of individual consumer habits, and it is thus subject to ideological critique. However, Beavan's radicalization and integration of green consumption also presents a critique of consumerism and even shows the limits of conventional green consumption. In this chapter I analyze the affective experience fostered by Beavan's narrative and public performance of no impact consumption. As readers experience the negative affects of struggling individually against the system and the positive affects of enhanced community and connections to place, they may begin to feel how green consumption can be an integral *part* of a more sustainable future.

Conclusion

In the final chapter I summarize and synthesize my analysis of these rhetorics of green consumption and return to reflect on the theoretical and methodological implications outlined in this introductory chapter. I draw conclusions on the significance

[216] No Impact Project, "About Us," *No Impact Project*(2009), http://noimpactproject.org/explained.

of this analysis for both the study and process of environmental change and rhetorical criticism.

CHAPTER 2

FILTERING OUT ENVIRONMENTALISM?: IDEOLOGICAL CAPTURE AND AFFECTIVE EXCESS IN THE *FILTERFORGOOD* CAMPAIGN

Introduction

In August 2007, Brita Products Company partnered with Nalgene Outdoor Products to start "FilterForGood," a "campaign to reduce bottled water waste" by encouraging consumers to switch from disposable plastic water bottles to a Brita filter and a Nalgene bottle.[217] Since the campaign began in 2007, it has gained visibility through its website (FilterForGood.com), print advertisements, television commercials, and various partnerships with other corporations, events, and celebrity figures. The website contains general information about the campaign and provides site visitors with the opportunity to "take the pledge" to "filter for good," read "facts," "news," and "tips" for going green, and link to other sustainability projects and sponsors. In January 2008, the advertising agency DDB San Francisco released a series of three similar print advertisements for the campaign.[218] In each ad, the image of a man or woman with a

[217] Mark Steele, "Brita and Nalgene Partner to Challenge People to Make a Difference," *Blue Planet Run Foundation* (2007, August 21), http://blueplanetrun.org/news/brita_nalgene, FilterForGood, "Home," Brita and Nalgene, http://www.filterforgood.com/.

[218] According to a personal communication with Drew McGowan of The Clorox Company, these ads were "created by advertising creatives as an idea, but were never put into print." However, the ads did circulate and attract attention on a number of environmental and advertising blogs. For examples, see: Coloribus, "Environmental Website: Carol," http://www.coloribus.com/adsarchive/prints/environmental-website-carol-268819/, greenteam, "Featured Review: Brita: Filter for Good," http://www.afterthesemessages.com/obe/review/256, Ads of the World, "Brita Water Filtration Pitchers / Nalgene Refillable Bottles: Blonde.", copyranter, "So Drinking Bottled Water Is Like Giving My Car a Blow Job?," http://copyranter.blogspot.com/2008/05/so-drinking-bottled-water-is-like.html, Christine

thick, black liquid spilling out of their mouths stands out beneath the FilterForGood.com web address and the message: "Last year 16 million gallons of oil were consumed to make plastic water bottles." In 2009, the same advertising agency created a series of six television commercials promoting Brita, Nalgene, and the *FilterForGood* campaign.[219] These thirty-second commercials call attention to disposable plastic water bottles in everyday scenes through visual framing and a variation of the written message: "45 minutes in traffic. Forever in a landfill. Please, drink responsibly. Brita Responsible water. FilterForGood.com."[220] In addition to these advertisements, the *FilterForGood* message also continues to circulate through the campaign's affiliation with "partners" ranging from the *Sundance Film Festival*, to eco-products manufacturer *Preserve*, NBC's reality television show *The Biggest Loser*, country band *Lady Antebellum*, and *The Lazy Environmentalist* author Josh Dorfman, among others.

In this chapter I analyze the affective and ideological capacity of the *FilterForGood* campaign as a rhetoric of green consumption. In many ways the campaign fosters an affective experience that may be productive for long-term environmental change, but the ideological content of the campaign also presents numerous problems that cannot be overlooked. While the campaign encourages consumers to feel connected to the problem of bottled water waste and capable of taking action, it does so in a way that may isolate, privatize, and personalize that action. In addition to the tension between the

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Lepisto, "Brita Water Filter Ad Campaign Provokes Strong Reactions," *TreeHugger.com*(2008, July 28), http://www.treehugger.com/files/2008/05/brita-water-filter-ads.php.

[219] At time of writing, these commercials could be viewed at DDB San Francisco, "Brita.", NBC, "Brita Videos."

[220] The *FilterForGood* campaign ran six variations of these commercials, and the first phrase of the message varied depending on the scene pictured: "At the gym: Thirty minutes on the treadmill; forever in a landfill," "At home: Forty minutes with a book; forever in a landfill," "Basketball: One hour on the court; forever in a landfill," "Meeting: Two hours in a meeting; forever in a landfill," "Snooze: Eight hours of sleep; forever in a landfill," and "Traffic: Forty-five minutes in traffic; forever in a landfill."

affective and ideological significance of the campaign's message content, the affective experience of "filtering for good" similarly creates both possibilities and limitations for environmental change, as the practice of filtering water connects consumers to a public water supply even as it attempts to privately maintain the quality of that water.

By tacking back and forth between the affective and ideological potential of the *FilterForGood* campaign, this chapter illustrates the productivity of juxtaposing affective and ideological analyses. On one hand, it is important that rhetorical scholars not overlook rhetoric's capacity to shape affective relations, for, as Lawrence Grossberg notes:

> Affective empowerment is increasingly important in a world in which pessimism has become common sense, in which people feel incapable of making a difference… The organization of struggle depends upon its articulation to different affective organizations and empowering investments.[221]

Yet recognizing the affective potential of rhetorics of green consumption is not the same as arguing that all affective experiences fuel active resistance, since "affective relations can also be disempowering… [t]hey can render ideological and material realities invisible behind a screen of passion."[222] My combined affective and ideological analysis allows me to acknowledge both the possibilities and limitations of affective relations. While some of the affective investments promoted by the *FilterForGood* campaign are channeled in service of an ideological perspective that is antithetical to systemic environmental change, the practice of "filtering for good" may also provoke feelings and experiences that exceed the ideological interests of the corporations behind the campaign. By analyzing the affective potential of the campaign in addition to its ideological meaning, this chapter attempts to recognize and understand the "material force" of the

[221] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 87.
[222] Ibid.

rhetoric of green consumption beyond the "goals, intentions, and motivations of its producers."[223]

This chapter begins by first exploring the affective experiences prompted by the *FilterForGood* campaign materials. I argue that the visual and verbal content of the campaign 1) fosters a felt connection and sense of individual responsibility for the problem of bottled water waste, and 2) enables consumers to feel capable of acting to "filter for good." In the second section I examine how the *FilterForGood* campaign harnesses these potentially productive affective experiences in support of an ideological perspective that is more limited for systemic environmental change. I begin this section by contextualizing the campaign within the media-described "bottled water backlash" to provide a framework for this ideological analysis. In contrast to the larger anti-bottled water movement, the *FilterForGood* campaign focuses solely on the problem of bottled water waste, ignoring concerns over public water quality standards and access. By overemphasizing the problem of the disposable plastic water *bottle*, the *FilterForGood* campaign isolates, personalizes, and privatizes the problems associated with public water quality.

After demonstrating how the ideological content of the campaign may curb its affective potential for broader environmental reform, in the third section I revisit the question of affect from a different perspective. As discussed in the introductory chapter, affective intensity may not be fully captured in linguistic representations and meaning content. While my initial affective analysis focuses on the affective experience associated with the message content of the *FilterForGood* campaign, the third section considers the

[223] Carole Blair, "Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric's Materiality," in *Rhetorical Bodies*, ed. Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 22.

affective relations created by the experience of "filtering for good." Even as consumers attempt to individually protect themselves from water contaminants through private filtration, the experience of filtering water begins at the tap, and this may provide an important sense of connection to water as a *public* resource. The final section of this chapter concludes with a brief reflection on the implications of this analysis for the study of rhetoric and environmental change.

I turn now to consider the affective experience created by the *FilterForGood* campaign. The following section examines how campaign materials go beyond providing consumers with *information* about the environmental problem of bottled water waste to create an *affective awareness* of that problem and the *FilterForGood* solution.

Affectively Experiencing the *FilterForGood* Campaign

The affective experiences fostered by the *FilterForGood* campaign are productive for environmental change in at least two ways. First, the campaign may help consumers feel connected to an environmental problem by encouraging them to *see* the problem of bottled water waste in relation to human actions and *feel* the environmental significance of individual consumption. Second, the campaign may help consumers feel capable of acting to solve an environmental problem by presenting "filtering for good" as an easy, fun, and fashionable solution. As a whole, the *FilterForGood* campaign creates an affective experience that may be important for involving consumers in the process of environmental change.

Feeling Connected to an Environmental Problem

The *FilterForGood* campaign promotes a felt connection between consumers and the problem of bottled water waste throughout the commercials, print advertisements, and website. In the commercials, the visual and linguistic messages encourage consumers to see and feel the environmental problem of bottled water waste in the context of everyday life. In the print advertisements, the visual association between human consumption, oil, and illness further creates a felt awareness of a problem. The website's use of personalized language and visual representations of "your impact" also encourage consumers to feel connected to the environmental problem of bottled water waste.

Although bottled water is often an inconspicuous part of our daily routines, the commercials' use of visual framing, a delayed linguistic message, and temporal contrast push viewers to attend to the significance of disposable plastic water bottles in ordinary scenes. In most of the commercials, the bottles occupy the foreground or center of the visual frame, while the people are either silhouetted in the background or their heads are excluded and only their bodies are pictured.[224] This visual framing shows viewers that the disposable plastic bottles, not the people, are the primary focus of the commercials. This visual focus is made explicit at the end of the commercials, when the background scene fades away, leaving only the image of a plastic water bottle that will remain "forever in a landfill." By visually featuring the plastic containers rather than the human subjects, the commercials promote a way of seeing that recognizes and values environmental concerns.

[224] This analysis is based on a close reading of "At the gym," "Meeting," and "Traffic" due to availability at time of analysis.

The affective impact of the commercials' shift in visual viewpoint—from looking at the people to looking at the bottles—is reinforced by the delayed presentation of the commercials' linguistic message. The commercials open with an un-narrated scene. For the first eight seconds of the thirty-second commercials, viewers are allowed to process the scene from their own perspectives. It is not until later in the commercials that the linguistic message shapes the viewers' way of seeing. While some viewers may immediately notice the water bottle due to the visual framing, the predominantly anthropocentric orientation of most U.S. consumers makes it likely that many viewers will not initially focus on the plastic water bottle. For many viewers, their first impression may be that the commercials depict ordinary daily life, or—depending on the commercial—part of a responsible, healthy lifestyle.[225] The introduction of text (i.e. "One hour on the court…Forever in a landfill") that focuses the viewer more specifically on the water bottle and its environmental footprint thus literally involves a shift in seeing for many consumers. Instead of seeing an individual engaged in a healthy workout or getting a good night of sleep, the commercials teach viewers to see an environmentally troubling practice. In doing so, they replace the image of bottled water as good for you with an image of it as bad for the environment. This change in perspective provides consumers with an embodied awareness of the problem—a change in physical seeing.

The temporal contrast in the commercials' linguistic message further encourages viewers to *feel* the problem of disposable plastic water bottles. Whether it is "30 minutes on the treadmill" or "8 hours of sleep," the juxtaposition of minutes and hours with "*Forever* in a landfill" magnifies the significance of the problem. Although people often

[225] A number of the commercials feature scenes that are often thought of as being "good for you": working out, reading a book, and getting enough sleep.

consider immediate benefits more than future removed benefits, the stark temporal contrast pushes viewers to consider the long-term environmental implications in relation to the convenience of their short-term water consumption. Additionally, the use of the word "forever" may resonate with religious discourses of "eternity," further fueling a sense of affective connection and significance. When combined with the visual de-centering of the human subjects, the commercials' contrast of mere minutes of use-value to its "forever" environmental impact helps to present bottled water consumption as the irresponsible choice.

As viewers begin to sense the problem of bottled water waste, the commercials further enforce a felt connection to the problem by ending with a plea to "Please, drink responsibly." Just as drinking alcohol responsibly is a way to individually solve the social problem of drunk driving, the commercials' appropriation of this slogan suggests drinking water responsibly is a way to solve the environmental problem of bottled water waste. While the cultural resonance of the slogan "drink responsibly" may arouse feelings of personal responsibility for individual actions, it is the overall *format* of the commercials, as much as this explicit message, that encourages viewers to feel connected to the problem. The commercials, in revealing the problem of bottled water waste, disrupt the "false consciousness" of viewers who were unaware of the environmental impact of their bottled water consumption. Unlike the people pictured in the commercials, who ignore the disposable plastic water bottles and remain oblivious to the problem, viewers of the *FilterForGood* commercials are taught to *see* bottled water waste and *feel* the

magnitude of the problem.[226] This lesson may leave viewers with a sense of obligation or guilt to avoid being like the people pictured in the commercials.

Like the *FilterForGood* commercials, the print advertisements (Figure 1) also contain visual features that may help consumers *feel* the problem of bottled water waste. The images of oil pouring out of human mouths promote—if not a logical understanding—an affective awareness of how bottled water consumption creates a problem that impacts people. In some ways, the advertisements do not make logical sense. Viewers of the image may be left wondering: What is that black liquid? Why is it coming out of their mouths? A series of comments on adsoftheworld.com shows some viewers' attempt to make sense of the relationship as "Davosk" asks, "They consumed the bottles?," "Almakos" suggests the images "would be better if they were posed like drinking oil and splashed up as a result," and "Inverted" asks: "Do i consume oil when drinking out of bottles made by oil? or are they trying to say that oil is bad for the earth, and we should recycle... in that case, why use a human dripping oil?? makes no sense."[227] Another blogger asks: "So drinking bottled water is like giving my car a blow job? While I'm all for giving it good to bottled water companies… I'm not sure showing crude vomit is the smartest way to get the message out."[228] While the surprising connection between consuming bottled water and vomiting oil invites questions about the logical coherence of the relationships pictured, I suggest the ads' significance extends beyond encouraging a

[226] The people pictured in the commercials are not paying attention to the bottles. The water bottles are not being used in any of the commercials. In the "traffic" commercial, the driver ignores the water bottle as he adjusts the radio and drives with his hands on the steering wheel. In the "meeting" commercial, the couple conversing in the background walk out of the scene, leaving the bottled water trash in the empty board room.

[227] Ads of the World, "Brita Water Filtration Pitchers / Nalgene Refillable Bottles: Brunette," http://adsoftheworld.com/media/print/brita_water_filtration_pitchers_nalgene_refillable_bottles_brunette, ———, "Brita Water Filtration Pitchers / Nalgene Refillable Bottles: Blonde."

[228] copyranter, "So Drinking Bottled Water Is Like Giving My Car a Blow Job?."

logical consideration of the relationship between bottled water consumption and oil to facilitate a negative affective response to the images.

Figure 1: Series of *FilterForGood* Print Advertisements[229]
Text in image: "Last year 16 million gallons of oil were consumed to make plastic water bottles."

The dominant feature in these ads is the images. Although the text helps to identify the dark liquid as oil, the message only partially explains the relationship between the people and the oil, and the light gray font color, peripheral location, and comparatively small size of the text directs viewers to focus on the image. The image, regardless of its (il)logical representation of the problem of bottled water, promotes a sense of disgust and aversion. A picture of black liquid vomit coming out of a person's mouth is—as suggested in a comment by "mrtalented" on adsoftheworld.com—"gross." As "Trev" comments in a thread on TreeHugger.com: "This ad is disgusting, but that's

[229] To view images, see Ads of the World, "Brita Water Filtration Pitchers / Nalgene Refillable Bottles: Blonde."

the point…You want to turn your eyes, but you shouldn't."[230] While the images may not logically show how bottled water consumption makes humans vomit oil, they do suggest that the relationship shown here is not good for the individual consumer. The people pictured in these ads look ill. They have dark circles under their eyes and oil coming out of their mouths. The visual association with sick people creates a felt connection between bottled water consumption and negative consequences that impact people. The images visually connect human health and bodily concerns to bottled water consumption and may enable consumers to see and feel bottled water consumption as a problem that impacts them.

In addition to the affective awareness promoted by the commercials and print ads, the website further reinforces the felt connection between consumers and the bottled water problem by focusing on "your" bottled water waste and visualizing how many water bottles "you" can save by taking the *FilterForGood* pledge. The website tells consumers to "Take the pledge and fill your reusable bottle instead of a landfill."[231] This emphasis on the importance of individual action reinforces the feeling that individual consumers are connected to the problem (and solution) of bottled water waste.[232] If "you" do not take the pledge, it is "your" water bottles that fill the landfill. After taking the *FilterForGood* pledge, participants are thanked "for doing *your* part to help reduce bottled water waste," and told "by keeping *your* commitment, *you* can save ### disposable bottles each year from going landfills.[233] The language "your part," "your

[230] Ibid, Lepisto, "Brita Water Filter Ad Campaign Provokes Strong Reactions."
[231] FilterForGood, "Home."
[232] Brita, "Take the Filterforgood Pledge to Help the Planet," Brita, http://www.brita.com/us/news/take-the-filterforgood-pledge/.
[233] Emphasis added. FilterForGood, "Pledge," Brita and Nalgene, http://www.filterforgood.com/login.php.

commitment," and the number of bottles "you can save" reinforces feelings of personal connection to the problem and responsibility for the problem and the solution.

The felt connection promoted by personalized language is further reinforced by the website's visual representations of the impact of the pledge. The home page of the website opens with a running tally of "bottles saved thanks to those who took the *FilterForGood* pledge," and after consumers take the pledge, they can see the numbers of "bottles saved" go up on this bottle counter. By visually quantifying the impact of individual consumer changes, the running tally enables consumers to feel the connection between individual action and the bottled water problem/solution. The "Map the Pledge" section of the website further visualizes the additive impact of individual action and reinforces participants' feelings of responsibility to act to solve the problem, as it displays the number of bottles saved by different locations across the U.S. Even website visitors who do not take the pledge can *see* this connection between individual consumer changes and environmental impact through the bottle counter and the map. By verbally and visually stressing the impact of individual action, the website may enable consumers to feel connected to the environmental problem of bottled water waste and responsible for the *FilterForGood* solution.

By promoting an embodied awareness of the connection between individual consumer choices and the problem of bottled water waste, the *FilterForGood* campaign may create an affective experience that is important for broader environmental change. Many environmental problems feel abstract and distant from our daily lives, so making individual consumers *feel* personally connected to environmental problems and solutions is an important contribution. The ability to *physically sense* the environmental footprint

of one's daily life may help infuse ordinary activities with a sense of environmental consciousness and thus contribute to the project of mainstreaming environmental concerns. By fostering an awareness of human-environment connections in ordinary consumption practices, the *FilterForGood* campaign may help establish a form of environmental change rooted in daily habits and consumer choices. This kind of individualized change and support is important for building a broader base of support for collective environmental reform.

Feeling Capable of Acting

In addition to helping consumers feel connected to the environmental problem of bottled water waste, the campaign may also make them feel capable of acting to solve the problem by presenting "filtering for good" as a pleasant, attractive, and easy solution. In the commercials, "filtering for good" literally sounds like a pleasant action to take. On the website, the shiny new aesthetic and visual quantification of the *FilterForGood* solution shows how taking action is not only attractive, but easy. The campaign's partnerships further enforce the feeling that "filtering for good" is an easy and stylish solution.

The progression of sounds in the *FilterForGood* commercials may help consumers feel that "filtering for good" is a pleasant solution to the problem of bottled water waste. As *Emotional Branding* author Marc Gobé suggests, "sound has an immediate and, to a large extent, cognitively unmediated effect on recall and emotions… sound is not simply a means of occupying consumers but also of engaging their

emotions."[234] Peter Simonson similarly recognizes the rhetorical importance of sound to "attract or repulse audiences," as "audiences can be turned from messages whose communicative form does not resonate with them."[235] I suggest the commercials' use of sound may shape how consumers feel about the problem of bottled water waste and the *FilterForGood* solution. While the written text of the commercials' linguistic message directs viewers how to *see* the scenes (as environmentally troubling), the use of sound provides a template for how to *feel* about the environmental problem and solution. Throughout the commercials, the general progression of sound from unpleasant to pleasant presents another way for consumers to *sense* the unattractiveness of bottled water consumption and the attractiveness of "filtering for good." The first part of the commercials—when the disposable plastic water bottles are in view—is accompanied by the sound of the background noise of the scene. Although not overwhelming, this soundtrack contains unpleasant noises, such as traffic, squeaky car brakes, a photocopy machine, a ringing phone, or clanking weights. The unpleasant sounds reinforce the negative message about bottled water. The silence that follows in the next two scenes dramatizes the severity of the problem that the water bottle will remain "*forever* in a landfill" as the visual scene fades away to leave the image of a clear, empty water bottle and viewers are reminded with a written message to "Please, drink responsibly." The closing visualization of the *FilterForGood* solution—a Brita pitcher pouring filtered water into a Nalgene bottle—is accompanied by the refreshing sound of water pouring. The revitalizing sound of pouring water at the close of the commercial may activate

[234] Marc Gobé, *Emotional Branding: The New Paradigm for Connecting Brands to People* (New York: Allworth Press, 2001), 71.
[235] Peter Simonson, "Social Noise and Segmented Rhythms: News, Entertainment, and Celebrity in the Crusade for Animal Rights," *The Communication Review* 4 (2001): 406, 01.

pleasant feelings in relation to the campaign's solution. Because the *FilterForGood* solution literally sounds pleasant, the commercials help make "filtering for good" feel like an attractive and accessible action.

The website's depiction of moving water and use of color reinforces the positive feelings created by the commercials' soundtrack. The opening video on the homepage features water pouring and splashing (no sound) as it fills an invisible container on the computer screen. This creates a refreshing and calming sentiment that is reinforced by the website's use of bright greens and blues against a white, water-bubble-filled background. The implied motion of the water bubbles and the shiny transparency of the bright colors and images on screen present "filtering for good" as an attractive action for consumers to take. The coloration of the campaign logo at the top of the website further reflects this overall feeling of refreshing pleasantness, as the words in the logo alternate between bright blue and green and the shading of the letters gives the appearance of water sloshing in the background (Figure 2).

Figure 2: *FilterForGood* Campaign Logo[236]

The website may further attract consumers with its "new product" aesthetic. Although the campaign's message promotes the lasting use of the Brita pitcher and Nalgene bottle, the website does not picture scratched or worn products that have endured repeated use. It shows only shiny new products that seem to reflect the light with their

[236] FilterForGood, "Home."

clean new aesthetic (Figure 3). In picturing shiny new "eco-products," the website makes participation in the campaign seem attractive. Consumers who "filter for good" are rewarded with the pleasant experience of two shiny new products: a Brita pitcher and a Nalgene bottle. The website's visual presentation of the aesthetically attractive Brita pitcher and Nalgene bottle helps makes participation in the campaign feel attractive and fun.

Figure 3: *FilterForGood* Brita Pitcher and Nalgene Bottle[237]

In addition to presenting "filtering for good" as an attractive solution, the website also contains visualizations that make that solution feel easy. As I have already discussed, the bottle counter on the homepage creates a sense of connection between individual consumers and the bottled water problem, but it also visualizes how easy it is to take environmental action. Consumers take the pledge, and the number of "bottles saved" goes

[237] Josh Dorfman, "Brita's Filterforgood Campaign: A Smart Way to Foster Big Positive Environmental Change," http://www.lazyenvironmentalist.com/the-lazy-e/brita%E2%80%99s-filterforgood-campaign-a-smart-way-to-foster-big-positive-environmental-change/.

up. Consumers can immediately *see* the difference they have made. By quantifying the environmental impact of the pledge, the bottle counter makes consumers *feel* the power of individual action—that it is easy to make a difference. Together the bottle counter and the map of "bottles saved" make environmental change feel simple and easy, as the impact is clearly visualized on screen. The website's use of a visual equation—Brita pitcher plus a Nalgene bottle equals "going green"—further illustrates the ease of taking environmental action through the campaign (Figure 4). Like a mathematical formula that adds 1+1=2, the formula of "Brita pitcher + Nalgene bottle = GOING GREEN" creates a feeling that going green is as easy and straightforward as a simple objective formula. By equating "filtering for good" with "going green," the campaign makes environmental action seem easy.

Figure 4: *FilterForGood* Visual Equation[238]

The *FilterForGood* campaign's partnerships with other people and organizations may also support the feeling that "filtering for good" is an easy and attractive solution. For example, the partnership with Josh Dorfman—host of *The Lazy Environmentalist* television show and author of *The Lazy Environmentalist* books—reinforces the campaign's association with "easy" environmental solutions. Dorfman's mantra is "it's easy to be green." As a spokesman for the *FilterForGood* campaign, Dorfman's association with "Easy, Stylish, Green Living" frames participation in the *FilterForGood*

[238] FilterForGood, "Facts," http://www.filterforgood.com/learn_the_facts.php.

campaign as "an easy thing" and the pledge as giving "people the opportunity to take action to protect the earth without having to change their lifestyle substantially."[239] In addition to the partnerships with Dorfman, the popularity and fashionable reputation of some of the campaign's other partners may help position "filtering for good" as an attractive action to take. From partnerships with the *Sundance Film Festival*, *Lady Antebellum*, *Dave Matthews Band*, *The Biggest Loser*, and others, the campaign's connections to the world of popular culture and celebrity help give the campaign a feeling of cultural relevance and fashion that makes it feel fun and attractive.[240]

By making "filtering for good" feel pleasant, easy, and fashionable, the campaign may encourage consumers to feel they are capable of taking environmental action. Such positive feelings of agency are significant in the face of what often feel like impossibly large environmental problems that overwhelm individuals and create feelings of hopelessness. In making one type of environmental action feel like easy fun, instead of hard sacrifice, the campaign may provide support for the kind of individual lifestyle changes that are necessary for a more sustainable future.

Across the *FilterForGood* commercials, print ads, website, and partnerships, consumers are encouraged to feel connected to the problem of bottled water waste and capable of taking action to address that problem. This kind of affective awareness is important as it may help consumers make more sustainable choices, but, as the next section demonstrates, the campaign is not without limitations as a rhetoric of environmental change.

[239] Brita, "Take the Filterforgood Pledge to Help the Planet."
[240] FilterForGood, "Partners."

Ideological Content of the *FilterForGood* Campaign

In addition to the affective possibilities described in the previous section, the *FilterForGood* campaign also (re)presents a number of ideological perspectives that are important to consider. On one hand, the campaign signifies a critique of our disposable culture that is productive for imagining a more sustainable future.[241] The previous section implicitly addresses the possibilities of this ideological perspective as many of the affective experiences discussed in that section support the critique of disposable plastic water bottles. On the other hand, the campaign also represents an ideological perspective that isolates, privatizes, and personalizes environmental problems and solutions in ways that are less conducive to systemic and public environmental reform. To fully appreciate the ideological possibilities and limitations of the *FilterForGood* message, it is helpful to consider the campaign in the context of what the media label the "bottled water backlash." While the *FilterForGood* critique of disposable plastic water bottles presents an important counter-perspective to the predominant ideology of disposable consumerism, this critique is only one component of the larger anti-bottled water movement. After situating the *FilterForGood* campaign within this larger movement, I analyze the ideological limitations of the campaign's overall message in light of this context.

[241] Americans' "disposable culture," or "throwaway ethic," can be tied to a number of environmental problems. As discussed further in the next chapter, Giles Slade locates the current e-waste crisis in relation to a longer history of technological and psychological obsolescence that began late in the 19th century with the invention of disposable products like razor blades, shirt collars, sanitary napkins, and tissues. Giles Slade, *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Context: Bottled Water Backlash

When Brita and Nalgene partnered to create the *FilterForGood* campaign in August 2007, they also joined the ranks of environmentalists, city governments, restaurants, tap-water enthusiasts, and other critics of bottled water consumption.[242] Corporate Accountability International's "Think Outside the Bottle" campaign had been actively working since 2005 to "[r]aise U.S. public awareness of the abuses of the bottled water industry, and the importance of protecting public water systems," and in the first half of 2007, the bottled water backlash began attracting additional support.[243] Food and Water Watch launched its "Take Back the Tap" campaign, the U.S. Conference of Mayors resolved to "study problems with bottled water consumption," and individual mayors from San Francisco and New York, to Minneapolis and Salt Lake City began banning or issuing warnings against bottled water consumption.[244] Similarly, a number of upscale restaurants removed bottled water from their menus and began serving tap water

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[242] Claudia H. Deutsch, "Two Growing Markets That Start at Your Tap," *New York Times* 2007, Michelle Locke, "California's Chez Panisse among Upscale Restaurants Leading Bottled Water Backlash," *Associated Press*, March 29 2007, Melissa Knopper, "Bottled Water Backlash: Environmental Concerns Are Sending People Back to Their Taps," *E Magazine*, May/June 2008.

[243] Corporate Accountability International, "History of the Think Outside the Bottle Campaign," http://www.stopcorporateabuse.org/history-think-outside-bottle-campaign, Bill Marsh, "A Battle between the Bottle and the Faucet," *The New York Times* (2007, July 15), http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/15/weekinreview/15marsh.html?_r=1, Tom Paulson, "Thirst for Bottled Water May Hurt Environment," *Seattle PI* (2007, April 19), http://www.seattlepi.com/local/312412_botwaterweb.html, Charles Fishman, "Message in a Bottle," *Fast Company* no. 117 (2007, July), http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/117/features-message-in-a-bottle.html, Theresa Howard, "Bottled Water Awash in a Sea of Controversy," *USA Today* (2007, August 20), http://www.usatoday.com/money/advertising/adtrack/2007-08-19-water-etc_n.htm, Locke, "California's Chez Panisse among Upscale Restaurants Leading Bottled Water Backlash.", Marian Burros, "Fighting the Tide, a Few Restaurants Tilt to Tap Water," *New York Times* (2007 May 30), http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/30/dining/30wate.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=fighting%20the%20tide,%20a%20few%20restaurants%20tilt%20to%20tap%20water&st=cse, Eviana Hartman, "Know Your Drinking Water: Bottled Vs. Brita," *The Washington Post* (2007, July 15), http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/12/AR2007071201862.html.

[244] Take Back the Tap, "New Bottled Water Report,"(2007, June 28), http://takebackthetap.org/press/releases/new-bottled-water-report, Emily Bryson York, "Nestle, Pepsi and Coke Face Their Waterloo," *Advertising Age* 78, no. 40 (2007), Marsh, "A Battle between the Bottle and the Faucet."

"as a way to reduce the environmental costs of manufacturing and transporting bottles of water, as well as the mountains of plastic that end up in landfills."[245]

In general, *FilterForGood* and the larger bottled water backlash were responding to what had become the "second largest commercial beverage category" in the U.S.—bottled water.[246] From 1987 to 2006, annual consumption of bottled water in the U.S. more than quadrupled to 27.6 gallons per person, transforming bottled water from a "niche market" to a $10.8 billion sales industry in the U.S. and $60 billion worldwide.[247] In *Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It*, author Elizabeth Royte identifies a number of factors that contributed to the "outrageous success of bottled water, in a country where more than 89 percent of tap water meets or exceeds federal health and safety regulations, regularly wins in blind taste tests against name-brand waters, and costs 240 to 10,000 times less than bottled water."[248]

First, marketing and advertising campaigns articulated bottled water with ideas of health, purity, and social status.[249] Royte explains:

> Drinking bottled water, like practicing yoga and eating organic food, was a station on the way to enlightenment. Advertisers used words (*pure, natural*) and imagery (waterfalls, mountains) to imply that bottled water tasted better and was healthier than tap.[250]

Regardless of whether the bottles actually held water of superior quality (they usually did not), advertisements suggested that "drinking tap water was déclassé," and "[o]rdering

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[245] Burros, "Fighting the Tide, a Few Restaurants Tilt to Tap Water."
[246] Brita, "Take the Filterforgood Pledge to Help the Planet."
[247] Elizabeth Royte, *Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 6-7, 17.
[248] Ibid., 40-41.
[249] According to Royte, "in 2005, the bottled-water industry spent $158 million on advertising in the United States." Ibid., 39.
[250] Ibid., 34.

imported water was classy."[251] Drinking bottled water became a signifier of social status, and the bottles themselves "became a bona fide fashion accessory" after celebrities and models were photographed with them.[252] When consumers bought bottled water, they were also "buying the artful story the water companies tell us about the water: where it comes from, how healthy it is, what it says about us."[253]

In addition to the association of bottled water with visions of health, purity, and fashion, the rise of bottled water must also be attributed to "an unglamorous technological advancement: the invention of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic."[254] In 1989, the PET bottle "revolutionized" the industry, as it was "cheaper, lighter, stronger, brighter, and clearer" than its predecessor, the polyvinyl chloride bottle.[255] Material improvements to the bottled water container made bottled water more viable as a portable beverage, and it thus became a convenient choice for many consumers. As journalist Charles Fishman suggests in an article about the bottled water boom, "[w]hen we buy a bottle of water, what we're often buying is the bottle itself, as much as the water. We're buying the convenience."[256]

Although the convenience of a portable, disposable plastic water bottle contributed to its popularity, the resource-intensive nature of the process required to manufacture, transport, and dispose of this plastic bottle also fueled the movement away from bottled water consumption. Organizations like Food and Water Watch and the Earth Policy Institute called attention to the amount of oil used to produce the plastic containers

[251] Ibid., 49, 33.
[252] Ibid., 33.
[253] Fishman, "Message in a Bottle."
[254] Royte, *Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It*, 33.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Fishman, "Message in a Bottle." Fishman also writes: "The plastic bottle, in fact, did for water what the pop-top can had done for soda: It turned water into an anywhere, anytime beverage, at just the moment when we decided we wanted a beverage, everywhere, all the time."

(more than 17 million barrels a year) and the poor recycling rate (only about 15 percent).[257] Tap water supporters like San Francisco Public Utilities Manager Susan Leal explained that "[r]elying on bottles that use lots of energy to produce and are sometimes trucked or even flown thousands of miles and ultimately become a municipal solid waste problem just makes no sense."[258] Newspaper coverage of the backlash frequently included information about the resources required to manufacture, ship, and dispose of the plastic bottles.[259]

In addition to exposing the wastefulness of the disposable plastic bottle, the bottled water backlash also critiques the other factor that initially sold the public on bottled water: its image. Challenging the health, purity, and fashion of bottled water, critics began to associate bottle water with questionable quality and environmental and economic waste. A passage by Fishman in a *Fast Company* article demonstrates the challenge to the image of health:

> We buy bottled water because we think it's healthy. Which it is, of course: Every 12-year-old who buys a bottle of water from a vending machine instead of a 16-ounce Coke is inarguably making a healthier choice. But bottled water isn't healthier, or safer, than tap water.[260]

A Food and Water Watch press release similarly rejects the "myth of purity in a bottle" promoted by the bottled water advertising industry:

> Bottled water generally is no cleaner, or safer, or healthier than tap water. In fact, the federal government requires far more rigorous and frequent safety testing and monitoring of municipal drinking water… The Environmental Protection Agency

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[257] These figures are from the U.S. Food & Water Watch, "New Bottled Water Report," *takebackthetap.org* (2007, June 28), http://takebackthetap.org/press/releases/new-bottled-water-report. Janet Larsen, "Bottled Water Boycotts: Back-to-the-Tap Movement Gains Momentum," *Earth Policy Institute* (2007, December 7), http://www.earth-policy.org/Updates/2007/Update68.htm.
[258] Food & Water Watch, "New Bottled Water Report."
[259] Marsh, "A Battle between the Bottle and the Faucet.", Hartman, "Know Your Drinking Water: Bottled Vs. Brita.", Burros, "Fighting the Tide, a Few Restaurants Tilt to Tap Water.", Locke, "California's Chez Panisse among Upscale Restaurants Leading Bottled Water Backlash."
[260] Fishman, "Message in a Bottle."

> requires up to several hundred water tests per month by utility companies while the FDA requires only one water test per week by bottling companies.[261]

In addition to undermining the healthy and pure image of bottled water, the backlash also involved a shift in its social status. A 2007 *Washington Post* article on the "bottled water backlash" highlights this change in fashion:

> Water may still carry that good-for-you appeal, but what you carry water *in* may not. Those clear, plastic status symbols (which scream *my body is a temple, therefore I pay more for water than I do for gasoline*) have been vilified as non-carbon-neutral time bombs with misleading labels.[262]

While bottled water once carried a "European mystique," the fashion trend began shifting away from bottled water to the "hip, new eco accessory"—the reusable bottle.[263]

As suggested above, the *FilterForGood* campaign emerged in the midst of this bottled water backlash. In some ways, Brita and Nalgene joined forces with the other organizations, local governments, and critics of bottled water with the launch of their *FilterForGood* campaign. Their campaign criticizes the environmental wastefulness of the disposable plastic bottle, and even challenges assumptions about the health and purity of bottled water.[264] Like both the "Think Outside the Bottle" campaign and Food and Water Watch's "Take Back the Tap" campaign, *FilterForGood* provides online opportunities for participants to pledge that they will stop drinking bottled water.[265]

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[261] Food & Water Watch, "New Bottled Water Report."
[262] "Quenching Your Conscience," *Washington Post*(2007, August 23), http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/22/AR2007082202513.html.
[263] Knopper, "Bottled Water Backlash: Environmental Concerns Are Sending People Back to Their Taps," 37. In 2007, a *New York Times* article reports "tap water is looking more fashionable," and an *AP* article refers to tap as the new trend. Burros, "Fighting the Tide, a Few Restaurants Tilt to Tap Water.", Locke, "California's Chez Panisse among Upscale Restaurants Leading Bottled Water Backlash."
[264] The "facts" page of the *FilterForGood* website reports: "Many people drink bottled water because they believe it to be of a higher quality, cleaner and better-tasting, but that's not necessarily true." FilterForGood, "Facts."
[265] Corporate Accountability International, "Think Outside the Bottle Pledge," http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/2215/t/8100/petition.jsp?petition_KEY=1410, Food & Water Watch, "Take Back the Tap Pledge," http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/fwwatch/petition.jsp?petition_KEY=569.

Additionally, as demonstrated in the previous section, the *FilterForGood* campaign exposes the environmental footprint of the disposable plastic water bottle and provides consumers with a felt experience of this problem. Despite these similarities, a closer analysis of the ideology presented by the *FilterForGood* campaign shows significant differences from the proponents of public water in the bottled water backlash.

There are three main differences between the messages of the *FilterForGood* campaign and the larger bottled water backlash. First, the *FilterForGood* campaign replaces a focus on big environmental problems with a focus on small ones, isolating the problem of bottled water waste from other concerns. Second, the campaign privatizes the solution to the problem of bottled water, assigning responsibility and agency to the individual consumer. Third, the campaign's justification for action is based on personal benefit rather than public good. By elevating the environmental importance of bottled water waste, the campaign distracts from other environmental and social issues, individualizes the solution to the bottled water problem, and suggests that consumers should fix environmental problems because it benefits them personally.

Shrinking the Problem of Privatized Water to the Problem of Disposable Plastic

The first limitation with the type of green consumption promoted by the *FilterForGood* campaign is its focus on a small, isolated environmental problem. The *FilterForGood* campaign transforms the larger problems associated with bottled water into a smaller problem of the bottle. By focusing only on the bottle, the campaign empties the bottled *water* backlash of its content—water.

The *FilterForGood* website, commercials, and print advertisements all feature the water *bottle* as the chief concern associated with bottled water consumption. The opening video on the campaign homepage emphasizes the "truly staggering" environmental impact of bottled water waste, suggests the reduction of this waste does "a world of good," and describes *FilterForGood* as "a campaign to reduce bottled water waste."[266] The website also contains a variety of facts about the environmental implications of plastic bottles:

> Americans send 38 billion water bottles a year to landfills, the equivalent of 912 million gallons of oil…. If placed in a landfill or littered, those bottles could take up to 1,000 years to biodegrade…. The energy we waste using bottled water would be enough to power 190,000 homes.[267]

The *FilterForGood* television commercials similarly feature the environmental impact of the disposable containers by emphasizing that empty water bottles will spend "Forever in a landfill."[268] While the commercials emphasize the impact of bottled water disposal, the print advertisements highlight the production costs. The startling images of people with oil spewing out of their mouths—accompanied by information about the amount of oil "consumed to make plastic water bottles"—calls attention to the demand for oil in making the disposable containers.

Although the *FilterForGood* campaign materials effectively expose the environmental footprint of the disposable plastic water bottle, they also magnify the problem of bottled water waste in a way that may distort its significance as an environmental concern. While it is true that the process of producing, transporting, and disposing of plastic bottles is environmentally wasteful, the additive effect of reducing

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[266] *FilterForGood*, "Home."
[267] Ibid, ———, "Facts."
[268] DDB San Francisco, "Brita."

bottled water waste may not be as significant as the campaign suggests. Even if the campaign could successfully eliminate the use of disposable plastic water bottles and save the "seventeen million barrels [of oil] it takes each year to make water bottles for the U.S. market," these bottles are only a small part of the problem—"total U.S. oil consumption is twenty million barrels a *day*."[269]

By focusing narrowly on the problem of bottled water waste, the campaign elevates concerns over some kinds of behaviors and products, while ignoring ones with similar environmental significance. For example, although the *FilterForGood* commercials focus consumer attention on the environmental significance of bottled water consumption, they ignore a number of other environmentally irresponsible behaviors shown in the commercials, such as driving a car alone (waste of fuel) or running on a treadmill (energy drain). The campaign does not explain how bottled water waste creates environmental problems, nor does it show how bottled water consumption is connected to macro-level environmental problems like climate change. Although the *FilterForGood* website does provide a link to the Brita-sponsored "Climate Ride"—a charity bike ride to "raise awareness and funds to reduce climate change"—it does not show how bottled water consumption may be connected to such macro-level environmental problems. In fact, viewers who click on the link are warned:

> ***You are leaving the FilterForGood website. The Brita Products® Company is not responsible for the content or data collection of that independent site.*[270]

This warning is further evidence of the campaign's failure to draw connections between the water bottle problem and other environmental problems.

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[269] Royte, *Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It*, 139.
[270] *FilterForGood*, "Home."

In addition to the lack of connections to larger environmental concerns, the *FilterForGood* campaign also largely ignores other problems associated with bottled water consumption that are critiqued in the larger bottled water backlash. Although *FilterForGood*'s early partnership with Blue Planet Run Foundation did include a monetary donation to the Foundation's efforts to "make safe drinking water available worldwide," this partnership ended in 2007.[271] The *FilterForGood* campaign's failure to draw connections to larger environmental concerns and other problems associated with bottled water consumption limits its capacity to contribute to widespread environmental reform.

In contrast to the *FilterForGood* campaign's isolation of the problem of bottled water waste, other participants in the bottled water backlash criticize the environmental footprint of the disposable plastic bottle as only *part* of the larger problem of bottled water. Of Corporate Accountability International's seven reasons to "Think Outside the Bottle," only one mentions the environmental impacts of plastic bottled water containers.[272] The other six reasons emphasize issues related to human rights, investment and confidence in public water systems, equal access, and broader environmental and community problems from spring and ground water extraction. Food and Water Watch also calls attention to the "many equity, public health, and environmental problems" caused by bottled water production and consumption.[273] They not only draw explicit connections between the environmental costs of the bottled water container and larger

[271] Brita, "Take the Filterforgood Pledge to Help the Planet." Steele, "Brita and Nalgene Partner to Challenge People to Make a Difference."
[272] Corporate Accountability International, "Think Outside the Bottle Pledge."
[273] Food & Water Watch, "Take Back the Tap: Why Choosing Tap Water over Bottled Water Is Better for Your Health, Your Pocketbook, and the Environment,"(2007, June), http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/pubs/reports/take-back-the-tap.

environmental issues, such as climate change, they also emphasize the decline of "our nation's public water and sewer infrastructure."[274] The Earth Policy Institute similarly critiques the local water shortages created by the extraction of water for bottling and point out that bottled water does not "solve problems for the 1.1 billion people who lack a secure water supply.[275] Royte summarizes the variety of problems associated with bottled water: "it's often no better than tap water, its environmental and social price is high, and it lets our public guardians off the hook for protecting watersheds, stopping polluters, upgrading treatment and distribution infrastructure, and strengthening treatment standards."[276] By focusing only on the problem of the bottled water container, the *FilterForGood* campaign isolates the problem of bottled water waste from these other concerns and minimizes the capacity for broader environmental change.

Substituting Private Solutions for Public Action

A second ideological limitation of the *FilterForGood* campaign is the way it privatizes the solution to the bottled water problem. Just as the campaign filters out the bottled water backlash's concern for *water*, it also empties the movement of its call for public action. Instead of supporting public water infrastructure and government regulations, the *FilterForGood* campaign promotes a private response of personal protection.

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[274] ———, "New Bottled Water Report.", ———, "Take Back the Tap: Why Choosing Tap Water over Bottled Water Is Better for Your Health, Your Pocketbook, and the Environment." They report: "Transporting the bottled water across hundreds or thousands of miles spews carbon dioxide into the air, complicating our efforts to combat global climate change."

[275] Emily Arnold and Janet Larsen, "Bottled Water: Pouring Resources Down the Drain," *Earth Policy Institute* (2006, February 2), http://www.earth-policy.org/Updates/2006/Update51.htm.

[276] Royte, *Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It*, 225.

Comparing the "pledges" of the *FilterForGood* campaign with those of the "Think Outside the Bottle" and "Take Back the Tap" campaigns clearly illustrates how the *FilterForGood* campaign promotes a private response that falls short of public action. Corporate Accountability International encourages citizens to take the pledge to:

> "Think Outside the Bottle, which means: Opting for public tap water over bottled water; and Supporting the efforts of local officials who prioritize strong public water systems over bottled water profits."[277]

Food and Water Watch similarly argues that "just kicking the bottle in favor of the tap is not enough," and they suggest reinvestment in our "public water and sewer infrastructure" is needed.[278] Their "Take Back the Tap Pledge" reflects this commitment to support systemic solutions to water problems in addition to changing personal consumption habits:

> "I pledge to: choose tap water over bottled water whenever possible; fill a reusable bottle with tap water; support public funding for safe and affordable tap water."[279]

In contrast to these pledges, the *FilterForGood* campaign only asks consumers to pledge to use "filtered water and a reusable bottle" instead of plastic bottles.[280] Although users who take the pledge are then encouraged to "increase your impact by challenging friends to take the pledge," the *FilterForGood* pledge does not include a public component.[281] It suggests that changes in personal consumption alone are enough to solve the problem of bottled water waste.

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[277] Corporate Accountability International, "Think Outside the Bottle Pledge."
[278] Food & Water Watch, "Take Back the Tap: Why Choosing Tap Water over Bottled Water Is Better for Your Health, Your Pocketbook, and the Environment."
[279] ———, "Take Back the Tap Pledge."
[280] *FilterForGood*, "Home."
[281] ———, "Take the Pledge," Brita and Nalgene, http://www.filterforgood.com/take_the_pledge.php.

While it is true that individual consumer changes can reduce problems such as bottled water waste, the *FilterForGood* campaign message is troubling because it positions private action as the solution to problems that also have a public component, and it lets government and businesses off the hook. A number of scholars have critiqued personal water filtration for individualizing and privatizing solutions to poor public water quality. Szasz critiques private water filtration because "systemic threats require systemic solutions."[282] Royte also expresses concern that personal water filtration offers consumers a way to partially "opt out" of concerns over public water quality, and therefore diminish support for "taking care of public water supplies—for protecting upstream watersheds, wrangling with polluters, tightening water-quality standards, and replacing old pipes."[283] Privately filtering water is an inadequate solution to the problem of public water quality because, while "water filters can eliminate some contaminants from tap water, the water that flows from them is not completely pure."[284] Additionally, public reliance on private water filtration systems could lead to a classed system of water purity, where only the rich could afford toxin-free water. As many in the larger anti-bottled water movement recognize, maintaining clean, safe water supplies requires both private and public action. It requires going beyond personal water filtration to include public support for more stringent environmental regulations and reinforcement of the Clean Water Act.

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[282] Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*, 3.
[283] Royte, *Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It*, 206.
[284] Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*, 181. Although the filtration process makes you feel protected, it primarily makes tap water taste better by reducing chlorine levels. Brita pitcher filters may reduce Copper, Cadmium and Mercury, and the faucet filters may reduce Lead, Cryptosporidium and Giardia, TTHM's and VOC, but as noted in a disclaimer to Brita's claim to provide "healthier" water "Substances reduced may not all be in all users' water." NBC, "Brita Home," http://www.nbc.com/The_Biggest_Loser/exclusives/sponsors/brita/.

Justifying Action for Personal, Not Public Good

In addition to privatizing the solution to the problem of bottled water waste, the *FilterForGood* campaign also personalizes the justification for taking action. In contrast to organizations like Food and Water Watch or the Earth Policy Institute, which advocate taking action "for every American and for future generations," and "creating and maintaining safe public water infrastructure," the *FilterForGood* campaign emphasizes the personal benefit of taking action.[285] From the print ads to the website and various partnerships, the *FilterForGood* campaign promises consumers that switching from bottled water to "filterforgood" water will be good for *your* health, *your* budget, and *your* image. While personalization can help people feel connected to environmental problems, much of the *FilterForGood* content is so focused on personal benefit that the environmental and public concerns of bottled water consumption effectively disappear.

The concern over personal health appears in many of the campaign materials. As discussed in the previous section on affect, the people vomiting oil in the print advertisements are visibly ill. Although the written message in the ads is about the use of an environmental resource—oil—for bottled water production, the images do not show ruined landscapes or dying wildlife. It is the health of people, not the environment, that appears threatened. These ads suggest bottled water consumption is a problem because it negatively impacts human health. The focus on *your* health is even more pronounced on the Brita website.[286] Although the Brita homepage contains a link to the *FilterForGood* campaign and a statement that appears to reinforce the environmental message of the

[285] Food & Water Watch, "Take Back the Tap: Why Choosing Tap Water over Bottled Water Is Better for Your Health, Your Pocketbook, and the Environment.", Larsen, "Bottled Water Boycotts: Back-to-the-Tap Movement Gains Momentum."
[286] Brita, "Home," http://www.brita.com/us/.

FilterForGood campaign—"Renew yourself, save money and reduce your impact on the Earth. Start today with a better you."—the hyperlink to "a better you" presents viewers with information about how Brita filtered water is better for "your body," "your weight," "your workout," "your pregnancy," "your home," "your health," "aging better," and "your child."[287] Conspicuously missing from this list is the benefit for "your environment" or "your community." While the website encourages viewers to "[e]xplore all the ways in which staying hydrated leads to healthier living," it does not draw the connection suggested by the *FilterForGood* campaign—to a healthier environment. Outdoor scenes are pictured as a backdrop for "you," and the text focuses on "you": "Water is beneficial and vital to all life—especially yours… It acts as a catalyst for renewal, like when you water your plants and watch them grow taller and greener."[288] Although the simile comparison brings nonhuman life (plants) into the picture, Brita's message and product here are clearly anthropocentric. Despite the *FilterForGood*.com logo and link, the content fails to draw connections to environmental health in addition to human health.[289]

The *FilterForGood* partnership with NBC's weight-loss reality television show, *The Biggest Loser*, further demonstrates the campaign's emphasis on personal health and

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[287] ———, "A Better You," http://www.brita.com/us/a-better-you/.
[288] Corbett, "A Faint Green Sell: Advertising and the Natural World.", Brita, "Your Body," http://www.brita.com/us/a-better-you/your-body/.
[289] The human-centered view permeates the "better you" messages. On the "your home" page, the site suggests: "A refreshing glass of water can benefit more than just your body. For example, plants and pets will also thrive with better water in their diets." Again, while this includes a small reference to the nonhuman (plants and pets), it does not go beyond individualized well-being. On the "your health" page, the personal health benefits of hydration are stressed as readers are reminded to "be sure to drink large amounts of water when you're ill or enjoying the great outdoors." Although the larger concept of "outdoors" alludes to something bigger than self, it is in the context of a human-centered view. Although many of the pages on the Brita website contain links to the *FilterForGood* campaign, an environmental focus is not embedded in the body of the website or the larger presentation of Brita products. Brita, "Your Home," http://www.brita.com/us/a-better-you/your-home/, ———, "Your Health," http://www.brita.com/us/a-better-you/your-health/.

wellness.[290] The show's focus on weight loss reinforces the *FilterForGood* campaign's contribution to healthy living. The campaign's health benefit is represented visually by the image of the *FilterForGood* Brita pitcher and Nalgene bottle encircled by a tape measure (Figure 5). This visual appropriation of *The Biggest Loser* logo—in which the words are cinched in the middle by a tape measure to signify weight loss—visually reinforces the personal health benefit of "filtering for good."[291]

Figure 5: *FilterForGood* Brita Pitcher and Nalgene Bottle[292]
and *The Biggest Loser* Logo[293]

In addition to *your* health, another personalizing justification for participation in the *FilterForGood* campaign is the benefit to *your* budget. The main page of the website tells viewers: "Go Green Save Green. Take the pledge to get your coupon. Buy a *FilterForGood* bottle."[294] By equating the "green" of environmental action with the "green" of money, the campaign endorses environmental action because it is financially

[290] The partnership began with Season 5 in 2008 and continues today. NBC, "Brita Home."
[291] The representation of the *FilterForGood* campaign on *The Biggest Loser* website further supports this focus on human rather than environmental health. Although the site suggests *FilterForGood* water consumption is "Better for You, Your Budget and the Environment," not only is "the environment" listed last, but unlike "your budget" it is not connected to you through the possessive personal pronoun "your." The environmental justification for the *FilterForGood* campaign is further weakened by the lack of supporting information about the environmental benefits of using Brita/Nalgene rather than disposable plastic water bottles. Underneath the large text of "Better for You, Your Budget and the Environment," *The Biggest Loser* website elaborates on the first two justifications, but not the environmental justification.
[292] NBC, "The Biggest Loser," http://www.nbc.com/The_Biggest_Loser/.
[293] *FilterForGood*, "Partners."
[294] ———, "Home."

advantageous. The reason to "ditch bottled water" is not only to save the environment, but to save you money.[295] By using a Brita pitcher filter and Nalgene bottle, viewers are told "you can get great-tasting water without so much waste… saving you hundreds of dollars a year on bottled water."[296] The website advances the idea that: "[t]aking the pledge at *FilterForGood*.com takes only seconds but can have a lifetime effect on the earth and on consumers' bank accounts. Filling a Nalgene bottle with filtered Brita water will reduce waste and expense."[297] The presentation of the *FilterForGood* campaign on the Brita website further demonstrates this emphasis on economic over environmental justification. The site provides a link to the *FilterForGood* campaign, with the following text beneath the *FilterForGood* logo: "Join the campaign by taking the pledge to help reduce bottled water waste and Save $5."[298] Such statements seem to place a value on environmental action, encouraging viewers that it is worth participating in environmental change because it saves you $5. While providing multiple reasons for taking action may be a productive way to attract support for the campaign, equating the benefits of saving money and saving the earth may also diminish the urgency and importance of environmental change. Additionally, justifying environmental action based on financial gain encourages a fair-weather view of environmental change that only supports action when it is economically advantageous. Linking environmental action to financial gain is particularly troubling during a time of economic crisis when many Americans have begun to value economic growth over environmental protection.[299]

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[295] _____, "Facts."
[296] Ibid.
[297] Brita, "Take the Filterforgood Pledge to Help the Planet."
[298] _____, "Home."
[299] Frank Newport, "Americans: Economy Takes Precedence over Environment " *Gallup* (2009, March 19), http://www.gallup.com/poll/116962/Americans-Economy-Takes-Precedence-Environment.aspx.

While the *FilterForGood* campaign explicitly states the economic benefit for individuals with their "Go Green Save Green" slogan, the campaign also implicitly operates according to a principle of "Go Green Make Green." That is, the *FilterForGood* campaign is not just Brita generously trying to promote environmental change. Brita is a business attempting to sell water filters for a profit, and the *FilterForGood* campaign offers a way to attract the "sustainability" market segment. The campaign began in late 2007, around the same time that Brita's parent company Clorox acquired Burt's Bees—a line of natural personal products—and began selling its line of natural cleaning products, Green Works.[300] In this context, the *FilterForGood* campaign can be seen as part of a larger attempt to capture the sustainability market share.[301] Indeed, a 2008 Clorox Earnings conference identifies the *FilterForGood* campaign as a way for Brita to "leverage the health and wellness and sustainability mega trends."[302] A statement on the DDB advertising agency's website about their work in creating the *FilterForGood* commercials provides further insight into the campaign as an effort to market Brita products:

> For years Brita has been a struggling brand in decline. Bottled water had been growing at double-digit rates leaving Brita in the dust. Through PR efforts, we found bottled water's Achilles heel: sustainability… Our idea was to send people a simple, yet powerful message---'Drink Responsibly'---in an effort to jolt them out of their bottled water routine.[303]

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[300] "Q2 2008 Clorox Earnings Conference Call," *Fair Disclosure Wire*, February 4 2008.
[301] A short article in *Brand/Packaging* entitled "Backlash = Opportunity?" cites the *FilterForGood* campaign as an example of how "marketers in other categories are quickly stepping in to leverage the situation" of the bottled water backlash. "Backlash = Opportunity?," *Brand Packaging*, October/November 2007, 4. Don Knauss, Chairman and CEO of Clorox, discussed the global mega trends of "health and wellness" and "convenience and environmental sustainability" at a 2008 Earnings Conference. "Q2 2008 Clorox Earnings Conference Call." Beth Springer, Growth and Strategy representative of the Clorox Company suggests the *FilterForGood* campaign is "capitalizing on consumers' interest in sustainability to rejuvenate the brand." "Clorox at Consumer Analyst Group of New York 2008 Cagny Conference," *Fair Disclosure Wire*, February 22 2008.
[302] "Q2 2008 Clorox Earnings Conference Call."
[303] DDB San Francisco, "Brita."

As part of a marketing effort to sell Brita filters, the *FilterForGood* campaign took advantage of the bottled water backlash.[304]

In addition to *your* health and *your* budget, the *FilterForGood* campaign also promises consumers that "filtering for good" will be good for *your* image. As I suggested in the preceding affective analysis, the campaign's partnerships may contribute to its attractive and fashionable appeal. Because the campaign frequently fails to draw connections to larger environmental problems (such as climate change) and other environmentally wasteful behaviors (like driving alone in a car), the environmental justification functions largely as a token signifier of a fashion trend. While the environmental benefit to be gained from the *FilterForGood* campaign is ostensibly about the public good, in the context of the larger *FilterForGood* campaign, the "good for the environment" claim positions the campaign as the fashionable consumer choice. Participating in the *FilterForGood* campaign promises to make you look good because it shows you care about the environment with your reusable bottle. The increasing trendiness of "going green" suggests that even the campaign's claims about benefiting the environment also benefit you by making you part of the latest eco-trend.[305]

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[304] Brita was not the only business to respond to the rising popularity of sustainability and the bottled water backlash. The bottled water industry response to the bottled water backlash has involved efforts such as "lightweighting" bottles to save plastic or offsetting carbon footprints by shifting to renewable energy sources. For example, "the offsetting effort has been the centerpiece of Fiji Water's $5 million 'Fiji Green' marketing blitz, which brazenly urges consumers to drink imported water to fight climate change." Another example of an industry response to the bottled water backlash is the emphasis on the added value of nutrients in some bottled water such as "Smartwater." York, "Nestle, Pepsi and Coke Face Their Waterloo.", Anna Lenzer, "Fiji Water: Spin the Bottle," *Mother Jones*(2009, August 12), http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2009/09/fiji-spin-bottle.

[305] The rising trendiness of green is nicely summarized in Suzy Menkes, "Eco-Friendly: Why Green Is the New Black " *The New York Times* (2006, May 31), http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/17/style/17iht-feco.1546573.html.

By emphasizing the personal benefits of health, savings, and social status, the *FilterForGood* campaign "echoes" the marketing that once helped sell bottled water.[306] Although the campaign includes promises to keep both "Mother Earth and your wallet green," the environmental justification for action is minimized throughout much of the campaign.[307] Because the *FilterForGood* justification for action is based primarily on personal benefits rather than collective or environmental benefits, the campaign is subject to the common criticism that green consumption fails to advance value-driven environmental change. As WWF suggests, environmental actions undertaken for self-interest rather than environmental interest are less likely to "spillover" into more substantial support for systemic environmental change.[308] While an anthropocentric approach to environmental change may help attract consumers to take action, the *FilterForGood* campaign's nearly exclusive focus on individual personal benefits may prevent participants from seeing or acting on broader connections. By promising that *FilterForGood* water will make *you* appear environmentally responsible, be good for *your* health, and save *you* money, the campaign advances a form of action that is so focused on individual, personal benefits that it may eclipse more collective human or

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[306] Royte, *Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It*, 165. As Royte observes in *Bottlemania*, "Brita's marketing direction now closely echoes that of bottled water, with an emphasis on health and wellness."

[307] *FilterForGood*, "Facts." The environmental justification to reduce the production, use, and disposal of plastic appears even more superficial since the Brita filters are made of plastic #5, which has also has a poor recycling rate since many communities do not have the capacity to recycle them. A "subvertisement" video points out this contradiction by appropriating the temporal contrast and structure of the Brita commercials to promote takebackthefilter.org, the website of a consumer campaign to pressure Brita to provide a way to recycle the filter cartridges. The text: "3 months in a pitcher. Forever in a landfill. Please urge Brita to recycle their filters responsibly. takebackthefilter.org" appears over the video of a woman changing the filter on a Brita pitcher and throwing the old filter in the trashcan. After months of pressure from the "Take Back the Filter" campaign, Brita partnered with Preserve to offer a recycling program for Brita filters. Studio Freshh, "Brita Ad - Take Back the Filter Subvertisement Commercial," YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tV6ztwmLsco, Take Back The Filter, "Brita® and Preserve® Announce Filter Recycling Program," http://www.takebackthefilter.org/.

[308] Crompton, "Weathercocks & Signposts: The Environmental Movement at a Crossroads."

environmental concerns. Thus, like the campaign's isolated and privatized presentation of the problem and solution to the problem of bottled water, the personalized justification for action raises serious concerns when considering the possibility for green consumption to function as a productive mode of environmental reform.

Brita is clearly in the business of selling water filters, not resolving environmental crises, and the preceding ideological analysis clarifies some of the limitations of their "save the planet by buying this product" approach.[309] However, just because the *FilterForGood* green consumption campaign is designed to expand their market share does not mean that the campaign is completely antithetical to environmental change. The next section considers how the material experience of "filtering for good" may enable participants to feel connected to the public water supply, even as they attempt to individually protect themselves from water contaminants through private filtration.

Affective Experience of "Filtering for Good"

By analyzing the affective and ideological capacity of the *FilterForGood* campaign, I have tried to provide a more complete assessment of the environmentalist potential of the campaign as a rhetoric of green consumption. However, as discussed in the introductory chapter, the rhetorical significance of green consumption is not just in the message and information it transmits, but in the experiences it creates and promotes. This final section of analysis examines the affective experience of participating in the *FilterForGood* campaign by filtering water using a Brita pitcher and a Nalgene bottle.

[309] It appears the *FilterForGood* campaign did successfully stimulate Brita sales. A May 2008 Clorox Earnings conference reported: "Brita business had its strongest quarter in several years, with very strong double digit bond and sales growth repelled by sustainability tail winds. The Filter for Good partnership with reusable water bottles has been a terrific success." "Q3 2008 Clorox Earnings Conference Call," *Fair Disclosure Wire*, May 1 2008.

The practice of "filtering for good" may foster several affective experiences that are noteworthy for this study. First, the practice of privately filtering water may provide a sense of security or protection from potential water pollutants. As Szasz recognizes in his critique of personal water filtration as a case of "inverted quarantine" in which healthy individuals attempt to protect themselves from polluted environments, such action may make consumers feel protected from potential toxins in the water.[310] He writes:

> Tens of millions of citizens believe they have successfully insulated themselves from the problems of the public water supply because they drink bottled water or because they filter the water coming into their homes. They continue to care about water quality, but is there any real motivation left to do anything more about it?[311]

Because the practice of privately filtering water may make individual consumers feel protected from water pollution, this affective experience may drain support away from more stringent regulation of public water quality. In this way, the feelings of personal protection are closely aligned with the ideological limitations discussed in the previous section.

Although private water filtration may in some ways foster an affective experience not conducive to public support for more stringent water regulations, the practice may also create a number of affective experiences that are more likely to encourage support. First, the practice of filtering public water may create or reinforce a feeling of concern over public water quality. In filtering tap water, consumers may see this need to filter as problematic, as indicative of a problem with public water quality. Through the practice of private filtration, consumers may begin to ask questions: *Why do I need to filter my water? What's wrong with our public water supply?*

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[310] Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*, 181.
[311] Ibid., 201.

A second potentially productive affective experience created by filtering water may be a sense of connection to the public water supply itself. The practice of filtering water begins at the tap and may enable consumers to feel more reliant on the public water supply than they would have by drinking bottled water. In contrast to the ideological and affective capacity of the campaign's message content, which filters out the public component of the bottled water backlash, the affective and material experience of "filtering for good" may create a felt connection to water as a public resource. It is interesting to note that the material connection between filtering water and obtaining that water from the tap is nearly invisible in *FilterForGood* campaign materials. Although the Brita faucet filters are certified to remove more substances from tap water than the Brita pitchers, the campaign only shows the faucet filter once.[312] Additionally, the campaign commercials and most other materials show *FilterForGood* water pouring from a Brita pitcher, but they do not show the process of filling the Brita pitcher from the tap. By picturing the source of *FilterForGood* water as the clean, white-topped Brita pitcher, the campaign messages may be attempting to maintain a conceptual distance from tap water and concerns over tap water quality through visual dissociation. However, as anyone who has ever used a Brita pitcher knows, the process of filtering water starts at the tap.

[312] A disclaimer on the Biggest Loser website's claim that Brita provides "healthier" water explains that "Brita® pitchers systems are certified to reduce Copper, Cadmium and Mercury. Brita® Faucet Filtration systems are certified to reduce Lead, Cryptosporidium and Giardia, TTHM's and VOC." NBC, "Brita Home."

The one exception to the invisibility of the tap in the *FilterForGood* campaign is an online commercial on the Biggest Loser website. In this commercial, Biggest Loser trainer Jillian Michaels lectures contestants in the gym on the importance of hydration for weight loss and she shows them how they can stay hydrated with the *FilterForGood* campaign: "Take your *FilterForGood* bottle, alright? You can either fill up at our Brita faucet mount or our Brita pitcher. I like the Brita pitcher because it keeps it cold, and there's no waste, so there's nothing to throw away. Saving the environment, hydrating your body... saves you money." ———, "Brita Videos."

Despite the invisibility of the tap in *FilterForGood* campaign materials, the *process of participating* in the campaign brings consumers into physical contact with the tap. In order to "filter for good," participants must fill their Brita pitcher with tap water, an experience that connects them to the public water system. As consumers respond to the *FilterForGood* campaign's call to change *containers*—from a disposable plastic bottle to a Brita pitcher and Nalgene bottle—they may also change the way they relate to the *content* of those containers. Unlike the experience of purchasing bottled water, drinking *FilterForGood* water does not privatize water in the same way. Instead of experiencing water as a pre-packaged commodity, *FilterForGood* consumers experience water as a substance that flows from the public water supply through their tap. In contrast to bottled water consumers, whose only interaction with water is to consume it as a private commodity, *FilterForGood* consumers interact with public water as they turn on the tap to fill their Brita pitchers and pour their filtered water into a reusable container.

Although the *FilterForGood* campaign messages empty the bottled water backlash of its public water content by focusing solely on a privatized solution to the environmental problem of the disposable plastic container, the experience of participating in the campaign may affectively support the bottled water backlash's turn back to the tap. Like the purchase of a refillable bottle, which Royte suggests announces "a commitment to public water," the experience of using a Brita pitcher and Nalgene bottle involves a commitment to obtaining water from the tap.[313] This affective connection to the public water supply may help expand the environmentalist potential of the *FilterForGood* campaign.

[313] Royte argues that "buying a refillable bottle is the opposite to the hyperindividualism of buying a private phone or musical headset. Refillables announce a commitment to public water." Royte, *Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It*, 165-66.

Conclusion

My analysis in this chapter demonstrates that there are both possibilities and limitations to the kind of green consumption promoted in the *FilterForGood* campaign. I have presented my analysis in a way that suggests the productive affective capacities of the campaign messages are captured by limited ideological meanings, but it is also possible to see how these affective relations exceed the limits of such ideological capture. Although the *FilterForGood* campaign isolates and magnifies the problem of bottled water waste, it also makes consumers *see* and *feel* our connection to the bottled water waste problem. Such felt connections are important in a society where environmental concerns most often feel separate from our everyday lives. Similarly, although the *FilterForGood* campaign presents a privatized solution to the bottled water problem, it also makes consumers feel individually responsible for acting to solve the problem. At a time when many environmental solutions seem unattainably large, abstract, and distant, such individual connections to environmental problems and solutions are important. While the campaign is also subject to critique for personalizing the reasons for taking action—suggesting that we should act out of selfish interest, not necessarily environmental concern—it does encourage consumers to feel like we are capable of taking action. Attractive, accessible actions are crucial in a society dominated by a "what's in it for me" attitude. While human-centered justifications for environmental actions are often critiqued for privileging humans over the environment and failing to create a "foot in the door" to public advocacy, rhetorics of green consumption may function productively to begin incorporating sustainable habits into our everyday lives.[314] Finally, although the *FilterForGood* campaign leaves out much of the public

[314] Crompton, "Weathercocks & Signposts: The Environmental Movement at a Crossroads."

environmental content that we see in the bottled water backlash, it also physically connects consumers to the tap in a way that may garner support for the improvement of municipal water supplies.

To borrow a phrase from Kavka, the "political purchase" of the *FilterForGood* campaign may be "not in terms of its content (which in so many ways represents and responds to the status quo), but rather in the way that it evokes affective responses from viewers which are in excess of a controlled meaning production."[315] While the affective capacity of this rhetoric of green consumption is limited by ideological content, such "[a]ffective relations are, at least potentially, the condition of possibility for the optimism, invigoration and passion which are necessary for any struggle to change the world."[316] Even though the ideology behind the *FilterForGood* problem and solution is limiting, the campaign's affective engagement of an environmental problem may accomplish the important work of engaging consumers and materializing environmental concerns.

However, to recognize the potential significance of the affective investments fostered by the *FilterForGood* campaign is not to overstate the potential of "filtering for good" to solve our current ecological crises. While it is potentially productive that the process of "filtering for good" (re)connects consumers to the tap and reinforces concerns over tap water quality, many Americans already feel concerned about this issue. According to a 2009 Gallup poll, water quality is the number one environmental concern cited by U.S. citizens.[317] A recent *New York Times* series on "Toxic waters… the

[315] Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters*, 7.
[316] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 87.
[317] Lydia Saad, "Water Pollution Americans' Top Green Concern " *Gallup* (2009, March 25), http://www.gallup.com/poll/117079/Water-Pollution-Americans-Top-Green-Concern.aspx.

worsening pollution in American waters and regulators' response" similarly demonstrates the visibility of public water quality concerns.[318] The prevalence of such concerns suggests that the problem of public water quality is not necessarily due to lack of affective awareness, but a lack of public regulation and public support for such regulation. The *FilterForGood* campaign does not provide the affective bases for supporting such regulation. In channeling consumer fears and energies over water quality into private filtration, the campaign may indeed distract from the kind of public policy necessary to stem the flow of toxins into our waters.

This is not to say that the *FilterForGood* campaign absolutely could not become connected to public action. The campaign's recent partnership with the *Surfrider Foundation* suggests one possibility for more public connections.[319] The *Surfrider Foundation* is a nonprofit organization that:

> advocates for strong water quality regulations, adequate marine recreational water quality monitoring, reporting and posting, reduction of polluted discharges into the ocean and education regarding personal responsibility for the reduction water pollution.[320]

Partnerships such as this could be developed to expand the affective investments of the *FilterForGood* campaign in support of more collective environmental change and participation from businesses and government in addition to individual consumers. While this is an underdeveloped affective potential of the *FilterForGood* campaign in its current form, the affective awareness and engagement fostered through the campaign suggests the environmentalist potential of such rhetoric of green consumption. The next two

[318] Charles Duhigg, "Toxic Waters: A Series About the Worsening Pollution in American Waters and Regulators' Response " *The New York Times* (2009), http://projects.nytimes.com/toxic-waters.
[319] FilterForGood, "Partners."
[320] Surfrider Foundation, "Clean Water," http://www.surfrider.org/whatwedo2a.asp.

chapters examine rhetorics of green consumption that channel the affective resources of the consumer into support of more systemic and collective kinds of change.

CHAPTER 3

APPROPRIATING AFFECT: TRANSFORMING APPLE CONSUMERS INTO E-WASTE ACTIVISTS THROUGH THE *GREENMYAPPLE* CAMPAIGN

Introduction

In September 2006, Greenpeace, the international environmental organization known for its use of image events, direct action, and other forms of "creative communication," launched a noteworthy new website: www.greenmyapple.org.[321] This website marked the latest phase of a Greenpeace campaign against electronic waste. It called attention to the environmental and health hazards created by the disposal of Apple products, and it encouraged Apple consumers to pressure the company to go green. To engage Apple consumers, the Greenpeace website was "designed to look like Apple's own site, with in-jokes that only Apple fans would get, and a single unifying theme: 'We love our Macs. We just wish they came in green.'"[322] Users who clicked on the site's green Apple icon, "About," or "iPoison + iWaste" tabs found information about the toxic substances in Apple products and the Greenpeace campaign. Those who viewed the "mAct," "ProCreate," or "iPush" tabs were provided with a wide array of ways to participate in the online advocacy campaign. Over the course of the *GreenMyApple* campaign, thousands of people e-mailed Apple, designed campaign materials,

[321] For more on Greenpeace's use of image events as a rhetorical tactic for environmental change, see Kevin Michael DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999). Greenpeace describes itself as "the leading independent campaigning organization that uses peaceful direct action and creative communication to expose global environmental problems and to promote solutions that are essential to a green and peaceful future." Greenpeace, "About Us," http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/about.

[322] Greenpeace, "Green My Apple Bears Fruit."

participated in the "Hug your Mac" initiative, and otherwise joined in the campaign to "make Apple green."[323] In addition to the online campaign, Greenpeace activists further spread their "green my Apple" message at several Apple stores, the MacWorld Expo, and a number of college campuses across the U.S.[324]

Although today Apple is still not what Greenpeace considers "green to the core," on May 2, 2007—nine months after the start of the *GreenMyApple* campaign—a Greener Apple logo appeared on the home page of the Apple website, and CEO Steve Jobs released a statement about "Apple's desires and plans to become greener."[325] This statement specifically addressed the two main issues raised by the Greenpeace campaign: removing toxic chemicals from Apple products and addressing the improper disposal of electronic waste. By 2008, Apple had moved up the ranks in the Greenpeace "Guide to Greener Electronics," the new Apple MacBook Air appeared on the *Environmental News Network's* list of "The Greenest Notebooks of 2008," and Apple began showing off its new green credentials with advertisements for "the greenest family of notebooks."[326]

As an environmental advocacy campaign built on the support of Apple consumers, the *GreenMyApple* campaign provides another opportunity for exploring the role of green consumption as a rhetoric of environmental change. Unlike the *FilterForGood* campaign, in which a corporation encourages individuals to green their consumption choices, the *GreenMyApple* campaign invited individual consumers to

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[323] ———, ".mAct," http://www.greenmyapple.org/mact-write.html, ———, "Procreate," http://www.greenmyapple.org/procreate.html.
[324] Greenpeace, "Tasty News from Apple!," *Greenpeace* (2007, May 2), http://www.greenpeace.org/international/news/tasty-apple-news-020507.
[325] Ibid, ———, "Greenpeace Comments on the Statement of Steve Jobs."
[326] Greenpeace, "Toxics Reports," http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/campaigns/toxics/toxics-reports, ENN, "The Greenest Notebook Computers of 2008," *Environmental News Network* (2008), http://www.enn.com/top_stories/article/37862, Apple, "Apple Macbook Pro - the Greenest Family of Notebooks."

pressure a corporation to green its consumer products. While the *GreenMyApple* campaign sought corporate rather than individual environmental action, like the *FilterForGood* campaign it harnessed the affective capacities of consumption as a mechanism for change. In this chapter I explore how Greenpeace utilized consumer attachment to the Apple brand to get individuals to sense and respond to the distant problem of e-waste. I argue that the *GreenMyApple* campaign went beyond *informing* consumers about the problem. By appropriating the affective resources of the Apple brand, the campaign encouraged consumers to *feel* their connection to the problem. Like the "rhetorical prankster," which Christine Harold suggests "resists less through negating and opposing dominant rhetorics than by playfully and provocatively folding existing cultural forms in on themselves…in an effort to redirect the resources of commercial media toward new ends," Greenpeace used the Apple brand (and consumer commitment to that brand) as a rhetorical resource for social change.[327] Rather than challenge consumer's loyalty to an environmentally troubling company and product, the campaign channeled "Apple love" into support for a greener Apple.[328] It used consumer's affective attachment to their personal Apple products and their larger identification with the Apple brand to create a felt connection to the e-waste problem. Through the *GreenMyApple* campaign, Greenpeace transformed the abstract and distant problem of e-waste into an immediate and perceivable problem of iWaste.

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[327] Christine Harold, "Pranking Rhetoric: "Culture Jamming" As Media Activism," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 21, no. 3 (2004): 191.

[328] Greenpeace described the campaign as "one in which we would turn over the reigns to Apple's customers. We would stand in the shoes of Apple fans, we would speak as fellow believers in the wizards of Cupertino, and we'd try to channel waves of Apple Love at corporate headquarters." Greenpeace, "Green My Apple Bears Fruit."

In Lawrence Grossberg's account of the rise of popular conservatism he suggests that an effective project for political change "has to acknowledge the already existing sites of people's investments, the structures of their mattering maps.... It can struggle to reshape and rearticulate them, but it has to think twice before rejecting them entirely."[329] While the *GreenMyApple* campaign may be subjected to criticism for its failure to challenge what many identify as the primary cause of our current environmental crises—consumerism—Grossberg's emphasis on the power of "the already existing sites of people's investments" encourages us to consider the significance of reshaping rather than rejecting the investments of the consumer. Environmental organizations do not have what Grossberg describes as "the luxury of an innocent beginning"—the individuals targeted by advocacy campaigns are always already tangled in a web of investments and priorities—so any attempt to foster affective investment in environmental change "requires using the cultural logics and media that already connect to people's lives to articulate interconnected antagonisms to the present and common commitment to the future."[330] If individuals feel more connected as consumers to a product or brand identity than they do as stewards of the earth to an environmental problem, environmental organizations might be wise to use the felt investments of the consumer as the basis for change. The *GreenMyApple* campaign offers a case study in how environmental advocates might channel the affective resources of consumer items or brands into a resource for environmental change.

This chapter proceeds by first acknowledging the limitations of Greenpeace's market-based approach to addressing the problem of e-waste. Responsibility for the e-

[329] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 394.
[330] Ibid., 394, 93.

waste crisis lies not only with those who design, manufacture, and sell computers, but also with consumers who discard "old" computers for the latest upgrade and with governments that insufficiently regulate and enforce environmentally-sound standards for computer production, recycling, and disposal. Although Greenpeace used consumers to hold a corporation accountable for its contribution to the e-waste problem, the campaign did not ask those consumers to check their personal contributions to growing mounds of e-waste, nor did it seek further government oversight.

While a complete resolution to the e-waste crisis will likely require a multi-pronged approach that involves all of the above parties, I suggest that a closer examination of the e-waste problem provides the context for understanding the campaign's affective significance despite its ideological shortcomings. Like many environmental issues, the problem of e-waste is not directly perceivable to consumers, and its distant location in space and time is further compounded by discursive representations and perceptions of electronic communication itself as immaterial. The second section of this chapter illustrates the importance of Greenpeace's appropriation of the Apple brand by analyzing how e-waste is a problem that is particularly difficult to perceive, let alone feel connected to. Even though the *GreenMyApple* campaign does not offer a systemic solution to the e-waste problem, its capacity to help consumers *sense* their connection to a problem that they may not have otherwise perceived is important.

Having established the significance of an advocacy campaign that could make individuals sense and feel connected to the e-waste problem, the third section of the chapter provides an analysis of how the *GreenMyApple* campaign did just this. The campaign not only associated the Apple brand—and its consumers—with the problem of

e-waste, it used consumers' love and pride in Apple to reinforce the felt connection and motivate them to action. The final section of this chapter reflects on the affective possibilities present in the campaign that could be further developed for more systemic change.

Consumerism Unchecked: Ideological Limitations of the Campaign

The larger Greenpeace campaign to reduce electronic waste began in 2004, "with the aim to remove the worst toxic substances from electronic products, improve recycling policies, and to catalyze a fundamental change in the way our electronic gadgets are designed, produced, and recycled."[331] In 2006, Greenpeace produced the first edition of the "Guide to Greener Electronics"—"a ranking guide to put pressure on individual [electronics] companies to improve policies and practices." While some companies, "like Dell and Lenovo responded to the pressure, committing to phase outs of the worst toxic substances from their product ranges," Apple did not respond until after specifically targeted by the *GreenMyApple* campaign.[332] In many ways the *GreenMyApple* campaign is a classic example of using "consumers' purchasing power to influence corporate behavior," and it is therefore subject to the common ideological critiques of green consumerism that I outlined in the introductory chapter.[333] By targeting the policies of one company, Greenpeace narrowed a systemic problem to a single source: Apple. Although corporations in the electronics industry certainly contribute to the e-waste problem, the campaign's narrow focus on Apple may shift attention away from other

[331] Greenpeace, "Green My Apple Bears Fruit."
[332] Ibid.
[333] Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, 247.

contributing factors: insufficient government regulation and oversight and a larger culture of consumerism.

The *GreenMyApple* campaign operated according to a neoliberal logic of the free market, in which voluntary corporate changes (in response to consumer pressures) are expected to solve social problems. Greenpeace told consumers: "YOU have to tell Apple to go green to the core -- they listen to their customers."[334] It got Apple customers asking "what's with the toxic chemicals inside, short life spans and allowing [Apple] products to be dumped in Asia?"[335] and it reminded Apple that poor environmental policies are not good for business: "none of this is making Apple a successful company."[336] By using the pressure of consumers' purchasing power, the *GreenMyApple* campaign encouraged Apple to be a "green leader," to go beyond the minimum government-imposed environmental regulations.[337]

Although Greenpeace's market-based strategy arguably helped pressure one company to "green" its policies, a sampling of recent news stories highlights the need for more stringent laws and enforcement and more systemic changes in addition to voluntary corporate ones:

> "EPA Lets Electronic Waste Flow Freely, GAO Report Says"
> "Smuggling Europe's Waste to Poorer Countries"

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[334] Greenpeace, "About Us."

[335] Although racial and colonial implications are not a part of this study, the Greenpeace campaign may also be subjected to an ideological critique for its portrayal of the victims of e-waste. As David Pellow suggests, the environmental and health risks of e-waste do fall disproportionately "in spaces around the globe where the poor, the working class, and people of color are concentrated," but the website's uniform presentation of e-waste victims as "Asian," and its associated images of children as those "othered" victims may be subjected to further ideological critique. For more on the race, class, and colonial considerations of the e-waste problem, see David N. Pellow, *Resisting Global Toxics: Transnational Movements for Environmental Justice*, Urban and Industrial Environments (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), 186.

[336] Greenpeace, "iPoison + iWaste," http://www.greenmyapple.org/itox.html.

[337] Ibid. The Greenpeace campaign critiqued Apple's current "green" policies as "fringe benefits": "Many of the changes Apple takes environmental credit for (Flat screens replacing CRT monitors, wireless reducing cables, banning certain chemicals) are just side-effects of changes made for design considerations or required by new laws."

> "Following the Trail of Toxic E-Waste: 60 Minutes Follows America's Toxic Electronic Waste as It Is Illegally Shipped to Become China's Dirty Secret"
> "E-Waste Still Being Exported, Says Watchdog"
> "High Tech Trash: Will Your Discarded TV or Computer End up in a Ditch in Ghana?"[338]

Indeed, the *GreenMyApple* website included a statement acknowledging that the magnitude of the e-waste problem may require more than encouraging one company to make voluntary changes: "A complete solution [to the e-waste problem] requires action from the *entire electronics industry* to make cleaner, longer lasting products *and governments* to prevent the dumping of e-waste."[339] While this statement nods to the need for larger changes from the electronics industry and government, the campaign never gives similar recognition to the role of consumerism in contributing to the e-waste problem.

In contrast, a number of scholars link the e-waste problem to the ideology of consumerism and a disposable culture. Giles Slade, author of *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America*, argues that e-waste is the result of an extreme version of the modern consumer's desire for "whatever is new and original over what is old, traditional, durable, or used."[340] He writes:

> At first glance, it might seem that responsibility for the looming crisis of electronic waste can simply be laid at the door of greedy IT manufacturers and marketers. But identifying who actually creates e-waste is intricate…. the actions

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[338] Juliet Eilperin, "EPA Lets Electronic Waste Flow Freely, GAO Report Says," *Washington Post*, September 17 2008, Elisabeth Rosenthal, "Smuggling Europe's Waste to Poorer Countries," *New York Times*, September 27 2009, 60 Minutes, "Following the Trail of Toxic E-Waste: 60 Minutes Follows America's Toxic Electronic Waste as It Is Illegally Shipped to Become China's Dirty Secret," *CBS* (2009, January 2), http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/08/19/60minutes/main4579229.shtml, CBC News, "E-Waste Still Being Exported, Says Watchdog," *CBC News* (2010, January 5), http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2010/01/05/consumer-ewaste-recycle.html, Chris Carroll, "High Tech Trash: Will Your Discarded TV or Computer End up in a Ditch in Ghana?," *National Geographic*, January 2008.

[339] Emphasis mine, Greenpeace, "Questions About the Campaign," http://www.greenmyapple.org/questions.html.

[340] Slade, *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America*, 265.

> and habits of America's consumers threaten to flood the world with toxins, just as surely as do the misguided priorities of multinational corporations.[341]

Slade is not alone in assigning responsibility for the e-waste problem and solution to both consumers and corporations. Jonathan Sterne similarly suggests:

> A seemingly endless cycle of creation and disposal is driven by the dreams of users who seek that killer application and by manufacturers who stay above the bottom line only so long as they anticipate the underground burial of next year's new product.[342]

Scholars who link the e-waste problem to consumers *and* manufacturers suggest that in addition to product redesign by electronics companies, addressing the e-waste problem will require adjusting our culture of consumerism and disposability. In Lisa Parks' examination of the television series *Junkyard Wars*, she stresses the need for more cultural sites that challenge consumerism and the values of "novelty, speed, and style."[343] She praises *Junkyard Wars* as a site that celebrates "practices of technological salvaging, repurposing, and recycling" and values "longevity, tinkering, and making do."[344]

Unlike these scholars, the *GreenMyApple* campaign does not challenge a consumerist ideology that celebrates the "next best thing" at the cost of casually discarding the previous "next best thing." Instead, the campaign promised a form of environmental action that did not challenge consumers' "fetishization of the new."[345] Apple consumers were encouraged to "demand *a new, cool product*: a greener Apple."[346] They could then "go green" by consuming the "new, cool product"—not by purchasing less or using their old computer longer. As such, the campaign did not challenge the

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[341] Ibid., 263.
[342] Jonathan Sterne, "Out with the Trash: On the Future of New Media," in *Residual Media*, ed. Charles R. Acland (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 29.
[343] Lisa Parks, "Falling Apart: Electronics Salvaging and the Global Media Economy," in *Residual Media*, ed. Charles R. Acland (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 39-40.
[344] Ibid.
[345] Slade, *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America*, 27.
[346] Emphasis mine, Greenpeace, "About Us."

"psychological obsolescence" of computers—the consumer's "belief that whatever is old is undesirable, dysfunctional, and embarrassing, compared with what is new."[347] It only challenged Apple to manufacture a product that would be less harmful when discarded by the fickle consumer.

Although an ideological critique of the neoliberal consumerist logic of the *GreenMyApple* campaign identifies valid limitations of this mode of advocacy, it fails to account for the productive capacity of the campaign to get individuals excited about taking action. Yes—in elevating a market-based solution the campaign overshadowed the importance of adopting and enforcing a sufficient regulatory system. Yes—in focusing on the responsibility of the corporation, the campaign underestimated the importance of the "actions and habits of America's consumers." [348] But the campaign did successfully activate thousands of individuals to take action to pressure Apple. Stopping at the level of ideological critique risks overestimating the importance of the meanings and ideologies advanced by the campaign and underestimating other dimensions of its effectivity. The *GreenMyApple* campaign may not have challenged the logic of consumerism, but as I develop more in a later section, it used the affective resources of the consumer to get individuals excited about addressing the e-waste problem.

The next section further establishes the context of the campaign in order to demonstrate why creating a connection between consumers and the e-waste problem is an important contribution of the *GreenMyApple* campaign.

[347] Slade, *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America*, 50.
[348] Ibid., 263.

What E-Waste?: The (Im)Materiality of Electronic Communication

> *"It's hard to judge if most buyers consider the environment when buying electronics. Most shopper surveys don't ask about it, probably because most shoppers don't think about it. That's not surprising, as the environmental impact of an electronic product can be hard to see… Preventing that kind of indirect harm is a tough sell."*
>
> *- USA Today, 2007*[349]

> *"High-tech electronics have created "virtual worlds" and foster the illusion that we have left the material world behind. Since the 1960s, as technology zoomed ahead, as a society we paid attention to what the gigabytes could bring us and ignored the mountain of plastics, metals, leaded glass, and chemicals that grew each time we upgraded our hardware."*
>
> *- Elizabeth Grossman*[350]

Although many individuals, advocacy groups, scientific studies, and government agencies recognize the environmental and health risks associated with e-waste and encourage the redesign, reuse, and extended use of computers and other electronic devices, the toxic byproducts of new communication technologies continue to accumulate.[351] In this section I suggest that the failure to resolve the problem of e-waste stems in large part from the inability of consumers to *sense* the environmental problem. Even when presented with information about the devastating environmental and health effects of e-waste, consumers are rarely provided with a sensory experience of the e-waste problem or a feeling that their actions are directly connected to it. This perceptual disconnection is created not only by the spatial and temporal distance of e-waste, but also by discursive representations and perceptions of electronic communication as immaterial.

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[349] Michelle Kessler, "Tech's Green Problems: Electonics Makers Break out the Environmentally Friendly Initiatives," *USA Today*, July 17 2007.

[350] Elizabeth Grossman, *High Tech Trash: Digital Devices, Hidden Toxics, and Human Health* (Washington: Island Press/Shearwater Books, 2006), 262.

[351] Basel Action Network, "Welcome to the Basel Action Network - Ban," http://www.ban.org/index.html, Toxics Link, http://www.toxicslink.org/, Greenpeace, http://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaigns/toxics/electronics, Stephen E. Musson et al., "Characterization of Lead Leachability from Cathode Ray Tubes Using the Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure," *Environmental Science & Technology* 34, no. 20 (2000), EPA, "Ecycling," http://www.epa.gov/ecycling/.

Electronic communication is often talked about as if it were an a-material practice not reliant on the physical world of bodies and environmental resources, and this perceived immateriality further conceals the environmental impacts associated with discarded electronics.

While sensory experience and direct perception are not necessarily required to acknowledge environmental problems, the lack of such perception may enable us to more easily overlook them. In Matthew Kirschenbaum's study of electronic texts, he refers to the "belief that electronic objects are immaterial simply because we cannot touch them" as "the tactile fallacy."[352] Although false, our common sense understandings of materiality often operate according to the tactile fallacy, leading us to associate matter only with directly perceivable objects. Lacking this quality of immediate sensibility, e-waste that is out of sight is frequently ignored. The remainder of this section illustrates how consumers' perceptions of the e-waste problem may be impeded by spatial and temporal distancing and the supposed "immateriality" of electronic communication.

Spatial and Temporal Distance

A number of scholars and advocacy groups have specifically examined how the spatial and temporal distance of e-waste impedes our ability to address the problem. In Jennifer Clapp's discussion of "the mounting problem of distancing" she points to the consequences of increasing the geographical distance between consumers and e-waste:

[352] Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, "Editing the Interface: Textual Studies and First Generation Electronic Objects," in *Text: An Interdisciplinary Annual of Textual Studies*, ed. W. Speed Hill and Edward M. Burns (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 43.

"[o]nce waste is out of sight, people tend to forget about it."[353] In Alastair Iles's analysis of environmental justice and technology flows, he suggests that "great distances... pervade the computer industry, making it hard to see technology impacts across the whole life cycle."[354] The authors of *Challenging the Chip* similarly link ignorance of the "health and ecological footprints of the global electronics industry" to the fact that it "remains largely hidden from most consumers' view."[355] The Basel Action Network also points to the export of e-waste "from rich industrialised countries to poorer developing countries" as problematic because the participants in electronic communication are no longer forced to directly confront the "toxic waste, dangerous products and polluting technologies."[356] Embedded in these critiques is the problem of distance as a barrier to perceiving the environmental consequences of e-waste. By this logic, the material impacts of e-waste are overlooked because the yearly accumulation of some 2 million tons of U.S. e-waste is sent away to distant landfills or "recycled" in developing countries.[357] The spatial distance between a computer monitor and a chromium mine, or between a keyboard and contaminated drinking water, prevents immediate or "tactile" perception of the environmental problem. Although "[c]omputers have become

[353] Jennifer Clapp, "The Distancing of Waste: Overconsumption in a Global Economy," in *Confronting Consumption*, ed. Thomas Princen, Michael Maniates, and Ken Conca (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 173, 58.
[354] Alastair Iles, "Mapping Environmental Justice in Technology Flows: Computer Waste Impacts in Asia," *Global Environmental Politics* 4, no. 4 (2004): 79.
[355] Ted Smith, David A. Sonnenfeld, and David N. Pellow, "The Quest for Sustainability and Justice in a High-Tech World," in *Challenging the Chip: Labor Rights and Environmental Justice in the Global Electronics Industry*, ed. Ted Smith, David A. Sonnenfeld, and David Naguib Pellow (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 1.
[356] Basel Action Network, "Welcome to the Basel Action Network - Ban."
[357] According to the EPA, "[i]n 2005, used or unwanted electronics amounted to approximately 1.9 to 2.2 million tons. Of that, about 1.5 to 1.9 million tons were primarily discarded in landfills, and only 345,000 to 379,000 tons were recycled." EPA, "Ecycling."

disposable consumer goods," Sterne explains, "the fact of their disposal is largely hidden from the front spaces of social life."[358]

In addition to the spatial displacement which prevents consumers from sensing the accumulation of e-waste, the environmental impacts of e-waste are also deferred through time. From plastics, lead, and chromium to mercury, arsenic, silica, and more, there are numerous "materials of health concern in a typical desktop computer."[359] However, the potential environmental and health impacts of these materials are long term. They do not immediately impact the consumer or the environment during computer use or immediately after discarding the computer. Scientific studies and government warnings that identify environmental and health risks associated with new communication technologies locate these concerns in a distant, future time. One study on the polybrominated diphenyl ethers found in the plastic casing of computers suggests this halogenated flame-retardant "may slowly volatilize into the environment during the product's lifetime."[360] The effects of such a slow break down are not immediately observable at the time of consumption, and may even be deferred onto future generations.[361] Such delays contribute to the difficulty in perceiving the problem of e-waste, as the environmental and health impacts are not readily apparent. In addition to dangerous materials gradually released over the working lifespan of electronic products,

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[358] Sterne, "Out with the Trash: On the Future of New Media," 18.
[359] Charles W. Schmidt, "E-Junk Explosion," *Environmental Health Perspectives* 110, no. 4 (2002): A190.
[360] Craig M. Butt et al., "Spatial Distribution of Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers in Southern Ontario as Measured in Indoor and Outdoor Window Organic Films," *Environmental Science & Technology* 38 (2004): 724.
Although the "more problematic" brominated flame retardants are no longer used in new computers, they continue to present disposal problems in older computers. EPA, "Ecycling: Frequent Questions," http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/recycle/ecycling/faq.htm.
[361] Polybrominated diphenyl ethers are associated with "endocrine disruption and affects on fetal development," so their release into the environment has troubling implications for future generations. Schmidt, "E-Junk Explosion," A190.

the hazardous elements burned, leached, and leaked from improperly discarded electronics further extend the temporal distance between computer use and perceivable environmental effects. The EPA identifies lead, mercury, cadmium, and brominated flame retardants as "substances of concern in electronics… [that] can cause problems if the products are not properly managed at end of life."[362] The phrase "end of life" points to the gap in time between computer use and its environmental impacts. Similarly, the authors of a study on the "characterization of lead leachability from cathode ray tubes (CRTs)" in computer monitors conclude that "[t]hese CRTs should be considered hazardous waste, and their disposal should be managed accordingly."[363] Because the environmental and health threats of most electronic communication technologies are postponed in our discourses and perceptions until "disposal," the environmental problems of e-waste are not only distanced in space, but also in time. The average consumer is thus not able to sense how their "clean" high tech computer is contributing to the contamination and degradation of the environment

Electronic Communication as Immaterial

The problem of spatial and temporal distancing of e-waste is compounded by the common perception and representation of electronic communication as immaterial. Because the very process of using computers for electronic communication effaces their materiality, the environmental problems become even more difficult to perceive. Although a number of scholars have critiqued the practice of ignoring the physical materials involved in electronic communication (from bodies to physical computers),

[362] EPA, "Ecycling: Frequent Questions."
[363] Musson et al., "Characterization of Lead Leachability from Cathode Ray Tubes Using the Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure," 4380.

assumptions about the a-materiality of electronic communication are embedded in our culture.

In addition to the physical properties of e-waste that make it difficult to perceive, the spatial and temporal characteristics of electronic communication make the practice itself seem immaterial. First, because the materials involved in electronic communication are often very small, the decrease in size is mistaken for a dematerialization, rather than a displacement of materiality from matter to energy. That is, electronic communication seems spatially immaterial due to the drastic reduction in size and space associated with communication via computers. Electronic communication is often talked about as eliminating the reliance of communication on physical matter, as the small size of many technologies decreases the space needed to store books or files and eliminates the need for paper and other materials associated with written or print communication. Grossman captures this sense in her characterization of the semiconductors and microchips involved in electronic communication as "tiny" and "dwarfs."[364] She suggests that "[b]ecause high tech enables us to store encyclopedias' worth of information on something smaller than a donut, we have—until very recently—overlooked the fact that miniaturization is not dematerialization."[365] In a study on the "energy and material use in the production of semiconductor devices," Eric Williams et al. similarly critique the assumption that the microchip is "a prime example of dematerialization."[366] Instead, they discuss the microchip as an example of "secondary materialization," rather than "dematerialization" because its production actually requires "additional secondary materials and energy," not

[364] Grossman, *High Tech Trash: Digital Devices, Hidden Toxics, and Human Health*, 4.
[365] Ibid., 9.
[366] Eric D. Williams, Robert U. Ayres, and Miriam Heller, "The 1.7 Kilogram Microchip: Energy and Material Use in the Production of Semiconductor Devices," *Environmental Science & Technology* 36, no. 24 (2002): 5509.

"radical reductions in the amount of materials (and/or energy)."[367] This idea of secondary materialization suggests that the apparent dematerialization of electronic communication is actually a displacement of materiality. While the microchip is physically small, its material energy costs are large, but not directly perceivable. Despite the Einsteinian revolution that demonstrated the equivalence of matter and energy, energy costs continue to be overlooked by our discourses and perceptions that rely on the tactile fallacy. Because electronic communication frequently eliminates or downsizes the directly perceivable matter of older forms of communication, such as books and filing cabinets, the small but energy intensive process is mistakenly perceived as immaterial. A blog post on treehugger.com highlights this tendency to "see digital files as existing in some kind of limbo – if they are not using up paper, or taking up storage space in our filing cabinets, what kind of impact can they have?"[368] As the physical space requirements of communication are replaced by energy requirements, the materiality is displaced beyond immediate sensory perception.

Second, in addition to spatial perceptions of immateriality, the rapidity of electronic communication also makes it difficult to sense the material dimensions. Grossman captures this iteration of the tactile fallacy in her characterization of the currency of electronic communication as "so physically ephemeral—that it's hard to remember that the technology that makes it possible has anything to do with the natural world."[369] Like the telegraph, which first overcame the physical barrier that limited communication to the speed of transportation, Slack and Wise suggest electronic

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[367] Ibid.
[368] Sami Grover, "The Footprint of Gmail: How Much Energy Would Deleting Email Save?," *TreeHugger* (February 17, 2008), http://www.treehugger.com/files/2008/02/the_footprint_o_1.php.
[369] Grossman, *High Tech Trash: Digital Devices, Hidden Toxics, and Human Health*, 5.

communication and the rapid electrical transmission of information appears "clean, mysterious, even supernatural," because it occurs without visibly moving physical materials.[370] Because the material processes involved in transferring electronic communication take place at a speed (and size) not perceivable to the unaided human eye, the physical materiality is often obscured. The instantaneous quality of an e-mail or instant message conceals the physical processes implicated in their transmission. As with the perceived dematerialization associated with electronic communication's reduction of size and space requirements, the acceleration of the speed of communication beyond the perception of human senses is often misinterpreted as an elimination, rather than displacement, of materiality. Although the transport of electrons through wires still occurs physically, the speed and scale of movement are not observable, and this contributes to immaterial perceptions and discourses.

Beyond the physical properties of electronic communication that contribute to perceptions of immateriality, assumptions about the non-materiality of electronic communication permeate popular narratives. From science fiction to advertisements, computer magazines, and everyday conversations, electronic communication is frequently talked about as immaterial. William Gibson's seminal science fiction novel, *Neuromancer*, helped popularize this non-material orientation with his creation of "cyberspace," where the "disembodied consciousness" could be projected into a "consensual hallucination experienced by billions of legitimate operators… [a] graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human

[370] Slack and Wise, *Culture + Technology: A Primer*, 15.

system."[371] As Gibson presented the "bodiless exultation of cyberspace" that "had no particular relationship with the [cyberspace] deck's physical whereabouts," he promoted a view of computer and electronic communication technology as disembodied, where the "meat" of the body was left behind for the world of cyberspace.[372] The more recent *Matrix* films add further fuel to this myth of an immaterial computer world inhabited by minds apart from bodies as "the matrix" is occupied by human minds, while the physical human bodies remain behind in the "real" world.[373]

In addition to these fictional narratives, other common discourses about electronic communication have historically taken on a decidedly immaterial tone. A 1997 television advertisement for MCI presents a disembodied computer world where: "There is no race. There is no gender. There is no age. There are no infirmities. There are only minds. Utopia? No, Internet."[374] Even popular computer magazines, which often discuss the details of the physical computer equipment and programs involved in electronic communication, contain frequent references suggesting immateriality. The first issue of *PC World* includes diagrams and discussions of the workings of disk drives and expansion boards, but the author of an article on "Do-It-Yourself Ram" expresses disappointment when he looks inside his computer and finds not "shining wheels and odometers with spaces for all the bits and bytes," but "quiet, passive circuit boards"

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[371] William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 20th anniversary ed. (New York: Ace Books, 2004/1984), 6, 69.In the afterword of the 20th anniversary edition, Jack Womack credits Gibson with creating cyberspace, 359.
[372] Ibid., 7, 139.
[373] Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachoswki, "The Matrix," (1999).
[374] This advertisement has been cited and analyzed in a number of works on virtual and cyberculture: Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. Macgregor Wise, "Cultural Studies and Communication Technology," in *Handbook of New Media: Social Shaping and Social Consequences of ICTs*, ed. Leah A. Lievrouw and Sonia M. Livingstone (London: Sage, 2006), 152, Beth E. Kolko, *Virtual Publics: Policy and Community in an Electronic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 7, Lisa Nakamura, ""Where Do You Want to Go Today?": Cybernetic Tourism, the Internet, and Transnationality," in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 2002), 255.

where "[n]othing moved or blinked; the blazing speed of computers was nowhere evident."[375] While the explanation that "[n]o bits or bytes exist physically inside a computer" helps to unpack the workings of the technology, it also contributes to the perceived immateriality, as the operations of electronic communication cannot even be seen when looking inside a physical computer.[376] The premier issue of *Wired* magazine similarly advances an immaterial outlook with feature articles touting a wireless email "gadget that lets you grab your e-mail out of thin air" and "libraries without walls for books without pages," where books are no longer "hoarded in subterranean stacks" but are "scanned into computers and made available to anyone, anywhere, almost instantly, over high-speed networks."[377] Articles such as these suggest that the barriers of physical distance fall away as access to databases and information is possible "without leaving [your] desk."[378]

Whether discussed as the disembodied hallucinations of cyberspace or the transfer of information without perceivable movement, recent scholars have begun critiquing a-material understandings of electronic communication. Sterne criticizes new media scholars who succumb to the "shadows of Augustine and Descartes," suggesting:

> Emphasis on virtuality, the ethereal, ideational, immaterial, and experiential dimensions of new media leads many writers to accept the myriad strategies that states, institutions, and individuals use to move computer trash into the backspaces of modern life.[379]

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[375] Charles Kelly, "Do-It-Yourself Ram," *PC World* 1983, 182.
[376] Ibid., 187.
[377] "Wireless E-Mail," *Wired* 1993, 85, John Browning, "Libraries without Walls for Books without Pages," *Wired* 1993, 62.
[378] Browning, "Libraries without Walls for Books without Pages," 62.
[379] Sterne, "Out with the Trash: On the Future of New Media," 15.

In contrast, Stern emphasizes the materiality of using computers, from "the body left behind in standard tales of online subjectivity" to the "bits of infrastructure proper."[380] In Richard Grusin's work on the electronic author, he also criticizes the frequent "unproblematic characterization" of electronic writing as "immaterial, ephemeral, evanescent."[381] Grusin calls for careful consideration of the "recurrent trope of dematerialization used to represent the consequence of electronic technologies," reminding us that "these ephemeral electromagnetic traces are dependent on extremely material hardware, software, communication networks, institutional and corporate structures, support personnel, and so on."[382] Marlene Manoff likewise articulates the significance of the materiality of electronic objects in the context of library collections, critiquing "early theorists of the electronic environment [who] made much of the ostensible immateriality of digital objects."[383] She calls attention to the "machines made of metal, plastic, and polymers" and "[n]etworks composed of fiber optic cables, wires, switches, routers, and hubs" that are involved in accessing electronic texts and data.[384] Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. MacGregor Wise similarly critique the trend in which "[i]t is often made to seem as if new technologies are themselves incorporeal: the mere bits of cyberspace…. where material structures (especially the body) are abandoned and subjects are left to play in 'the city of bits'"[385] Contrary to this trend, they argue that "we need to

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[380] Ibid., 17.
[381] Richard A. Grusin, "What Is an Electronic Author?: Theory and the Technological Fallacy," *Configurations* 2, no. 3 (1994): 476.
[382] Ibid.: 481, 76.
[383] Marlene Manoff, "The Materiality of Digital Collections: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 6, no. 3 (2006): 312.
[384] Ibid.
[385] Slack and Wise, "Cultural Studies and Communication Technology," 154, 55. Slack and Wise cite the following as representative examples: William J. Mitchell, *City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf,

realize that these technologies also operate in the realm of corporeal agency, despite the seeming ephemerality of the digital."[386] By pointing to the limitations of immaterial discourses and approaches, these critics help to illustrate how narratives of immateriality contribute to the difficulty of perceiving the e-waste problem.

Taken together, the spatial and temporal distancing of e-waste and the misperception of electronic communication as an a-material practice not connected to physical environmental matter create a perceptual challenge to addressing the e-waste problem. Not only are most individuals spatially and temporally distant from the physical problem of e-waste, but the perceived immateriality of electronic communication further masks the physical presence of the very machines that create the problem. Understanding these obstacles and the fact that the e-waste problem persists in spite of increasing information about its environmental and health risks suggests that resolving this problem may require not just correcting the tactile fallacy by providing information about e-waste—that is, telling consumers: "even though you can't sense it, it's there"—but also adapting to the sources of the tactile fallacy and finding a way to make these problems materially present and perceivable for consumers.

As Celeste Condit's theorization of a "modal materialism" suggests, there are multiple forms or arrangements that matter can take.[387] In addition to the physical environmental matter of e-waste, electronic communication may also produce affective modes of response that are materially felt in the human body. Although the physical material of e-waste is removed from consumers' immediate perception, an affective

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1995), Hans P. Moravec, *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[386] Slack and Wise, "Cultural Studies and Communication Technology," 154.

[387] Condit, "Race and Genetics from a Modal Materialist Perspective," 384.

awareness of the e-waste problem may be made immediately and materially present through corporeal sensation. The next section examines how Greenpeace appropriated the affective resources of the Apple brand for an interactive online campaign that would create just such an embodied, sensory experience of the e-waste problem.

Appropriating Apple: Creating an Affective Connection to E-Waste

Capitalizing on the success of the Apple brand and its capacity to engage consumers, the *GreenMyApple* campaign transformed the abstract and distant problem of e-waste into the immediate and personally felt one of iWaste. The campaign did not just *inform* consumers about the e-waste problem and the need for "greening" the computer industry—it used consumers' affective attachment to the Apple brand to get them to *feel* the problem. Rather than challenge the role of consumers and their excitement about consuming and using Apple products, Greenpeace channeled consumers' love and pride in Apple into feelings of connection and responsibility for the problem. It then encouraged the Apple consumer to "use your Mac to make Macs better" by participating in the online campaign to pressure Apple.[388]

Apple is widely recognized for its success in brand marketing and the loyalty of Apple customers is well-know. They are humorously referred to as "Apple's faithful, Mac zealots, members of the cult of Mac, Appleholics, Macheads, Maccies, Macolytes and Mac addicts," and "the biannual Macworld conference is often compared to a religious revival meeting, where Steve Jobs is worshipped like a rock star, or a

[388] Greenpeace, "Procreate."

charismatic cult leader."[389] Previous scholarly work has attempted to account for Apple's notable success in brand marketing. Ronald Shield's analysis of Apple's "Think Different" campaign shows how the corporation sought to build a "reputation as the computer of choice for creative young professionals."[390] Eric Jenkin's analysis of Apple's iPod commercials demonstrates how "the participatory and ritualistic nature of iconic form helps inspire a cult following."[391] An article in *Wired*, "Apple: It's All About the Brand," cites numerous marketing experts who suggest the Apple brand is "key to the company's success" and responsible for the loyalty of Mac users.[392] *Emotional Branding* author Marc Gobé describes Apple as the "archetypal emotional brand," suggesting that Apple has created a "humanistic, beyond-business relationship with users and created a cult-like relationship with their brand."[393] Through this relationship, customers who choose the "Apple tribe" become "part of the brand."[394] This kind of identification is reinforced in commercials ("I'm a Mac") and other materials on the Apple website ("Which Mac are you?") that equate the consumer with the product they choose.[395]

The strength of Apple's brand identity may explain why Greenpeace asked consumers to pressure the company but not boycott it. Unlike a conventional boycott, the *GreenMyApple* campaign did not endorse buying greener alternatives instead of Apple products. In response to the question, "Do you want me to ditch my Apple?", Greenpeace

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[389] Leander Kahney, "Mac Loyalists: Don't Tread on Us," *Wired* (December 2, 2002), http://www.wired.com/gadgets/mac/news/2002/12/56575?currentPage=2.
[390] Ronald E. Shields, "The Force of Callas' Kiss: The 1997 Apple Advertising Campaign, 'Think Different'," *Text & Performance Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (2001): 204.
[391] Eric Jenkins, "My Ipod, My Icon: How and Why Do Images Become Icons?," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 25, no. 5 (2008): 467.
[392] Leander Kahney, "Apple: It's All About the Brand," *Wired*(December 4, 2002), http://www.wired.com/gadgets/mac/commentary/cultofmac/2002/12/56677.
[393] As cited in Ibid.
[394] As cited in Ibid.
[395] Apple, "Watch the Ads," http://www.apple.com/getamac/ads/, ———, "Which Mac Are You?," http://www.apple.com/getamac/whichmac/.

explicitly stated: "this is not a campaign against Apple – it's a campaign to change Apple for the better….As an Apple customer it's vital that you tell Apple you want them to be a green leader now."[396] The first words of the *GreenMyApple* campaign were "We love Apple," and "Apple love" was a central component of the campaign.[397] This pro-Apple orientation differs from past Greenpeace campaigns that have boycotted corporations with poor environmental records. For example, Greenpeace's *Kleercut* campaign (2004-2009) told participants: "Don't purchase Kimberly-Clark tissue products. Choose ancient forest friendly alternatives instead."[398] In contrast, the *GreenMyApple* campaign was "not about bruising Apple's image" but pushing Apple to be an environmental leader.[399] Even when providing information about the environmental problems associated with Apple products, the campaign affirmed Apple's status as a "cutting edge company" and encouraged Apple consumers to utilize Apple products to create messages for the campaign.[400]

Presenting the campaign for a greener Apple as the act of a loving fan may have accomplished a number of important functions for Greenpeace. First, it enabled the organization to avoid alienating Apple consumers. As discussed above, Apple consumers are known for being fiercely loyal to the brand, so a direct attack from an outsider might be more easily dismissed than the concerns of a fellow "Apple believer." By positioning itself as an insider—"we Apple fans want a greener Apple"—Greenpeace established its credibility with Apple consumers. Second, and more importantly for my argument, the sentiment of love that courses throughout the campaign fostered a sense of connection to

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[396] Greenpeace, "Questions About the Campaign."
[397] _____, "Green My Apple Bears Fruit."
[398] _____, "Kleercut," http://kleercut.net/en/takeaction.
[399] _____, "About the Campaign."
[400] Ibid.

the e-waste problem. The campaign not only acknowledged the existence of Apple love, it used that love and attachment to bring Apple consumers closer to the Apple e-waste problem.

The following sections analyze specifically how the *GreenMyApple* campaign utilized the success of the Apple brand to encourage Apple consumers to perceive and respond to the problem of e-waste. I suggest that the campaign transformed feelings of identification with the Apple brand into an identification with Apple's e-waste problem by simultaneously associating the Apple brand with e-waste and using consumers' affective attachment to the Apple brand to connect them to the e-waste problem. The actions promoted by the campaign—"use your Mac to make Macs better"—then reinforced the consumer's connection to both Apple and the e-waste problem.[401]

Transforming E-Waste into iWaste

The *GreenMyApple* campaign connected Apple consumers to the e-waste problem in a number of ways. The website informed consumers that:

> Right now, *poison Apples* full of chemicals (like toxic flame retardants, and polyvinyl chloride) are being sold worldwide. When they're tossed, they usually end up at the fingertips of children in China, India and other developing-world countries. They dismantle them for parts, and are exposed to a dangerous toxic cocktail that threatens their health and the environment.[402]

The website described the "hazardous substances" and dangerous chemicals found in Apple's "Macs, iPods, iBooks, and the rest of their product range."[403] It presented detailed timelines, comparisons, and goals for Apple to have less toxic computers.[404] It

[401] ———, "Procreate."
[402] Emphasis mine, ———, "About the Campaign."
[403] Ibid.
[404] ———, "iPoison + iWaste."

also provided images of children standing amidst piles of e-waste, holding computer parts with identifiable Apple logos. The campaign further juxtaposed Apple's reputation—"sleek looks, amazing design, meticulous attention to detail"—with their "ugly" environmental problems—"toxic chemicals inside, short life spans and allowing their products to be dumped in Asia."[405]

It is perhaps not surprising that a campaign targeting the policies of a particular company would highlight the problems of that company and its products, but the *GreenMyApple* campaign went beyond *informing* consumers of the connection between Apple and the e-waste problem. The campaign also *showed* consumers the connection by appropriating the Apple aesthetic in campaign materials. As suggested in the introduction, the GMA website was "designed to look like Apple's own site."[406] Greenpeace copied the Apple aesthetic so closely that upon first glance, viewers may have thought they were viewing the Apple website (Figures 6 and 7). Content on the *GreenMyApple* homepage was arranged in a layout similar to the Apple site—in image boxes with rounded corners set against a white background.[407] The tabs across the top of the *GreenMyApple* site also mimicked the coloration, shape, font, and content of those on the Apple site, with a few notable modifications. Greenpeace replaced the grey Apple icon with a green Apple icon, the *iPod + iTunes* tab with an *iPoison + iWaste* tab, and the *.Mac* tab with a *.mAct* tab.[408] Additionally, while the grey color of the Greenpeace tabs matched the coloration of the Apple tabs, when users clicked on the Greenpeace

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[405] Ibid.
[406] ———, "Green My Apple Bears Fruit."
[407] This comparative analysis of the Apple and *GreenMyApple* website relies on the September 2006 archive accessed through the Internet Archive's "Way Back Machine" (http://www.archive.org)
[408] The tabs on the Apple site in September 2006 appeared in the following order: Apple icon – Store – iPod + iTunes – .Mac – QuickTime – Support – Mac OS X. The tabs on the Greenpeace site appeared in the following order: green Apple icon – About – iPoison + iWaste – .mAct – ProCreate – iPush.

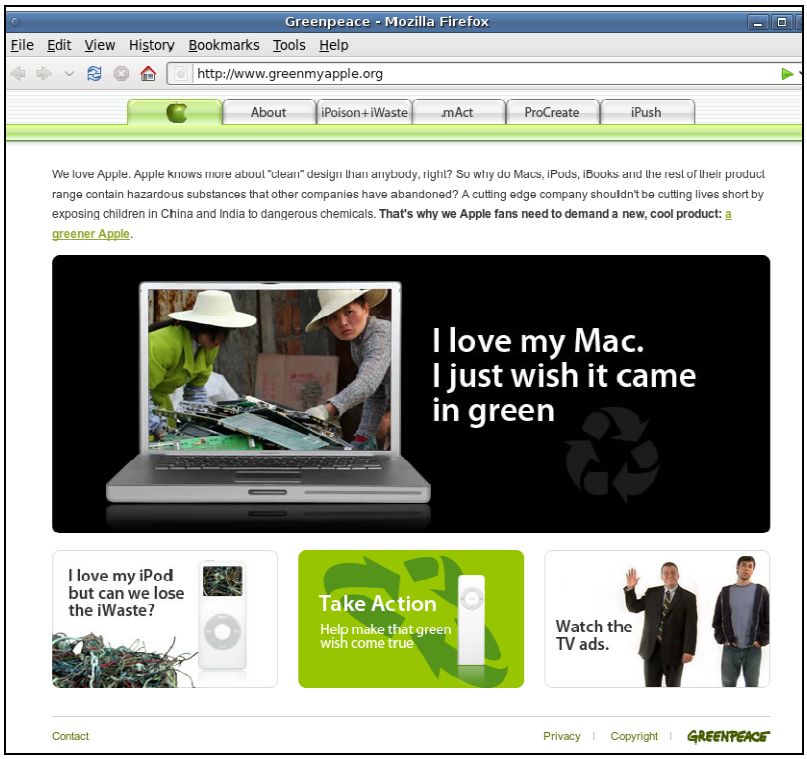

Figure 6: GreenMyApple.org

Figure 7: Apple.com After the Site Added “A Greener Apple” Logo

tabs, they turned from grey to green. Throughout the *GreenMyApple* website, Greenpeace leaned on the aesthetic and associations of the Apple brand. Even at the level of individual words, the campaign appropriated the company's use of the distinctive lowercase first letter combined with an uppercase second letter: "I love my iPod but can we lose the iWaste?"[409] By assigning the aesthetic of the words "iPod," "iTunes," or "iMac," to "iPoison," "iWaste," "mAct," or "iPush," Greenpeace linked Apple products to the environmental hazards identified by the campaign. It relied on visual brand recognition to not only grab the attention of Apple consumers, but to further reinforce the association between Apple and the e-waste problem. This use of the Apple aesthetic enhanced the felt connection between Apple products and environmental hazards by creating a visual link between the Apple brand and the campaign against toxic e-waste.

The visual association between Apple and the *GreenMyApple* campaign was also reinforced by events at Apple stores, which appropriated not just the Apple aesthetic, but used the entire Apple store to spread the message. When Greenpeace activists illuminated Apple's flagship stores in New York and San Francisco with green lights, they visually "greened" Apple, turning the store itself into a campaign message.[410]

By providing information about Apple's contribution to the e-waste problem and appropriating the tools of the Apple brand—its aesthetics and even its stores—the campaign encouraged Apple consumers to identify Apple with the e-waste problem and the need to "go green." But the campaign did not stop at associating the Apple brand with

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[409] Greenpeace, "Green My Apple," http://www.greenmyapple.org, ———, "Green My Apple Bears Fruit."

[410] AppleInsider Staff, "Macworld: Activists Plan 'Dramatic Greening' of Apple Store SF at 6:00pm," *Apple Insider* (2007, January 8), http://www.appleinsider.com/articles/07/01/08/macworld_activists_plan_dramatic_greening_of_apple_store_sf_at_600pm.html.

e-waste. It used consumers' identification with the Apple brand to further associate the consumers themselves with the e-waste problem.

The "Hug your Mac" component of the *GreenMyApple* campaign exemplifies how Greenpeace encouraged Apple consumers to sense their own connection to Apple's e-waste problem. To participate in the "Hug your Mac" action, Apple consumers were instructed to:

1. Download the [campaign] desktop picture to your Mac
2. Install it on your desktop
3. Take a snap of yourself showing how much you love your Mac but just wish it came in green. Go on - stroke it, give it a hug or even a kiss!
4. Then share your picture with us - the easiest way is to send your picture by email.[411]

Apple lovers from across the globe participated in the "Hug your Mac" action by posting pictures of themselves hugging, kissing, touching, pointing, holding, and otherwise embracing their "Green my Apple"-sporting Mac laptops, monitors, and iPods on desks, couches, beds, and other spaces in computer labs, offices, and homes.[412] Like the rest of the campaign, the desktop picture they downloaded to their Macs appropriated the Apple aesthetic. It featured a neon green box (set against a black background) with a silhouetted figure characteristic of the recent dancing iPod commercials and the written text: "iLove my Apple. I just wish it came in Green. greenmyapple.org" (Figure 8). In the image, the iconic white iPod cord is positioned in the shape of a heart and ends in an Apple icon, rather than an iPod.

[411] Greenpeace, "I Wish It Came in Green," http://www.greenmyapple.org/hug.html.
[412] The captions on flickr identify individuals from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Ecuador, UK, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, Italy, Israel, UAE, and China among other places. "I Want It Green," *flickr* (2007), http://www.flickr.com/photos/greenmyapple/sets/72157594471078946/.

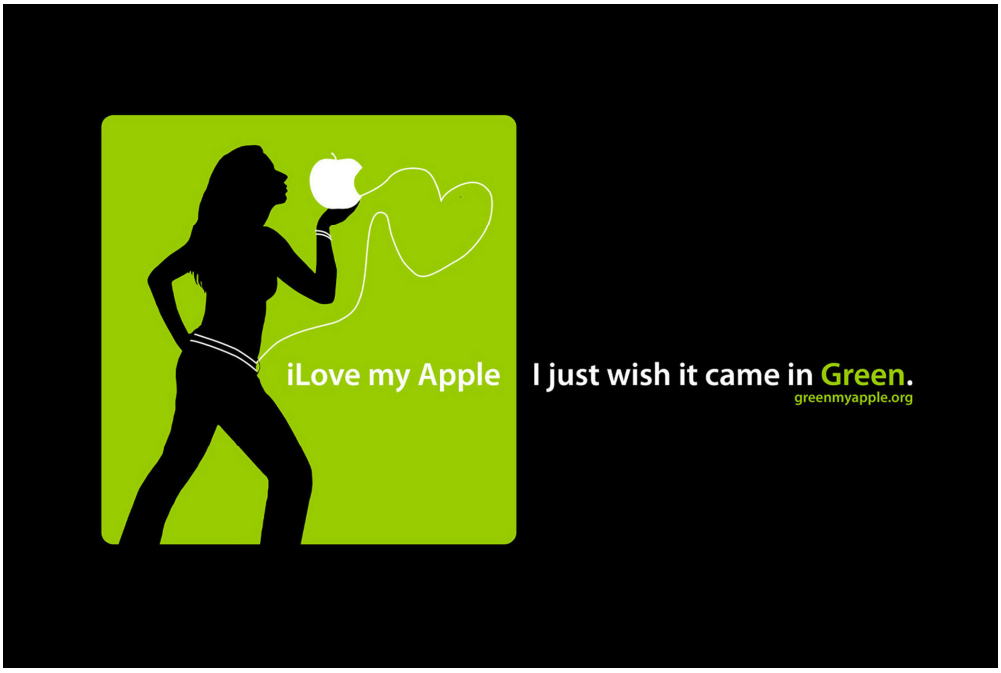

Figure 8: *GreenMyApple* Desktop Picture

Greenpeace presented the "Hug your Mac" action as a way to "visualise support for the campaign," and the appearance of "all sorts of images of green Mac love… being posted on the popular photo-sharing site, Flickr," did contribute to the visibility of the campaign.[413] However, perhaps more significant than the visibility created by this action was the affective attachment encouraged by the creation and circulation of the photographs. By inviting consumers to locate the *GreenMyApple* logo on their own Mac and then "show it a little affection," the campaign used consumers' affective attachment to Apple computers and the Apple brand to help them feel personally connected to the environmental problem of e-waste.[414] Consumers who "hugged their Macs" embraced not only the Apple brand, but their personal connection to environmental problems critiqued by the Greenpeace campaign. The physical expressions of love and attachment brought

[413] _____, "I Wish It Came in Green.", "I Want It Green."
[414] Greenpeace, "Green My Apple Bears Fruit."

the e-waste problem into consumers' homes and offices—transforming the environmental problem from an abstract and distant concern into a perceivable problem created by the *particular* Macs loved by the consumer.

The action of hugging encouraged Apple fans to physically confront the environmental hazards contained in their computers. This not only helped to foster a material awareness of the environmental hazards of Apple products; it pushed Apple consumers to feel connected to and responsible for Apple's e-waste problem. By "hugging your Mac," consumers were literally embracing the associated environmental impacts. In this way, the campaign transformed feelings of love and commitment to Apple products into a sense of responsibility.[415] By linking environmental problems to "Your Apple" that you love and embrace, the campaign transferred responsibility for the environmental impacts of Apple to "you," the consumer.[416] It suggested that if you love Apple—if you are an Apple person—then you are connected to and responsible for Apple's environmental record. As suggested in the "I'm a Mac" commercials, many consumers do not just purchase Apple products, they adopt the Apple identity. Because Apple consumers identify so strongly with the Apple brand, the campaign's emphasis on the environmental concerns of "your Mac" and "my Apple" also associates *you* and *me* with environmental harm, creating a felt connection between consumers and e-waste. The campaign's use of the personal possessive pronouns "your" and "my" highlight how Greenpeace utilized the affective attachment to Apple products. The campaign was not about greening an abstract computer company, but a personally owned computer—Green *My* Apple. It transformed distant and abstract e-waste into immediate and personalized

[415] ———, "I Wish It Came in Green."
[416] The .mAct section of the website confronts Apple fans with the statement: "Your Apple. Green with the Internet." Ibid.

iWaste. By using the affective connection between consumers and their Apple products, the campaign encouraged consumers to feel involved in, not just informed of the e-waste problem. In this way, Greenpeace transferred the responsibility for action to the loyal Apple consumer.

By posting Mac-hugging *GreenMyApple* pictures online, Apple consumers not only pressured Apple to go green, but also worked to dissociate themselves and their Apple identities from the problem of e-waste. In this way, the "Hug Your Mac" action both reinforced consumers' felt connection to the e-waste problem, and offered them a way to respond to their personal identification with environmental harm. *GreenMyApple* events on college campuses that took and posted pictures of consumers professing their support for a greener Apple also functioned similarly. Instead of hugging a Mac with the *GreenMyApple* message, college students from across the country posed for pictures with cartoon talk bubble signs promoting the greener Apple message:

> "Stout wants a Green Apple," "Are you sure this doesn't come in Green?," "Steve, Why did you give me a poison Apple?," "green my apple, please!" "I want a cleaner World and a GREENER Apple," "UW-LaCrosse wants our Apples Green!" "USC wants a GREENER Apple," "UVM WANTS A GREENER APPLE!!" "SJSU says Steve Score a 10," "UNC Wilmington loves the beach and GREEN APPLES", "UMD wants Apple to score a Green 10!"[417]

These campus initiatives further visualized support for the campaign, raised awareness, and fostered a felt connection between consumers and the e-waste problem.

Use Your Mac to Make Macs Better

In addition to using Apple consumers' brand loyalty to give them a sensible connection to the problem of e-waste, the campaign also used consumers' pride in Apple

[417] "Greenmyapple," *flickr* (2007), http://www.flickr.com/groups/greenmyapple/.

to motivate them to act. It contrasted Apple's "amazing design," "iLife image," and reputation as an "industry innovator" with its poor environmental standards.[418] By highlighting this incongruity, Greenpeace spoke to the desire of Apple and Apple consumers to be the best: "We want Apple to do that 'amaze us' thing that Steve does at MacWorld: go beyond the minimum and make Apple a green leader."[419] The campaign encouraged consumers to take action to restore Apple's reputation: "When this campaign succeeds you can be proud your Apple purchase is a greener choice."[420]

The campaign further leaned on consumers' pride in the Apple brand by presenting the e-waste problem as a challenge to be solved by the best brand. The website pointed out that:

> Of course Apple isn't the only company that needs to change its ways. But in a recent Greenpeace scorecard, Apple ranked lower than HP, Dell, Nokia, and Sony. For an industry innovator, Apple is falling off the cart while the leaders of the industry are speeding ahead."[421]

The website provided several comparisons of Apple's environmental standards to those of other computer companies: "Other companies have set a date to remove PVC from their products. Apple hasn't. Major new product lines like the iPod nano and MacBook still contain PVC."[422] The website compared the unsurprisingly anti-environmental actions of "fat corporate CEOs who dump polychlorinated biphenyls into rivers," to the unexpectedly low environmental standards of Apple's CEO Steve Jobs, "a cool, potentially eco-friendly titan of the information age."[423] The website also pointed to Apple's position in last place on the "Greenpeace Guide for Greener Electronics,"

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[418] _____, "iPoison + iWaste.", _____, "About the Campaign."
[419] Greenpeace, "About the Campaign."
[420] _____, "Questions About the Campaign."
[421] _____, "About the Campaign."
[422] _____, "iPoison + iWaste."
[423] Ibid.

describing Apple as "the only company that made no movement since the first version of the guide (Aug 06)."[424] By contrasting Apple's low environmental rankings with its high achievement in other areas of product design, the campaign aroused feelings of competitiveness.

In order to maintain pride in Apple, the campaign told consumers: "ask Apple to go beyond its competitors and set a new green standard in electronics. A standard Apple can be proud of, a standard that will attract new customers and make every Apple product tread a lot lighter on the Earth."[425] By contrasting Apple's lack of responsibility with other companies, the campaign challenged feelings of pride and encouraged action based on a sense of competition:

> A basic environmental principle is that if you make and sell a product you should be responsible for that product when it is no longer wanted. This is also a basic rule for children: you clean up your own mess. Dell and Hewlett Packard (HP) both support this principle, which goes by the very grown-up name of Individual Producer Responsibility.[426]

By suggesting that other computer companies and even children were more capable of living up to their responsibilities than Apple, Greenpeace further stirred feelings of competitiveness and challenged the pride felt by Apple consumers to help make Macs better.

In addition to using consumers' pride in the Apple brand to motivate them to take action, the *GreenMyApple* campaign actually encouraged consumers to use their Apple products to take action. Rather than saying "No, stop using your favorite Mac," Greenpeace asked consumers to use them more: "Use your Mac to make Macs better."[427]

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[424] Ibid.
[425] _____, "Questions About the Campaign."
[426] _____, "iPoison + iWaste."
[427] _____, "Procreate."

In this way, the campaign transformed part of the problem—Apple computers—into the solution. The .mAct section of the website provided links to "1. Write to Steve 2. Sign Up 3. Hug your Mac 4. Spread the word 5. Get creative."[428] The "get creative" section encouraged users to participate in the "ProCreate section" of the website where they could access resources to:

> Design a campaign or t-shirt… Use our footage to make a video about the issue… Grab a Green My Apple logo… Repurpose some of our images from the e-waste dumps in Asia… Create an alternative Steve Jobs speech… Make an alternative Apple ad….We're featuring the best designs and ideas.[429]

The iPush section of the website urged viewers to expand the campaign beyond the *GreenMyApple* website to "Get people talking about this campaign" with links to "Send this video e-card… Link/Blog this site…Add this page to your del.icio.us, furl, or other social bookmarking site… Download a wallpaper for your Mac to show your support for a green Apple…Create a viral animation linking back to this site…" and more.[430] In making the "graphic resources to get you started" available and providing "footage from the e-waste yards in China and India to edit and use in your video" as well as "homemade shots of Apple products," the campaign transformed the distant problem of e-waste into a directly perceivable problem that could be located in and on Apple products.[431]

Even if consumers did no more than view the website or sign up for e-mail alerts, the electronic form of the campaign meant that Apple consumers were confronted with the problem of e-waste in the immediate context of the problem: on the screens of their Apple products. If you are an Apple consumer viewing the on-screen image of children standing amidst a pile of discarded electronics and holding a keyboard that bears the

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[428] _____, ".mAct." During the campaign more than 46,115 people wrote to Steve Jobs.
[429] _____, "Procreate."
[430] _____, "iPush," http://www.greenmyapple.org/ipush.html.
[431] _____, "Procreate."

logo, if not the exact make, of the one at your fingertips, you are able to sense a direct connection to the problem. Participating in the more interactive components of the campaign, like making videos with such imagery, just reinforces this kind of felt connection and awareness of the Apple e-waste problem. By locating the problem of e-waste in e-mail inboxes and on desktop screens, the campaign created an immediate and directly sensible awareness of the problem.

The International Association of Business Communicators Blog described the *GreenMyApple* campaign as "virtuoso activism – with the best usage of online and digital media I have ever seen."[432] From desktop wallpapers, to online videos, e-cards, bookmarked webpages, blog entries, e-mail alerts, online Mac-hugging pictures, and more, the Greenpeace campaign encouraged regular confrontations with the environmental limitations of Apple's communication technology by exploiting its creative possibilities. It involved consumers in a substantial way, enabling them to not only know the information about the environmental impacts of their Apple products, but to feel their personal contribution to the e-waste problem, see the powerful images of e-waste in developing countries, and experience and use these resources to incorporate environmental messages onto their personal Apple products. The interactive online format further enabled participants to affectively experience the physically distant environmental impacts in the directly perceivable space and time of electronic communication. By providing an affective experience of the e-waste problem in proximity to Apple products, the *GreenMyApple* campaign created an immediately sensible experience that could satisfy the tactile fallacy's equation of materiality with direct sensibility. That is, by creating an embodied affective connection to the e-waste

[432] ———, "Green My Apple Bears Fruit."

problem, the *GreenMyApple* campaign provided Apple consumers with a material experience and connection to the e-waste problem, even without changing their physical proximity to e-waste. The final section of this chapter reflects further on the theoretical and practical significance of the affective capacity of the *GreenMyApple* campaign.

Conclusion

"there is a real danger that emotions do not just buttress a brand but overwhelm it…"[433]

In Nigel Thrift's discussion of the affective dimensions of consumption and capitalism, he recognizes the potential for re-directing "consumer passions" for "new imaginings" that exceed the interests of the corporation or capitalist system.[434] Because today's consumer brands and products are designed to be "more open-ended and less predictable" in order "to engage more fully with consumers," environmental advocates may have an opportunity to capture and channel the affective potential of consumerism for environmentalist ends.[435] The *GreenMyApple* campaign illustrates one possibility for how such consumer passions may be appropriated for environmental action. Rather than simply rejecting the attachments and practices of the consumer, the campaign suggests advocates may be able to reshape and redirect consumerism toward more sustainable ends.

By analyzing the ideological and affective capacity of the *GreenMyApple* campaign, this chapter has attempted to provide a more complete understanding of the possibilities and limitations of this form of green consumption as a rhetoric of environmental change. Although the campaign advanced a limited ideological

[433] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, 54.
[434] Ibid., 54-55.
[435] Ibid., 54.

perspective by focusing solely on the responsibility of a single corporation to manufacture more sustainable products, Greenpeace's appropriation of the affective resources of the Apple brand functioned as a powerful mechanism for transforming Apple consumers into e-waste activists. By presenting the e-waste problem through the Apple brand and interactive online campaign, Greenpeace provided consumers with a way to sense their connection to an abstract and distant environmental problem. By fostering an embodied awareness or "tactile" experience of the e-waste problem, the campaign overcame consumers' tendency to ignore the materiality of that which is not directly perceivable. In analyzing the possibility for an affectively material awareness of e-waste to counteract the perceptual obstacle of physical distance, I have recognized the possibility for different types of tactile sensation. Physical environmental problems may be "felt" not only through direct observation, but also through an affective mode of awareness. While long-term environmental sustainability may require correcting the tactile fallacy with information about environmental problems that are not directly perceivable, some gains may also be made by conforming to the "logic" of the tactile fallacy and working to make environmental problems materially felt.

By foregrounding the affective dimensions of the *GreenMyApple* campaign, this chapter has attempted to provide a more complete picture of the rhetorical effectivity of this rhetoric of green consumption. Although meanings, ideologies, and cognitive content shape the influence of environmental campaigns, the affective, embodied emotional dimensions of such campaigns also significantly impact the process of environmental change. The affective experiences created by the *GreenMyApple* campaign are particularly important to consider as they enabled consumers to overcome a major

obstacle to addressing the e-waste problem—a lack of embodied awareness of the problem. Although the affective dimension of electronic communication is materially experienced and omnipresent, Slack and Wise note that "[t]he power and significance of the embodied emotion, the affective response, has been a neglected aspect of most discussions of technology."[436] By bringing a consideration of affective materiality into the discussion of this online advocacy campaign, this chapter strives to overcome this shortcoming.

My attention to the importance of affectively experiencing the e-waste problem runs counter to much e-waste advocacy and scholarship that emphasizes *more knowledge* as the solution to the problem. For example, in Grossman's project on *High Tech Trash*, she emphasizes the importance of knowledge: "the more we know about the environmental and health problems caused by high-tech trash and high tech manufacturing, and the wider this knowledge is spread, the more quickly these problems may be solved."[437] Slade similarly privileges knowledge as he concludes:

> Now more than ever, end-users of new technology need to pursue higher levels of technological literacy in order to negotiate the complex interactions among technology, society, and the environment. Ignorance of these interactions effectively grants a permission slip for technological hazards to persist.[438]

Although technological literacy and knowledge may play an important *part* in solving the e-waste crisis, knowledge alone is not enough. Widespread knowledge about the problems of e-waste has not yet prevented the continued resistance from individuals, organizations, and governments to adopting less environmentally destructive practices. According to the most recent information from the EPA, in 2007, over 2.5 million tons of

[436] Slack and Wise, *Culture + Technology: A Primer*, 140.
[437] Grossman, *High Tech Trash: Digital Devices, Hidden Toxics, and Human Health*, 16.
[438] Slade, *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America*, 263.

e-waste ended up in landfills.[439] While spreading knowledge is certainly an important component in resolving the e-waste crisis, knowledge alone cannot stem the flow of e-waste into our environments.

To supplement initiatives that seek to disseminate information about the environmental problem of e-waste through the use of facts, statistics, and scientific information, my analysis of the *GreenMyApple* campaign suggests that advocates may also need to raise an affective awareness of this information. The path to an environmentally sustainable future may require both more knowledge and more feeling. The Greenpeace campaign demonstrates the possibility for using the affective resources of a consumer brand and product to create such feelings.

While the *GreenMyApple* campaign may effectively diminish the perceived distance between consumers, computers, and the environmental problem of e-waste, the specificity of the campaign's approach may require some modifications before its model of green consumption rhetoric may be applied to environmental change at a larger scale. Although the *GreenMyApple* campaign engaged a large number of Apple consumers, the main focus and circulation was towards Apple and within the Apple fan base. The awareness created through the campaign relied heavily on "Apple's famously loyal fan base," who already feel an affective attachment to Apple—the "Apple Love"—that Greenpeace channeled into a sense of responsibility for addressing environmental problems.[440] While Apple "would never tune out their customers," other corporations that lack a customer base of "believers" may not respond to consumer pressure and non-Apple consumers may not feel their environmental responsibilities outside a fan culture

[439] Leslie Kaufman, Hattie Bernstein, and Claudia Rowe, "New Laws Offer a Green Way to Dump Low-Tech Electronics," *New York Times*, June 30 2009.
[440] Greenpeace, "Green My Apple Bears Fruit."

with a pre-existing affective attachment to their computers.[441] To fully resolve the e-waste crisis will require expanding affective awareness and action beyond Apple consumers and corporation. To repeat and extend the success of the *GreenMyApple* campaign, environmental advocates may need to explore other ways to appropriate the affective resources of consumer brands and products.

Solving the e-waste crisis will also require activating consumers not only to pressure corporations, but also to support government regulations and enact changes in their own habits of consumption. While the *GreenMyApple* campaign is ideologically limited by its focus on corporate environmental responsibility, the affective awareness promoted by the campaign may potentially be developed and amplified into broader forms of action. First, the campaign's amplification of "Apple love" may be pushed even further to modify consumers' desires for constant upgrades. If consumers truly love their Macs, that attachment may form the basis for extending product life. Magnifying consumers' affective attachment to a particular product could help challenge the psychological obsolescence that Slade locates at the heart of the e-waste crisis.[442] As Sterne suggests, it is often "only when people stop caring for [computers] that many of them begin to fall apart."[443] If consumers could be encouraged to care more for their computers and other consumer items, they may be less likely to discard them for the latest upgrade.

A second possibility for further developing the affective potential of the campaign stems from the ability to see electronic communication itself as a material process. The campaign's affective materialization of the e-waste problem also opens the door for

[441] Ibid.
[442] Slade, *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America*, 262.
[443] Sterne, "Out with the Trash: On the Future of New Media," 26.

consumers to see the practice of electronic communication as material. If consumers could begin to see the practice of using their computers to communicate and relate to others as a satisfying material practice, it may become a viable alternative to consumerism. Once consumers begin to recognize the practices of designing and creating via electronic communication as material practices, the next step may be to encourage them to choose this kind of material creative engagement as an alternative to constantly upgrading and purchasing new computer gadgets. If consumers can become excited and engaged not just by buying new products, but by using existing ones to create and communicate new things, they may be satisfied with buying less and relating more.

The next chapter examines a rhetoric of green consumption that goes beyond appropriating an affective attachment to consumer products to develop the positive affective experience of relating and connecting with others as a more satisfying alternative to consumerism.

CHAPTER 4

THE IDEOLOGICAL AND AFFECTIVE IMPACT OF *NO IMPACT MAN*

Introduction

In December 2006, New York City resident and professional writer Colin Beavan began an experiment to live for one year as "No Impact Man."[444] Together with his wife Michelle and 2-year-old daughter Isabella, Beavan would attempt "to live in the heart of New York City while causing no *net* environmental impact."[445] To eliminate their environmental impact, the family gradually implemented what would become the seven stages of the "No Impact Experiment": "no trash, no carbon-producing transportation, sustainable eating, no buying anything new, no fossil-fueled electricity, careful water use and giving back."[446] As Beavan researched, developed, and adopted the "no impact" lifestyle, he documented his experiences on the *No Impact Man* blog,[447] which became the basis for his 2009 book, *No Impact Man: The Adventures of a Guilty Liberal Who Attempts to Save the Planet, and the Discoveries He Makes about Himself and Our Way of Life in the Process*.[448] In addition to Beavan's writings, the *No Impact Man* project was also recorded in a similarly titled documentary released at the same time as the book.[449]

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[444] Colin Beavan, "Worms in the Apartment," *The New York Times* (2007, March 18), http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/18/opinion/nyregionopinions/18CIbeavan.html.
[445] Beavan, "What You Need to Know."
[446] No Impact Project, "How-to Manual," *No Impact Project*, http://noimpactproject.org/experiment/your-how-to-guide/, Colin Beavan, "Conservation Versus Innovation," *No Impact Man* (2008, July 22), http://noimpactman.typepad.com/blog/2008/07/conservation-ve.html.
[447] Beavan, "What You Need to Know."
[448] ———, *No Impact Man*.
[449] Gabbert and Schein, "No Impact Man."

Although Beavan's year of no impact living ended in 2007, he continues to blog and encourage other consumers to try the "No Impact Experiment," which is a one-week version of Beavan's year-long project.[450] In June 2009, Beavan helped launch the "No Impact Project," a non-profit organization designed to "empower citizens to make choices which better their lives and lower their environmental impact through lifestyle change, community action, and participation in environmental politics."[451]

From the outset, Beavan's *No Impact Man* project received significant attention in mainstream media outlets. An article in *The New Yorker* described the project as "a public-relations triumph" that resulted in a "flood of media requests."[452] Beavan appeared on programs like *Good Morning America*, *The Colbert Report*, and *National Public Radio*, and his story was featured in outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *Business Week*.[453] In 2007 Beavan's blog made *Time* magazine's list of top environmental websites, and by 2008 the site had been viewed by nearly 2 million people, with "10,000 email and 'newsreader' subscribers" and "some 2,500 daily visitors and 4,000 daily page views."[454]

As a highly visible case of consumer-based environmental action, the *No Impact Man* project offers another opportunity for exploring the possibilities and limitations of green consumption as a rhetoric of environmental change. In many ways *No Impact Man*

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[450] Colin Beavan, "Join Thousands Who Are Trying No Impact for a Week!," *No Impact Man* (2009, October 8), http://noimpactman.typepad.com/blog/2009/10/join-thousands-who-are-trying-no-impact-for-a-week.html.
[451] No Impact Project, "About Us."
[452] Elizabeth Kolbert, "Green Like Me: Living without a Fridge, and Other Experiments in Environmentalism," *The New Yorker* (2009, August 31), http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2009/08/31/090831crat_atlarge_kolbert.
[453] Colin Beavan, "About Colin Beavan," *No Impact Man*, http://noimpactman.typepad.com/blog/about-colin-beavan.html.
[454] Eric Roston, "No Impact Man," *Time* (2008, April 17), http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1730759_1731034_1731035,00.html, Beavan, "About Colin Beavan."

functions as a typical instance of green consumption and is thus subject to the same kinds of ideological critiques as the *FilterForGood* and *GreenMyApple* campaigns. The project privatizes, minimizes, and personalizes environmental problems and solutions, advocates a privileged course of action available only to some consumers, and cashes in on the popularity of "green" to make a profit. However, unlike the case studies examined in the preceding chapters, Beavan's project also take the "greening" of the consumer to the extreme and positions individual consumer changes as part of a larger solution. In his no impact quest, Beavan does not just purchase greener consumer products, he questions what and whether he really *needs* to consume. For Beavan, "no impact" consumption ultimately means:

> no take-out food… no driving or flying… no laundry detergent… no produce from distant lands… no elevators, no subway, no products in packaging, no plastics, no air conditioning, no TV, no buying anything new…[455]

In addition to changing his lifestyle to accommodate the greenest ways of consuming, the *No Impact Man* project also involves taking action beyond consumption. During the "giving back" phase of the project, Beavan begins "cleaning up garbage in the Hudson River, helping care for newly planted trees, giving money to charity," and participating in other forms of environmental activism.[456] He describes this action as "positive impact… to balance what negative impact we couldn't eliminate," and he puts it most plainly in equation form: "Negative Impact + Positive Impact = No Net Impact."[457] By supplementing a radical reduction in consumption with other kinds of actions, the *No Impact Man* project troubles both the ideology of consumerism and the possibility for green consumption to function effectively as an isolated mode of environmental reform.

[455] Beavan, *No Impact Man*, 3.
[456] Ibid., 15.
[457] Ibid.

While Beavan's radicalization and integration of the practices of green consumption are noteworthy, as significant for my project is the affective awareness fostered by *No Impact Man*. Like the *FilterForGood* and *GreenMyApple* campaigns, the *No Impact Man* project goes beyond *informing* individuals about the need to change their consumption habits to encourage them to *feel* they can make a difference through green consumption. The narrative format of the book and Beavan's performance of his affective experience with the project help make green consumption feel like an important *part* of environmental change.[458] As consumers read about Beavan's year-long experiment, they do not just cognitively process the meanings of his message. They may also experience what Thrift describes as the "imitative transmission of affect" and Kavka discusses as "affective identification"—in which an individual is not just "*sharing in* the feeling of the other" but "*having* the feeling itself."[459] Beavan's expressions of both positive and negative (and conflicted) feelings about the process of no impact consumption may provide consumers with an important affective awareness of how the process of green consumption can function as a bridge between individual and collective action and between choosing either human happiness or environmental sustainability.

This chapter proceeds by first outlining the ideological perspectives contained in the *No Impact Man* project. After considering the limitations and possibilities of the meanings of *No Impact Man* as a rhetoric of environmental change, I turn in the second section to examine the affective significance of the project. As a public demonstration of how no impact consumption feels, Beavan's book provides the basis for an affective

[458] The analysis in this chapter is based primarily on the book, which also overlaps with much of the content found on the blog. While the documentary and media coverage of the project facilitate the circulation of the *No Impact Man* message and affect, the scope and diversity of voices presented in these artifacts makes it necessary to limit my analysis for this chapter.
[459] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, 245.

identification with this approach to environmental change. The final section of this chapter reflects briefly on the significance of this analysis for rhetorical criticism and the rhetoric of environmental change.

The Ideological Meanings of *No Impact Man*

As suggested in the introduction to this chapter, the *No Impact Man* project shares many characteristics with conventional practices of green consumption and is thus subject to critique for the ideological perspectives it represents. The project's focus on the importance of altering individual consumer habits may distract from the need for action from government, businesses, and other sources of power. Beavan's attention to the environmental impact of small consumer purchases, like toilet paper and light bulbs, may exaggerate the significance of trivial acts and detract from larger problems. The project's emphasis on the personal benefits of no impact consumption may overshadow the environmental justification for action. The extra time and money required for no impact living may also position it as a classed solution available only to the privileged few. Finally, the sale of the book and documentary open the project to critique for using "green" as a gimmick to turn a profit. In addition to these limitations, however, the *No Impact Man* project also represents an ideological perspective that is more clearly productive for environmental change, as Beavan critiques the logic of consumerism for failing to sustain environmental and human happiness. He further demonstrates the limitations of green consumption to individually resolve environmental problems through his insistence on the need for "positive impact"—volunteering, participating in political and community action, etc—to balance the "negative impact" he cannot reduce through

consumption. The rest of this section explores each of these ideological limitations and possibilities in more depth to provide a sense of the representational significance of the project.

Ideological Limitations

Like many forms of green consumption, *No Impact Man* may be critiqued for privatizing environmental solutions by focusing on the environmental significance of individual consumer choices. Although many of Beavan's statements acknowledge the need for government and corporate action in addition to no impact consumption, much of the project positions the individual consumer as the agent of change in solving environmental problems. For example, while he writes things like, "individual action does not preclude involvement in collective action"[460] and "I'm not sure that reducing individual resource use is the entire way forward,"[461] he also talks about individual responsibility and the need to "stop outsourcing our political power to politicians."[462] He tells readers "You Can Make a Difference!" and suggests "We have to stop waiting for the system to change and remember that every decision we make in our homes and in our workplaces amounts to 'the system.'"[463] Even the title of the project points to the individualistic nature of no impact consumption with its singular identification of "No Impact *Man*." By elevating the importance of individual action, the *No Impact Man* project may shift attention away from the need for action from governments and

[460] Beavan, *No Impact Man*, 220.
[461] Ibid., 204-05.
[462] Ibid., 176.
[463] Ibid., 230, 21.

corporations, privatizing the solution to public environmental problems. As Noortje Marres notes in her analysis of green living experiments like *No Impact Man*:

> These accounts have little to say about rather more "constraining" or inescapable entanglements, such as for instance, energy infrastructures and landlords… They tend to highlight socio-material relations that can be reconfigured through individual intervention, by switching appliances off or installing saving devices.[464]

Although Beavan tries to present a message of individual consumer responsibility *in addition* to corporate and government responsibility, he acknowledges that a focus on individual consumer habits may deflect attention away from corporate responsibility. In the book, he recounts a conversation where a friend voices this critique:

> Of course the corporate media love you. You're out there telling us all that individually we should use less electricity and distracting everyone from the fact that industry is killing us. You're out there worrying us about littering while they get away with killing the world.[465]

This observation points to the risk that an approach based on individual consumer changes will privatize and individualize the solution to public environmental problems.

The privatized focus on individual consumer choices is related to another potential shortcoming of the *No Impact Man* message: the tendency to overestimate the environmental significance of individual consumer products and minimize more systemic environmental problems. Although the *No Impact Man* project effectively interrogates the environmental impact of consumer products, its focus on the significance of small acts, like substituting a reusable cup for a disposable one, may be problematic. Marres identifies the tendency for green living experiments to "rob people of their sense of proportion" so they are "unable to differentiate between the big and the small, the more

[464] Noortje Marres, "Testing Powers of Engagement: Green Living Experiments, the Ontological Turn and the Undoability of Involvement," *European Journal of Social Theory* 12, no. 1 (2009): 125.
[465] Beavan, *No Impact Man*, 181.

and the less important."[466] Beavan's decision to stop using toilet paper but still publish a book provides one example of a distorted sense of proportion with respect to paper use.[467] Similarly, as pointed out by one of Beavan's friends in the documentary, Michelle Conlin's (Beavan's wife) substitution of the stairs for the elevator pales in comparison to her continued employment at *Business Week*, a magazine which promotes the ideology of corporate capitalism that contributes to so many environmental problems.[468] Just as the *FilterForGood* campaign minimizes public environmental concerns like water quality with its emphasis on the isolated problem of disposable plastic, the *No Impact Man* project may be criticized for displacing systemic and public environmental problems with a focus on smaller, individual acts of consumption. One book review voices this limitation as it criticizes Beavan for failing to "see the deforestation for the trees":

> He worries a great deal about the environmental consequences of Michelle's tampon use and the shrink-wrap around a block of cheese. But when it comes to his building's heating system, which is apparently so wasteful that people are opening windows in the middle of winter, he just throws up his hands.[469]

A similar critique is made by one of Beavan's friends in the documentary who states: My hesitation about your work is that it enables people to fool themselves that all they have to do is change the lightbulb and recycle their plastic bag.[470] Although Beavan attempts to maintain a broader view of environmental problems and solutions, interviews and media coverage of the project frequently present the simple steps you can take to save the

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[466] Marres, "Testing Powers of Engagement: Green Living Experiments, the Ontological Turn and the Undoability of Involvement," 128.
[467] This contradiction is pointed out in several media stories. Scott Simon, "The Year of Living Environmentally," *NPR*(2007, April 7), http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9479796, Green, "The Year without Toilet Paper."
[468] Gabbert and Schein, "No Impact Man."
[469] Kolbert, "Green Like Me: Living without a Fridge, and Other Experiments in Environmentalism."
[470] Gabbert and Schein, "No Impact Man."

earth, like "sign up for windmill power" or "use compact florescent lightbulbs."[471] As such, the *No Impact Man* project may present a message that minimizes and trivializes environmental problems and solutions.

Like most green consumption rhetoric, the *No Impact Man* project can also be critiqued for its focus on the personal benefits of taking action. The primary reason to participate in no impact consumption is to "get a happier life!!!"[472] Throughout the project Beavan catalogues the personal benefits of the project, from weight loss to improved health and strengthened personal and social relationships. This emphasis on personal benefits may risk displacing environmental concerns from the realm of a supposedly environmental action. While Beavan's writing clearly includes attempts to balance human and environmental happiness, the *No Impact Man* project may be critiqued for erring too heavily on the human side of the scale. The personalized, human-over-environment bias is particularly evident on the homepage of the non-profit *No Impact Project* website, which contains the following text: "what do YOU want?...more time…better health…more fun…clearer conscience…more money."[473] The lack of any reference to the environment in this list demonstrates how no impact consumption may privilege the human over the environment, to the point of erasing the latter. A *New York Times* article similarly pokes fun at the personal benefits emphasized by the project: "Concrete benefits are already accruing to Ms. Conlin and Mr. Beavan that may tempt others. The sea may be rising, but Ms. Conlin has lost 4 pounds and Mr. Beavan 20."[474] The same article cites a reader's comment posted to Beavan's blog that more directly

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[471] ABC News, "One Year, No Electricity; How Did Our Green Family Do?," *Good Morning America* (2007, December 27).
[472] Beavan, "Home."This is the text of the No Impact Man blog's hyperlink to the No Impact Project.
[473] No Impact Project, "Home," *No impact Project*, http://noimpactproject.org/.
[474] Green, "The Year without Toilet Paper."

addresses the question of balance: "how are you going to measure your nonimpact, except in rather self-centered ways like weight loss and better sex?"[475]

In addition to personalizing the justification for action, the *No Impact Man* project promotes a very privileged form of action. As Beavan acknowledges, becoming *No Impact Man* requires a significant amount of time (and therefore money), as things like self-propelled transportation, using cloth diapers, and cooking local foods take longer than conventional alternatives. Although no impact consumption may require less money than more conventional forms of green consumption that involve purchasing more expensive green products, it is still subject to critique as a classed solution, as the availability of time requires a certain amount of economic privilege. As *NPR's* Scott Simon states in an interview with Beavan, "not everybody in their life—practically speaking, we have so many people living, including yourself, two-income households—has that kind of time."[476] Other news coverage of the project also identifies the "full time" commitment of this "privileged lifestyle experiment."[477] To some extent, Beavan is self-reflexive about his privileged position as a writer with flexible time, and he acknowledges that not everyone is in a position to decrease their personal consumption. He specifically states that this kind of environmental action applies only to "people who actually have excess resources to consume. There are plenty of people, of course, who have way less than they need and by rights really should be consuming more."[478]

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[475] Ibid.
[476] Simon, "The Year of Living Environmentally."
[477] Penelope Green, "And Now, the Impact of No Impact," *The New York Times* (2009, August 19), http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/20/garden/20living.html, Dana Stevens, "An Inconvenient Husband," *Slate* (2008, September 11), http://www.slate.com/id/2227972/.
[478] Beavan, *No Impact Man*, 147.

While Beavan is somewhat aware of the economic privilege at play in his project, he is less reflexive about the privileged gendered position that he occupies as *No Impact Man*. No impact consumption requires that additional time be spent on household chores—a category of (often unpaid) labor that has historically fallen disproportionately to women. Beavan's nostalgic account of his grandparents' way of life glosses over the fact that "grandmother washed the dishes" and her unpaid labor made the experience "the opposite of a rush" that he finds so attractive.[479] Beavan's wife Michelle is more reflexive about the fact that Beavan has transformed "himself into a 1950s housewife," and chosen a title that erases the family's participation: "he's no impact man, but… the project is our family is doing this."[480] While Beavan may be in a privileged classed and gendered position to choose additional household labor, many individuals have sought (and continue to seek) to escape from the drudgery of precisely the kind of work Beavan celebrates. As a privileged white male, Beavan does not face the same obstacles to justifying the value of his unpaid household labor as women or minorities might.

Finally, like other instances of green consumption, the *No Impact Man* project may also be critiqued for using "green" as a gimmick to sell products. As Marres observes:

> in recent years, so-called 'green living experiments', in which people set themselves the task of making environmental changes in their lives for a set period of time, have been widely featured in popular media and on the Internet.[481]

Beavan's *No Impact Man* project is not only part of a growing trend in green living, but also blog-based publishing.[482] Blogs and books that feature "ecology as an extreme life

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[479] Ibid., 41.
[480] Ibid., 51, Gabbert and Schein, "No Impact Man."
[481] Marres, "Testing Powers of Engagement: Green Living Experiments, the Ontological Turn and the Undoability of Involvement," 117-18.

style" are part of the "latest publishing fad," in which authors embark on a "yearlong quest" to do things like "follow every mandate in the Bible," give up shopping, eat locally, watch no TV, give up fossil fuel, or cook Julia Child's recipes. [483] Locating *No Impact Man* in this "recent flurry of 'year of' books," highlights the profit—rather than environmentalist—potential of the project.[484] Much of the media coverage about *No Impact Man* acknowledges Beavan's self-interest in using green as a gimmick for profit, referring to it as "an ethically murky exercise in self-promotion," a hip way to "sell a book," and a "disingenuous" project for "a man whose environmental activism began over lunch with his agent." [485]

The green gimmick critique is further supported by the sale of two new "green" products: the *No Impact Man* book and documentary. While Beavan tries to avoid consuming during the No Impact year, he ultimately tempts consumers with new items to purchase in support of no impact consumption. Beavan's book does not have a book jacket and it "is made from 100 percent postconsumer recycled paper and cardboard, processed without chlorine… [and] manufactured using energy generated from biogas."[486] The *No Impact Man* documentary was produced using "low impact

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[482] Joanne Kaufman, "Completely Unplugged, Fully Green," *New York Times* (2008, October 17), http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/fashion/19greenorexia.html, Bonnie Alter, "Families Living and Loving Green Alternative Life Styles," *Treehugger* (2010, February 9), http://www.treehugger.com/files/2010/02/green-alternative-life-styles.php?campaign=daily_nl.
[483] Kolbert, "Green Like Me: Living without a Fridge, and Other Experiments in Environmentalism.", Jennie Yabroff, "A Year of Selling Books: A Rash of Memoirs by People Spending 12 Months Following Rules Shows Self-Deprivation Is Strangely Hip," *Newsweek* (2007, October 1), http://www.newsweek.com/id/41781, Susan Salter Reynolds, "'Traveling with Pomegranates'; 'in Cheap We Trust'; 'No Impact Man' " *Los Angeles Times* (2009, August 30), http://articles.latimes.com/2009/aug/30/entertainment/ca-discoveries30?pg=2.
[484] Yabroff, "A Year of Selling Books: A Rash of Memoirs by People Spending 12 Months Following Rules Shows Self-Deprivation Is Strangely Hip."
[485] Green, "The Year without Toilet Paper.", Yabroff, "A Year of Selling Books: A Rash of Memoirs by People Spending 12 Months Following Rules Shows Self-Deprivation Is Strangely Hip.", Kolbert, "Green Like Me: Living without a Fridge, and Other Experiments in Environmentalism."
[486] Beavan, *No Impact Man*, 227.

filmmaking" and the DVD comes packaged in all cardboard made from "well-managed forests and recycled wood or fiber."[487] Although the lower impact design of these products decreases their environmental footprint, their "green" credentials also function as a gimmick to help attract consumers. Beavan's "jacketless book" is not only a greener alternative, it is part of a new effort to compete with electronic books by creating an attractive retro-looking book by stamping the cover art directly on the board, rather than printing on a dust jacket.[488]

Ideological Possibilities

In addition to the above limitations, the *No Impact Man* project also represents an ideological perspective that may be more supportive of systemic environmental change. As a radical "greening" of consumption habits, *No Impact Man* critiques the ideology of consumerism. Throughout the book Beavan catalogues the detrimental environmental impact of consumerism, providing information about global warming, the ocean garbage patch, air pollution, water pollution, and a host of other problems resulting from the unending production, consumption, and disposal of consumer goods. His criticism of consumerism goes beyond listing the negative environmental impacts to also critique the practice for failing to make consumers happy. He observes: "it's not that while trashing the planet the human race is having a party."[489] Like a number of other environmental writers, Beavan connects the decline of human and environmental happiness to a faulty

[487] Justin Schein, "Low Impact Filmmaking: Applying a Low Impact Philosophy to Filmmaking," *No Impact Man*, http://www.noimpactdoc.com/low_impact_film.php.
[488] Leon Neyfakh, "The New Thing: Books without Jackets," *The New York Observer* (2009, August 24), http://www.observer.com/2009/media/jacketless-hardcovers.
[489] Beavan, *No Impact Man*, 11.

logic of consumerism as a means of fulfillment.[490] He examines his family's habits, and asks: "How much of our consumption of the planet's resources actually makes us happier?" and "is this 'high standard of living' the same as a good quality life?"[491] He frames the project as a search for "a way to make what's good for the planet good for us, too," and intertwines happiness psychology and quality of life information with information about the environmental impact of consumption.[492] Based on this information, Beavan rejects the belief that we can find happiness through consumerism, suggesting personal satisfaction is more closely linked to "strong social connection… a sense of some higher purpose," and meaningful work than to the consumption of material goods.[493] He suggests that the personal satisfaction gained from relating, affiliating, and being with other people surpasses the short-lived buzz from obtaining new stuff, and he proposes, "If it's love we're after, how about we cut out the middleman—the stuff—and just hang out?"[494]

Beavan's attempts to eliminate his personal environmental impact through altered consumption practices *and* more collective forms of environmental action further signify that while green consumption matters, it is not *all* that matters. In this way, the project functions to critique isolated and superficial acts of green consumption as a productive mode of environmental reform. On one hand, Beavan promotes the importance of individual consumer changes. He goes to extreme measures to reduce the environmental impact of his consumption choices, eliminating take-out food, cars, laundry detergent,

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[490] Durning, *How Much Is Enough?: The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth*, 36, Bill McKibben, *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*, 1st ed. (New York: Times Books, 2007), 11, Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*, 160-61.
[491] Beavan, *No Impact Man*, 15, 39.
[492] Ibid., 99.
[493] Ibid., 26.
[494] Ibid., 158.

paper towels, disposable diapers, elevators, products in packaging, air conditioning, TV, and even toilet paper from his consumption routine. On the other hand, while *No Impact Man* presents the importance of individual green consumption, Beavan also suggests the limits of such individual action. He positions green consumption (even the radical, no impact kind) as only *part* of a larger collective solution to environmental problems. To achieve "no net impact" Beavan works with environmental organizations to also create "positive" impact. Although he repeatedly emphasizes the power of individual consumer changes to improve the environment and increase human happiness, he also explicitly acknowledges the need for both individual and collective action to solve environmental problems. While the *No Impact Man* project began with Beavan's frustration with the political process and his belief that "it had lost its ability to change and act," by the end of the project he concludes, "as much as I value individual lifestyle change, there is also the fact that we can do together what I can't do alone."[495] Confronted with the absence of renewable electricity sources and affordable high-speed trains, Beavan reflects on the "limits of individual action" and his realization that "collective action was also completely necessary."[496] He locates responsibility for our environmental crisis not just with the individual, but with a system and a culture of unsustainability: "making so much trash and pollution and greenhouse gases is not the result of our natures—selfish or otherwise—but simply of corporate habits our culture can no longer sustain."[497]

While the ideological perspectives contained in *No Impact Man* are significant for assessing the environmentalist potential of this rhetoric of green consumption, the impact of the project is not limited solely to its ideological implications. The project may have

[495] Ibid., 205.
[496] Ibid., 168.
[497] Ibid., 66.

rhetorical effect beyond the meanings and representations contained in Beavan's narrative account. The next section explores the affective capacities of *No Impact Man* to produce feelings and experiences that may be important for fostering long-term environmental change.

The Affective Experience of *No Impact Man*

In addition to the ideological content of *No Impact Man*, the affective capacities of Beavan's narrative and performance of no impact consumption also merit close analysis. In this section I analyze how the narrative form of *No Impact Man* and Beavan's public demonstration of his affective experience with the project may enable consumers to feel the possibilities and limitations of the practice of green consumption. Before describing the contours of the affective experience of *No Impact Man*, I explain how the narrative form of the book may facilitate an affective identification with the process of no impact living.

In *A Rhetoric of Motives,* Kenneth Burke describes identification as a process of understanding "joint interests":

> A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so.[498]

Although Burke's discussion of identification is based most explicitly on beliefs or meaning content, the process of identification also involves affective feelings as "A" becomes "'substantially one' with a person other than himself."[499] The importance of

[498] Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley,: University of California Press, 1969), 20.
[499] Ibid., 21. While Burke based his theory of identification in part on Freud's work, Diane Davis suggests that Burke "buries" Freud's "reflections on an immediate, *affective* identification…an a priori affect*ability*

affective form is present (if only implicitly) in Burke's theory of identification as he acknowledges that "[y]ou persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his."[500] Features such as "gesture," "tonality," "image," and "attitude" operate in the realm of affective intensity as much as ideological signification. As Kavka suggests, identification is not only rationally processed; it is *felt* as "affect moves through and across us, in palpably material form, resonating across divides."[501] *No Impact Man* may foster such a sense of affective identification as it presents an intimate narrative of one family's transformation from conventional consumption to no impact consumption. While some of this identification is no doubt based on cognition and representational meaning, readers may also affectively experience the process of no impact consumption, not only "*sharing in* the feeling of the other" but "*having* the feeling itself."[502]

By presenting the transformation to no impact consumption through one family's experience, the project enables consumers to experience the process of change through identification with specific "characters." *No Impact Man* puts not one, but three human faces on the process of environmental change as readers encounter the experience through the lives of Colin and Michelle and their daughter, Isabella. Through the project we follow both the environmental actions of these characters and their personal lives, and this experience of intertwining realities promotes feelings of connection and intimacy with the project. From the blog, to the book, documentary, and even news coverage, the project creates the kind of "mediated intimacy" that is characteristic of reality television,

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of persuad*ability* that precedes and exceeds symbolic intervention." Diane Davis, "Identification: Burke and Freud on Who You Are," *RSQ: Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (2008): 125.

[500] Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 55.

[501] Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters*, 33.

[502] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, 245.

and this functions to foster a sense of involvement and connection to the experience.[503] Like reality television, which Kavka suggests "stimulates intense intimacy," the intimate narrative format of *No Impact Man* "may serve to communicate aspects of social reality that exceed categories of 'information.'"[504] As Colin and Michelle relate parts of their personal lives—such as dealing with loss of a loved one or deciding to have another child—to their experiences with no impact consumption, readers may also begin to feel connections between their personal life choices and their environmental impact.

The transformation of Colin, Michelle, and Isabella from ordinary consumers into environmentalist-no impact consumers may further enable readers to identify with and feel the experience. As Beavan suggests in the first chapter of the book, "How a Schlub Like Me Gets Mixed Up in a Stunt Like This," he began the year of no impact living from a very high impact starting place. Although Beavan initiates the *No Impact Man* project (at least in part) out of environmental concern, his pre-project way of living did not reflect that environmental concern. His family was "your typical media-addicted take-out slaves" with an "appalling twenty-gallon-a-day waste habit."[505] They did not carry canvas shopping bags or reusable cups or practice any other simple acts of green consumption or environmental activism. He describes his wife as "one of those New York Media-industry glam-girl fashionistas" who likes to shop and enjoy the good life,[506] and himself as "the type of person who left his air conditioners on when no one was home" and "shopped for the fifty-two-inch television, then thought he was a rebel against

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[503] In Marres' discussion of the genre or form of green living experiments, she notes that "green living blogs can also be seen to enact a particular form of publicity that sociologists have recognized in reality television, that of 'mediated intimacy.'" Marres, "Testing Powers of Engagement: Green Living Experiments, the Ontological Turn and the Undoability of Involvement," 121.
[504] Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters*, 24, 10.
[505] Beavan, *No Impact Man*, 26, 51.
[506] Ibid., 62.

consumerism because he bought the discounted floor model."[507] Despite his growing environmental concern, Beavan admits:

> I lived and acted as though everything was normal. I just led my usual workaday life. Wake up, take my daughter, Isabella, to the babysitter, spend the day writing, pick her up, watch TV, start all over.[508]

By presenting himself as a typical privileged American consumer at the outset of the project, Beavan creates a character whom the consumer can relate to. While consumers who already practice minimal green consumption habits may feel superior to the idealistic "schlub" who has no idea where to begin, those who—like Beavan—are "behind the touchdown line" and are not even practicing "Environmentalism 101" are not made to feel hopeless or bad.[509] Instead they may be able to see themselves in this transformation, as Beavan either begins where they are or soon catches up in his journey toward no impact consumption. Consumers' ability to identify with pre-project Beavan may help them feel with him as the project progresses.

In addition to starting the No Impact Project from a place of high impact (a.k.a. conventional consumption habits), Beavan embarks on the project without any kind of specialized environmental knowledge. He starts the project "from scratch—with not a clue about how to deal with our planetary emergency."[510] He has big questions:

> What would it be like to try to live a no-impact lifestyle? Is it possible? Could it catch on? Would living this way be more fun or less fun? More satisfying or less satisfying? Harder or easier? Worthwhile or senseless? Are we all doomed or is there hope? Is individual action lived out loud really just individual action?... was I as helpless to help change the imperiled world we live in as I'd thought?[511]

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[507] Ibid., 12, 4.
[508] Ibid., 9.
[509] Ibid., 53.
[510] Ibid., 22.
[511] Ibid., 16.

And small ones:

> "On what does one blow one's nose?"
> "Paper bag or plastic?"[512]

Because Beavan is not an "environmental expert," his experience with the project may feel more accessible to readers. Novice green consumers might identify with his simple questions and appreciate his gradual discovery of the answers: cloth handkerchiefs, reusable bags. More experienced green consumers might feel superior because they already know the simple answers and, like Beavan, are thinking through the big questions. By portraying his project as one of learning and transformation, Beavan may help his readers affectively experience that transformation.

While some readers may identify with Beavan's experiences through a cognitive processing of the similarities in character and ideology, Kavka suggests:

> affective identification is *not* a secondary, imitative or vicarious feeling, but rather an affective reality, something we are given to feel, which arises from the resonances played out across and through the television screen.[513]

Like the reality television shows that Kavka studies, *No Impact Man* uses an intimate narrative form and presents the struggles of ordinary consumers in a way that may foster such resonances and affective identification in excess of cognitive processing.

In addition to the narrative form of *No Impact Man*, Beavan's account of the project functions as a public demonstration of how no impact consumption feels, and this may further enable consumers to feel the possibilities and limitations of green consumption as a mode of environmental action. As Marres suggests in her analysis of green living projects as "devices of public engagement," a green living experiment may be engaging "because it appeals to people's senses, and because, as a material set-up, it

[512] Ibid., 19, 21.
[513] Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters*, 33.

addresses audiences as embodied actors, and allows for playful forms of interaction."[514] One such form of interaction is at the level of affect. Teresa Brennan's extended discussion of the "transmission of affect" illustrates the social nature of affective energies and the possibility that "the emotions or affects of one person… can enter into another."[515] As Thrift explains, "[t]here is, in fact, only a delicate separation between one's own mental life and that of another, so that affective contagion is the norm, not an outlier."[516] He provides the example of how "hearing an expression of anger increases the activation of muscles used to express anger in others," and suggests "people seem to be fundamentally motivated to bring their feelings into correspondence with others."[517] Whether it is described as "affective identification," "imitation-suggestion," or "affective contagion," the capacity for affective experiences to circulate socially suggests that Beavan's affective experiences with no impact consumption may spread to observers of his project. In witnessing Beavan's expressions of frustration, anger, happiness, and fulfillment, *No Impact Man* readers may feel such emotions in their bodies in addition to through cognitive processing.

While the transmission of affect does not require linguistic processing or labeling of emotions, Beavan's self-reflexivity on how this project makes him *feel* may aid in such transmission, as he articulates a range of emotions and feelings throughout the book. In many ways, *No Impact Man* is as much about the *affective experience* of no impact consumption as it is about the ideas and meanings of the project. Beavan's project is not only "to live in the heart of New York City while causing as little harm to the

[514] Marres, "Testing Powers of Engagement: Green Living Experiments, the Ontological Turn and the Undoability of Involvement," 125, 20.
[515] Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 3.
[516] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, 237.
[517] Ibid.

environment as possible," but to explore, "What would that feel like?"[518] As suggested by one of the chapter titles—"Conspicuous Nonconsumption"—the *No Impact Man* project is green consumption on display in public, but it is also the feelings and affective experiences of the project that are on display. While readers may not cognitively process the affective experiences of no impact consumption into the same emotions or meanings that Beavan does, their ability to access the kind of embodied affective experiences that accompany this way of living and consuming may create an important foundation for environmental change.

Upon first glance, the *No Impact Man* project may seem to present a view and experience of green consumption that is ambivalent or inconsistent. Beavan presents readers with a mixture of negative and positive affective experiences of no impact consumption. While in some ways his transformation from high impact consumer to no impact consumer is accompanied by a shift from feeling frustrated to feeling happy with his extreme green consumption, the overall affective experience is not quite that simple. Sometimes no impact consumption creates positive, joyful feelings; other times it creates frustrating, unfulfilling feelings. On one hand, the jumble of affective experiences may provide an important counter-experience to the expectation that environmental activism must feel either only positive or only negative. On the other hand, I suggest that a closer examination of the affective relations throughout the project reveals an important association between isolated, individual action and negative affect and connected, relational aspects of green consumption and positive affect. Although some of the negative experiences stem from the challenge of habit change or material hardships, the most limiting negative affects of green consumption occur through Beavan's attempts to

[518] Beavan, *No Impact Man*, 14.

operate individually in opposition to the consumerist system. In contrast, while some of the positive affective experiences do come from material gains, much of the positive affect comes through Beavan's increased relations, affiliations, and connections with people and places. This is not to say that all of Beavan's (or the readers') affective experiences of no impact consumption fit neatly into these categories, but that it can be productive for consumers to begin to feel positively about human affiliation and negatively about isolated acts of (green) consumption. These kinds of affective relations may provide important grounding for the kind of cultural lifestyle changes needed for large-scale environmental change.

Negative Affects

The *No Impact Man* project presents and facilitates negative affects through a number of Beavan's experiences. First, on a most basic level, no impact consumption feels hard because it is a deviation from an established habit or routine. Unlike conventional consumption, no impact consumption doesn't feel normal. It requires additional thinking and effort to materially move through life in a different way. Second, at a practical level, no impact consumption feels hard because the lack of sustainable products and practices forces Beavan to go without—to sacrifice. Because the system does not offer no impact pizza or electricity, Beavan has to abandon them. As a lone individual struggling against the collective system, Beavan reacts negatively as he individually does without the conveniences of modern life. In addition to the material inconvenience of things like not driving or eating take-out food, a final source of negative affect for Beavan is his abandonment of his membership in a society of consumers.

Although consumers are not all magically joined in a happy collective, the practice of consumption shapes how we relate to many of the people and places around us. Without that—as an individual acting in an unsustainable system—Beavan feels stripped of his status, affiliations, and community. Throughout the project, Beavan's no impact consumption often feels hard, frustrating, and even stupid due to the material and relational limitations of an individual acting alone against a system.

The first way *No Impact Man* stimulates negative affective relations is through the difficulty of doing something out of the ordinary consumer routine. As Beavan discovers on the first morning of the project, greening his consumption requires him to not only know how to do it, but to create a new habit of action to put that knowledge into practice. In the opening passages of the chapter, "Day One and the Whole Thing is a Big Mistake," Beavan acknowledges the difficulty not knowing how to put his new way of consuming into practice:

> it turns out that becoming No Impact Man does not mean running into a phone booth and coming out transformed into some sort of eco-hero with my underwear stretched over my trousers. It doesn't, in fact, feel heroic at all. What it feels like, waking up at 6:00 a.m. and hoping to get just a little more shut-eye before your eighteen-month-old greets the day by jumping up and down on your head, is enforced martyrdom of the most trivial and ridiculous kind. Because day one starts with me standing in my skivvies, looking through the purple dawn light and into the bathroom closet at a roll of paper towel (which I've always preferred to flimsy tissue), really needing to blow my nose, and suddenly realizing I'm not supposed to use the paper towel."[519]

While Beavan soon figures out the sustainable alternative is a cloth handkerchief, this passage demonstrates not just his struggle to *learn* how to change a routine, but to actually change it—to have green consumption *feel* natural and easy enough that when you stumble out of bed half awake needing to blow your nose, you can just blow it on a

[519] Ibid., 19.

cloth without having to think about it. Another example from Beavan's first day further illustrates the obstacles of an embodied habit, as he puts "Isabella in a sort of backpack contraption instead of a stroller because it will be easier to deal with on the stairs," but then "[w]ithout giving it a second thought, the three of us pile into the elevator. We get down to the ground floor before we remember we're supposed to be taking the stairs."[520] Such examples illustrate the challenges of revising a behavior that is normally on autopilot. The demand for a constant consideration of the "green-ness" of every activity feels hard for Beavan until he becomes, not only aware of the green action to take, but physically accustomed to taking that action. Beavan explicitly reflects on the challenge of changing his habits of consumption:

> Everything about yourself wants to fall back into the rut, at least for a while. By 'for a while,' by the way, I mean a month. That's how long they say it takes to change a habit… for the first month or so it's going to suck. It's not going to suck because the new way of doing things is inherently difficult. It's going to suck because your whole life is structured around the old way of doing things.[521]

From taking the stairs to putting Isabella in cloth diapers to cooking with only local food, each act of green consumption requires additional effort until it becomes a habit.

In addition to the affective challenge of habit change, Beavan's no impact consumption feels hard because in many cases he has to stop consuming all together due to a lack of green alternatives. He stops using electricity, stops flying, stops eating pizza, and makes other "sacrifices" only because the "system makes it virtually impossible to get the things we want and need without leaving behind a trail of trash and pollution and greenhouse gases."[522] The unsustainability of the current system makes him feel like he

[520] Ibid., 33.
[521] Ibid., 184.
[522] Ibid., 64-65.

has to sacrifice his wants and desires. "To avoid making trash," he has to "say no" to many of the things he wants:

> No to an everything bagel with scallion tofu wrapped in waxed paper from Bagel Bob's. No to a bottle of seltzer water. No to herbal tea in a paper cup from News Bar. No even to a tinfoil-wrapped Hershey's Kiss from the snack area at the Writers room, where I go to work. No peanuts. No potato chips. No popcorn at the movies. Our entire universe, apparently, is individually wrapped. Unless you're willing to toss out that handful of barely used packaging within five minutes of getting it, without ever even using it, you're screwed.[523]

In saying no, Beavan writes, "I felt like I was making sacrifices for the sake of environmentally poor decisions that other people had made…. I felt like I was the one paying for their bad systems."[524] In expressing his feelings of sacrifice and frustration, Beavan reinforces the negative affects he (and his readers) are already experiencing through the process of no impact consumption. He explains that "[b]ecause our systems are not designed to be sustainable, I had to swim against the cultural tide, and sometimes I got tired."[525]

In addition to material challenges of self-restraint, Beavan feels the relational limits of no impact consumption when, in sacrificing products, he also sacrifices the status and affiliation those products create. For example, after refusing a slice of pizza because it would require using a disposable paper plate he tells readers:

> I say no to the pizza. But I'm not happy. I walk away down Fourteenth Street. Stopped at the red light on the corner of Third Avenue is a guy in a BMW. Anger washes over me. And self-righteousness. This idiot is guzzling oil and pumping carbon into the air in the middle of a city that has wonderful public transportation, my mind tells me. But I'm not mad so much as I'm envious. This guy gets to sit in his fancy car, listening to his Bose in-car stereo while pretty girls crossing the street turn to look at him, and I'm stuck in my self-imposed year of not having a piece of pizza when I want one.[526]

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[523] Ibid., 60.
[524] Ibid.
[525] Ibid., 61.
[526] Ibid.

In addition to Beavan's craving for pizza, this experience feels hard because he feels like he is doing it alone, against everyone else. As illustrated by Beavan's shift from being mad about pizza to being jealous of the fancy car guy, consumption is not just about immediate material wants, but status and affiliation. He has similar feelings of envy and anger after he gets hit while riding his bike:

> Feeling so vulnerable, I understood how we all wanted to protect ourselves by being inside these big, tanklike SUVs. Then I wished I had an SUV and that I had run this guy over instead of the other way around. Then I chastised myself for having had such a thought. Then I realized how trying to protect ourselves with SUVs is the whole problem. Nothing can really protect you from life's uncertainties, after all. Sitting on the bumper, bleeding, I felt the insecurity of life with all my being. There was no escaping it. You never know when you're going to be hit. There is no point wrecking the world, trying to protect myself with an SUV, I thought.[527]

This account creates an affective experience of consumption as intertwined with a sense of security that is disrupted by no impact consumption. While Beavan is able to "reason" himself out of wanting an SUV, his desire for protection through consumer products is an important affective obstacle to no impact consumption. Throughout the book, Beavan's expressions of feeling "weird," "ashamed," or "ludicrous," further display and provoke in readers a sense of how pitting the *individual* against the *collective* can be unfulfilling and unsatisfying.[528]

If *No Impact Man* only presented such negative affects, it would provide an important basis for rejecting individual green consumption as a mode of environmental change. Yet much of Beavan's account also feels attractive and positive as the material challenges and isolation are alleviated by new ways of relating to other people, places, and things.

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[527] Ibid., 104.
[528] Ibid., 183, 59.

Positive Affects

Coded by Beavan with terms like happiness, joy, satisfaction, or fulfillment, many of the positive affective experiences of no impact consumption are created by and through a more connected way of living. From stronger relations with family and friends to feeling more embedded in a community and a place, Beavan's positive feelings during the project are often tied to a more relational way of living. While Beavan does acknowledge some of the more materialistic and individualistic benefits of no impact consumption, like feeling healthier, losing weight, and saving money, in reading the book consumers get a sense of the relational gains of this way of living.[529]

Through the *No Impact Man* project Beavan begins to feel more connected to his family. At times he explicitly acknowledges the project's influence on his fatherhood and his marriage, but even when he skirts around the impact of no impact—"we had improved, um, marital relations"—his narrative account provides a sense of what it feels like to live no impact.[530] It feels connected and communal. His descriptions of some of the family's new routines present how it feels to him, and readers can feel the joy of happy family life. Without electricity in their apartment, life feels "like a nonstop vacation" as:

> Every summer night we search for things to do outside—play in the fountain with Isabella's friends in Washington Square Park, make a trip to the river. Then we come home in the dark, put Isabella to bed, and sit up, talking in quiet tones by candlelight.[531]

Without carbon-producing transportation, the family sometimes has to cancel their plans, but as Beavan describes one afternoon spent in the apartment, he realizes:

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[529] Ibid., 153.
[530] Ibid., 17, 153.
[531] Ibid., 188.

> This is no sacrifice. This is relief. Without some sort of a mechanized box to whisk us through the rain to where our schedules say we're supposed to go, we can just relax…. Isabella makes a lion with her blocks. Michelle falls asleep on the couch. How strange and wonderful for my little family, here in New York, to be living in the rhythm of the weather.[532]

Through such descriptions, readers can feel the positive affect of a connected, intimate family relationship. On another rainy afternoon, Beavan discovers the joy of being caught in the rain with Isabella:

> I take Isabella down from my shoulders and let her jump in a puddle, soaking her shoes and her pants. For fun, I jump in the puddle, too. Isabella laughs. She stretches out her arms with her palms facing up to catch the rain. She opens her mouth, sticks her tongue out and leans her head back. I try it, too… People are running past. They look desperate, miserable, trying to get out of the rain.[533]

A similar feeling of positive connectivity accompanies the family's shift to local food consumption. Beavan writes:

> A new family routine emerges. While I cook, Michelle sits at the table and chats with me. Isabella stands on a chair in the kitchen and pretends to help. We can't resist, even after only a few days of local eating, contrasting this with the old life of shoveling in greasy takeout while we sat in front of the television. Now we're talking. Instead of the TV being the center of our life, the kitchen table is. We spend more time talking to Isabella than we used to.[534]

Rather than get positive affective fixes from shopping or television watching, Beavan and the readers feel the sense of joy and happiness through relating to family.

This sense of connectedness and fulfilling relationships also extends beyond Beavan's immediate family relations to include stronger relationships with friends. Beavan recognizes that one "gift" of no impact consumption is that they socialize more with friends:

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[532] Ibid., 88.
[533] Ibid., 87-88.
[534] Ibid., 130.

> We get rid of the TV and a bunch of stuff and get the friends in return. You allow one channel to weaken and the others strengthen. You pull the weeds from your garden and the sustenance-giving plants have room to grow.[535]

Contrasted with such "gifts," the "sacrifices" of high impact consumer products feel less significant. While Beavan admits, "[i]t's true that we sometimes miss the strawberries we can't have and the nonlocal balsamic vinegar we used before the project started," he also explains that:

> I enjoy feeling a little like a grandmother, feeding all my friends. There is something wonderful about it, and wonderful about playing host and everybody just being able to kick their shoes off and relax. This rush we're in—I don't think people like it. At least for this year, my family has opted out of it. Is that why people flock to us lately?[536]

Readers feel the joyfulness and fulfillment of this way of relating through Beavan's descriptions of what they do instead of consume:

> We play Scrabble. Even better, we've rediscovered charades. Teams of four face off in our living room and we laugh, I swear, till tears are just pouring down our cheeks. The rhythm of our lives is changing. It's not based on electronic entertainment… It's based on the fact that the kitchen table, not the TV, has become the center of our lives. It's based on the fact that our house has become a home."[537]

As Beavan and his readers begin to feel the positive emotions and relational experiences associated with no impact consumption, the process of green consumption may feel more attractive and inhabitable.

In addition to connecting with family and friends, as the project progresses Beavan begins to feel more rooted in a community and a place, and this provides a positive affective experience. At the beginning of the project he focuses heavily on changing his consumption and his environmental impact individually, but it is the more

[535] Ibid., 183.
[536] Ibid., 137.
[537] Ibid.

relational, communal parts of this habit change that feel rewarding and positive. As he establishes a habit of shopping at the farmers' market, he meets and starts to "relax and joke around" with the farmers.[538] He describes the experience of finding another local food activist to talk to as "the feeling of coming home," explaining:

> I hadn't realized how alone I had felt with this project until now. Talking to Alisa, to someone who shared my concerns and the desire to find both a more satisfying way of life and a way that was kinder to the planet, made me feel like the ugly duckling finally rejoining the swans.[539]

Experiences like these help Beavan (and his readers) realize and feel the affective importance of embedding individual changes within a community. When he starts volunteering with environmental organizations, he feels invigorated by the community he joins. These positive relational components of no impact consumption create a more connected and collective experience of individual consumer changes.

The positive affective relational experiences of the project are not limited to human relationships. They also includes a sense of embeddedness and connection to places, moments, and even consumer products. For example, Beavan articulates how the experience of biking feels:

> Transportation by bike means you are riding *in*, not driving *through* like a car. You are life-*experiencing*, not sight-*seeing*. You are in it and of it, and the beauty goes so deeply inside you that you could weep, and you just never want to get off the bike again.[540]

By eating local food and using only self-propelled forms of transportation, Beavan describes feeling "linked to the natural movement of life, where you actually know in

[538] Ibid., 129.
[539] Ibid., 119-20.
[540] Ibid., 114.

your body what season it is."[541] He begins to experience "the landscape as something more than the space that stands between where I am now and where I want to be later."[542]

As Beavan changes from purchasing new products to buying or obtaining used products, he starts feeling more connected to the items he now owns. For example, when he purchases a rocking horse at a thrift store he finds that:

> Instead of feeling, as I might have expected, like the used rocking horse is somehow grubby, I found myself imagining it to be alive with history. I find myself imagining that it is the by-product of the love of some handyman grandfather for a grandchild. I feel more warmth about this gift for Isabella than I would about something plastic and anonymous from the toy store.[543]

Similarly, he describes his experience getting a "new" teapot through freecycle instead of just shopping for one at a place like Bed, Bath, & Beyond:

> it turns out that the teapot is a standard and perfectly attractive blue ceramic affair… I ask the lady who is covered in paint and appears to be an artist, what she herself has gotten through Freecycle. She tells me she got a trailer home—yes, a trailer home—and a pair of pet rats… I get the blue teapot home and make some tea and I get to tell the story about where the tea came from—my windowsill—and where the teapot came from, and the artist lady and the rats.[544]

Such descriptions show the capacity for green consumption to feel connected and relational, and, as Beavan suggests, these stories "gave me a sense of connection to the people who owned them before. And I think, perhaps, I like it better than the feeling of owning something new. It has to do with the story."[545] Such stories create feelings of connection and make Beavan "want to preserve things and take care of them instead of throwing them out."[546]

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[541] Ibid., 88.
[542] Ibid., 87.
[543] Ibid., 155.
[544] Ibid., 158-59.
[545] Ibid., 156.
[546] Ibid., 157.

Through Beavan's descriptions of his embodied feelings of connections to objects, places, and people, he may enable readers to feel with him. These communal and relational qualities of such positive affective experiences make no impact consumption feel like a part of something larger. It is not merely individual consumer change, but individually reconnecting to the collective and working to make that collective better. Through Beavan's performance of the affective experience of no impact living, green consumption feels like social connection and community, not just like isolated, individual action.

Affective Implications

As the preceding analysis illustrates, Beavan's negative experiences with working individually against the collective system of consumerism and his positive experiences with no impact consumption as part of a relational, communal process may create an important affective awareness as readers affectively identify and feel with Beavan. However, as much as Beavan's positive and negative experiences with no impact consumption contribute to this affective awareness, his "failures" to strictly adhere to no impact consumption or to sustain the practice for more than a year may be as, if not more, important. In spite of all the positive relating, even the self-proclaimed "eco-superhero" finds no impact consumption to be unsustainable for the long term.

During the project, Beavan and his family—despite their best efforts to adhere to no impact consumption—do make some exceptions. Some of the exceptions are material conveniences. He and Michelle only temporarily manage to go without coffee, and he begins using the laundry machine again during the project when his daughter gets sick in

the middle of the night on the bed sheets. Other exceptions involve maintaining relationships with family and friends. For example, Beavan does not completely cancel planned travel to visit extended family, but takes the train for one longer visit rather than driving or flying for multiple short visits. Similarly, when time with friends requires some kind of non-sustainable consumption, they make "social exceptions" to the "rules." Beavan's willingness to bend the rules, particularly when it supports his relationship to others, may contribute to the feeling that this mode of action is attractive when it enhances relationships, but falls short when it reduces capacities for relating and sharing with others.

The one-year time limit to Beavan's project further illustrates the limits of individual consumption as the *only* way forward. After the year-long experiment ends, Beavan resumes flying, turns on the electricity, takes the subway when it rains, and discontinues the most extreme measures of no impact consumption. Near the end of the book, Beavan expresses concern over his inability to sustain no impact consumption beyond the one-year experiment:

> I am feeling shame because I'm looking forward to the end of the project. It's not that I want to make trash or buy new things or eat packaged food from far away. But I'm tired of not traveling. I'm tired of not having electricity…. I am confused. I feel guilty and ashamed. Because after all this time I worry that if I am not willing to maintain all elements of this lifestyle, then what does this year of No Impact living end up telling the world? What do my choices tell the world?[547]

Based on my affective analysis, I suggest that one thing that his "choices" and his "failure" tells the world is that in order for green consumption to help sustain both our environment and our happiness, it needs to be connected to other, more collective forms of action. Beavan's inability to sustain the project reinforces the feeling that such a

[547] Ibid., 204.

solution cannot be the *only* way forward, but that the positive, relational aspects of no impact consumption may make it an important *part* of the way forward. While Beavan's statements about the interdependence of individual and collective action may encourage consumers to rationally consider the reasons to pair individual green consumption with more public actions, his struggles with no impact living and his inability to sustain the no impact lifestyle may enable readers *to feel* the need for connecting individual consumer change to more systemic action.

Conclusion

As suggested in the introductory chapter, one major criticism of green consumption's capacity to function as an effective mode of environmental change is the disconnection between individual acts of green consumption and more collective forms of change. The *World Wildlife Fund* refers to this problem as the failure of green consumption to provide a "foot-in-the door" to more substantial citizen engagement.[548] This chapter demonstrates the possibility that some rhetorics and practices of green consumption may create an affective experience that helps bridge this divide. By presenting both the negative experiences of acting as a lone individual against the system and the positive experiences of (re)discovering the kinds of relationships, affiliations, and community connections that a revised mode of consuming can provide, Beavan's *No Impact Man* project facilitates a felt experience of green consumption as *part* of a collective solution. Through Beavan's radicalization of green consumption, he presents not only an ideological critique of (green) consumerism, but an embodied experience of the potential for isolated individual action to be sustainable—in both senses of the word.

[548] Crompton, "Weathercocks & Signposts: The Environmental Movement at a Crossroads."

While green consumption alone will not resolve our environmental crises, and green consumption alone is not an attractive way of living, Beavan shows us that green consumption does not have to happen alone.

In addition to linking individual and collective action, Beavan's report of both positive and negative affective experiences also functions to challenge another polarity in the debate over the possibilities for environmental reform. The affective experience required for environmental change is often framed as either negative *or* positive. While some environmental advocates argue we have to sacrifice for the environment, others imagine we must make environmental change feel attractive and positive. Indeed, the blurb at the beginning of *No Impact Man* suggests this project will determine which camp is right: "What is it like to live a no-impact lifestyle?... Is it satisfying, or exasperating, to live this way?" In contrast to this either/or set-up, Beavan's (and the readers) affective experience of no impact consumption is neither completely satisfying or exasperating; it is both. Individually acting to green your consumption is satisfying when it reinforces your connections to people and place, but less so when it requires opting out of or operating against the collective norms and systems of our society.

As I discuss further in the final chapter, my analysis of the ideological and affective possibilities of the *No Impact Man* project illustrates the potential of a dual notion of rhetorical effectivity. While this case of the rhetoric of green consumption balances some of the ideological limitations of the practice with content that explicitly acknowledges and critiques those limitations of (green) consumerism, the affective experiences of the project facilitate an embodied, felt connection to this content. As both consumers and critics we come to "know" the rhetoric of green consumption through

both ideological and affective content. By analyzing both modes of rhetorical effectivity, critics can construct a more complete picture of the rhetorical possibilities of green consumption.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Introduction

"Concluding… is not a task that comes easily, in part because we think our study remains far from 'complete.'"[549]

In many ways a conclusion to this project is premature since I am still working through the possibilities and limitations of both the rhetoric of green consumption and the application of an affective rhetorical analysis. Yet I can at this point draw together the theory, method, and content of the preceding chapters to suggest some of the contributions and implications of this dissertation project. Indeed, two such implications push me to bring this project to a (temporary) close. First, our current environmental crises require immediate intervention, and this project offers insight into how the rhetoric of green consumption may contribute to such intervention. Second, the practice of rhetorical criticism, if it is to remain a vibrant and useful field of study, must begin to more fully address the material force of rhetoric beyond its ideological or representational meanings. Although the application and theorization of affective rhetorical analysis in this dissertation still needs further elaboration, I am hopeful that my attempt to begin unpacking the rhetorical effectivity of the rhetoric of green consumption may prove a useful catalyst for further exploration, development, and criticism.

[549] Blair and Michel, "Commemorating in the Theme Park Zone: Reading the Astonauts Memorial," 67.

To that end, the remainder of this chapter revisits and reflects on some of the key questions that have shaped my analyses in this dissertation. After summarizing and synthesizing my analysis of the rhetoric of green consumption, I (re)consider some of the theoretical and methodological issues outlined in the introductory chapter. Specifically, I discuss the importance of affect in shaping the process of social change and the possibilities and limitations of a dual rhetorical analysis of ideology and affect. The chapter closes with a brief consideration of this project as illustrative of a positive approach to environmental change and rhetorical criticism.

The Rhetoric of Green Consumption

This dissertation project began in part as a response to the debate over green consumption as a mode of environmental action. As a recent article on the popular environmental blog *Grist.org* demonstrates, "[t]he environmental movement is divided over the importance of small steps—are they a critical starting point or a distraction from needed policy and institutional changes?"[550] On one hand, critics of green consumption fault the practice for reinforcing the environmentally destructive ideology of consumerism and failing to directly resolve environmental problems, promote environmental values, or mobilize support for environmental policy. On the other hand, proponents of green consumption celebrate the potential of the practice to harness consumerism in support of environmentalism, revise unsustainable habits, and present environmentalism as an attractive way of living.

[550] Cathryn Clarke Murray and Kai Chan, "Sweat the Small Stuff: How Personal Actions Can Kick-Start a Sustainability Revolution," *Grist*(2010, February 2), http://www.grist.org/article/2010-02-01-how-personal-actions-can-kick-start-a-sustainability-revolution. In the article Murray and Chan support the possibilities for green consumption, but many of the comments illustrate the controversial nature of their position.

Rather than attempting to resolve this debate by siding solely with the critics or proponents, this project has tried to unpack some of the issues at stake by considering green consumption as a *rhetoric* of environmental change. As a physical practice, green consumption has serious limitations as a mode of environmental action, as the direct additive impact of small consumer changes will not solve environmental crises.[551] However, the physical impact of green consumption on the environment is not the only material impact of the practice. As "embodied discursive matter," green consumption may also produce ideological meanings and affective feelings that are material in their effectivity.[552] By examining the practice of green consumption according to two levels of rhetorical efficacy—ideology and affect—this project provides a careful consideration of the possibilities and limitations of green consumption as a rhetoric of environmental change.

As suggested in the introductory chapter, my purpose in this dissertation project is not to proclaim a definitive verdict on green consumption as a mode of environmental change, but to present a more complete picture of the practice's possible modes of rhetorical force. There is not one answer to the question of green consumption's capacity as a rhetoric of environmental change, but many, and applying a universal judgment to green consumption may be less useful than recognizing what potentials and pitfalls it may have in particular situations. Rather than merely accepting or rejecting green consumption as a mode of environmental reform, my analysis illustrates the productivity of replacing a simple good/bad dichotomy with a more grounded and contextualized

[551] As WWF suggests, "the direct additive impact of large numbers of individuals changing their behaviour in ways that lead to small reductions in their personal environmental impacts will be a small reduction in overall environmental impact." Crompton and Thøgersen, "Simple & Painless? The Limitations of Spillover in Environmental Campaigning," 6, 10.
[552] Condit, "Race and Genetics from a Modal Materialist Perspective," 384.

approach. The rhetoric of green consumption is not simply good or bad for environmental change; it is both. Through close analysis of three different case studies of the rhetoric of green consumption, this project illustrates how certain forms of green consumption may be used, modified, amplified, and variously directed to shape both meanings and feelings in the process of environmental change.

In the case of the *FilterForGood* campaign, consumers who view campaign materials are encouraged not only to *see* and *feel* the connection between bottled water consumption and the waste of resources, but also to *experience* the *FilterForGood* solution as an attractive, easy, and effective form of action. While such affective experiences are productive for supporting action on the limited problem of bottled water waste, the campaign's isolation of the problem of bottled water waste and focus on the personalized benefits of a privatized solution may diminish important connections between individual consumption and larger environmental problems in a way that prevents consumers from feeling and acting on those connections. In contrast to the larger bottled water backlash, the *FilterForGood* campaign thus presents an ideologically limited environmental critique. The affective experience of actually "filtering for good" similarly contains both possibilities and limitations, as privately filtering water provides a sense of both questionable public water quality and personal protection from that problem. A combined ideological and affective analysis of the *FilterForGood* campaign suggests the potential for the rhetoric of green consumption to isolate individual action from larger connections and collective solutions, yet also to help individuals feel personally connected to a problem and capable of taking action.

In the case of the *GreenMyApple* campaign, consumers were also pushed to *see* and *feel* their connection to an environmental problem: e-waste. Like many environmental problems, the e-waste crisis is difficult for most consumers to see due to the spatial and temporal distance between the problem and the act of consumption, and a further perceptual obstacle is created by the (mis)perception of electronic communication itself as an immaterial practice. The Greenpeace campaign overcame these perceptual obstacles by using consumer attachment to the Apple brand to foster a sense of connection between Apple consumers and Apple e-waste. By transforming e-waste into iWaste, the campaign also transformed consumers' Apple love into Apple activism, motivating consumers not only to sense the environmental problem, but to pressure Apple to address it. While the *GreenMyApple* campaign is ideologically limited by its failure to challenge consumerism or promote government regulations, its successful appropriation of consumers' affective attachment to a brand illustrates the possibility for activating consumers as advocates for sustainable product design.

Finally, in the case of *No Impact Man*, consumers are encouraged to both know *and* feel the possibilities and limitations of green consumption as a form of environmental action and a way of living. Through Beavan's narrative and public performance of no impact consumption, he promotes an affective awareness of how it feels to enact a radical and integrated form of green consumption. Consumers who follow Beavan's experiment are invited—through both cognitive and affective identification—to experience along with him the joys and challenges of no impact living. Although in some ways the project's focus on private, personal, and trivial acts of consumption detracts from the need for collective, systemic change, Beavan's negative experiences as an

individual consumer fighting against the system and his positive experiences with increased relations and community through no impact consumption illustrate the potential for green consumption when it becomes integrated as part of a more collective green lifestyle.

Taken together my analyses of these three case studies highlight some of the affective and ideological possibilities and limitations of the rhetoric of green consumption. In some cases green consumption may help foster consumer connections and involvement in relation to at least limited environmental problems, and the practice has the potential to engage not only isolated, individual actions, but also more collective forms of change. Before elaborating on the relationship between the ideological and affective potential of the rhetoric of green consumption, the next section considers the significance of the affective capacity in more detail.

Affective Matters

"If people are to change history, it is their passions that must be awakened, for the crisis of the Left is not ideological. It is a matter of people's affective involvement, of the intensity people are willing to invest in their political beliefs and struggles…"[553]

While this dissertation project demonstrates the importance of considering *both* the ideological and affective capacities of the rhetoric of green consumption, it is my hope that this analysis also illustrates the need to bring the study of affect to the forefront of rhetorical studies. As I suggested in the introductory chapter, implicit acknowledgement of the affective capacity of rhetoric can be found in a variety of rhetorical scholarship. For example, the potential for affective experiences to influence the process of social change is an undercurrent that runs through even the earliest studies

[553] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 394.

of the rhetoric of social change. In Franklyn Haiman's consideration of "the rhetoric of the streets," he recognizes the rhetorical potential of "non-rational strategies of persuasion" like "physical and psychological manipulation" that help protestors gain access to public debates.[554] Robert Scott and Donald Smith go further to question the "presuppositions of civility and rationality underlying the old rhetoric," as they acknowledge the potential for confrontational rhetoric to do more than attract attention to the cause, but to create a sense of rightness or guilt.[555] Herbert Simons also acknowledges that a "major rhetorical process" of social movements "consists of legitimizing privately-held feelings by providing social support and rationalizations for those feelings."[556] Richard Gregg's attention to the "ego-function of the rhetoric of protest" further challenges the tendency to associate protest rhetoric solely with "the principles of 'rational' discussion," as he recognizes such rhetoric as speaking to "the basic reasoning and *feeling* capacity of those in authority."[557]

Despite these early acknowledgements of affective potential in scholarship on the rhetoric of social change, the rhetorical significance of affect has not been developed with extended analysis. Unlike ideological analysis, which is well-established as a mode of rhetorical criticism, affective analysis is underdeveloped. One goal of this project is thus

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[554] Franklyn S. Haiman, "The Rhetoric of the Streets: Some Legal and Ethical Considerations," in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, ed. Charles E. Morris and Stephen H. Browne (State College, Pa.: Strata Pub., 2006), 26-27.
[555] Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith, "The Rhetoric of Confrontation," in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, ed. Charles E. Morris and Stephen H. Browne (State College, Pa.: Strata Pub., 2006), 33.
[556] Herbert W. Simons, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, ed. Charles E. Morris and Stephen H. Browne (State College, Pa.: Strata Pub., 2006), 38-39. Simons further recognizes feelings and embodied emotions as an important part of social movements as he suggests refers to the importance of "reducing the psychological distance between the movement and the external structure." Simons, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," 41.
[557] Emphasis added. Richard B. Gregg, "The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest," in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, ed. Charles E. Morris and Stephen H. Browne (State College, Pa.: Strata Pub., 2006), 56, 47.

to push our field to theorize affective analysis so that it can become a more rigorous and widely used mode of rhetorical analysis. The remainder of this section reinforces why affect matters to the study of rhetoric and highlights some of the productive affective capacities present in the rhetoric of green consumption.

Throughout this project, I have demonstrated that ideological analysis, though important, cannot capture all of the dimensions of rhetorical force that may shape the environmentalist potential of the rhetoric of green consumption. A number of scholars have commented on the inability of ideological analysis to fully account for the rhetorical force of a discourse. Brian Massumi suggests that "[a]ffect holds the key to rethinking postmodern power after ideology" because:

> although ideology is still very much with us, often in the most virulent of forms, it is no longer encompassing. It no longer defines the global mode of functioning power. It is now one mode of power in a larger field that is not defined, overall, by ideology.[558]

Were environmental change merely a struggle over meaning, minds, and logic, green consumption might more easily be dismissed, but politics today is, as Grossberg recognizes, "a struggle over [the nation's] heart and body":

> The question is how people's affect—their attention, volition, mood, passion—is organized, disciplined, mobilized, and ultimately put into service of specific political agendas. Here the struggle for hegemony foregrounds popular culture and languages… It operates on the very ground on which affect and politics are linked together, rather than on the terrain of ideology and common sense.[559]

Although ideology is important, it is no longer sufficient as the sole focus of the rhetorical critic. As Kavka suggests, it is not only ideology but affect that "perform[s] a function of intermediation between selves and the world of objects/others."[560] Thrift

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[558] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 42.
[559] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 255.
[560] Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters*, 35.

describes affect as one of the important "means by which masses of people and things become primed to act"—affective resonance is one way to "switch on" citizen engagement and attachment.[561]

While I cannot generalize to all green consumption practices, I can, based on my affective analysis of these three case studies, identify two general ways that affective relations might function in some rhetorics of green consumption. In the case studies of green consumption that I examined, many of the affective experiences foster a sense of connection to an environmental problem and interest in taking action to address that problem.

First, my analysis shows how the rhetoric of green consumption may help make environmental concerns present and connected to consumers' lives. The *FilterForGood* campaign makes the disposable plastic water bottle visible and the negative impacts of such waste on consumers palpable. The *GreenMyApple* campaign transforms the abstract problem of e-waste into the immediately felt problem of iWaste. The *No Impact Man* project makes environmental problems feel like human problems as conventional consumerism is connected to the decline of both environmental and human happiness. As a recent poll from the Pew Research Center illustrates, environmental problems often feel less immediate and pressing than problems like jobs or the economy, so the ability of green consumption to make distant environmental problems and relationships present through affective feeling and sensation may be important for initiating the process of environmental change.[562]

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[561] Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, 220, 40.
[562] Jon Gertner, "Why Isn't the Brain Green? ," *The New York Times* (2009, April 19), http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/19/magazine/19Science-t.html. Gertner reports that climate change was

In addition to promoting feelings of connection to environmental problems, my analysis also suggests that the rhetoric of green consumption may help make consumers feel capable of taking action by providing them with feelings of agency or interest in acting. The *FilterForGood* campaign not only makes consumers feel capable of taking the easy *FilterForGood* pledge, but it also makes that action feel stylish and fun. Consumers who "filter for good" get to have "healthy" drinking water, a clear conscious, and a shiny new eco-accessory. The *GreenMyApple* campaign similarly makes action feel fun and easy, as Apple consumers get to become Apple activists by loving their Macs and using them more. The *No Impact Man* project also makes action feel personally beneficial as no impact consumption promises to provide consumers happy, fulfilling relationships to replace the short-lived buzz of consuming. Such feelings of interest and agency in taking environmental action are an important contribution of the rhetoric of green consumption, as they may attract and empower individuals to begin the transition to a more sustainable future.

Across these case studies, the affective capacities of green consumption are channeled in support of different ideological meanings and modes of action, as the *FilterForGood* campaign asks consumers to buy a different product, the *GreenMyApple* campaign asks consumers to pressure a corporation, and the *No Impact Man* project asks consumers to change their lifestyles to accommodate less negative consumption and more positive action. While this variation demonstrates there is no guarantee that the affective relations of green consumption will be harnessed in support of a more sustainable future, without such affective investments the possibility for environmental change is likely to be

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in last place of Americans' priorities for 2009, below jobs, the economy, terrorism, deficit reduction, and energy.

overwhelmed by apathy and other more affectively charged issues. As I discuss further in the next section, the connections, contradictions, and overlaps between the ideological and affective capacities of the rhetoric of green consumption further illustrate the importance of integrating them in analysis.

Integrating Ideological and Affective Rhetorical Criticism

Throughout this project I have treated affective and ideological analyses independently for the purpose of methodological clarity, but in practice the different modes of rhetorical effectivity are more integrated. The rhetorical efficacy of green consumption is shaped not only by its ideological meanings *or* affective form, but by the *relationships between* the ideological and affective capacity of the practice. While at times, meaning and affect may work in opposing or separate directions, they are frequently interconnected. In my analysis I often found it difficult to completely separate the ideological meanings and affective relations, as the meanings and feelings of a discourse are intertwined in practice. Affective investments may enable green consumers to "internalize" an ideological perspective, or ideological content may create, frame, or justify affective feelings.[563] As Raymond Williams suggests in his discussion of structures of feeling and affective elements, it is not "feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feelings as thought."[564]

By examining both the ideological and affective capacity of the same rhetorics of green consumption, my analysis provides the basis for a more nuanced assessment of

[563] Grossberg suggests "It is the affective investment which enables ideological relations to be internalized and consequently, naturalized," yet recognizes that "affect can never define, by itself, why things should matter." Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 83, 86.
[564] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 132.

their environmentalist potential and further suggests how affect may be variously channeled to support or detract from public environmental reform. While the *FilterForGood* campaign captures consumers' affective engagement primarily for an isolated, private form of action, the *GreenMyApple* campaign harnessed consumers' affective engagement to pressure a corporation to change, and the *No Impact Man* project channeled the affective experience of no impact consumption to support a more integrated and collective form of action. This combined analysis across different case studies further illustrates how the rhetoric of green consumption may be modified or amplified to better support collective environmental change. The variation in case studies suggests that the affective capacities of green consumption may be directed to support changes in individual consumer habits, corporate product design, and a broader involvement in the environmental movement. Depending on the nature of environmental problems and other contextual factors, green consumption may be activated as a productive component of collective change.

My dual affective and ideological analyses of these rhetorics of green consumption have also pushed me to question my underlying assumption about the association between ideology and negative critique and affect and positive critique. Perhaps because my project originated out of a sense of dissatisfaction with the negative ideological critiques of green consumption, I came to affective analysis seeking productive possibilities. While it would be convenient if the ideological and affective capacities of green consumption lined up neatly with negative and positive assessments of the practice—if ideological criticism of green consumption focused only on the limitations and affective analysis identified only the possibilities—in practice, the lines

are less clearly divided. In some ways, I found ideological limits and affective possibilities, but I also discovered that the ideological meanings of green consumption may not always be limiting and the affective relations of the practice may not always be productive for environmental change. As I proceeded with my analysis, I discovered that the ideological and affective possibilities of green consumption are closely intertwined and may be both contradictory and complementary. Although *FilterForGood* presents a message that privatizes the problem of public water quality, it also challenges elements of our disposable consumerist culture. Although *GreenMyApple* fails to challenge the consumerist push for the latest new electronic gadget, it does promote an understanding of extended producer responsibility for the entire lifecycle of a product. Although *No Impact Man* promotes an ideology of individual responsibility, it also challenges the ideology of consumerism as a way to personal happiness.

In addition to my own assumption about the connection between negative critique and ideological analysis in the context of green consumption, the association appears more widely in the field of rhetorical criticism. In part this may be traced back to the ideological turn of rhetorical critics to respond to and criticize unethical or abusive discourses. Rhetorical critics frequently use ideological criticism to uncover the negative ideological meanings embedded in a discourse.[565] However, in Grossberg's account of the limitations of ideological criticism, he identifies the shortcomings of this negative form of critique, as:

> the critic always finds domination where he or she expected to find it, and, moreover, it always takes the forms that he or she knew it would. Popular culture

[565] For examples, see: Bonnie J. Dow, "Ellen, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18, no. 2 (2001), Dana L. Cloud, "Hegemony or Concordance? The Rhetoric of Tokenism in `Oprah' Winfrey's Rags-to-Riches Biography," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 13, no. 2 (1996).

> is nothing more than the attempt… to re- or de-inscribe the transhistorical and abstract relations of domination and subordination: e.g., patriarchy (or feminism), or commodification and consumerism (or socialism). The critic is… merely the doomsayer, witness and chronicler of the impending if not continuous victory of the dominant forces or of their inevitable overthrow.[566]

While ideological criticism is often used to identify the negative or limiting meanings of a discourse, ideological meaning is not always unproductive, nor should ideological criticism always be negative.

Just as ideological meanings will not always be limiting, the affective relations of green consumption may not always be productive for environmental change. Although Grossberg recognizes the possibilities of "affective empowerment," he also acknowledges that "affective relations can be disempowering."[567] Grossberg even uses green consumerism as an example of how "ecology as a political struggle is increasingly displaced from questions of national and international policy and economics." He writes:

> the very empowerment which struggles within everyday life make available can be articulated into larger structures of disempowerment which continues to subordinate people by erasing the possibilities of political struggles in another space.[568]

Affective experiences may distract from the ideological limitations of a practice, drain support away from action, or aestheticize politics in a way that eliminates the potential for public debate. In the *FilterForGood* campaign, feelings of privatized protection and personalized benefits encourage consumers to feel that private individual action is productive, even in isolation from more collective action. In the *GreenMyApple* campaign consumers' feelings of personal responsibility were relieved by pressuring Apple to fix the problem, so consumers stopped short of revising their own ways of

[566] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 92.
[567] Ibid., 87.
[568] Ibid., 305-06.

consuming. In the *No Impact Man* project, the feelings of negative affect may overwhelm some consumers and prevent them from also experiencing the positive affects of relating and connecting to people and places.

While the affective capacity of a discourse will not always be productive for social change and the ideological meaning of a discourse negative, my interest in the productive potential of the affective capacity of green consumption suggests a positive perspective on rhetorical criticism and environmental change that is illustrated throughout this project.

A Positive Approach to Change and Criticism

"No imagined future is possible without an informed and mobilized public that is willing to demand it and work to achieve it." [569]

To bring this dissertation project to a close, I would like to reflect on one final point that permeates both my method of analysis and my choice of case studies: the need for productive and positive criticism. We—rhetorical critics and environmental advocates—are well-versed in the practice of negative critique and identifying the problems of a discourse or action. We stress stopping troubling behaviors and unmasking unproductive rhetorical acts. But the path toward a sustainable future may require not just saying *no* to our current path. We may also need to help construct a new, more productive one.

While "saying 'no' is itself often a productive alternative," Christine Harold notes that "it is hardly one on which to build a lasting political movement capable of providing an alternative to commercial culture."[570] As Grant suggests,

[569] Robert Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), 418.

> It is not enough to remove… If we only take consumerism out, the danger then is that the choice will be between boring ethical products or fun, sexy, beautiful, crazy consumerist ones.[571]

Bemoaning or rejecting the already existing affective attachments of our society to the practices of consumption and consumerism will not produce more sustainable alternatives. In addition to critiquing the environmental limits of consumption, we may also need to find ways to use the affective investments of the consumer to create a more sustainable way of living. Similarly, with respect to rhetorical criticism, we may need to, as Condit suggests, do more than "merely finding insufficiencies in the rhetoric of others."[572] We may also need to begin to imagine new rhetorical resources.

I offer this analysis of the limitations *and* the possibilities of the rhetoric of green consumption as one way to begin taking such a positive approach. It is my hope that this dissertation pushes us as rhetorical critics, environmental activists, and individual consumers to consider the many paths and possibilities for rhetorical impact and environmental change. The path to a more sustainable future demands no less.

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[570] Harold, *Ourspace: Resisting the Corporate Control of Culture*, 57.
[571] Grant, *The Green Marketing Manifesto*, 289-90.
[572] Condit, "Pathos and Ideology: From Edwin Blacks's "2nd Persona" To Humans."

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