UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

"CREATION CARE IS A MATTER OF LIFE":

THE RHETORIC OF PRO-LIFE EVANGELICAL ENVIRONMENTALISTS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

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Norman, Oklahoma
2017

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“CREATION CARE IS A MATTER OF LIFE”:
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A THESIS APPROVED BY THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A heartfelt thanks to my committee chair, Dr. Roxanne Mountford and my committee members, Dr. Susan Kates, Dr. Michele Eodice, and Dr. William Kurlinkus for your guidance and support with my thesis and throughout my graduate program—I am deeply grateful for your contributions to my intellectual development, as well as my development as a human.

To my parents, for your love and encouragement in all my endeavors, and for instilling in me the importance of persistence and hard work.

And to Paul, for reading and re-reading drafts, listening to me ramble over various sections of this thesis countless times, and for being there.

I appreciate you all.

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ABSTRACT

Evangelical groups have often been considered politically conservative on issues such as climate change and abortion. However, some evangelical groups employ pro-life rhetoric as a tool to influence pro-life evangelicals to consider climate change as an evangelical issue. The Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) is one such group. Analyzing the EEN's pro-life environmental rhetoric through the lens of what Chaïm Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca define in *The New Rhetoric* as dissociation allows rhetoricians to visualize the rhetorical moves of the EEN. The EEN dissociates the term pro-life from its common usage as *anti-abortion* and redefines pro-life as *all life*—including the environment. The EEN's dissociative rhetoric compels evangelicals to accept the reality of climate change and take efforts to address it as part of their Christian responsibility to care for God's creation.

Introduction

Evangelicalism and environmentalism are two logics that typically exist at opposite ends of the political spectrum in the United States. Evangelicals are a subset of Protestantism characterized by their beliefs in biblical literalism (or the inerrancy of the Bible), activism, and spreading "the good news" (or evangelizing), and have been recognized for their broad support of the current political administration and conservative values. Evangelicals are commonly known as pro-life supporters and climate change deniers. However, evangelicals do not fit into one cultural identity, but rather exist as a diverse web of subcultures, with some groups blurring traditional conservative boundaries (Cope and Ringer 107). One such site where evangelicals appear to diverging from a path of climate change denial is through the use of pro-life rhetoric. Specifically, the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) uses pro-life rhetoric as a way to connect evangelical groups to environmentalism and promote a more active position on addressing climate change. The EEN employs what Chaïm Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca refer to as dissociation to redefine *pro-life* from a stance primarily focused on anti-abortion views to include environmentalism, or what the EEN describes as "caring for creation."

In considering the EEN as a site where ideological boundary crossings occur, this essay explores the ways groups change their stance on long-held beliefs regarding certain issues, and come to accept ideas they were previously opposed to. I also consider what modes of persuasion are employed to encourage groups to support or believe something the group has historically rejected on the basis of their belief system. Exploring these topics can enable

rhetoricians to more deeply understand the rhetorical mechanisms and movements that allow groups to shift ideological stances in both subtle and radical ways. Moreover, understanding how groups rework their frameworks for perceiving the world can help us trace the evolution of groups' cultural logics over time as well as how rhetorical factors, such as the process of dissociation, influence and challenge group belief systems.

Chaïm Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca's concept of dissociation presented in *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* will be used as a methodological tool to unpack how pro-life rhetoric has become a vehicle to bring evangelicals into acceptance of climate change and environmentally focused activism. Dissociation, according to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, is a method through which a unified notion is divided in two terms, or a philosophical pair, referred to as term I and term II. The notional division is, as stated by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, "always prompted by the desire to remove an incompatibility arising out of the confrontation of one proposition with others, whether one is dealing with norms, facts, or truths" (413). From this,

> [Dissociation] can prevent the incompatibility from occurring, or dilute it in time, or sacrifice one or even both of the conflicting values. At this practical level, the dissociation of notions amounts to a compromise, but, on the theoretical level, it leads to a solution that will also be valid for the future, because, by remodeling our conception of reality, it prevents the reappearance of the same incompatibility (Perelman and Olbrects-Tyteca 413).

As engaging in dissociation is a way to "[remodel] our conception of reality," it thus alters the ways persons or groups come to understand a particular concept

(Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 413). In the case of the EEN, dissociation alters the way some pro-life evangelicals understand the meaning, extent, and implications of the term *pro-life*. Dissociation is a rhetorical *process*, as opposed to "a set of principles," whereby the audience's role in the process of dissociating notions is of paramount importance, and the conclusions drawn are rooted in the rhetorical context of the dissociation (Anderson 23). This process holds true for the EEN, as engagement with the audience grows out of a particular context that is not shared by all evangelical groups. Applying the framework of dissociation to the EEN's use of pro-life rhetoric to move certain evangelicals to accept climate change and to promote environmental values enables us to see how the term pro-life is redefined to alter evangelical conceptions of reality.

Historical Connections of Evangelicals to Environmentalism

While some evangelical groups like the EEN are currently taking an environmentally forward stance, this was not always the case. Lynn White notes in his 1967 article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," the anthropocentric nature of the Christian faith and its dogma led to the exploitation of the environment based on humans' needs and desires. White explains the anthropocentrism of Christian beliefs as, "God planned all of this [nature] explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image" (5). This belief was derived from biblical interpretation of Genesis, and, in White's opinion, was responsible for actions that led to the ecological crisis. White's

essay prompted responses from evangelicals, which revealed the beginnings of "a uniquely evangelical environmental ethic" (Wilkinson 16). This unique ethic is founded in biblical interpretations and reinterpretations of Genesis 1.

Though evangelicals ground their faith in the inerrancy of the Bible, its interpretation is very significant. Paul Maltby writes that the interpretation of Genesis 1 has previously occurred through dominion theology, which "in environmental debates…is used to designate the belief that the achievement of a sovereign and exploitive power over nature is mandated by the Bible" (120). Genesis 1:28 of the King James Version reads, "And God blessed them [humans], and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and *subdue* it: and have *dominion* over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (emphasis mine). The specific terms "subdue" and "dominion" are the basis for dominion theology and the view that the earth was created for human use. While dominion theology has been popular among climate change denying evangelicals, evangelical environmentalists have adopted an ecotheological lens, especially in re-interpreting Genesis 1 as a call to stewardship.[1] Ecotheology, or ecological theology, establishes a reconnection between humans and nature through religious, particularly Western, theology.

Clifford Cain, author of *An Ecological Theology*, describes ecotheology as a correction to the denial of the relationship between humans and nature, primarily through humans situating themselves above nature. Ecotheology,

[1] Many evangelicals today use the New International Translation of the Bible, as opposed to the King James Version.

then, aims to advocate a *reconnection* of humans to nature through a theology that "support[s] an environmentally-sensitive, ecologically-informed, biocentric,[2] understanding and explication of the nature of God, which in turn would stimulate fitting, biocentric, ethical actions in harmony with this description (i.e. the Church would be at the forefront of efforts to save the planet)" (179). In other words, ecotheology suggests scientific understanding of the environment paired with religiously driven beliefs and actions can establish a connection, or rather a reconnection, between humans and nature, on both a spiritual and secular level.

Early development of ecotheology in the 1980s influenced evangelicals "to embrace an eschatology that envisions the redemption of all creation rather than its destruction at the end of days" (Wilkinson 17). Ecotheology inspired the use of the term "creation care" which reflects a belief in caring for God's creation as opposed to dominating or subduing it. Katherine Wilkinson, author of *Between God and Green: How Evangelicals Are Cultivating a Middle Ground on Climate Change* states, "Reinterpreting the dominion passage as a call to stewardship, exhorts Christians to recognize the sinfulness implicit in environmental destruction and the intrinsic value of divinely created nature beyond utilitarian assessments" (17). Emphasizing stewardship above domination encourages evangelical environmentalists to remain true to their belief in the Bible's inerrancy, while taking a more progressive environmental

[2] Biocentricism refers to "ethical perspective holding that all life deserves equal moral consideration and has equal more standing" (*Encyclopedia Britannica).* In this way, biocentricism is held in contrast to anthropocentrism.

stance than their anti-environmental counterparts. Along with emphasizing stewardship and the Christian responsibility to "care for creation" some evangelical environmental groups, like the EEN, are tying their environmental stance to issues long championed by evangelicals, such as pro-life.

A national study conducted in 1998 of evangelicals and other Protestant groups regarding the beliefs and practices of these groups reveals "religious faith among evangelicals is subject to the least amount of doubting. Seventy-one percent of evangelicals report never having doubts about their religious beliefs, well above that expressed by members of other traditions" (Smith 29). This finding is important to note when considering that the EEN has managed to open up certain evangelicals' minds and hearts to issues relating to climate change—a phenomenon many evangelicals previously denied. Although the EEN has managed to influence certain evangelicals to accept the reality of climate change, this does not mean that those evangelicals ever doubted their faith. Rather, certain topics that were connected to evangelical identity, such as pro-life as anti-abortion and the denial of climate change, have become integrated into evangelical practice and responsibility to "care for creation."

For a group as fervent in their beliefs as evangelicals, the ability to alter long-standing beliefs on issues such as pro-life concerns and climate change is a feat in itself. Yet, this alteration is where the rhetorical moves exercised by the EEN become especially notable—caring for God's creation is presented by the EEN as *already* woven into the threads of an evangelical belief system revolving around pro-life ideology. The motto of the EEN, "creation care is a matter of life," represents a subtle definitional maneuvering with radical implications, as

it allows evangelicals to challenge their behavior without challenging their fervently held beliefs. They are instead encouraged to see how environmentalism exists under the purview of pro-life doctrine.

The EEN is perhaps the most vocal and visible pro-life evangelical environmental group. The views of the Network are espoused via the EEN website and elaborated further in the book *Caring for Creation: An Evangelical's Guide to Climate Change and a Healthy Environment*, written by Mitch Hescox (the founder of the EEN) and Paul Douglas (a meteorologist and evangelical minister). Of paramount concern to the EEN is protecting "the unborn" and the lives of children, expressed through a pro-life ideology that moves beyond the notion of pro-life as grounded only on anti-abortion views. They connect their pro-life views to broader environmental responsibilities bestowed on Christians to care for God's creation, and claim habitually that "creation care is a matter of life."

The EEN alters and expands commonly held definitions of pro-life, which have predominately been akin to anti-abortion, to encompass the environment as part of the life represented in the term *pro-life*. The EEN's particular take on environmentalism places a Christian responsibility for the life and health of the unborn and children as of utmost concern. Pro-life evangelical environmentalists argue protecting the environment from toxins such as mercury in the water and pollutants emitted from corporations and factories into the air is the best way to protect the unborn. Further, the EEN emphasizes the importance of reducing human-induced climate change. In order to act against climate change, the EEN proclaims evangelicals' role in protecting God's

creation is a Christian responsibility to be stewards of the earth, which references evangelical environmentalists' reinterpretation of Genesis 1. The vehicle through which these arguments aim to reduce the effects of climate change is neatly encompassed in a pro-life rhetoric dissociated from its usual usages.

The EEN dissociates the common conception of pro-life ideology (i.e. anti-abortion) from their own form of pro-life environmentalism, or "creation care." The EEN essentially expands notions of pro-life ideology as contained within anti-abortion attitudes to a more encompassing term (within evangelicalism) that includes environmentalism. Christian Smith writes in his study of American Christianity, "evangelicals, compared with all other [Christian] groups, are by far most likely…to believe in the existence of absolute, unchanging standards as the basis for morals" (127). Because of these absolute and unchanging moral standards, offering pro-life as an umbrella under which environmentalism sits, is one of the most effective ways to create room for evangelicals to make ideological boundary crossings.

Applying Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's concept of dissociation explained in *The New Rhetoric,* to the movements of pro-life usage within the EEN, specifically seen in *Creation Care* and the EEN website, will be analyzed. Using the rhetorical process of dissociation as a framework allows us to understand how evangelical environmentalists have expanded and altered the definition of pro-life to encapsulate "creation care." This framework also illuminates limitations of pro-life environmentalism employed by the EEN. Creation care is described as a responsibility of Christians, and perhaps specifically evangelicals,

to protect the environment as part of the biblical mandate to care for God's creation, which stems from viewing Genesis 1 as a call for Christians to act as stewards of the environment.

Dissociating Pro-Life

In *The New Rhetoric*, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca begin their description of the concept of dissociation as a rhetorical process through constructing a visual of two dissociating terms, term I and term II, which they refer to as a philosophical pair or a *couple philosophique*. The terms are visualized as follows:

$$\frac{\text{term I}}{\text{term II}}$$

Amy Anderson explains the relationship between term I and term II in *Image/Text and Text/Image: Reimagining Multimodal Relationships through Dissociation*, by quoting Olbrects-Tyteca's *The Realm of Rhetoric*, stating "'Term II provides a criterion, a norm which allows us to distinguish those aspects of term I which are of value from those which are not' (RR 127)" (24). Anderson explains that, between the two terms, term II is more stable and "serves as the constant against which term I is judged and refined" (24). Explaining further she writes:

> Because term II is the more ideologically valued concept in the pair, it follows that term II is the criterion for judging the relative merit of the less valued term, term I…Term I may be the dependent term, but it is the one that we are first aware of and the one from which the dissociative pair begins. Term II is the underlying principle or value that impacts the way we view the first term, although we are often unaware of a difference between the term until an incompatibility appears (25).

From Anderson's description, we see that term II is the norm to which term I is compared – term II is heavier, more expansive, and encompassing. Term I is then an aspect of, or held in comparison to, term II. Although term I may be the more obvious or present of the terms to an audience, and the term where the dissociation first begins, it is encompassed within and defined by its relationship with term II. In a dissociative process, term I can move into the place of term II and then be held in comparison with a new term. This particular movement is seen in the EEN's redefining of *pro-life* to include environmentalism as a component of evangelical identity.

The EEN's alteration of the definition of pro-life to encompass environmentalism illustrates a dissociative argument. Anderson writes, "Dissociation…is a type of argument that involves breaking the links between related ideas by changing the ways that the ideas are associated with each other. Once these associations are changed, the ideas become uncoupled, creating possibilities for new and different associations, and thus new and different ideas" (22-3). If we understand that evangelicals have commonly held *evangelicalism* as term II and *pro-life* as term I, with pro-life acting as a subset of the heavier, more encompassing term of evangelicalism, then we can see how the EEN has changed the ways that not only evangelism relates to pro-life, but how pro-life relates to environmentalism. The EEN uses a dissociative argument to move *pro-life* from term I, to creating an adjacent construction where pro-life is term II and creation care (i.e. environmentalism) functions as a subset of pro-life ideology and becomes the new term I. The primary area this dissociative

argument takes place is in the motto of the EEN: "creation care is a matter of life." To give a visualization of this dissociative movement:

$$\frac{\text{pro life}}{\text{evangelicalism}} \quad \rightarrow \quad \frac{\text{creation care [i. e. environmentalism]}}{\text{pro life}}$$

$$\frac{\dfrac{\text{creation care [i. e. environmentalism]}}{\text{pro life}}}{\text{envangelicalism}}$$

Term I and term II can express a variety of relationships, according to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. For instance, term I can be related to term II through "a particularization. . .a relativization. . .a fragment. . . the alteration. . . expression. . .or even the representation of term II" (Anderson 26). Considering these relationships, the relationships expressed between term I and term II in the case of the EEN, term I (creation care/environmentalism) is most clearly related to term II (pro-life) through alteration, expression, and representation. The creation care rhetoric employed by the EEN not only illustrates the way they have altered the definition of pro-life, but also shows how they have molded conceptions of environmentalism to act as an *already* essential component of acting to care for God's creation.

In the book *Creation Care*, Hescox and Douglas cite a study that links smog and volatile organic compounds to negative health effects on fetuses in the womb, such as low birth weight and other birth defects (40-41). In reference to these studies, they state:

> Unfortunately, many in our pews have not yet accepted the connection [between pro-life concerns and environmentalism]. Until our communities understand and identify the problems using

> our values, our communities have no way to internalize and act on problems our children face. Often when speaking before a congregation, I start my presentations asking, 'Will you please stand if you have a child or grandchild with asthma? Autism? ADHD? Allergies? Cancer?'
> By the time I get through asking those questions, it's not uncommon for up to 90 percent of the congregation to be on their feet. I look around the room to see the number of lives and families that are impacted. Then I simply state, 'If you're not concerned about caring for God's creation, you should be, because our failure to be good stewards touches every one of our family's lives. Creation care is a matter of life (40).

Hescox and Douglas repeat the phrase "creation care is a matter of life" as a type of mantra to the evangelical environmental movement. It appears often in *Creation Care* and also appears throughout the EEN website. This phrase, along with the sermon Hescox and Douglas reference in the previous quote, illustrates how their rhetoric performs a process of dissociation between commonly held views of protecting the unborn through pro-life ideology, and how the EEN explicitly connects this revised ideology to environmentalism. Creation care (environmentalism) is a matter of life (pro-life as *all life*).

Hescox and Douglas's description of the sermon they use to highlight connections between children's health and environmental concerns referenced above demonstrates how environmentalism is transformed into a component of pro-life. Anderson describes the negotiations and transformations that take place in the relationship between terms I and II:

> Dissociative pairs counteract irrefutable binaries and absolutism because they create a relationship of negotiation between the terms…Dissociation places two unequally valued concepts in a transformative relationship. There are no predetermined outcomes for the ways that term I will be altered; instead, the term is changed through a process that is rooted in the audience's understanding of

> both term I and term II. The dissociative relationship is a contextualized process (Anderson 26).

As mentioned, pro-life rhetoric is often situated in politically conservative arenas and to an anti-abortion interpretation, while environmentalism has commonly been conceived of as a secular concern. In this way connecting conservative politics to a liberal movement is situated within an "irrefutable binary." Yet the negotiation between pro-life and environmentalism takes place most obviously in the phrase *creation care is a matter of life*, or, for our purposes, *environmentalism is pro-life*. The EEN relies on their audience's participation in this renegotiation of terms and broader cultural logics relating to pro-life understandings.

The Role of Audience in Dissociative Process

The transformation that occurs in placing environmental concerns as an *already* essential part of the pro-life agenda occurs through a rhetorical process where Hescox and Douglas engage the audience on health concerns of the audience's children, which then are revealed to be effects of environmental pollution. The audience is thus an essential part of the negotiation to bring environmentalism under the wing of pro-life concerns—Hescox and Douglas present the audience's stake in this negotiation in order to transform the audience's understanding of environmentalism.

The Pro-Life Clean Energy Campaign is one site where the audience's participation is heavily relied upon to move forward with the dissociative process (EEN). The Campaign calls on evangelical Christians to sign a petition that expresses, as pro-life Christians, they advocate for clean energy initiatives,

specifically related to clean electricity. Prior to the petition itself, the EEN offers a description as to why evangelicals who identify as pro-life are called to join the campaign through connecting environmental concerns (clean energy) to pro-life ideology, stating:

> Pollution harms the unborn, causing damage that last's [sic] a lifetime. Dirty air and water has [sic] serious consequences for the health of our children and other vulnerable populations like the elderly. This is why pro-life Christians must lead the charge on clean energy, and why the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) will organize *half a million pro-life Christians* to participate in our Pro-Life Clean Energy Campaign…It is time to stop poisoning the womb and our environment and create a cleaner, brighter future for our children, free from pollution (original emphasis).

The explicit interlocking of "the womb and our environment" forces pro-life Christians to see their long-held concerns for "the womb" and "our children" not only woven into fibers of "the environment," but also immediately impacted by the health of the environment. The *womb* in this sense is expanded. *Pro-life* reaches out to encapsulate environmental concerns because of the logical construction that if the environment experiences harm, this harm will be felt within the mother's *womb*.[3]

The petition, which lists 63 signatories on the EEN website, posits that advocating for clean energy initiatives, such as solar and wind power to replace electricity by 2030, is a pro-life concern tied into one's expression of Christianity, and thus illustrates the EEN's reliance on their audience to engage

[3] And maybe, also through a dissociative process, the environment then comes to be seen as the *womb* of humanity.

in the dissociative process of moving pro-life from an anti-abortion stance to one of creation care. The full petition states:

> As a pro-life Christian, I believe pollution harms the unborn, causing damage that lasts a lifetime. Dirty water and air have serious consequences for the health of our children and other vulnerable populations, like the elderly.
> So, I ask my Governor and other elected officials to support a plan for clean electricity that will: free our children from pollution by relying entirely on clean electricity from renewable resources like wind and solar by 2030; defend our freedom to create our own electricity from sunshine, without fees championed by monopolistic utilities; free our communities from regulations that prevent us from joining together to create our own electricity; and free businesses from such regulations so that they, too, can create and sell clean electricity (EEN).

The extension of one's identity as a pro-life Christian to encompass consideration for the impact of pollution on the unborn illustrates how environmentalism (or creation care) has become term I of the philosophical pair, with pro-life functioning as term II, the more valued and heavier term. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca refer to this extension of pro-life to encapsulate environmentalism as a dissociative redefinition. They write:

> Often the statement that something falls or does not fall within a given concept amounts to the indirect introduction of a dissociative definition, especially when the introduction of a new characteristic becomes the criterion for the correct use of the concept…The extension of particular concepts sometimes represents a dissociative redefinition, as in this passage from Cicero:
>
> > No, judges, the violence threatening our lives and persons is not the only kind of violence. There is that other, much more serious form, which by the threat of death fills our minds with terror and often turns them from their natural condition.
>
> The extension of the concept [violence] is combined with a playing down of what consisted the usual concept (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 445-6).

The extension of pro-life, its redefinition to include all life, to include the environment, and tying pro-life to one's Christian identity, puts forth the criterion that *this* conception of pro-life is its correct use. Similar to what we see in Cicero's explanation of violence as not only the actual, physical violence itself, but also the threat of violence that is encapsulated within *violence*, the EEN concludes that pro-life as caring for creation exceeds, yet is also contained within, its common usage. And, not only is the inclusion of the environment within the bounds of a pro-life definition the *correct* use, it is also an integral component to evangelical Christian identity.

Dissociation as a 'Profound Change': Pro-Life as a 'Way of Life'

The EEN not only claims evangelicals' responsibility in caring for creation through the use of biblical verses, such as Genesis 1, Psalm 24:1,[4] Psalm 139:14,[5] and Matthew 19:14,[6] they also substantiate this claim by providing scientific evidence of the impact of pollution and climate change on pregnant women, and therefore "the unborn." The webpage Mercury and the Unborn offers evidence of the prevalence of mercury contamination in lakes and streams caused by power plants. The page also provides information regarding the

[4] "The Earth is the Lord's, and the fulness [sic] thereof" (Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation).
[5] "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb" (Mercury and the Unborn).
[6] "Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'" (Mercury and the Unborn).

negative health implications for developing fetuses, as well as pregnant women, from consuming mercury. For example, the page states:

> Mercury emitted from power plants drops from air to earth and presently contaminates over 6 million acres of freshwater lakes, 46,000 miles of streams, and 225,000 wetland acres across the U.S. Every state has a fish consumption advisory. Mercury contaminated fish are often eaten by pregnant women. Mercury and other heavy metal toxins pass across the mother's placenta and enter the bloodstream of her unborn child. A protective shield around the developing child's brain is not fully formed until the first year of life. Mercury easily crosses into the developing child's brain causing brain damage, developmental disabilities, neurological disorders, lowered intelligence, and learning difficulties (EEN)

By elaborating on the developmental issues that arise in children from pregnant women consuming too much mercury, the EEN places environmental concerns close to the heart of pro-life evangelicals. Further, the scientific evidence provided is an essential component in the EEN's dissociation of the term pro-life. Pro-life moves (or dissociates) from meaning anti-abortion, to pro-life meaning causing no harm to fetuses, and thus pregnant women, which is accomplished, according to the EEN, through a stance against fuel emissions (as seen in the previous quote). The anti-fuel emissions stance then transforms pro-life as an acknowledgment of and proactive engagement in efforts to combat climate change through an environmentalist worldview and the use of scientific evidence. This fluid redefinitional movement exemplifies the dissociative process of the term pro-life by the EEN.

As outlined by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, employing the use of scientific evidence is one aspect of a dissociative redefinition. They explain, "In

order to justify the definition, appeal is sometimes made to scientific or popular etymology. A usage of the notion will be advanced as being primitive, authentic, that is to say real, having been separated out from later falsifications" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 448). The ability of the EEN to effectively put forth scientific evidence of pollution, as seen in Mercury and the Unborn, to a group who has resisted such evidence illustrates the power of a dissociative redefinition. As pro-life concerns are expanded to encapsulate creation care, the use of scientific explanations of pollution is normalized, or at least made to seem so in this particular rhetorical context.

In *Creation Care*, Hescox and Douglas further demonstrate the dissociative negotiation they set up between pro-life and environmentalism by highlighting how their pro-life stance is what enabled them to conceptualize caring for the environment as a Christian responsibility. In this way they voice their insider status as evangelicals who are able to see the 'inherent' connections of pro-life views and creation care. They describe a unity between pro-life and environmentalism as if the two parts were ever *not* connected:

> When issues of climate change arise, it's very easy for us to dismiss or deny them because they put one additional stress into our everyday lives. That's why being pro-life helped me to understand that creation care is truly a matter of life for our kids, the majority of the world's poor, and even many of the economically disadvantaged in the United States whose homes border some of the most toxic air, foul water, and polluted land.
> Pro-life for me is caring for all life…pro-life is not a political statement, it's a way of life…We [evangelicals] are concerned about life from conception until natural death. The unborn child is very important to us, but so is each child of God at every stage of life.
> A few years ago, I testified before the United States House of Representatives Energy and Power subcommittee on mercury

> emissions from coal-fired power plants and the threats posed to our unborn children's brains as a pro-life matter (Hescox and Douglas 37-38).

In this excerpt, Hescox and Douglas articulate that *pro-life* refers to *all life*. In altering pro-life to expand to "caring for all life," Hescox and Douglas implicitly offer a redefinition of the term. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write, "The dissociation of notions brings about a more or less profound change in the conceptual data that are used as the basis of argument. It is then no more a question of breaking the links that join independent elements, but of modifying the very structure of these elements" (412). In other words, the conceptual data that was previously used to define pro-life—viewing abortion as sinful—underwent a "profound change" to include the health of all life, including children, the environment, the poor, and other vulnerable populations. Therefore, the definitional elements of pro-life are modified to include environmentalism—which according to the EEN is inherently tied to protecting children from mercury poison along with other toxins emitted into the environment.

In *Creation Care*, Hescox and Douglas transfer pro-life from inhabiting the space of term I, above evangelicalism (term II), to becoming the more encompassing term II, to which term I (creation care/environmentalism) is compared. The EEN also claims their definition of pro-life is more genuine and more real compared to previous definitions by stating "pro-life is not a political statement, but a way of life." They thus essentially reject conceptions of pro-life concerns existing purely in opposition to abortions as a political statement, and

replace this conception with "a way of life." Dissociating pro-life (anti-abortion) from pro-life (environmentalism) acts under the idea(l) that pro-life (environmentalism) is 'the deeper truth'. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca speak to this definitional dissociative by offering an example:

> Definition is an instrument of quasi-logical argumentation. It is also an instrument of the dissociation of concepts, more especially whenever it claims to furnish the real, true meaning of the concept as opposed to its customary or apparent usage. So Shri Aurobindo, after eliminating the more usual definitions of 'work,' gives us what he considers the 'the deeper truth of work':
> 'By work I mean action done for the Divine and increasingly in union with the Divine—for the Divine alone, and nothing else' (444).

What we see Shri Aurobindo doing with the term *work* is effectively the same process Hescox and Douglas use in redefining pro-life to incorporate environmentalism and "all life." Offering the definition of *pro-life* as *all life* holds the same sentiment described by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, that the EEN's definition of pro-life is "the real, true meaning of the concept as opposed to its customary or apparent usage" (444). The dissociative process of redefining pro-life is seen in a more complete form in the Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation on the EEN website. This declaration moves beyond the redefinitional moves described above to a stance which assumes the acceptance and implementation of the redefined *pro-life* by the audience. The EEN no longer uses language to build a bridge between *pro-life* and environmentalism, but rather highlights a desired result of the dissociation process.

The Dissociative Process Continues

The Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation, composed by the board of directors of the EEN, outlines key issues the EEN sees as related to evangelicals' responsibility to care for God's creation, as well as ways that evangelicals can address these issues. The Declaration opens with the scripture, "*The Earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof-Psalm 24:1,*" then continues,

> As followers of Jesus Christ, committed to the full authority of the Scriptures, and aware of the ways we have degraded creation, we believe that biblical faith is essential to the solution of our ecological problems. Because we worship and honor the Creator, we seek to cherish and care for the creation.
> Because we have sinned, we have failed in our stewardship of creation. Therefore we repent of the way we have polluted, distorted, or destroyed so much of the Creator's work.

This introduction establishes the evangelical responsibility to care for creation, not only because it is from the Creator, but because the EEN understands that the degradation of the planet is because of humans' misuse and mistreatment of it. By establishing that evangelicals must care for creation and repent of "the way we have polluted, distorted, or destroyed so much of the Creator's work," the EEN explicitly links environmentalism to honoring the Creator, and thus to evangelicalism and being a "follower of Jesus Christ." Through chastising the role humans have played in harming creation, the EEN lays the foundation that environmentalism is an already established pillar of evangelicalism. In this way, the EEN furthers the dissociative process of the term pro-life by weaving core components of Christian identity into the dissociative framework. The Declaration thus illustrates how environmentalism is woven into the fabric of evangelicalism, and Christian identity, by connecting the life of children to the planet as a living creation.

The Declaration asserts:

> Because we await the time when even the groaning creation will be restored to wholeness, we commit ourselves to work vigorously to protect and heal that creation for the honor and glory of the Creator—whom we know dimly through creation, but meet fully through Scripture and in Christ. We and our children face a growing crisis in the health of the creation in which we are embedded, and through which, by God's grace, we are sustained. Yet we continue to degrade that creation.

Though the Declaration does not use the same dissociative definitional framework as seen in *Creation Care* and the Pro-Life Clean Energy campaign, in that it does not use the phrase *pro-life* or the statement *creation care is a matter of life*, the Declaration illustrates the effect of the definitional dissociation of *pro-life* in its complete form. By complete form, I mean that the dissociation of pro-life as anti-abortion from pro-life as creation care is described as if there were never a dissociative movement between these terms in the first place. In other words, the dissociative process is hidden and the outcome (pro-life as environmentalism) is posited as reality. The dissociation of evangelicals' responsibility to care for *all* creation is described as the norm, as an already existent element of evangelical Christianity. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca state:

> The new concepts resulting from the dissociation may acquire such a consistency, be so fully developed, and appear so indissolubly linked to the incompatibility whose removal they make possible, that the forceful presentation of the incompatibility may seem to be another way of stating the dissociation…The accepted solution sometimes seems so firmly based that failure to take it into consideration will be regarded as a logical error, as a fallacy (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 413-4).

Thus the Declaration illustrates how the new concept of caring for *all* creation, for *all* life, has become inseparable from the responsibility of evangelicals, that thinking this was *ever not* the responsibility of evangelicals can now "be regarded as a logical error, as a fallacy" (Perelman and Olbrects-Tyteca 414). Though the Declaration furthers the process of dissociation by intimately linking Christian identity to environmentalism, the dissociative framework employed by the EEN still holds limitations in its execution, and in its rejection by other pro-life evangelical groups.

Limitations

The use of redefining pro-life so that "creation care" is a component of its expression is effective in many ways. The dissociative process of term I and term II in our equation allows the audience, pro-life evangelicals, a space to negotiate commonly held conceptions of pro-life with the call to act as stewards of the environment. However, the conceptual framework that places pro-life views as a catalyst to caring about and protecting the environment from pollution has long-term implications that will hinder this rhetorical construction in the future. As the pro-life attitudes of the EEN have origins in anti-abortion rhetoric, and *pro-life* to the EEN is tied up in protecting pregnant women and the unborn, addressing issues of population control in the current rhetorical cultural logic put forth by the EEN will require a new negotiation, and perhaps a new dissociative process.

Consumption and population growth are two factors which weigh heavily on the changing climate. In the current dissociative framework of pro-life evangelical environmentalism,

$$\frac{\underline{\text{creation care [i. e. environmentalism]}}}{\underline{\text{prolife (i. e. } all\ life\text{)}}}{\text{envangelicalism}}$$

which positions that pro-life (as *all life*) and creation care grow from the root of evangelicalism, human life continues to be more highly valued that of the environment. Though the redefining of pro-life is done with the intention of altering the meaning of pro-life from anti-abortion to that of *all life*, the predominant reason caring for the environment is placed as term I is to protect pregnant women and children—not necessarily to protect the environment in and of itself. Thus, to consider larger relationships between the environment and humans, the EEN places humans as term II (the more encompassing term), and the environment, or ecological systems, as term I, or a component of humanity:

$$\frac{\text{environment}}{\text{humanity}}$$

For sustainable changes regarding the protection of the environment to be implemented, it can be argued that this framework needs to be flipped, placing humanity as a component of the environment, situated within ecosystems as opposed to thinking of humans as outside of or more important than the environment. As the EEN has previously shown the influence of dissociation to lead to ideological boundary crossings, there is possibility for this method to be used in the future. This particular boundary crossing, however, is unlikely within evangelicalism due to the belief that humans are made in the image of God, and therefore have a special connection to the Creator above that of other non-human life.

While presenting a framework which places *environment* as term II (the bottom, and more encompassing term) and *humanity* as term I (the top term which is held in comparison to term II) is an unlikely possibility for evangelicals, the EEN does point to interconnectedness of humanity with the environment. The EEN website specifically poses two questions "How are we to treat non-human creation? Are not people more important?" They answer these questions by stating: "…the Bible also proclaims that human beings have a special role and a special responsibility in God's creation since they are created in God's image and have free will. Human beings are called to care for the rest of God's creation, not abuse or destroy it." Although their answer still places humanity in a special role seemingly more important than non-human creation, the EEN also states, "God created us to depend on the rest of his creation for our material existence, for the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the raw materials we use for everything else." In this statement, the EEN acknowledges humanity's reliance on non-human creation. If a further dissociation that privileges a biocentric worldview over an anthropocentric one were to occur, I believe it would occur from this point.

While the EEN is forging a path for evangelicals to join the environmental movement, other pro-life evangelicals do not recognize, or reject, the pro-life environmental stance of the EEN. For instance, Brian McCammack notes that groups like the EEN "continue to encounter strong resistance from such popular evangelical leaders as James Dobson and Charles Colson, who refuse to believe that climate change is an issue evangelicals are morally obligated to address" (645). Pro-life evangelicals who are offended by the EEN's

use of pro-life as an environmental stance have been expressing their views on platforms such as The Cornwall Alliance, an evangelical environmental group that rejects EEN's use of pro-life environmentalism, and *The Christian Post*. In a publication titled "A Call to Protect the Unborn and the Pro-Life Movement from Environmentalist Deceit: A Declaration by Concerned Pro-Lifers," members of The Cornwall Alliance write, "Recently some environmentalists have portrayed certain [sic] of their causes as intrinsic to the pro-life movement. As adherents of the pro-life movement, we reject that portrayal as disingenuous and dangerous to our efforts to protect the lives of unborn children" (The Cornwall Alliance). In the same document, they state, "*'Life' in 'pro-life' denotes not quality of life but life itself. The whole term denotes opposition to a procedure that intentionally results in dead babies.* In stark contrast, most environmental policies promoted as pro-life address problems that pose little threat to human life itself, and no intent to kill" (The Cornwall Alliance, original emphasis). Although the Cornwall Alliance, whose tagline is "for the stewardship of creation," is founded on "environmental stewardship and economic development," they vehemently reject the redefining of *pro-life* to refer to the environment as they feel it weakens the traditional conception of pro-life as anti-abortion.

Expressing similar sentiments in an article published in *The Christian Post* titled "Evangelical Environmentalists Undermine the Pro-Life Movement, Again," the authors criticize the EEN's use of pro-life cause to encapsulate environmentalism by stating that this argument "[obscures] the meaning of 'pro-life' and [dilutes] its usefulness to identify people working to end abortion

on demand." The authors continue, "First they aligned global warming to the 'pro-life' cause, and then they expanded the definition of 'life' beyond human beings to include caring for all of life" (Beisner & Crouse). Beisner and Crouse appear to be aware of the dissociative process in which the EEN engages to redefine and expand the meaning of *pro-life;* they along with Cornwall Alliance, are not moved by the dissociative process. The failure of the EEN to persuade certain pro-life evangelicals of the connection between environmentalism and pro-life ideology highlights some limitations of the dissociative framework. Beisner and Crouse's awareness of the EEN's attempt to dissociate pro-life from anti-abortion seems to weaken the persuasive qualities of dissociation. However, limitations need not be confused with futility. If anything, the resistance to the EEN's redefinition of pro-life is an indicator of its influence.

Conclusion

Utilizing a framework for dissociation to understand the ways groups make subtle and radical ideological boundary crossings enables rhetoricians to trace these crossings and see the rhetorical mechanisms that make the crossings possible. It is exigent for rhetoricians and scholars concerned with environmental rhetoric to return to *The New Rhetoric*, as it is ripe with analytical tools and frameworks that enable unique observation into rhetorical arguments that affect discourse communities and the wider public, as was seen with the EEN. Dissociation can, and should, be applied to other environmental rhetorics to understand underlying motivations and intentions through examining the rhetorical dissociations made. Some examples of other locations where a dissociative framework would be useful is in petroleum commercials,

such as Suncor Energy, where the boundary crossing occurs through gentle music and a focus on *energy* and its possibilities without mention of oil, and also in understanding the reasons Shell has dropped the word *oil* from its company name. Additional research regarding the comparison of the EEN's "Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation" and The Cornwall Alliance's "Call to Protect the Unborn and the Pro-Life Movement from Environmentalist Deceit: A Declaration by Pro-Lifers" would also be beneficial to understand the divergences within evangelical environmental groups.

The New Rhetoric opens up unique ways to visualize rhetoric and to see how dissociation is employed in groups like the EEN to cross boundaries and alter ideologies of members of the group without causing the members to doubt or question their identity or belief system. Through dissociating pro-life doctrine from anti-abortion views to environmentalism, a section of evangelicals, one of the largest sects of Christianity today, has taken a stake in protecting the environment. While their environmental concerns are limited by their elevation of humanity above ecological systems, and neglect of the negative impact of population growth and consumption on the environment, the EEN has reached a previously impenetrable group on the reality of climate change and its present and future implications, and has paved a way to bring evangelicals into the conversation of protecting the environment.

In our current political and environmental climate, it is now more crucial than ever to look to environmental rhetorics, the groups who use them, to what end, and through what rhetorical mechanisms they are employed. *The New Rhetoric* offers the tools to peer more closely into the inner workings of

environmental rhetoric, and thus opens more and different pathways to understand our world and the changes occurring within it.

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