THESIS

SERENE TEA: UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY CONSERVATIVE ENVIRONMENTALISM IN THE UNITED STATES USING A MIXED METHODS APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

SERENE TEA: UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY CONSERVATIVE ENVIRONMENTALISM IN THE UNITED STATES USING A MIXED METHODS APPROACH

Climate change will require action that transcends political divides, yet environmental politics in the US appear as polarized as ever. This thesis investigates conservative environmentalism using a mixed methods approach. Quantitatively, I find that liberals are increasingly uniform in their pro-environmental attitudes post the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, while conservatives have substantial amounts of intra-ideology dispersion on environmental spending. I then interview self-identified conservative environmentalists and progressive environmentalists to explore this dispersion qualitatively. Conservative environmentalists unite in their staunch belief of market-driven solutions to ecological degradation but diverged between a market-based "ecological modernization" framework or a more libertarian, market-only "free market environmentalism" framework. The conservative interviewees shared focus on increasing market access and outcomes contrast with progressive interviewee's market skepticism and support for intersectional processes aimed at socially equitable, system-altering solutions that jointly address intertwined "wicked" ecological and social problems. Practically, two contrasting solutions to ecological degradation were salient: conservative interviewees sought to relegitimize the current social system; progressive interviewees seek to restructure the current social system.

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DEDICATION

Ku Muchinga Phiri, ubongo uli khuta

Ku Evelyn Thunell, mugone bwino

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Conservativism, environmentalism, movement, countermovement, mixed methods

Chapter 1: Introduction

In his bid for reelection in 2020, former Colorado Republican Senator Cory Gardner ran an ad in which former Deputy Director of Colorado State Parks Larry Kramer proclaimed: "Cory Gardner has always been one of the few Republicans who fights for green energy…we need people in both parties fighting for the environment" (Gardner, 2020). Intriguingly, in this ad a Republican flaunts his *green* energy credentials to sway voters. This conservative pro-environmental rhetoric is surprising as political orientation and party affiliation are among the strongest predictors of environmental attitudes and behaviors in the US (Dunlap, Xiao, & McCright, 2001; Adua, 2021; Hein & Jenkins, 2017; Bohr, 2014; Steele, 2020; Hamilton, 2011; Dunlap, McCright & Yarosh, 2016; McCright & Dunlap, 2011a, 2011b; Leiserowitz et al., 2011; Guber, 2012). McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap (2014), for example, find that beginning in 1991 conservatives have become increasingly "anti-environmental" while liberals have become increasingly "pro-environmental". So, for the past three decades the term "conservative environmentalist" has become seemingly oxymoronic.

In this thesis I aim to advance understandings of conservative environmentalism. I begin from the position that conservatism is both diverse and worthy of study. When preparing for this research by reading through environmental sociology texts, many writers appeared to treat conservatives as monoliths intent on upholding a relatively constant status quo or as static scarecrow supporters of climate denialism, who would accept anthropogenic climate change if they "only had a brain" (Baum & Denslow, 1900) to see through corporate misinformation campaigns (Farrell, 2015a; 2015b; 2019; Farrell, McConnell, & Brulle, 2019; McCright & Dunlap, 2017; Dunlap & Brulle, 2020) or suddenly realize the systemic inequities they disproportionately benefit from (i.e. McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Campbell, Bevc, & Picou, 2013). As Gross, Medvetz, and Russell (2011: 329) point out social research often:

> "Falsely presumes that it is possible for the social scientist to specify objectively what counts as liberal or progressive social change, with conservatism defined negatively against it…built on the assumption that conservatism can be characterized in terms of a fixed or stable essence"

Underlying assertions about pro- and anti-environmentalism, left and right, progressives and conservatives are discursive frames that engender conscious or implicit ontological presuppositions which affect epistemic justifications (Goldman, Turner, & Daly, 2018; Hempel, MacIlroy, & Smith, 2014; Lave, 2012; Langhalle, 2010; Hajer, 1996; Turnhout, 2018). In essence, how you define a problem predicates how you find solutions to it. I feel this is a rather obvious statement, but often overlooked when discussing environmental problems. Understanding these discursive frames are the keystones for bridgebuilding and ripostes underlying incisive critiques. Throughout the thesis, I explore the ideas that conservatism is heterogeneous, and to understand conservative solutions to environmental issues you first must understand discursive frames.

In chapter 2 I display the heterogeneity of conservative environmental attitudes quantitatively. The chapter shows that *inter*-ideologically, conservatives and liberals continue to diverge on their environmental attitudes through 2018. *Intra*-ideologically, liberals have become increasingly uniform in their environmental attitudes after the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan introduced federal neoliberalism, with the global minimum of intra-liberal environmental polarization occurring in 2021. Contemporarily, to be liberal is to be "pro-environment". However, conservatives have heterogeneous polarization on environmental attitudes throughout, culminating in 2021 being within the global maximum standard error of intra-conservative polarization. Contemporarily, to be conservative is not to be "anti-environmental" but to have heterogeneous views on the environment.

Chapter 3 first reviews how ecological modernization, critical theory, and free market environmentalism define environmental problems. If you take a critical theory approach and define the market as the causal mechanism creating ecological degradation, then market-driven solutions become homogenized and dismissed. In many ways, a critical lens would have simplified this thesis by prioritizing something I'm good at, critiquing. However, this critical lens is unhelpful at fully explicating groups that solve ecological degradation through market-driven approaches. Prioritizing an inductive approach grounded

in conservative interviewee's responses, chapter 3 investigates the conservative dispersion within government spending on the environment. Conservatives display two distinct market approaches to solving environmental issues: ecological modernization (EM) and free market environmentalism (FME). EM is a well-known reformist sociological theory based on proliferating society-wide ecological rationality demanding government regulation to incentivize ecologically sustainable technologies and economic growth simultaneously. FME is a lesser-known revolutionary libertarian economic theory based on negligible government regulation with the combination of the market, strong property rights, and tort law exclusively creating incentives for ecological sustainability. Interviews with self-identified conservative environmentalists display a steadfast belief in the market as the solution for environmental issues but also an affinity for both EM and FME, indicating a diversity of viewpoints on the role of government regulation.

Chapter 4 compares self-identified conservative and progressive environmentalists on the four tenets of environmental justice: distributive inequities, procedural inequities, recognition injustice, and restoration justice. Conservative interviewees posit that increased market access can solve both ecological degradation and then social inequities as they view the environment as separate from other social issues. The conservative worldview acknowledges distributive inequities exist but the focus on solutions-oriented outcomes to first solve strictly environmental problems through increasing market access does not manifest procedural inequities, recognition injustice, or restoration justice. Progressive interviewees view environmental and social issues as fundamentally interconnected and are skeptical of market-driven solutions to intersectional environmental problems. The base of the progressive worldview is acknowledgement of distributive inequities, with a focus on robust, process-oriented approaches to solve "wicked" intersectional environmental problems through systemic changes that address procedural inequities and recognition injustice implicit to the market system. To create a more equitable restructured system, progressive interviewees attempt restoration justice. To conclude

chapter 4, I state that it is improbable conservative interviewees will embody the four tenets of environmental justice as they position themselves as the pragmatic, outcome-oriented alternative opposite the progressive interviewee's emphasis on systematic, process-based changes. Similarly, to conclude the thesis, I discuss the validity of different responses to the "cultural trauma" (Brulle & Norgaard, 2019) of climate change without taking a firm stance on which is better which I'm sure will appease everyone and not lead to further probing questions.

The key takeaway from this thesis is that conservative attitudes on the environment are complex. Quantitatively, conservative General Social Survey (GSS) respondents are certainly not monolithically anti-environmental but qualitatively, self-identified conservative environmentalists don't feel a part of either mainstream environmentalism or conservatism. Conservative interviewees accept anthropogenic climate change as a taken-for-granted fact, which separates them from mainstream conservatism. However, conservative interviewees explicate environmental problems through pragmatic, market-driven solutions to ecological degradation which contrasts with progressive interviewees market skepticism and intersectional approaches. Conservative interviewees view markets as the mechanism through which change can and will happen. This orientation leads to a singular focus on strictly environmental issues, since conservatives opine that incorporating intersectional issues decreases the likelihood of addressing the largest environmental issue, climate change.

Chapter 2: A Quantitative Approach to Understanding Conservative Environmentalism

"Kusadziwa ndi kufa komwe" – Chewa proverb, which translates to "Ignorance is death"

2.1 Summary

This chapter uses the GSS to explore polarization on environmental issues between Democrats/liberals and Republicans/conservatives and, more interestingly, within both political orientations. An assumption in contemporary environmental politics within the United States (US) is the divide between right and left. I look at this assumption anew. Recent rhetoric from conservative elites indicates a shift towards more pro-environmental messaging, but regressions demonstrate a continued divergence from 2014 to 2018 between conservatives and liberals. However, collapsing all conservatives into one category creates the narrative that "conservative" and "pro-environmental" is a rigid dichotomy. This narrative lacks nuance. The Index of Ordinal Variation shows liberals are increasingly uniform in their pro-environmental attitudes post the 1980 presidential election of Ronald Reagan, yet conservatives are heterogeneous. Intra-ideological differences matter when discussing environmental issues as they have the potential to create unexpected collaborations and allow for incisive critiques. For these reasons, I argue for further study on conservative environmentalism as climate change will require action that transcends political divides.

2.2 Background

Most people in the United States (US) say the government is doing too little to protect the environment (Funk et al., 2020), yet the environment remains a wedge issue with increasing polarization between right and left observed across various measures of environmental concern and policy support (Bergquist & Warshaw, 2019). I contribute to the current understanding of this political divide by examining both

inter-ideology[1] and intra-ideology polarization. Inter-ideology polarization on environmental issues is well studied, but intra-ideology polarization also matters in contemporary US politics (Groenedyck, Sances, & Zirkov, 2020; Lee, 2021).

Polarization results from the increased dispersion of economic, cultural, and sociopolitical views (DiMaggio, Evans, & Bryson 1996). There are varying arguments about why it occurs (see Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008). For example, Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope (2011) posit that while the mass public is primarily centrist in political orientation, US politics have become sorted by party because party activists and elites have become more extreme in their views. From this perspective, party activists and elites endorse diametric policy positions, driving the Democratic Party further left and Republican Party further right. This top-down polarization then sorts voters into the neat dichotomy of Republican or Democrat with little overlap between the official party positions, forcing voters to choose which party most aligns with their ideology. A contemporary example of party sorting is polarization around the environment.

Previous research suggests a political split in environmental views initially emerged in the early 1990's (McCright, Xiao & Dunlap, 2014). The narrative associated with this finding identifies the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, and Rio Earth Summit in 1992, as major catalysts behind the political split in contemporary environmental views (Jacques, Dunlap, & Freeman, 2008). A tenet of conservatism is individual economic freedom through a small government. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 meant there was no longer a direct comparable antithesis to conservative neoliberal philosophy. In essence, the big government "green scare" of environmentalism replaced the dissipating "red scare" of communism (ibid). The Rio Earth Summit in 1992 called on nations to construct and implement

[1] For parsimony and to save space, I use ideology to refer to both political ideology (conservative) and political party (Republican)

actionable plans to protect and preserve the environment for future generations, which were seen to further threaten free market interests (ibid).

In response, industry leaders launched a well-organized and funded campaign to foster scientific uncertainty and undermine support for green initiatives (Oreskes & Conway, 2010; McCright & Dunlap, 2010). Industry leaders and corporate elites pumped over $900 million annually from 2003 to 2010 into conservative advocacy organizations and think tanks to fund or support climate change counter-movement scientists (Brulle, 2013), often funding contrarian scientists to discredit the scientific consensus on climate change through production of white papers, presentations, and research (Björnberg et al., 2017; Farrell, McConnell, & Brulle, 2019, Farrell, 2015a). Additionally, from 2000 to 2016 lobbyists spent $2 billion on climate change legislation, with expenditures by industrial sectors dwarfing those in environmental organizations by a factor of 10:1 (Brulle, 2018). Industrial investment, in cooperation with conservative media and political elites, disseminated information that contradicted the scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change and signaled to supporters that the environment had become a politically split issue (Farrell, 2015b, Farrell, 2019). For supporters of conservative elites, the presumed and manufactured illegitimacy of the climate change non-consensus legitimized their pro-business attitudes. This milieu created an anti-environmentalist conservative identity that supports business and industry, with overbearing environmental legislation framed as oppugnant to a successful business climate (Campbell & Kay, 2014; Oreskes & Conway, 2010). The resultant alignment of political party and ideology is evident across multiple studies which find political orientation to be the strongest indicator of environmental concern in the US (Schwom et al., 2015; McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap, 2014; McCright & Dunlap 2011b; McCright, Dunlap, & Xiao, 2013; Bolin & Hamilton, 2018; Fairbrother, 2016; Guber, 2013).

The McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap (2014) study discussed above ends in 2012, I replicate and extend their research until 2018. Assuming a continuing pattern of polarization post-2012, I anticipate a similar political divergence in subsequent years.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a political divergence between conservative GSS respondents and liberal GSS respondents on environmental issues from 2014-2018.

The above accounts provide insight into the political divide in the US including why polarization on environmental issues exists, as well as insight into the mechanisms undergirding anti-environmental conservatism. As the environmental movement threatened economic interests, conservative leaders used elite cues from prominent Republican politicians and media personalities to signal to supporters where to stand on social issues, including the environment (Bolin & Hamilton, 2018; Bohr 2017; Brulle, Carmichael, & Jenkins 2012; McCright & Dunlap 2011a, Farrell, 2015a; Farrell, 2015b; Brulle, 2021). Thus, through a combination of elite cues and party sorting, the environmental movement has become politically cleaved, with liberals commonly referred to as "pro-environment", and conservatives as "pro-business". However, the accounts provide limited insight into the emergence of pro-environmental conservatism.

Conservative environmentalism has only recently begun to receive popular press (e.g. Weir, 2020) and academic (Hess & Brown, 2016) attention. The growth of this faction corresponds to emergent shifts within conservative rhetoric from denialism towards acceptance of the scientific consensus on climate change and presenting conservative solutions to solve climate issues (Hess & Brown, 2016). Responding to younger generations propensity for belief in anthropogenic climate change and aversion to political affiliation (Ross, Rouse, & Mobley, 2019) conservative elites and activists have sent a clear signal to ideological supporters through promotion of the Republican climate plan (see Robinson, 2021), the championing of former Republican president Teddy Roosevelt by forming the bicameral Roosevelt

Republican Conservation Caucus, and the Baker-Shultz Carbon Dividend Plan. Top officials from the archetypal conservative Reagan era such as Chief of Staff and Treasury Secretary James Baker III, Secretary of State George Shultz, and Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors Martin Feldstein as well as other conservative elites such as N. Gregory Mankiw and Henry Paulson Jr. contributed to these efforts in coauthoring the Baker-Shultz plan. In essence, the plan infuses the conservative tenets of a small government, entrepreneurship, and a market driven, efficient economy into policies addressing climate change issues (Baker et al., 2017). These notable elites who hearken to Reagan era conservatives suggest that the same mechanism of elite cues addressed in the polarization literature may also steer conservatives to a more pro-environmental orientation. If these numerous conservative elite cues resonate with supporters and liberal attitudes remain pro-environmental, this shift could lead to a political convergence on environmental issues. Thus, in response to recent conservative elite cues I expect the opposite of hypothesis 1:

Hypothesis 2: There will be a political convergence between conservative GSS respondents and liberal GSS respondents on environmental issues from 2014-2018.

If conservative rhetoric translates into actual yes votes, then bipartisan environmental legislation becomes a very real possibility again. However, the literature amalgamates conservatives into a broad anti-environmental category which then dismisses the possibility of bipartisan legislation (i.e. Guber, 2012; McCright, 2016; Farrell 2019, 2015a, 2015b; Fairbrother, 2016;Mayer 2019a, 2019b; Hazboun et al., 2020; Peifter, Khalsa, & Ecklund 2016; Druckman & McGrath 2019; Johnson & Schwadel, 2019; Leiserowitz et al., 2011; Hess et al., 2014; Hamilton, 2011, 2016; Bolin & Hamilton 2018; Bohr, 2014; Jacques, Dunlap, & Freeman, 2008; McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap, 2014; Brulle, Carmichael & Jenkins, 2012; McCright & Dunlap, 2011a, 2011b; Dunlap & McCright, 2008; McCright et al., 2016; Dunlap, McCright, & Yarosh, 2016; Dunlap, McCright, & Xiao 2001; Brulle, 2021; Adua, 2021; though note the exceptions of: Hess & Brown, 2016; McCright, 2017). Hein and Jenkins (2017: 99) typify this when they

methodologically separate environmental and conservative as dichotomous: “To identify the leading think tanks on both sides of the global warming policy debate in the United States, we begin with a larger list of environmental and conservative think tanks”.

Likewise, in a frequently cited paper, McCright, Xiao, and Dunlap (2014: 258) observe that:

> “since the early 1990s the conservative movement has become increasingly hostile towards environmental protection…Political polarization on the environment among political elites (e.g. party activists and members of Congress) has resulted from this increasing anti-environmentalism of conservatives and Republicans.”

However, Eun Kim and Urpelainen (2018) find that liberals moving further left may propel the observed political divide more than conservatives moving right. Arguing against McCright, Xiao, and Dunlap (2014) and citing federalism to focus on the state level instead of national, Eun Kim and Urpelainen (2018: 105) find that “the divergence between Democrats and Republicans is thus driven by large positive changes among Democrats’ opinions, while Republicans do not show a systematic pattern of change across the country” such that (ibid: 110):

> “Democratic public opinion has converged to a relatively high level of environmental awareness, while Republicans have converged to a low level of support for environmental protection. Within each party’s voting base, variation in support for environmental protection has decreased and some of the partisan polarization is thus driven by less heterogeneity among American partisans.”

This point of contention of whether right-leaning individuals are “anti-environmental” (McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap, 2014) or “converging to a low level of support for environmental protection” (Eun Kim and Urpelainen, 2018) is further explored below.

Following Eun Kim and Urpelainen (2018) I predict:

<u>Hypothesis 3:</u> There is diminishing polarization on support for the environment within conservative GSS respondents and within liberal GSS respondents.

Dissimilar to Hypothesis 3, I expect recent conservative pro-environmental elite cues to resonate with conservative supporters which would lead to increased intra-conservative polarization, such that:

Hypothesis 4a: Intra-ideology polarization within conservative GSS respondents on support for the environment will increase

Similar to Hypothesis 3, since there are no recent liberal anti-environmental cues, I expect liberals to solidify into a staunchly pro-environmental position.

Hypothesis 4b: Intra-ideology polarization within liberals on support for the environment will decrease

2.3 The Current Study

The goal of this research is to determine if recent conservative pro-environmental elite cues have resonated with supporters both inter-ideologically and more interestingly, intra-ideologically. First, to test for inter-ideological convergence, I replicate and extend the framework provided by McCright, Xiao, and Dunlap (2014) in their analysis of political polarization and spending on the environment from 1974 to 2012. Using ordered logistic regression and pooling General Social Survey (GSS) data into two groups, one from 1974 to 1991, and the other from 1993 to 2012, they find 1991 to be the critical year that environmental issues became politically split. This McCright, Xiao and Dunlap (2014) study is important as it establishes not only that political orientation is one of the most robust, if not the most robust predictors of environmental belief in the US, but also pinpoints the year in which polarization began, and reasoning why. I extend their research through 2018. The McCright, Xiao, and Dunlap (2014) study is also referred to as the "framework study" throughout the rest of this chapter.

To test for intra-ideological changes, I use the Index of Ordinal Variation (IOV) to provide the measurement of the dispersion within an ordinal variable, measured on a 0 to 1 scale, with less dispersion indicating less polarization within the variable (Blair & Lacy, 2000). The framework study

established the dependent variable as ordinal through using ordered logistic regressions, so the IOV is appropriate to use. Maximum dispersion in the IOV occurs when responses are equally divided among the two extreme categories, with no responses between them (Blair & Lacy, 2000). For example, in the three-category response to spending on the environment: if all the responses were evenly distributed between the first category "too little" and the third category "too much" with none in the middle category of "about right" then the IOV would equal 1. As the number increases in the most extreme categories, dispersion as measured through the IOV also increases (Blair & Lacy, 2000; Willis, 2017: 36).

2.3.1 Data

I obtain data for this research from the GSS. The GSS provides generalizable, national level data from clustered random samples of every year from 1973 to 1994 with the exceptions of 1979, 1981 and 1992. Starting in 1994 the GSS began collecting samples on even numbered years, except for 2021. This study uses data from 1974-2021. The ordered logistic regression models only go from 1974-2018 since one of the independent variables, race, and sampling weights are not available for 2021. Graphs exclusively using the dependent variable, support for spending on the environment, span from 1974-2021. Because political ideology was not measured in 1973, and there was an alternative measure in 1983 these years are not included in the study (McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap, 2014). The single year lowest sample size in the dataset is 1,340 and occurs in 2004, while the highest single year sample size is 2,950 in 1994. The total pooled sample is 54,406.

2.3.2 Dependent Variable

The framework study and this study operationalize concern for the environment through support for government spending to protect the environment. Environmental researchers have used this single item indicator for three decades, as it has face and content validity (Jones & Dunlap, 1992). The logic follows

that if people support the environment, they will support the government spending more money to protect the environment. The verbatim prompt within the GSS is:

> *We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. First (READ ITEM A) . . . are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on (ITEM)?*

The prompt has two versions. For the environmental item, the verbatim phrases are "improving and protecting the environment" or "the environment". Following the framework study, I combine the two wordings into a single measure of support for governmental spending on the environment coded so that 1 = "too much", 2 = "about the right amount" and 3 = "too little" (McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap, 2014). Unlike the framework study, which imputes the dependent variable to the yearly medians, I do not impute the dependent variable.

2.3.3 Independent variables

There are additional methodological changes to the independent and control variables. This study runs multiple models following the framework study in collapsing the seven-point scales of political ideology and party identification into three-point scales but also diverges from the framework study in other models by using the full seven-point scale. The full seven-point scale adds further nuance, and I argue that this allows for a more robust understanding of how conservatives view government spending on the environment. Additionally, the framework study codes the "other party" option of party identification to Independent. I drop any respondents who selected "other party" from the analysis, preferring not to place respondents who do not identify on the US political spectrum, either being further right or left than the GSS indicators, into the perceived middle of that spectrum. Finally, the framework study imputes the small amount of missing data for party identification to Independent, political orientation to moderate, as well as age, education, and income to yearly medians which creates

an unneeded influx of values to the middle of the data (White, Reiter, & Petrin, 2018). In replication models, I use median imputation following the framework study, in other models, I use listwise deletion. I summarize the differences between the framework study and this research below in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1: Comparing this research with McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap (2014)

McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap (2014)	This research
Missing data for age, education, income, and support for government environmental spending imputed at yearly medians	Both median imputation and listwise deletion for missing data of age, education, and income. Support for environmental spending is not imputed since it is the dependent variable
Missing data for political views and party identification, as well as "other party" set to moderate or Independent	"Other party" dropped from dataset. Missing data imputed to moderate or Independent in replication models, deleted in other models.
Collapsed three party identification/ideology scale	Uses both collapsed three-point and full seven-point scale
Variables for party identification and ideology coded as -1, 0, 1	Variables for party identification and ideology coded as 1, 2, 3, or 1 through 7

2.3.4 Controls

Government spending is a politically split issue within the US with Democrats generally favoring increased spending, and Republicans generally favoring decreased spending, hence why I follow the framework study and create a spending index, minus environmental spending, as a control variable. The spending index includes the same prompts as the dependent variable with support for government spending on improving the environment/environment replaced by: space exploration program/space exploration; improving the nation's health/health; improving the nation's education/education; defense/national defense; and foreign aid/assistance to other countries.

The spending index is the averaged responses given to the above five variables from a low of one (respondent answered "too much" to all answered items) to a high of 3 (respondent answered "too little" to all answered items). For instance, a respondent receives a one if they said there was "too much" government spending on space and health but didn't answer any other of the prompts. They

receive a 1.5 if they responded “too much” to government spending on space, “about right” to the health prompt, and didn’t answer any of the other prompts. I excluded participants who did not answer any of the prompts (n= 1,882; 2.93% of the sample).

Demographic variables follow the framework study and are age (in years), sex (“female” = 0; “male” = 1), race (“white” = 0, “nonwhite” = 1), income (in 1986 constant dollars, rescaled to thousands of dollars), and education (years of school completed). I provide descriptive statistics for these and other variables used in the study in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Original GSS code	Coding	Mean	SD
Dependent variable: Support for government spending to protect the environment	NATENVIR/NATENVIY/NATENVIZ	1 “too much” to 3 “too little”	2.54	.65
Independent variables				
7-point scale of party identification	PARTYID	1 “strong Republican” to 7 “strong Democrat”	3.69	1.96
7-point scale of political ideology	POLVIEWS	1“extremely conservative” to 7 “extremely liberal”	4.09	1.35
Collapsed 3-point scale of party identification	PARTYID	1 “Republican” to 3 “Democrat”	2.15	.90
Collapsed 3-point scale of political ideology	POLVIEWS	1 “conservative” to 3 “liberal”	1.94	.77
Control Variables				
Age	AGE	Age in years	46.17	17.56
Sex	SEX	0 “female” to 1 “male”	.44	.50
Race	RACE	0 “white” to 1 “non-white”	.20	.40

Education	EDUC	Number of years of school completed	12.96	3.14
Income	REALINC	Family income in constant $1000s	31.91	29.94
Support for Government Spending Index	NATSPAC/NATSPACY/NASPACZ, NATHEAL/NATHEALY/NATHEALZ, NATEDUC/NATEDUCY/NATEDUCZ, NATARMS/NATARMSY/NATARMSZ, NATAID/NATAIDY/NATAIDZ	1 ("too much on all five items") to 3 ("too little" on all five items)	2.05	.33

2.3.5 Analytic Strategy

The goal of this research is to determine if recent conservative pro-environmental elite cues have resonated with supporters. To test for intra-ideological changes, I use the IOV. To test for an inter-ideological convergence, I follow the framework study and employ ordered logistic regressions.

Ordered logistic regression models are useful when the dependent variable has more than two levels and a meaningful order. The dependent variable in this study has three categories: "too much", "about right", and "too little". These have an obvious meaningful order to them, which satisfies the two requirements for using ordered logistic regression models. To check for multicollinearity, I employ the variance inflation factor (VIF) and find no variables near 5.

Continuing to follow the framework study, this study operationalizes polarization through a "group dummy variable * year" interaction effect in a regression model (Evans, 2002), with the groups dummy variables being political party and political ideology. After centering on a year, the two interaction terms for the models are party*year and ideology*year. The four groups of data are from 1974-1991, 1993-2012 (the end of the framework study), extension from 2014-2018, and full 1974-2018 dataset. This grouping allows for McCright, Xiao, and Dunlap (2014) to confidently point to 1991 as the pivot year of political polarization on environmental issues. The literature review explained the recent increase in conservative pro-environmental cues. Given the increased attention to environmental issues since 2012,

this study extends the framework study to see if there has been a contemporary political convergence. As alluded to earlier, I also run the same model but with the seven-point scale of political affiliation instead of the three-point scale, as this adds additional nuance to the debate. To test the robustness of the framework study's findings, I run additional models that use listwise deletion instead of median imputation.

For interpretability, and to follow the framework study, this study uses X-standardized odds ratio which provide the ratio changes in odds with a one standard deviation change in the independent variable (Long & Freese, 2005). In contrast to linear regression models, you cannot compare logistic regression coefficients and X-standardized odds ratio year to year, or even this study to the framework study (Mood, 2010). However, using ordered logistic regression X-standardized odds ratio and conglomerating years does provide a parsimonious interpretation, as anything above one on the interaction terms indicates a political divergence, while anything below one indicates a political convergence (McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap, 2014).

Unlike ordered logistic regression models, you can compare the IOV year to year and graph to graph, provided they have the same number of categories (Blair & Lacy, 2000). The IOV is an underutilized approach to studying polarization. To demonstrate the effectiveness of the IOV in measuring longitudinal changes in polarization I mimic Eun Kim and Urpelainen's (2018: 109) strategy of comparing polarization on other partisan issues. Specifically, I use contentious issues from the Obama and Trump administrations. The contentious issue in the Obama administration is government spending on health (Singer, 2016; Brodie et al., 2019; Kriner & Reeves, 2014) and the contentious issue in the Trump administration is government spending on foreign aid (Regilmen, 2022; Shendruk & Rosenthal, 2019; Kull 2017). Both figures use variables from the government spending index and have the same three-category responses ("too much", "about right", "too little") as the dependent variable. For the IOV graphs, upper/lower shows the standard errors. The IOV for the other three variables that make up the

spending index: government spending on national defense/education/space exploration are available in the appendix.

In 2010, President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act (ACA) into law after years of debate. Figure 2.1 shows the tremendous jump in polarization that occurred from 2008 to 2010 (26%!), with debates raging about what is informally known as “Obamacare”, with conservative elites voicing their dissent and liberal elites voicing their support (Singer, 2016; Brodie et al., 2019; Kriner & Reeves, 2014). Government spending on health has remained polarized throughout the Trump presidency, and current Biden presidency, and has yet to return to pre-2010, or pre-ACA levels. Additionally note the local maximum in Figure 1 that occurs in 1994, and aligns with President Clinton’s 1993 healthcare plan, which included universal healthcare and a health insurance mandate for employers, like early versions of the ACA. This met resistance from conservative elites (Kriner & Reeves, 2014); most notably in their “Harry and Louise” advertisements against the plan, while liberal elites created counter-advertisements in support of the plan (see CSPAN, 2009). In 1994, the legislation surrounding Clinton’s healthcare plan was declared dead, and polarization slowly returned to its pre-Clinton “baseline” until the ACA in 2010.

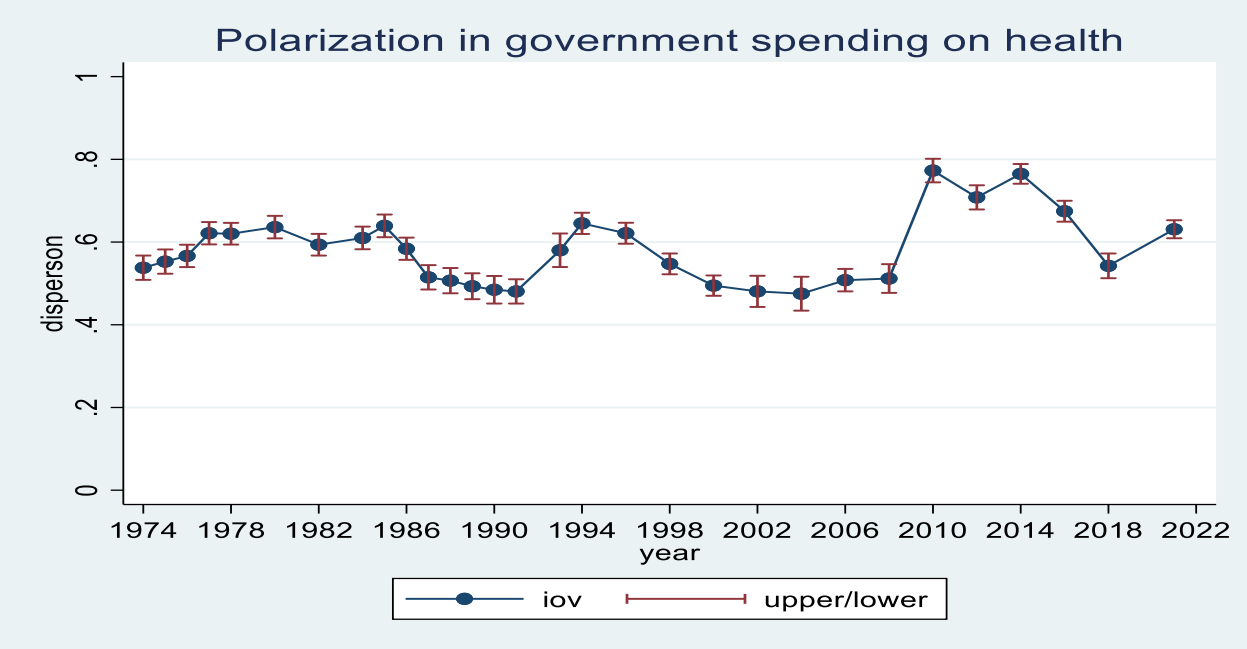

Figure 2.1: Note the increase in polarization associated with the ACA in 2010 and the increase in polarization associated with Clinton's 1993 healthcare plan

President Trump's *America First* rhetoric implicitly and explicitly prioritized US interests over other nations (Shendruk & Rosenthal, 2021; Regilme, 2022). In his own words: "America is governed by Americans. We reject the ideology of globalism, and we embrace the doctrine of patriotism" (Trump & Ward, 2018). Figure 2.2 shows foreign aid has become steadily more polarized since 1974, but the slope substantively increases from 2014-2018, coinciding with the 2016 election of President Trump's America First rhetoric, and then beginning to decline with the election of Joe Biden in 2020. Biden has reversed Trump cuts to foreign aid (Shendruk & Rosenthal, 2021).

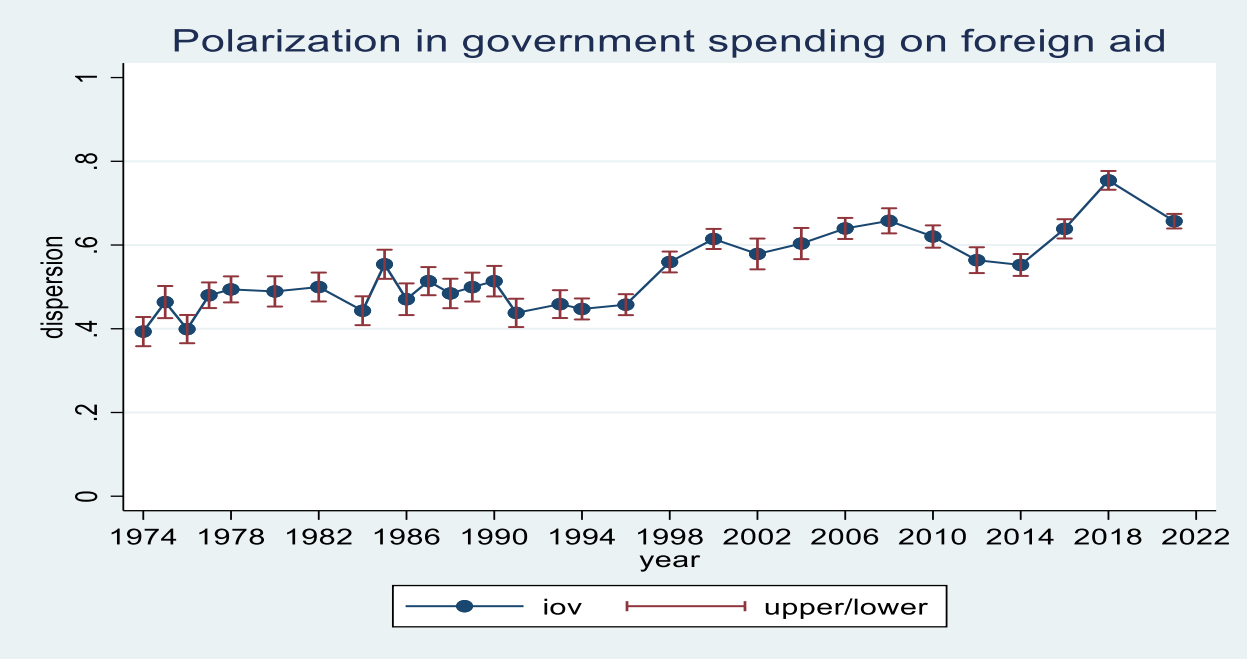

Figure 2.2: Note the increase in dispersion associated with the election of President Trump in 2016.

2.4 Results and Discussion

2.4.1 Replication and extension of McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap (2014)

The framework study provides graphs of respondent's percentages that the government is spending "too little" on the environment divided by the combined "just right" and "too much", contrasting Democrats with Republicans, and liberals with conservatives. The top of Figure 2.3 replicates and extend the framework study's graphs using the collapsed 3-point measure of party and political ideology. These uppermost collapsed graphs support the narrative that liberals are pro-environmental while conservatives are anti-environmental as a higher percentage of Democrats/liberals believe the government is spending too little compared to Republicans/conservatives throughout. However, by adding more nuance through the full seven-point scale in the bottom portion of Figure 2.3 I find little difference between those self-identifying as "extremely liberal", "liberal", and "slightly liberal" or those self-identifying as "strong Democrat", "not strong Democrat", and "lean Democrat". Conversely, there

are large differences between “extremely conservative”/”conservative” and “lean conservative”, as well as “strong Republican” and “not strong Republican”/”lean Republican”. This is like Hamilton and Saito’s (2014) findings that Tea Party (typically considered far-right) supporters differed significantly from self-identified Republican’s on 8 of 12 science or environmental questions. There are large intra-ideology/party differences among conservatives/Republican, but not for liberals/Democrat.

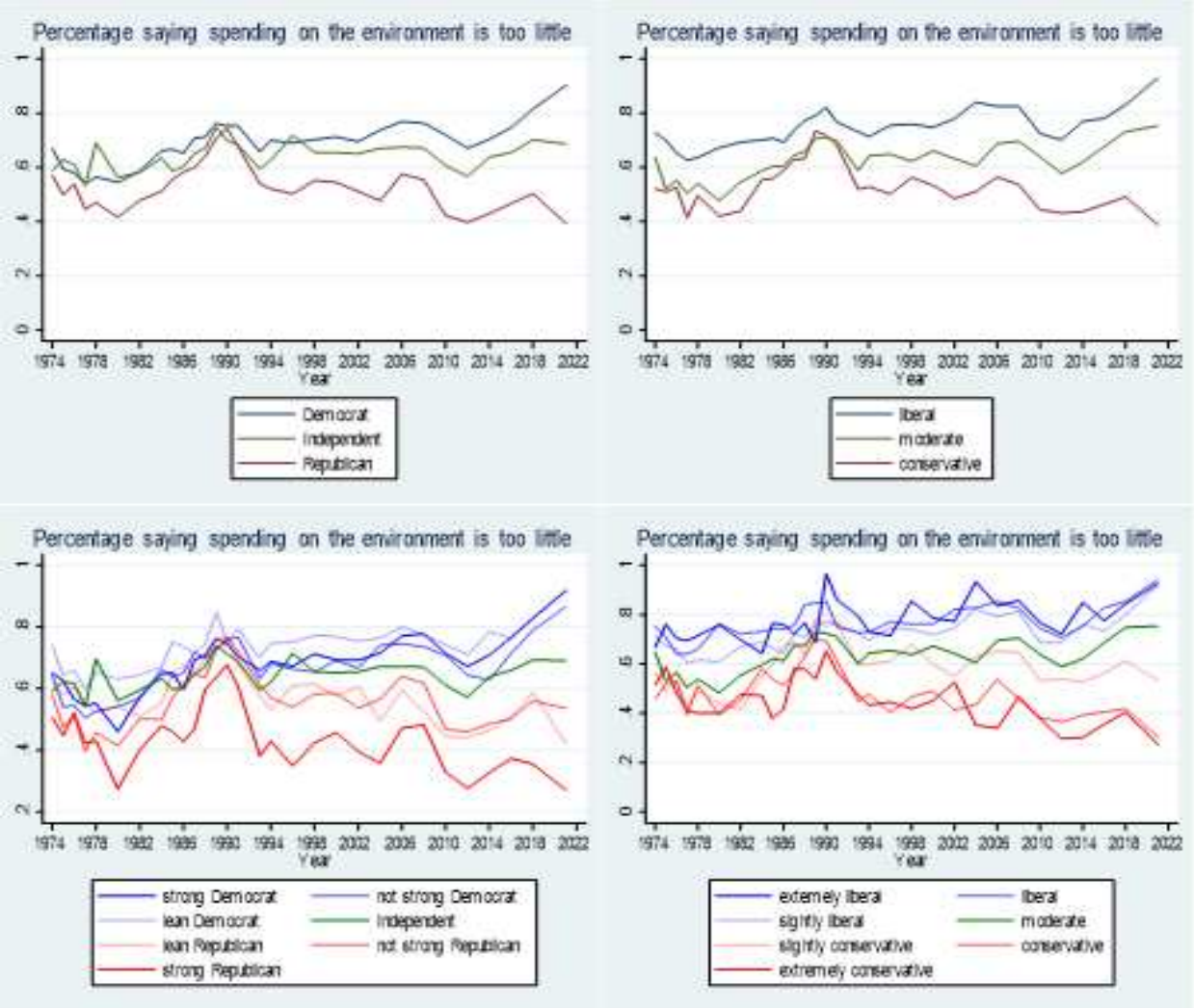

Figure 2.3

While all the figures to this point have provided nice visual representations, they address only one variable without any controls. Government spending is a politically split issue within the US, with liberals

favoring increased spending, and conservatives favoring decreased spending. The next models test the inter-ideology Hypotheses 1 and 2, but control for the respondent's attitudes on government spending through the spending index, as well as age, sex, race, education, and income.

The emphasis of this research is to see if recent pro-environmental conservative elite cues correspond to a political convergence on environmental issues. Thus, I relegate the year-to-year logistic regressions to the appendix. For direct year-to-year comparisons I also include linear regressions in the appendix which confirm the findings from logistic regressions. I observe no substantive differences from the original McCright, Xiao, and Dunlap study, as political party/ideology is statistically significant in every table after 1991 including 2014-2018 signifying the continued robustness of political party/ideology as a key environmental indicator. Interestingly, both race and education are significant in all three years post 2012 in logistic models. In the extension years of 2014, 2016 and 2018: nonwhites support more environmental protection compared to whites, while increased education also led to increased support.

Table 2.3 uses the framework study years of 1974-1991 and 1993-2012 as baselines and extends those to include new iterations of the GSS from 2014-2018. The models within Table 3 lists only the interaction terms, with the control variables of age, sex, race, education, and income included in the models but not the table.

Model 1 is a direct replication of the framework study, sans putting "other party" as "moderate" for party affiliation. This means median imputation for missing data, and a collapsed 3-point scale of political party/ideology. Significant results mirror the framework study as expected: a political convergence on spending on the environment in the years 1974-1991 and a political divergence from

1993-2012. The extension years of 2014-2018 indicate a continued political divergence on spending on the environment after 2012.[2]

Model 2 uses the full seven-point scale and deletes missing values instead of performing median imputation. There is a slight change from previous methodological adjustments, as from 1993-2012 party divergence ($p = .128$) is not significant. Akin to the framework study, ideological divergence from 1993-2012 ($p = .028$) is significant. Overall, these models show robust evidence of the framework study's findings, and support for Hypothesis 1 but not Hypothesis 2. Only when using both listwise deletion and a full 7-point scale is there a slight change to the narrative.

Intra-ideology differences matter when discussing environmental issues. The use of a seven-point scale instead of a three-point scale adds valuable nuance that doesn't exist when collapsing respondents into either liberal or conservative. This amalgamation helps create the narrative that "conservative" and "pro-environmental" are mutually exclusive. Assisting this narrative is decades of corporate-funded climate denialism and lobbying against climate change reform (Farrell 2015a; Farrell, 2015b; Brulle 2018; Brulle 2013; Dunlap & McCright 2015; McCright & Dunlap, 2010). The data rejects Hypothesis 2 as there is a continued political divergence from 2014-2018. This means that recent pro-environmental conservative elite rhetoric has yet to lead to a political convergence, likely due to the decades of corporate-funded climate change denialism targeted towards conservatives.

[2] Models 3 and 4 are available in the appendix. Model 3 uses replicates using a 7-point instead of 3-point scale. Model 4 uses listwise deletion and the collapsed 3-point scale. Significant results mirror the framework study and Model 1 further showcasing the robustness of the framework study's findings.

Table 2.3: Replication Results

Model 1: Direct replication, sans "other party" to moderate.	Party Polarization 1974-1991	Ideological Polarization 1974-1991	Party Polarization 1993-2012	Ideological Polarization 1993-2012	Party Polarization 2014-2018	Ideological Polarization 2014-2018	Party Polarization 1974-2018	Ideological Polarization 1974-2018
Party * year	.97		1.16**		1.24*		1.47***	
Ideology * Year		.83***		1.11*		1.17		1.34***
N	22666	22666	24209	24209	7531	7531	54406	54406
Model 2: Listwise deletion, 7-point scale								
Party * year	.97		1.08		1.40**		1.44***	
Ideology * Year		.84**		1.14*		1.13		1.44***
N	19012	19012	20003	20003	6453	6453	45468	45468

2.4.2 IOV

I now move on to test the intra-ideological hypotheses 3, 4a, and 4b using the IOV, but first Figure 2.4 further supports McCright, Xiao, and Dunlap's (2014) claim of 1991 as the pivot year in polarization on environmental issues. The year 1991 is within the standard error of the global minimum of dispersion on government environmental spending, in 1990. The framework study ended in 2012, a local maximum, but there have been no large dips in polarization post-2012. The global maximum occurs in 1980, which dovetails with the presidential election of Ronald Reagan. Reagan's policies rolled back government

agencies to create a more business friendly climate without government regulations. For instance, the administration targeted the EPA, viewing the agency as overburdening business interests. Reagan also famously removed the solar panels from the White House roof installed by the previous Carter administration.

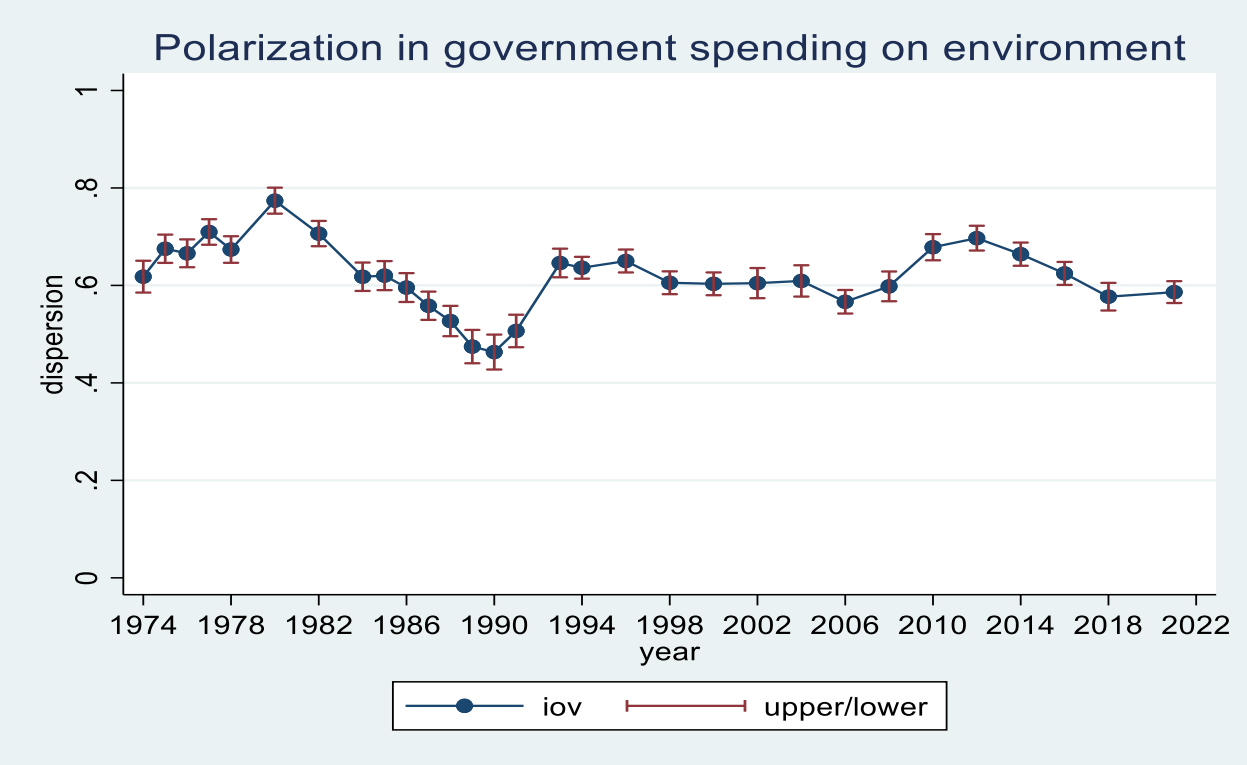

Figure 2.4 Note that the global minimum is 1990, which affirms McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap's (2014) claim of 1991 as the pivot year in polarization on environmental issues. Also note the global maximum in 1980.

There is extensive literature showing political orientation as the most salient indicator of support for the environment in the US. McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap (2014) further show that 1991 is the year of the political split where liberals become more pro-environmental, and conservatives become more anti-environmental. Figure 5 adds further nuance to this narrative. Post the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, liberals and Democrats have become increasingly uniform in their environmental beliefs as indicated by the sharp decline towards zero. As a reminder, being close to zero on the IOV indicates most responses concentrate in one of the categories. For instance, liberal respondents primarily score the government

as spending “too little” on the environment. Conservatives and Republicans show a different pattern, as illustrated in the right portion of Figure 2.5. Being close to one on the IOV indicates responses being nearly evenly split between the two most extreme categories, the government spending “too much” or “too little” on the environment. This provides added evidence that in contemporary environmental politics in the US, it does not matter whether you are extremely liberal or slightly liberal, a strong Democrat or lean Democratic, to be liberal/Democratic is to believe that the government is spending too little on the environment. With conservatives/Republicans, however, there is substantial dispersion on environmental attitudes.

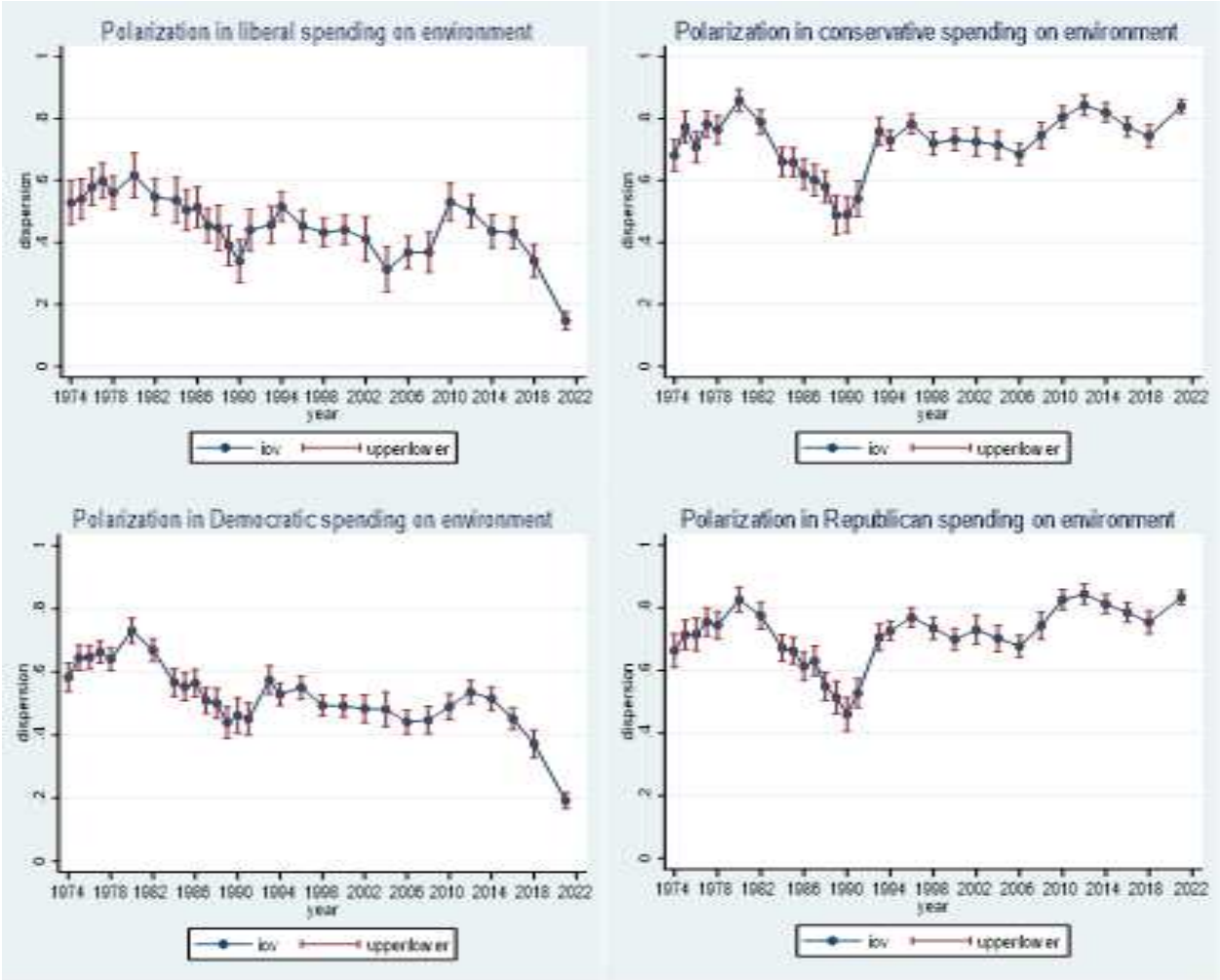

Figure 2.5

As reflected in the figures above, I find that conservative attitudes towards government spending on the environment are diverging while liberal attitudes are converging, and thus find support for Hypotheses 4a and 4b which anticipates that polarization on the environment among conservatives will increase, while polarization among liberals will decrease. I do not find support for Hypothesis 3, which predicts that both liberals and conservatives have decreasing intra-ideological polarization. These results counter Eun Kim and Urpelainen (2018) which warrants discussion. Most obviously, Eun Kim and Urpelainen (2018) cite federalism within the US and use a state level analysis while I use a nationally representative individual level analysis. Additionally, I use both *natenvir* and its alternate wording *natenviy*, while they strictly use *natenvir*. Finally, the IOV directly incorporates respondent's actual responses of either "too little", "just right", or "too much" since it treats variables as ordinal. Eun Kim and Urpelainen's (2018: 112 footnote 3) methodology of multi-level regression with poststratification (MRP) "requires dichotomization", meaning they use nested multinomial MRP to average "just right" responses into either "too little" or "too much" thereby obscuring the ordinal association of the variable.

In sum, I robustly affirm McCright, Xiao, and Dunlap's (2014) finding of 1991 as the pivot year of environmental polarization with their own methods, *and* the IOV. Extending through 2018 there is a continued inter-ideological divergence between conservatives and liberals on environmental spending supporting hypothesis 1 and rejecting hypothesis 2. However, the IOV also shows that intra-ideologically, liberals have become increasingly uniform in their pro-environmental attitudes post the presidential election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, which support Eun Kim and Urpelainen (2018) and hypothesis 4b. However, conservatives remain heterogeneous from 1974 to 2021, which contradict Eun Kim and Urpelainen (2018) and support hypothesis 4a. Based on these results, I argue against conflating conservatives with anti-environmentalism but also note that conservatives are becoming more heterogeneous in their environmental attitudes, not converging. I further argue there is a need of more

research on the seemingly oxymoronic "conservative environmentalism" to advance understanding of the contour and logic shaping pro-environmental attitudes on the right.

2.5 Conclusion

I add more evidence to the extensive literature showing political orientation as the best predictor of environmental belief but also add more nuance to the conversation. McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap (2014) maintain that the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Rio Earth Summit in the early 1990's threatened corporate, and neoliberal, interests which creates a political schism. I add more detail to that narrative showing that liberals may have reacted to the inception of federal neoliberalism in the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan (Harvey, 2005) by becoming more uniform in their environmental beliefs. The global minimum of liberal polarization on the environment occurs in 2021 giving contemporary evidence that to be liberal is to converge to a uniform pro-environmental attitude.

Conservative environmental attitudes are more complicated. Their global minimum of dispersion occurs in the early 1990's, consistent with the McCright, Xiao, and Dunlap (2014) narrative. However, there is a tremendous amount of *intra-ideological* dispersion, culminating in 2021 being within the standard error of the global maximum in 1980. This means that intra-ideologically in 2021, liberals have their least amount of polarization on support for the environment, while conservatives are nearly at their most polarized. Such intra-conservative polarization may stem from recent elite cues signaling conservative environmentalism may no longer be an oxymoron. However, political orientation remains one of the most salient indicators of environmental attitudes through 2018 as liberals and conservatives are still diverging in their environmental attitudes from 2014-2018. A few years of elite conservative pro-environmental rhetoric is unlikely to ameliorate decades of corporate funded climate denialism and lobbying.

Shifts in conservative rhetoric signal to supporters that the environment is no longer a politically split issue, but rather that conservative social and economic values are applicable or even inherent to solving environmental issues. Using Sagoff's (2013) definition of federal environmental legislation, Steele (2020) compiled the 884 environmental acts in the US since the 1862 Homestead Act to show an exponential growth in signed legislation until its asymptote in 2003 where new laws stagnated. Steele's (2020) research shows that Republicans have historically been environmentally friendly, signing 540 environmental acts with the greatest number of acts during years with a Republican President and Democratic Senate and House. Major environmental bipartisan federal legislation has not occurred since 2002 (ibid), or perhaps the Food Quality Protection Act passed in 1996 (Lamphere & Shefner, 2015) depending on your definition of "major". At the very least, it has been two decades, if not more since the passage of major bipartisan federal environmental legislation to deal with a crisis that has only become more severe since.

Shifts in elite conservative rhetoric about the environment make sense given that in the past three presidential elections in 2012, 2016, and 2020 Republicans lost the 18-29 demographic by 29%, 29%, and 24% respectively in exit polls conducted by CNN. As the older voters who reliably vote Republican begin to die off, the party will need to adapt to new, younger voters on prominent issues that matter to them, such as the environment (Ross, Rouse, & Mobley, 2019) if it wants to remain competitive in future presidential elections. Balancing fiscally conservative, small governments, while attempting to make measurable change on emissions and pollution then becomes an ambivalent challenge, and an opportunity for further research. Though mobilization around environmental issues swelled before the pandemic, as seen through the large turnouts for March for Science, and new figureheads emerged in the forms of Greta Thurnberg and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the movement has continued to target the typically receptive liberal, younger audience. This is despite most federal environmental legislation being

bipartisan (Steele, 2020), so there is a need for both political sides to reach solutions together, as anthropogenic climate change will require action that transcends political divides.

Previous research alienates pro-environmental conservative voices when it considers all conservatives to be 'anti-environmental'. This divisiveness reaches an apex when two leaders in the environmental sociology sub-field assert that:

> "Whichever technocognition strategies are employed are unlikely to prove effective among conservatives. Rather, scientists, journalists, and other communicators may be better served in directing their technocognition strategies toward political moderates and liberals-combatting misinformation designed to reduce these citizens' motivations to vote and participate in governance more generally" (McCright & Dunlap, 2017: 394).

Technocognition is a proposed solution to counter misinformation in a post-truth society premised on investigating the social factors that promote alternative epistemologies which disregard scientific evidence and experts (Lewandowsky, Ecker, & Cook 2017). To go beyond "fake news", Lewandowsky, Ecker, & Cook (2017) recommend an interdisciplinary cognitive science approach, emphasizing information architectures to disseminate high-quality evidence and discourage misinformation. However, we can gather from the above quote by McCright and Dunlap that they consider one political side to be unsalvageable and not worthy of any more study. This is surprising, not only because conservatives are a prime target for technocognition strategies, but also most federal environmental legislation has been bipartisan (Steele, 2020), so excluding half the population may be an untenable strategy.

Much research concentrates on liberal environmental organizations (notable exception: Hess & Brown, 2016), which is like preaching to the choir as this research shows liberals vehemently support increased spending on environmental issues. Much less research has concentrated on conservative environmental groups, due in no small part to the limited number of conservative organizations espousing

environmental solutions. Thus, the conservative environmental countermovement should be further explored through qualitative methods to provide additional context.

This research is not without limitations. Due to the slope of ordered logistic regression, it impossible to compare models (Mood, 2010) and ascertain if environmental support has become more or less polarized year-to-year[3] or the periods 1993-2012 and 2014-2018. Future research should use linear regression models to capture year-to-year differences. More importantly, the IOV can't determine causality of the dispersion within conservative support for increased government spending on the environment. It is plausible conservatives are disperse due to the differing opinions on increased government spending, the environmental aspect, or a combination of the two. Qualitative research can further explicate these findings.

This study contributes to the burgeoning literature moving away from viewing conservatives as "structural dopes" (Giddens, 1979) on environmental issues (i.e. Merkley & Stecula 2018, 2020; Mayer & Smith, 2017; Hamilton & Saito, 2013; Lee, 2021). It is useful to scrutinize ties between corporate influence and conservative movements (i.e. Farrell 2015a; Farrell, 2015b; Brulle 2018; Brulle 2013; Dunlap & McCright 2015; McCright & Dunlap, 2010), and further research should investigate the funding behind the nascent conservative environmentalism countermovement and how this is similar or different to denialism movements. However, it is unhelpful to view all conservatives as thralls beholden to corporate interest and devoid of agency as this creates a false dichotomy that conservatives are monolithically anti-environmental and alienates half the population. Future research can continue to preach to the choir and study liberal environmentalism, or it can further study libertarian and

[3] Year-to-year linear regressions in the appendix confirm liberals and Democrats are more environmentally friendly compared to conservatives and Republicans with statistical significance in every year after 1991. From 2014-2018, there are mixed results for decreasing polarization but liberals are more supportive of the environment than conservatives ($p < .001$ every year), while Democrats are more supportive of the environment than Republicans ($p < .001$ every year).

conservative environmentalism and compare that to the wealth of information on anti-environmental conservatism, as well as liberal and progressive environmentalism.

Chapter 3: A Qualitative Approach to Understanding Conservative Environmentalism

"It is our task not to complain or to condone but only to understand" – Georg Simmel in *The Metropolis and Mental Life*

3.1 Summary

The previous quantitative chapter established that there are heterogeneous views amongst conservatives within the variable "government spending on the environment", thus viewing all conservatives as monolithically anti-environmental is incorrect. This chapter discusses a potential cause of that intra-ideological polarization on environmental issues: disparate conservative views on the role of government regulation. Conservative environmentalism is a countermovement in the United States premised on providing a conservative alternative to environmental issues. Conservative environmentalists promote two distinct market approaches to solving environmental issues: ecological modernization (EM) and free market environmentalism (FME). EM is a well-known reformist sociological theory based on proliferating society-wide ecological rationality demanding government regulation to incentivize ecologically sustainable technologies and economic growth simultaneously. FME is a lesser-known revolutionary libertarian economic theory based on negligible government regulation with the combination of the market, strong property rights, and tort law exclusively creating incentives for ecological sustainability. Interviews with self-identified conservative environmentalists display a steadfast belief in the market as the solution for environmental issues but also an affinity for both EM and FME, indicating a diversity of viewpoints on the role of government regulation. Practically, this conservative environmentalist group is attracting a wide variety of ontologies concurrently, with EM attracting lean conservatives and FME attracting more dogmatic conservatives, which provides contemporary political opportunities.

3.2 Background

To further explore conservative environmentalism, I integrate a qualitative approach. By using both qualitative and quantitative data in a mixed methods approach, also called triangulation (Denzin, 2012), the thesis can "capture a more complete holistic and contextual portrayal" (Jick, 1979: 603). Quantitative methods are a powerful tool to show generalizable trends, but that appearance of precision creates a fixed view of social life divorced from real life experiences. Context matters when discussing social, and specifically environmental issues (Brieger, 2018), as environmental views can change based on the weather (Hamilton & Stampone, 2013; Bohr 2017; Egan & Mullin, 2012), or the current president (Johnson & Schwadel, 2019), among other factors. Qualitative methods provide context through thick descriptions of phenomenon but at the cost of small sample sizes that likely don't generalize. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative, I seek to provide a more robust overview of contemporary conservative environmentalism.

Reductive quantitative studies show conservatives are contemporarily resistant to both climate mitigation strategies and the scientific consensus on climate change (Adua, 2019; 2021; Leiserowitz, 2011; McCright & Dunlap, 2010; McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap, 2014; Dunlap, McCright, & Yarosh, 2016; Bohr, 2017; Brulle, Carmichael, & Jenkins, 2012; Guber, 2013). As Adua (2021: 141) states:

> "Getting a handle on the daunting environmental challenges facing us today will require getting Americans identifying as Republicans to embrace the need for proper environmental management and protection."

In their recent research article on "clean energy conservatism" Hess and Brown (2016: 73, emp. added) state that:

> "The growth of clean-energy conservative organizations suggests some potential limitations, *which are not yet visible with quantitative methods*, to the linkage between conservative ideology and opposition to energy-transition policies and climate science."

They analyzed content from conservative organizations attempting to mitigate anthropogenic climate change, and compared them with similar conservative organizations that do not outwardly support clean energy (i.e. Young Conservatives for Energy Reform and Young Conservatives). They find that clean

energy conservative groups emphasize market-based, small government approaches but differentiate themselves from other conservative groups by rejecting both climate denialism and energy-transition opposition. The clean energy conservatives themselves are an ideologically diverse group, with some citing the economic benefits of clean energy, others the scientific knowledge of global warming and air quality, and others the strategic benefit of reclaiming the environmental debate from Democratic hegemony (Hess and Brown, 2016). Hess and Brown (2016: 74) conclude that:

> "Conservative environmentalism is part of the conservative movement, not a synthesis of progressive and conservative environmentalism."

Thus, there is a need to qualitatively study conservative organizations promoting pro-environmental views in the United States (US). I provide this research by interviewing self-identified conservative environmentalists, as opposed to Hess and Brown's (2016) method of content analysis. Through semi-structured interviews, I explicate how interviewees communicate their ambivalent feelings about mainstream environmentalism and conservatism. In the process, I treat conservative ideas as meriting research independently, not as a caricature (e.g. Stoner, 2021) or simple foil to the progressive movement (Merriman, 2019; Gross, Medvetz, & Russell, 2011).

The amalgamation of conservatives into an anti-environmental category opposing progressive environmentalism is partly due to corporate funded denialism campaigns (Hein & Jenkins, 2017; Farrell 2015a, 2015b, 2019; McCright, 2016; Jacques, Dunlap, & Freeman, 2008; McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap, 2014; McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Dunlap & McCright, 2015, McCright et al., 2015; Bohr, 2016; Brulle, 2013, 2018, 2021) and contention surrounding market-based solutions to ecological degradation (Ewing, 2017; Foster, 2012; Carolan, 2004; Mol & Spaargaren, 2004; Mol, Spaargaren, & Sonnenfeld, 2014; Brulle & Norgaard, 2019). Underlying these assertions are discursive frames about the environment that engender conscious or implicit ontological presuppositions which affect epistemic justifications (Goldman, Turner, & Daly, 2018; Hempel, MacIlroy, & Smith, 2014; Lave, 2012; Langhalle, 2010; Hajer,

1996; Turnhout, 2018; Lamb et al., 2020; Brulle & Norgaard, 2019). In essence, how you define environmental problems predicates how you find solutions.

3.3 Literature Review

In this chapter, I show how the theoretical frameworks of EM, Critical Theory, and FME conceptualize and define environmental problems. For conservative environmentalists, the market is the solution to climate change and environmental issues, not the root cause of pollution and degradation. However, there is more complexity to environmental sustainability solutions that utilize markets beyond EM theory. To explicate these theoretical differences, I briefly elucidate the well-known market-based, reformist EM theory including some of its extensive critiques. Then, I more thoroughly explain the lesser known, libertarian theory of FME, summarizing the differences between EM and FME in a table. Finally, after describing my methods, I show how members of Conservative Environmentalist Organization (pseudonym; CEO) manifest both EM and FME concurrently, noting the intra-ideological diversity that this brings.

3.3.1 Ecological Modernization

Gillis et al. (2021) find that conservatives tend to favor climate change mitigation frames that promote private action over public action, but this belief in the private sector leads to complacency, reducing climate change concern. Sociological theories favoring more market based, reformist solutions, such as EM seek to make change within the capitalist system, as technological advances replace antiquated, ecologically harmful technology and shifting social practices ecologically restructure society (Spaargaren & Mol, 1992; Mol, 1996; Gouldson & Murphy, 1996; Mol, 2006). There is no "fundamental opposition between economy and ecology" (Mol 1996: 314), since economic growth becomes decoupled from resource consumption (Mol and Sonnenfeld, 2000). Thus, in the reformist EM theory, ecological

rationality permeates social norms and institutional structures demanding examination of consumption and production practices for both economic *and* ecological integrity (Huber, 2010; Mol, 2006).

There is a difference between a "weak" EM and "strong" EM (Christoff, 1996; Gibbs, 1998; Dias, Sexias, & Lobner, 2020). Weak EM uses a rigid, Eurocentric framework for ecologically sustainable political economic progress exclusive to developed nations, benefitting elites, and in the process creating an instrumental view of nonhuman nature which legitimates narrow technocratic solutions to environmental issues to create a "win-win" between industry and the state (Christoff, 1996; Dias, Sexias, & Lobner, 2020). Weak EM allows "modernization losers" such as high polluting but politically powerful industries, countries, and individuals to co-opt climate friendly initiatives without ecologically restructuring their business, regulations, or lifestyles (Jänicke, 2008; Christoff, 1996). "Strong" EM prioritizes a democratized approach, flexibly adapting to extensive political, economic, and ecological conditions by restructuring institutions to benefit the public instead of the elite (Christoff, 1996; Dias, Sexias, & Lobner, 2020). Regardless of whether it is in its more radical strong version or co-opted weak version, the primary mechanism of EM is state-based regulation (Dias, Sexias, & Lobner, 2020; Gibbs, 1998; Jänicke & Jörgens, 2009; Murphy & Gouldson, 2000).

EM is most successful in nations that have corporatist political-economic systems that prioritize cooperation between the common interests of government, corporations, and environmental groups (Dryzek, 2013; Scruggs, 1999). "Such a structure has simply not existed in the US, where the adversarial culture and institutional pathologies of US policy-making encourage competition and conflict over cooperation and intelligent policy design" (Schlosberg & Rinfret. 2008: 256). This leads Schlosberg and Rinfret (2008) to posit that due to missing federal government support, EM in the US incorporates renewable energies to increase energy independence, and conspicuous consumption of sustainably made products to tie economy and ecology together. This unique "American style" (Schlosberg & Rinfret, 2008) of EM is against system-wide federal legislation, focusing on subnational policies,

executive authority, and stimulating research and development to assuage climate change (MacNeil & Paterson, 2012). By focusing on *market-based legislation*, EM prioritizes a reformist orientation.

3.3.2 Critical Theory

I use Critical Theory as an umbrella term to include analyses that view the market and current social system as the root cause of environmental harm (Ewing, 2017; Foster, 1999; Gould, Pellow, & Schnaiberg, 2004), as seen in a definition of modern environmental movements (Rootes and Brulle, 2013: 1):

> "Although concern about the environment has a long history, modern environmental movements date from the 1970s. The increasingly obvious effects of accelerating industrialization and exploitation of natural resources provided growing audiences for the alarums of conservationists and preservationists, but the radical critique of capitalist industrialism and representative democracy associated with the New Left and the counterculture created the public space for the development of new social movements as well as furnishing their tactical repertoire."

The emphasis on market-based forces pushing towards accelerating industrialization and exploitation of natural resources is not only the ultimate cause of environmental degradation, but also a primary driver bringing new audiences into the radical movement from this perspective.

Ecological Marxists, human ecologists, World Systems theorists, and others working the tradition of critical political economy excoriate market-based reformist solutions associated with the theoretical framework of EM. Research shows decoupling does not lead to lower carbon emissions in developed nations (Bugden, 2022; Jorgenson and Clark, 2012) possibly due to the rebound effect whereby advancements in the efficiency of a technology lead to more use of that technology, or Jevon's paradox (York & Magee, 2015; York, 2012; Hediger, Farsi, & Weber, 2018; Adua et al., 2019). Market-based approaches also fail to address vast power dynamic differences between countries (Ciphet & Timmons Roberts, 2017; Dunlap & Sullivan, 2020; Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2016), including the lack of consideration for ecological debt, or unequal ecological exchange where raw materials flow from the

global south to the global north (Roberts & Parks, 2009; Noble, 2017), which leads to footprint shifting of environmental degradation from north to south (Jorgenson & Clark, 2012; Jorgenson, 2003; Dietz, Rosa, & York, 2007; McMichael, 2013; Bonds & Downey, 2012). Additional critiques of EM are the overuse of individual country case studies as explanations, and lack of international comparative studies (Adua et al., 2019; York 2012; Jorgenson & Clark, 2012; Langhalle 2010), commodification of nature (Fremaux & Berry, 2019; Bakker, 2010; Arsel & Büscher, 2012; McCarthy & Prudham, 2004; Sullivan, 2009), overreliance on technocratic solutions and the lack of the need for social change (Fremaux & Barry, 2019; Ewing, 2017; Toke, 2011), and finally, and perhaps most damning, simply being a cover for further elite wealth accumulation (Ewing, 2017; Lachapelle, MacNeil, & Paterson, 2016; Warner, 2010; Foster, 2012; Gonzalez, 2013).

EM approaches allow for, and even emphasize cooptation so that terms such as “sustainable development ”, “sustainable energy transition”, and “green growth” are dependent on economic growth rather than truth, thus introducing neoliberalism into environmentalism (Stegemann & Ossewaarde, 2018). Companies can then appear to be environmentally friendly through greenwashing, and that shifts the focus towards more technocentric, human exemptionalist, neoliberal concerns, and away from ecocentric, humanistic concerns (McCarthy & Prudham, 2003; Eckersley 1993; Fraune & Knodt, 2018). Furthermore, as late-stage capitalism looks for new markets, the view of the natural environment shifts from something to extract and pollute, but now also to conserve, forcing capitalism to look for other methods of polluting and extracting while also trying to increase the accumulation of capital and profit leading to a market dominated environmental policy and conservation ethic (Arsel & Büscher, 2012).

Foster’s (2012) delightful diatribe on EM associates it with human exemptionalism, which doesn’t incorporate power dynamics or, even worse, the infallible classical sociological canon. Foster (2012: 213) views EM as promoting:

> "A dangerous and irresponsible case of technological hubris, a fateful concession to capitalism's almost unlimited destructive powers, and the intrusion of denialism into environmental sociology itself."

By considering environmentalism and capitalism as a dichotomy, Foster, and environmental sociology more broadly alienate pro-environmental conservatives. Those more inclined towards revolutionizing the political economic system may consider this a non-issue. As shown above, there are extensive critiques rebutting the "pragmatism" of EM solutions for failing to address the ultimate cause of environmental degradation and social inequities, the contemporary market-based social system.

3.3.3 Free Market Environmentalism

For environmental sociology, the debate often centers on the role of the market and whether it is the causal mechanism for environmental degradation, or a necessary tool to create a more ecologically sustainable future. For conservative environmentalists, the variance is between the market-based EM, and the libertarian FME. As Gonzalez states (2010: 209):

> "The advocates of ecological modernization differ from free market environmentalists in that the modernization school does not rely solely on market mechanisms to achieve a salutary environment. Instead, public regulations are often necessary to correct for market failures and advance the ecological modernization of capitalist society."

FME research largely comes out of the Property and Environment Research Center (PERC) founded in 1980 in Bozeman, Montana, premised on the tenets that "all environmental problems emanate from conflicting demands on limited resources" (Anderson & Leal, 2015: 1), and "the principles undergirding capitalism can be used to remedy the excesses of capitalism in order to help the environment" (Asserson, 2007: 3).

The mechanism through which FME proposes to remedy the excesses of capitalism is through incentivizing self-interested individuals through property rights.

> "At the heart of free market environmentalism is a system of well-specified property rights to natural resources. Whether these rights are held by individuals, corporations, non-profit

> environmental groups, or communal groups, a discipline is imposed on resource users because the wealth of the owner of the property right is at stake if bad decisions are made." (Anderson & Leal, 2018: 3).

FME commonly refers to the prototypical environmental movement as top-down political environmentalism, which from their perspective emphasizes a zero-sum game and leads to a tragedy of the commons due to lack of property rights.

> "Governments – national, state, or local - can impose rules to grant access to the commons and dictate the terms of use. Because such public choices occur in the political arena, we refer to this as political environmentalism. At the other end of the spectrum, individuals or groups who own resources can control access and use in a private or market setting, we refer to this as free market environmentalism." (ibid: 2).
>
> "Whether via regulation or ownership, political environmentalism is based on the premise that environmental quality and resource stewardship can be improved through scientific management carried out by highly trained and motivated professionals…Although government regulation has the potential for improving environmental quality and resource stewardship, the government-knows-best, command-and-control mentality requires assuming that centralized policy makers will accurately account for all costs and benefits and act to improve efficiency." (ibid: 7).

Both EM and FME believe that the market is a solution to environmental degradation, commonly referencing the Environmental Kuznets Curve as evidence of decoupling.

> "The connection between incomes and environmental quality is more complicated in that the latter generally declines in the early stages of growth and then increases after a certain threshold, and the turning point varies with the environmental goods in question. As incomes rise people shift their focus from obtaining the necessities of life – food and shelter – to other goods and services." (ibid: 4).

Both EM and FME believe in a decoupling of environmental degradation from economic growth, as well as the idea that consumers will demand more ecologically sustainable products, or conscious consumerism (i.e. Spaargaren, 2003; Creutzig et al., 2022). Along with these similarities, there is also a strong belief in human ingenuity to create technocratic solutions to environmental problems. Environmental entrepreneurs, or "ecopreneurs" (for the EM explanation of "ecopreneurs" see Gibbs, 2009) will seize ecological sustainability market opportunities as they become available. These technological advances then drive both environmental and human prosperity.

There are also distinct differences between EM and FME, mainly the reformist EM compared with the more revolutionary ideas of FME centered on orthodoxy neoliberal solutions. When dogmatic neoliberalism conflicted with elite accumulation, the latter was victorious (Harvey, 2005). Rejecting this elite capture, FME believes that:

> "Without the potential for trade, competition for the stakes on the political table is a negative-sum game. In such cases, the costs are diffused among the general citizenry and the benefits are concentrated on the group with the political clout. Without the potential for trade among opposing stakeholders the resulting redistributed (not added) wealth results in a negative-sum game as both sides expend scarce resources to play political games." (Anderson & Leal, 2018: 8).

From this perspective introducing markets on species, ecosystems, pollution, and water eliminates the zero-sum fight over political legislation, replacing it with markets and how much an individual or group is willing to pay to protect it, typified by this quote:

> "Yet we, the public, are being asked to foregone great benefits in order to prevent the supposed extinction of various species. If I own a couple of acres on which I could build a resort hotel, and you object that in consequence, some exotic species of bird or lizard may disappear forever, my answer should be: 'OK-how much is it worth to you? You can buy the beasts and take care of them yourself or you can buy my property for what it's worth, which in this case is a lot.' If you are unwilling to do that, *why should your preferences count for more than mine*?" (Narveson, 1995: 154, emp. in original).

The answer to issues such as endangered species and pollution then becomes an issue of market access, property rights, and tort law from a FME perspective. For example, nearby homeowners may sue a factory pumping out toxins since it violates their property rights to clean air, water, and the non-aggression principle (Wirtz, 2017; Anderson & Leal, 2015).

A further difference is that EM believes society will inherently progress to a more ecologically sustainable state through "smart" regulation (Jänicke, 2008).

> "The urge to modernise is a compulsion inherent in capitalistic economies…The task is therefore to change the direction of technological progress and to put the compulsion for innovation at the service of the environment." (ibid: 558).

EM makes change through regulation, making it government-based in orientation (Jänicke, 2008; Buttel, 2000). Conversely, the role of the government in FME is minimal, primarily to supply strong property

rights and the ability to litigate violations to those property rights, all other legislation is extraneous and open to elite capture (Cordato, 1997; Wirtz, 2017). In their view, "progressive institutions empowered elites at the expense of the less powerful members of society." (Asserson, 2007: 10).

> "The ability of market institutions to resolve conflicting human demands on the environment relies not on benevolent political actors, but on entrepreneurs guided by market prices…the decentralized process of entrepreneurial discovery is much more likely than any central agency or group of scientific management to devise solutions to local and time specific environmental problems." (Anderson & Leal, 2015: 25).

By theorizing a revolutionary system run on libertarian principles, FME is distinct from the market-based model of EM which views the role of the government to be more involved in promoting technological advances and regulating the market (Gonzalez, 2010). An example of this lack of belief in political legislation is that FME views carbon taxes as a biased tool (Anderson, 2020). "Because regulation and taxation will always be conditioned by political pressures, a carbon tax is less likely to bring into balance social and private costs than it is to benefit the politically powerful" (Anderson & Leal, 2015: 27). In sum, FME stresses that private property increases individual's knowledge of the area and creates an incentive for the individual to foster sustainable practices, and if fully implemented the model would be harsher on corporations and polluters by internalizing the full economic cost of their environmental degradation (Wirtz, 2017; Anderson & Leal, 2015; 2018). I summarize the similarities and differences between EM and FME in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Comparing Ecological Modernization and Free Market Environmentalism

Ecological Modernization	Similarities	**Free Market Environmentalism**
Market-based, more reformist in orientation, bipartisan	Belief in decoupling of environmental degradation from economic growth, Environmental Kuznets Curve	Free market, libertarian, more revolutionary in orientation
Role of government is to create "smart" legislation to promote technological advances, and regulate the market	Strong belief in human ingenuity, technological innovation, and economic growth as ways to protect both the environment and human prosperity, "ecopreneurs"	Government as small as possible, market incentives exclusively promote technological advancements

More open to a carbon tax		Anti-Carbon tax, market distortions in general
Nonhuman nature has intrinsic value in "strong" version, instrumental value in "weak" version	Want to preserve nonhuman nature.	Nonhuman nature has economic value
Progression of society to be more ecologically sustainable	Conscious consumerism, individual choice	Localized decision making, humans as rational and self-interested leads to ecological sustainability
Increasing societal ecological rationality of the utmost importance		Private property rights of the utmost importance

3.4 Methods

3.4.1 Embracing Conservative Intellectualism

Gross, Medvetz, and Russell (2011) note that sociology has largely disregarded conservative social movements, usually amalgamating conservatives into a monolith. Social researchers "falsely presumes that it is possible for the social scientist to specify objectively what counts as liberal or progressive social change, with conservatism defined negatively against it" (ibid: 329). These views lead to an "assumption that conservatism can be characterized in terms of a fixed or stable essence" (ibid: 329).

I embrace the position of understanding conservative values as variegated, adaptable, intellectually informed, and meriting research to understand the ambivalence of merging conservatism with environmentalism. In essence, I want this chapter to represent the views and opinions of interviewees, where my interpretations mainly provide vocabulary instead of interviewing a community just to extract from them. In preparation for this research, I immersed myself in conservative environmentalism by taking notes on blogs, posts, magazines, and seminal texts (i.e. Anderson & Leal 2015; 2018), as well in participating in virtual trainings, *Slack* groups, and monthly meetings to try and understand as much as I could about the theoretical underpinnings of conservative environmentalism ontology before

conducting the first interview. This allowed for manifestations of conservative intellectual thought to develop inductively when coding interviews. In my opinion, these inductive codes would be imperceptible without prior immersion.

3.4.2 The Virtual Field

To explicate conservative environmentalism, I interviewed 10 self-identified conservative environmentalists via ZOOM. To ensure the population was conservative environmentalists, I only asked members of Conservative Environmentalist Organization (CEO) for interviews, following Salmons' (2010) nomination sampling frame for online interviews. I used purposive and snowball sampling, with gatekeepers recommending specific participants, as well as *Slack* messages to active members in CEO.

The CEO is a virtual community (Rheingold, 1993; Hine, 2015; Kozinets, 2020; Addeo et al., 2019; Wilson & Peterson, 2002) in that they are an online collection of individuals united by a belief in markets as the solution to ecological degradation and validate that belief through the collective effervescence of the community CEO provides via private *Slack* forums, monthly meetings, trainings, and the knowledge that other likeminded pro-environmental conservatives exist.

3.4.3 Virtual Field Methods: Netnography and ethnography for the internet

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an impasse for in-person meeting, including ethnographic research. This leads some researchers to advocate for the postponement of ethnographic research until after the pandemic (Hall, Gaved, & Sargent, 2021) particularly due to ethical concerns that could lead to participant harm (Surmiak, Bielska, & Kalinowska 2021). Other, usually younger researchers, see the pandemic as an opportunity for innovative research that democratizes the divide between researcher and participant (ibid). In their narrative literature review of participative methods during the pandemic Hall, Gaved, & Sargent (2021: 12) conclude with a question: "Can the true nature of participatory research be established and maintained in projects entirely native to a distanced pandemic context?" I

conducted the entirety of this research within the omnipresent pandemic setting. To solve this participatory methodological hurdle, I use the established and interrelated methodologies of netnography (Kozinets, 2002; 2020) and ethnography for the internet (Hine, 2015) to provide a thick description of conservative environmentalism through immersion within an online community culminating in semi-structured interviews.

Kozinets (2002: 3) defines netnography as: "a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of cultures and communities emerging through computer-mediated communications." Both Kozinets (2020) and Hines (2015) emphasize that ethnographic methods are appropriate in online settings. Ethnography for the internet (Hine, 2015) assumes that online and offline worlds are distinct, with online research not capturing the complete social experience, whereas netnography considers the dichotomization as antiquated and that online and offline personas are inseparable (Addeo et al., 2019).

Kozinets (2020: 138-143) offers an alliterative procedural praxis for netnographic research: initiation, investigation, immersion, interaction, integration, and incarnation. Applying this scaffolding, initiation began when I read a popular press article (Weir, 2020) on conservative environmentalism then noted the critical tone most academic research had when discussing conservatives and the environment. Investigation involved finding conservative environmentalist groups online and cursorily reading through text material posted on websites and social media. Immersion began after attending my first virtual meeting in September of 2020.

Most studies using netnography are text-based discourse analysis (Heinonen & Medberg, 2018). Although there are studies employing netnography as part of a triangulation process by including interviews (i.e. Fisher & Smith, 2011; Lu & Lu, 2021) or quantitative surveys (i.e. Chan & Li, 2010) these studies are in the minority (Heinonen & Medberg, 2018). Hine (2015:105) reminds us that:

> "Taking a discourse analytic approach is not, in itself, ethnographic, since discourse analysis relies upon an interpretation of the texts at hand without necessitating immersion in the setting or requiring the interactions with participants that characterizes ethnography as immersive and experiential."

Additionally, internet spaces, and particularly social media, are ethically ambiguous as to what constitutes public and private text (Lunnay et al., 2015; Kozinets, 2020). For these reasons, the notes taken during the immersion stage manifest as a semi-structured interview guide, which was then pre-tested and revised multiple times and is available in the appendix. Interaction involved attending meetings and trainings, as well as soliciting interviews via the *Slack* messaging function and email.

An aspect on netnography I found especially appealing was the emphasis on ethics. "Honest researcher disclosure, without hesitation, obfuscation or deception, is the edifice upon which the research relationships in netnography are built" (Kozinets, 2020: 200). Following this tradition, my initial messages to participants always started with my name and my status as a researcher before explaining the impetus of the project. If the receiver showed interest, I set up a 15-minute unrecorded virtual meeting to exclusively go over the informed consent document and answer any questions that potential interviewees had at that time. This meeting also allowed for development of rapport before the formal interview. After mutually agreeing upon a time for the recorded formal interview, I would email participants the informed consent document for their own records and asked them to reply with a signed and dated one in return. Prior to recording the formal interview, I always asked if the participant had any questions, reiterated to participants the use of pseudonyms and that they could leave at any time or request for the exclusion of their responses from the analysis, and double checked that they were comfortable being recorded. All agreed and the interview commenced, with the 10 conservative environmentalist participants' (all names are pseudonyms), age and political orientation listed in Table 3.2. I have intentionally excluded gender, keeping names gender-neutral, and race for two reasons. First, there is already a bevy of research into the "white male effect" in climate change denialism to keep the status quo axis of domination (most notably McCright & Dunlap, 2011b; 2013; Jylhä et al., 2016).

Second, this chapter focuses strictly on the intersection of political orientation and environmental beliefs, and I believe a broader discussion about the effects of gender and race would distract the reader and me from the main point of explicating intra-conservative ambivalence between conservatism and environmentalism.

Table 3.2: Conservative Environmentalist respondents

Name	Age	Political Orientation
Frankie	22	Moderately conservative
Jordan	26	Very conservative
Aspen	22	Lean conservative
Hayden	25	Moderately conservative
Taylor	21	Very conservative
Kai	29	Lean conservative
Skyler	25	Lean conservative
Tatum	21	Moderately conservative
Quinn	26	Lean conservative
Dallas	23	Moderately conservative

Integration is a synonym for the more commonly known interpretation. Kozinets (2020: 298-299) argues for netnographies to begin with a deliberately stated theoretical view, and reflexively comment on the integration throughout, using that lens exclusively. Though not deductive, Kozinet's (2020) method does lead towards an understanding that makes the data "fit" within a theoretical framework. An example of starting from a deliberate theoretical orientation within environmental sociology comes from Hazboun et al. (2020). They qualitatively code interviews using Mayer's (2019) four-part conceptual framework of partisanship to find that conservatives use cue receptivity, negative partisanship, and performative partisanship to explain the environmental partisan divide from a conservative perspective. This theoretical perspective adds nuance to anti-environmental conservatives, showing that there are reasons beyond simple political orientation to explain environmental beliefs, as social identity is more useful in clarifying partisanship surrounding environmental issues. However, Mayer's (2019) conceptual

understanding is that conservatives are firmly anti-climate change mitigation, leading Hazboun et al. (2020) to the same conclusion. I separate from orthodox netnography at this stage due to this lack of inductive reasoning.

Instead, I use inductive interpretation strategies derived from the methodologies promoted by Hine (2015: 25) who starts from the epistemology that ethnography is:

> "Very much an adaptive method, in that it begins from the premise that it will not be immediately apparent what the relevant dimensions of contextualization will be…By refusing to decide in advance what will be most interesting to explore in the setting, the ethnographer remains open to novel discoveries about the unique ways that a particular way of life might be organized and to the prospect that activities may make sense in surprising ways."

Ethnography applied for the internet then entails a holistic approach, recognizing the embedded nature of the Internet such that the "field" is fluid and emergent which embodies not only online participants but the researcher as well (Hine, 2015: 87-88). Adopting this methodological orientation, I inductively coded and recoded themes from interviews through NVivo (Release March, 2020) (Hine, 2015; Thomas, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

As an example of the coding strategy, within conservative environmentalist interviews there are codes of both EM and FME, often within the same interview. In first-order codes, I inductively coded interviews simply for EM and FME. Looking back on the codes, I realized I had conflated the two. I then reanalyzed the combined EM and FME quotes, recoding second-order codes based on refined definitions of EM stressing bipartisanship, reformist market-based logic, sustainable development, and pro-Carbon tax, while major FME codes were incentives, privatization, property rights, revolutionary, and anti-carbon tax.

3.4.4 Reflexivity

In her conclusion, Hines (2015: 184) restates a main point that "each ethnography for the Internet deploys a unique set of strategies and faces its own set of challenges". Kozinets (2020) echoes this point

in his conception of netnography, and both emphasize the need for researcher reflexivity to become aware of the many potential forks, or paths, not taken. In this vein, I conclude the subsection by reflexively commenting on the main forks.

My academic background is from outside sociology, so I was simultaneously learning a typically critical discipline, sociology, while researching a particularly uncritical approach to solving environmental issues. Hence, I was reading extensively about conflicting ideologies concurrently, resulting in a cacophony of thoughts and ultimately producing this analysis on a burgeoning countermovement. When beginning this project, I initially contacted many conservative environmentalist groups, but decided it was easiest to build rapport with the one that had showed the most interest and whom I had already made connections with. I viewed content analysis of various conservative environmentalist texts and videos as the most necessary step when developing the interview guide, but the content was representative of a few voices. Since I wanted the perspectives of both leading activists and movement participants, I decided interviews were likely to give more varied responses, and thus a deeper understanding, than strictly the web-based content. On this note, I tried to conduct the first interview as solemnly as possible. I realized within the first interview that style wasn't me, and embraced a more ebullient style, encouraging interviewees to discuss in detail the ideas they were passionate about. This created more authentic conversation with interviewees, which then led to engaged discussion.

The pandemic setting mandated virtual interviews, which had the advantages of a diverse geographical reach, the comfortability of conducting an interview at a place and time of the participants choosing, and a recording of nonverbal cues. However, the disadvantages particular to virtual interviews are bad connections resulting in missed words or sentences, barking dogs and other home distractions, only being able to see nonverbal cues presented on camera (i.e. not seeing a bouncing knee), and the ability of participants to google or conduct other activities simultaneous to the interview. I reflected on frustrations and joys after the conclusion of every interview in interviewee specific reflection journals.

Most important is that the project received feedback from interviewees, friends, colleagues, and advisors at every step of the process from naïve, theoretically uninformed diatribe at the project's formulation to the culmination of a year's work presented now.

3.5 Results: Conservative Environmentalism

3.5.1 Environmentalism

Conservative environmentalism may still seem oxymoronic (perhaps with an emphasis on the latter three syllables) for some readers so I use interviewee's own definitions of "environmentalism" to illustrate how conservatives conceptualized the term. When asked, all conservative environmentalists identified as "environmentalists". Their own definitions of "environmentalism" stressed taking action to preserve the environment. In their own words:

- "I think you're not only an activist but a steward as well so I think you both need to be actively defending the environment and also doing something about it too." Jordan
- "Caring about the environment and then making sure you're taking action to protect it in a way that will benefit it for future generations" Frankie
- "Basically the aspect of understanding and recognizing that the environment is an ever changing landscape and we as humans are in a situation where we need to either conserve or preserve and work with the environment that we're in, and the ending goal should be both what's good for humanity and individuals and at the same time balancing the ecological biodiversity." Kai
- "You care about everything from your local environment, making sure that there's not trash floating down the little creek by your house, thinking about the impact of runoff, and how you choose to use your land, and even the sustainability of how you plant your crops, all the way up to your local and state level parks, and nature preserves, all the way up to the national nature preserves and national parks, and including global issues like climate change and the ozone layer, everything that ties into environmental sustainability." Skyler
- "Just being more conscious, or conscious of the environment that we're operating in. So, if you were purchasing things, be aware of what materials they're using, and where they're getting it from, you don't need to be obsessed with it, but just be more conscious when you do purchase things, find ways to just use less, recycling, to use more repeatedly. Like I have my water bottle I actively think about all the plastic that was wasted when you use a disposable so being an environmentalist to me is thinking about doing things differently, in a way that's more resourceful and less negatively impactful on our environment." Hayden

Merriam-Webster defines environmentalism as: “advocacy of the preservation, restoration, or improvement of the natural environment”. The above conservative environmentalist quotes show how their increasing ecological rationality spurs direct action to improve the environment from a local to global level. The desire to create a more ecologically sustainable world unites environmentalists. However, the solutions and processes to get to that ecological sustainability differ between mainstream environmentalism and conservative environmentalists.

Differentiating from mainstream environmentalism

Interviewees disagree with mainstream environmentalist discourse on three main subjects: climate alarmism, political environmentalism, and structural reform that increases government regulation. Interviewees view the mainstream environmental movement and associated media as deepening polarization on environmental issues through promoting discourse such as “climate alarmism” or “political environmentalism” instead of focusing on practical environmental solutions. Conservative environmentalists characterized climate alarmism as the overdramatic use of scare tactics associated with current climate change solutions (Risbey, 2008; Shellenberger, 2020). Taylor, for example, said:

> “I think one of the things that has defined climate skepticism is the idea that the left will throw out some arbitrary consequence that will happen in a couple of years, and they will give a short term and they’ll say if we don't pass this piece of legislation, Florida will be gone by 2005. It doesn't happen. We aren't underwater right now, and then people don't believe in these sorts of things. The hyperbole in the language used definitely drives people away from even the most sensible solutions, and the left has been pretty interested in demagoguing climate change to push any legislative solution they want at any given time. It doesn't do anything besides turn people off.”

Frankie described some of the counterproductive ramifications they saw climate alarmism having on news coverage, discussing the Republican climate plan introduced by House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy:

> “What I would like the media to do in general is to expand what they report on favorably because I didn't see a lick of the plan that McCarthy introduced from anyone except like Fox News and The Hill, so it wasn't on mainstream media…But if we're talking on a less political

> stance, I wouldn't want to see as much of the panic button being hit all the time and scaring the crap out of people, instead of actually talking about what policies and bills are out there that are working to combat climate change and what people's individual representatives are doing to combat climate change 'cause I feel like a lot of people don't really know anything about their own representative. I feel like the only reason I know what's happening in my district is because I work for an environmental organization."

From the conservative environmentalist perspective, the overuse of scare tactics leads to a paralyzed state of fear resulting in anxiety but no resolution. Interviewees view mainstream environmentalism as employing fearmongering tactics that are unhelpful in mobilizing change, as Taylor points out how individuals become numb to doom-proclaiming, and that lessens the legislation attached to absolve it. Frankie then shows that focus should be on increasing knowledge of local representative's practical, non-'panic button' legislative solutions to environmental issues which would create pragmatic solutions. However, conservative environmentalists also viewed legislative solutions as tailored towards a liberal audience.

Political environmentalism (Anderson & Leal, 2015; 2018) refers to the politization of environmental problems and suboptimal solutions that result. In this view, politization results in legislation that favors powerful organizations and media that can broadcast their solution, as Jordan points out:

> "Like the climate plan, the GOP climate plan just came out and there's literally no coverage of it, like no one knows it happened, and it's this massive, huge plan to solve climate change, written by a bunch of Republicans and yeah that's the problem it's the politicizing of it. Like do you actually want the environment to get fixed or no? Because right now it's just…they don't even like show off when people are trying to help…it's like you really don't want conservatives to be seen working on this issue, like what the heck, so it's really sad that they do that. They push away and just don't show off people because they have a narrative to sell."

The media associating "conservative" with "anti-environmental" was especially frustrating to interviewees attempting to change the narrative but not receiving the attention they thought they deserved. As Jordan shows, this perceived media bias leads to a feeling of liberal hegemony on environmental solutions. For conservative environmentalists, liberal solutions entailed expanding government and sweeping changes to the socioeconomic system.

Throughout interviews, conservative environmentalists separated themselves from the larger environmental movement, and especially the progressive wing by positioning themselves as antipodal to radical structural changes that increase government regulation, instead offering solutions-oriented change using markets. In their own words:

- "I think when you get down to the message of when you compare the stuff that Greta Thurnberg and Greenpeace or Sierra Club is saying to what CEO is saying it's the same deal. We're identifying the same problems and we're saying hey we really need to do something about this. Where we really splinter off is the solutions. CEO is a lot more likely to work within the current system in order to find some sort of environmental change" Aspen

- "So I think that with conservative environmentalism we're a bit more realistic with our goals, whereas things like the Green New Deal are a pipe dream, they're an optics pipe dream put together by communications staff. It's not an actionable plan for change, whereas conservative pushes are more small steps towards a big goal, so I imagine conservatives taking very small steps, whereas liberals are like, well progressives wanna take this big leap, just wanna jump to the finish line, it's like no you can't do that, that's not really how it works, you can't make this massive sweeping reform 'cause there's going to be unintended consequences from it." Tatum

- "When you see environmentalist groups there's this underlying, what I call anti-human sentiment where they'll blame humanity for this and they'll say, there needs to be less people on the planet, or they'll do something like really screwy, like they'll shut off water to the farms just because there's a certain species of fish that got in the pipes, or they'll prevent developers from building housing because there's a squirrel population that lives on this land. So, what these environmentalist groups end up is they do anti-human stuff. They care more about small animals, than they do humans. So, I like how CEO has a focus on free market solutions, and less regulation, placing more focus on solutions rather than just preventing people from doing X or Y." Quinn

In sum, according to conservative environmentalists: Climate alarmism provides passing outrage at best but no substantive solutions, political environmentalism prioritizes hegemonic liberal solutions to climate change at the expense of alternatives, and structural reforms associated with environmental legislation result in impractical solutions. In the above quotes, Aspen identifies that both conservative and liberal environmental organizations identify the same problems but come up with different solutions. Tatum points out the impracticality of sweeping structural reforms and unintended consequences an expanding government would create. Quinn then cements the point that conservative environmentalists favor the carrot over the stick with practical solutions-oriented approaches that

encourage people through incentives rather than 'preventing people from doing X or Y'. Interviewees view themselves as providing pragmatic, conservative-oriented change that mainstream environmentalism currently lacks. However, interviewees also differentiate themselves from mainstream conservatism as well.

3.5.2 Differentiating from mainstream conservatism

Acceptance of anthropogenic climate change is a taken-for-granted fact amongst all interviewees. Conservatives have a well-documented recent history of climate change skepticism and denialism (Dunlap, Xiao, & McCright, 2001; Adua, 2021; Hein & Jenkins, 2017; Bohr, 2014; Steele, 2020; Hamilton, 2011; Dunlap, McCright & Yarosh, 2016; McCright & Dunlap, 2011a, 2011b; Leiserowitz et al., 2011; Guber, 2012). So, a shift towards conservative acceptance of anthropogenic climate change is extraordinary but conflicts with still-dominant conservative discursive frames of denialism. This intra-conservative dispersion in anthropogenic climate change belief was not lost on interviewees:

- "I'll say if there's anything I dislike more than the Green New Deal it's conservative coverage of it, the only time I ever went to CPAC, it gave me a weekend long headache, not from drinking, wink wink, but from just the stupid garbage people are saying, like we're going to get rid of cows, well guess we'll just eat Chick-fil-A. Bro what? What does that even mean, there's nothing about cattle in this bill, I literally went into the bill I hit control F 'cattle', no 'cow', nothing, 'agriculture' nothing, 'fauna' nothing. I don't even know where they got that line, I don't even know where that's from, I think that's just from shit they made up…Sometimes it's like, I can't even agree with people in my own party, and that sucks, like I went to CPAC and there's this guy going, well actually more carbon in the air is good because you know, stuff, and then just said like some pseudo bullshit science, and I was like, how do me and you even agree on some topics is insane to me. So, I think as an environmentalist, it's moved me away from groupthink where I'm not totally contingent on a party platform for my idea…It's just because we've had such a long precedent of like, well they are doing green stuff, let's not do green stuff. Whereas I think like, there's a good market for green stuff, so let's do green stuff" -Tatum

- "I was at a meeting one time of a lot of conservative interest groups and there is a group there that was called, I kid you not, Citizens for Carbon. And they're trying to preach the benefits of having carbon in the atmosphere and we should accelerate production[4] and I'm like 'honey'. So, you have that but then you also have a lot of people on the conservative side who, they acknowledge that there's a lot of environmental problems but on the tier list of other problems

[4] "production" refers to Carbon production, not accelerating production to super-industrialize

it's not necessarily high enough for them to sacrifice a lot of the resources or policies that we need to solve them right." -Aspen

- "I hope to see a way that we can solve problems, 'cause there's a legitimate criticism that we can be the party of 'no'. We need to show up and talk about how we're gonna solve problems, win over young people, win over swing voters and actually solve problems this country faces, with improving the status quo. We're all in this to improve the status quo, and environmentalism, and embracing many aspects of that through a more limited government lens allows me to do that." -Skyler

Each quote shows the difficulties of opposing the dominant conservative discursive frame of climate denialism. Tatum and Aspen both humorously comment on the conservative propensity for misinformation regarding environmental issues, while Skyler thinks that conservatives often frame themselves as being the party of 'no' on environmental issues. Each interviewee admits that current conservative environmental solutions are exiguous, but conservative solutions to environmental issues are still superior to (liberal) alternatives. Skyler feels that although reformist tendencies tend to lead a party of 'no', a limited government is still the most effective method to solve environmental problems. For Aspen, there is conservative acknowledgement of environmental problems, but not enough investment into the 'right' (i.e. conservative) environmental solutions. Finally, Tatum's quote concludes with the opinion that new markets can drive conservatives into the climate debate and away from denialism.

CEO frames itself as offering conservative and pragmatic solutions to solve environmental issues, which united diverse individuals, from conservatives disillusioned with decades of climate denialism, to moderates dissatisfied with current environmental options. The varieties of political orientations unite in their belief that increased market access and decreased government regulations are essential to solve environmental issues. However, the ratio of market access to government regulation differed among interviewees. Interviewees who favored a reformist, market-based solution incorporating regulation as a key component aligned with the ecological modernization approach.

3.5.3 Ecological Modernization

EM is a well-known market-based sociological theory based on ecological rationality permeating social norms and institutional structures demanding examination of consumption and production practices for both economic *and* ecological integrity. These themes were evident in the interviews with Aspen, Tatum, and Skyler. Aspen, a lean conservative stated:

> "I'm skeptical of businesses being able to regulate themselves, by that I mean people from the business coming in and saying hey well we'll be able to sacrifice this, we'll do this, we'll reduce this much. How does that sound to you guys if you make it into law? The politicians are like sure. I am very skeptical of that, I prefer something more like the government does its research, it consults with the businesses and then it puts out something and it says you guys need to follow this to reach our goal and it creates finite goals."

Tatum, a moderate conservative believed that the mainstream conservative movement was becoming more bipartisan in general and that:

> "I don't think total unbridled capitalism is a great thing to have, I don't think that companies being able to do what they want above the law is a great thing, so as we are stewards of the environment, we also have to be stewards of capitalism, and we have to keep it in check, and while it's an amazing tool to change the world and raise standards of living, it's also something we do need to keep in check, because it is just that, a tool."

Skyler, who rated themselves a lean conservative and believed the CEO was "very bipartisan; I live for it."

EM accomplishes reformist change through smart legislation, using the market as a 'tool' to stimulate technological advances. Aspen is skeptical of market-only approaches as they prefer a government regulated approach with legislation cocreated by a government that first does its research, working with business interests instead of for business interests. Tatum echoes this point, viewing the market as needing 'stewardship', a 'tool' to be 'kept in check' rather than set free. Skyler succinctly brings up the point that reformist change can create bipartisan solutions. While lean and moderate conservatives favored ecological modernization due to its reformist nature, more dogmatic economic conservative interviewees favored a more revolutionary approach.

3.5.4 Free Market Environmentalism

FME uses a libertarian framework, viewing legislation as open to elite capture and prioritizing an unrestricted market, combined with strong tort law and property rights to exclusively create incentives for ecological sustainability. Hayden, who receives news from the FME think tank PERC, explains FME:

> "Using the tools of the capitalist system to provide for the innovation of new technology, to tackle carbon emissions through developing new sources of renewable energy, or more efficient ones. Free market environmentalism is embracing private land ownership as a principle for how we manage and protect and conserve land. Certainly, it's one that seeks to empower individuals to take control of the land around them rather than a centralized plan by the federal government, or an international organization."

Taylor, who rated themselves as very conservative, contributed that:

> "I think when you look at the United States you see a lot of private landowners doing a much better job of managing the property that they have, purely based on things like self-interest. It is in their interest to preserve the land in which they steward. I think promoting stewardship and responsible practices is a good thing, I think it's enormously more effective than top-down management. I don't think a bureaucrat based in DC is best positioned to tell people how to govern and manage the land in Wyoming or Montana. I think entrusting people at that most local level is the best way to go out protecting and conserving land."

Jordan, a self-described anarcho-capitalist, succinctly summarizes their lack of belief in regulation as "Well yeah I don't believe the government is good, inherently good, I think people are".

The FME solution to environmental problems stresses private land ownership, and an unperturbed market with negligible government regulation which attracted dogmatic economic conservatives. Jordan provides the base of FME belief: government regulation is incapable of responding to environmental degradation and is thus an inadequate authority on environmental issues. Taylor expands this thinking, opining that a federal government located thousands of miles away cannot respond to, nor is as interested in preserving and maintaining land as someone who lives on and owns the property. Hayden then summarizes these points by providing the definition of FME stressing increased environmental incentives driven by expansion of both the capitalist system and market demand, with private land ownership once again stimulating a rational economic ethic to conserve what you own.

3.5.5 Both Ecological Modernization and Free Market Environmentalism

I would be remiss if I exposed a false duality conflating conservativism with anti-environmentalism and replaced it with the duality of EM vs. FME. Some individuals leaned towards FME or EM, but most expressed a mixture of both, often within the same interview. Dallas, for example, showcases this ambivalence as they believed the biggest difference between liberal and conservative environmentalism was the role of the government:

> "Is it the primary actor or is it kind of a helping hand here and there when the private sector needs it? Or when there absolutely needs to be a standard set."

This combination of government and private sector would indicate a more EM oriented approach while later in the interview, they expressed a want to bring more conservative voices into the climate debate by purposefully not discussing a Carbon tax, something libertarians and other economic conservatives would view as a market distortion.

> "I think at the top of the party we're seeing an eco-right movement for a carbon tax but people who are just kind of dipping their toes into this climate space and getting out of the echo chamber of climate denial, that unfortunately still exists in the right of center, a carbon tax is not something that they're immediately supportive of, frankly a carbon tax is not a coalition builder. So, well we can kind of debate the policy aspects of it I think the biggest thing is the political feasibility and bringing more people into the climate conversation. It's not something that we find to be that good first step in getting an activist or even a legislator engaged on this issue."

These quotes showcase the contention of either promoting a bipartisan EM approach to attract moderates or a libertarian FME approach to attract staunch economic conservatives.

In addition, there are many similarities between the market-based EM, and libertarian FME such as 1.) increased ecological rationality leading to conscious consumerism, as Hayden explains:

> "Like my dad, who's probably the least environmental person in our family, he voluntarily went out and purchased a special laundry detergent that was more sustainable, and that just blew my mind because he did that voluntarily, nobody told him do it and he's not known to be that guy, but he did it, and I think that's kind of how we'll go forward with people. There's a culture around it."

2.) Decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation as Hayden again explains*:*

> "I think that as a country gets more developed and has more advanced technologies, I think the environment is impacted, I think at some point it's actually positively impacted, as we've seen in a lot of cities in the US have projects to clean up urban spaces, and to replant trees, and outside the city, regenerate native populations of animals, but we can only do that when we have the wealth to do it, and I think it depends on what stage of development you're in. If you're in China or Brazil or India where you're still industrializing, I think there's a greater impact but at some point, the curve starts bending the other way and we start doing better for the environment."

3.) A belief in technocratic solutions as Dallas explains:

> "I think the beauty of human ingenuity, and especially American ingenuity, is that we will continue to innovate will become more efficient and will support our populations in a sustainable way."

Though the degree of government regulation differs among EM, FME, and interviewees, a staunch belief in the market, or business, is the most obvious connection between the two. Tatum declares that conservative environmentalism is:

> "The best damn thing ever I'll tell you what. It is one electric vehicle company making sure that every other vehicle company in the world has to have an electric vehicle to compete. It's setting the precedent and setting the standard of what the world's going to look like in 10 years. It's the quickest and best way to get us towards a more clean earth…It's like 'monkey see monkey do', oh Tesla is making electric vehicles? Oh, we at Ford have to make an electric Mustang. Monkey see, monkey do. Oh, Hummer has to make one, oh, Nissan has to make one. I think it's the best ends to a mean."

Jordan also explains that:

> "I think there's a huge narrative out there that says business is the enemy, and that's certainly the opposite of the case. Like everything good we're doing is coming because people can be inventing things and coming up with new technologies and new ways to clean the air and ocean and whatever else, and solving all sorts of problems, desalinating water so people can actually drink water in places where there's droughts and stuff. So yeah, it's all because of businesspeople doing that stuff and so if we think that they're the enemy then we're going to get rid of the only people that can help."

EM and FME unite under the umbrella of increasing market access for ecological sustainability. This commonality results in joint belief of decoupling ecological degradation from economic growth, a strong belief in human ingenuity and technological innovation, ecopreneurs, and conscious consumerism. EM and FME differentiate on the degree of market access. EM believes increased societal rationality and smart regulation will increase market demand for technological advances. FME believes in an

uninhibited market as the only true solution to ecological degradation. The concept of neoliberal nature critiques this staunch belief in the market as the ultimate solution for environmental problems.

3.5.6 Neoliberal Nature

Both EM and FME utilize the market to different extents. A prominent critique of EM is the "technisiation of nature" (Hajer, 2009). Neoliberal nature, or the critique of market institutions extending into the nonhuman natural environment under the guise of environmentalism (McAfee, 1999) centers around the core axiom that "for nature to be saved it first must be imbued with profit or there is little incentive for rational actors to pursue it." (Büscher et al., 2012: 13). FME views market incentives and property rights as the solution to conserve land but is agnostic about the existing power differentials of owning property (Anderson & Leal, 2018: 10). Increased privatization and property rights favor those who already own property (Eckersley, 1993). So, while localized knowledge and care of natural areas would increase, that local knowledge would be characteristic of those organizations or individuals with enough disposable capital to buy land, or put land away in conservation easements, and not representative of the general population. Jordan, a quintessential supporter of FME typifies this:

> "The environment suffered during COVID people are like hey we're not driving like that must be helping, no. All these wonderful conservation groups ended, people gutted their staffs. Awesome people, organizations that are responsible for some species still being around went under because of COVID."

Here is an undeniable environmental good, the conservation of endangered species, but the further protection of that species is now dependent on the whims of the market, individuals, and groups. The species itself has no intrinsic value as utilitarian human institutions determine the species value.

Wildlife tourism provides an example of this conundrum, as people pay good amounts of money to get close to animals in their natural habitat, and this money goes to protect the ecosystem, thus nature is paying for itself. However, tourists expect to see the megafauna of the area, creating pressure for companies to find those specific animals for tourist interactions and photos. This commodifies an

animal's naturalness, with a high value on some animals because of how much they can generate (Belicia & Islam, 2018). However, a dip in tourism (such as during a pandemic as seen with Jordan's quote) can put the animal at risk (ibid). Compared to FME, the commodification of nature in the state-based, market as a tool, EM seems tame.

3.6 Discussion

Conservative environmentalism is a countermovement in the United States premised on providing a conservative, alternative to environmental issues. If you define the market as the primary causal mechanism leading to ecological degradation, then EM and FME may be synonymous. However, this chapter shows that conservative environmentalist interviewees vary in their environmental views much like their counterparts in the liberal environmental movement, who vary from the "strategic centrism" of the Audubon Society (Cherry, 2019) to environmental justice emphasizing racial discrimination, economic inequality, and sociopolitical exclusion as environmental issues (Mohai, Pellow, & Roberts, 2009). All conservative interviewees united in their belief that solutions to environmental issues were urgently needed and in the efficacy of increasing market access as the solution to environmental problems. Interviewees differed in the amount of government regulation needed. EM defines environmental problems as a lack of societal ecological rationality, embracing reformist, market-based government regulation to incentivize ecologically sustainable innovations and economic growth concurrently. EM primarily attracted moderate and lean conservatives. FME defines environmental problems as contradictory demands on finite resources solved exclusively by private property rights, tort law, and the free market, thereby excluding regulation. FME primarily attracted dogmatic conservatives. Conservative environmentalist interviews show evidence for both EM and FME, often within the same interview, but are constant in their belief in the market as the solution to ecological degradation. At the very least, I show qualitatively that there is interest amongst conservatives in environmental issues.

It is important to note that conservative environmentalists believed in anthropogenic change, and indubitably did not believe that humans were exempt from its effects (i.e. Foster, 2012; Dunlap & Catton, 1994). Instead, conservative environmentalists believed in human exceptionalism, that society can and will prioritize environmental innovations that solve problems through market incentives. Human exemptionalism creates a frame that conservatives and market-based theories do not mitigate environmental issues because they view humans as unrestrained from natural limits. This caricature is not true of conservative environmentalist interviewees, who care passionately about creating a more sustainable environment. A more accurate term would be human exceptionalism, which recognizes that humans are not exempt from environmental issues such as climate change but the solutions to environmental problems rely on human innovation, ingenuity, and the further expansion of human institutions (the market) into the natural environment. Thus, the semantic difference is important, as interviewees think of humans not as exempt from environmental limits, but still exceptional enough to overcome them.

Earlier I showed critiques of neoliberal nature apply well to FME as it commodifies nature. So, how well do other critiques of EM fit FME? Human exceptionalism critiques of EM manifesting in decoupling, a reliance on technocratic solutions and Jevon's paradox also apply to FME. Like EM, FME doesn't use a world systems approach, so that critique holds. In relation to footprint shifting and ecologically unequal exchange, there is no race to the bottom in FME since there are no regulations. From the FME perspective, private property would provide incentive to prevent environmental degradation. Since the market and private property also arbitrate social equity in FME, the Global North would start from a wealthier position which affords those in the North the opportunity to move degradation into less wealthy sections of the world concentrated in the Global South.

The role of the state is where EM and FME separate. At the extremity of FME, the state withers away as relic of a bygone era replaced by market incentives and private property owners, unperturbed by

national boundaries. At the "strong" extreme of ecological modernization, large structural changes still require overcoming the politically powerful "modernization losers" (Jänicke, 2008) to create ecologically equitable *regulation*. Though strong EM incorporates elements of radical thought, it is still state-based making it ultimately reformist in orientation. FME views further regulation as open to elite capture and circumvents this by stressing the libertarian ideals of minimal government, undeniable private property rights, and strong tort law.

This research is not without limitations. Mainly, the methods used are qualitative which makes generalizability impossible to ascertain. Interviews are from one group, CEO, which is not representative of conservative environmentalist countermovement or the larger conservative movement, future research can determine if the same logics hold in similar groups. The convenience and snowball sampling method also prioritized particularly active members of CEO. Future quantitative research should see if recent pro-environmental conservative rhetoric has a generalizable effect on the national environmental conversation. Additionally, due to the pandemic setting, "immersion" was completely online.

Assuming conservative environmentalism continues to gain popularity, there will be a speciation among conservative environmentalist groups responding to the different wants of supporters. Currently, the conservative environmentalist movement is small enough and doesn't need to discuss difficult intramovement theoretical splits that have already occurred in liberal environmentalism (i.e. environmental justice vs. mainstream environmentalism focused on preservation/conservation). However, as CEO grows there will have to be a choice between attracting more bipartisan support through an EM theoretical stance or attracting more libertarian and staunch conservative support through a FME approach. Practically, conservative environmentalism opens the door for bipartisan environmental legislation again but being the new kid on the block after decades of denying the block's

existence necessitates discussions of commonalities and differences with the broader environmental movement.

Chapter 4: The Once-ler and the Lorax

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot. Nothing is going to get better, it's not." – Dr. Seuss in *The Lorax*

4.1 Summary

The previous chapter focused on intra-conservative variation, while this chapter focuses on inter-conservative/progressive variation, comparing both conservative and progressive perspectives concurrently through interviews with self-identified conservative and progressive environmentalists. I use the four tenets of environmental justice: distributive inequities, procedural inequities, recognition injustice, and restoration justice to contrast the two groups. Conservative interviewees view the environment as a single issue divorced from social issues, with increasing market access as the solution to ecological degradation and then social inequities. The conservative focus on outcomes acknowledges one of the four tenets of environmental justice, distributive inequities, but not the other three process-oriented tenets. Progressive interviewees are skeptical of market solutions and view the environment as intersectional, necessitating robust, system-altering solutions. The progressive focus on systemic changes leads to process-based solutions which manifest all four tenets of EJ. Practically, each side critiques the other, with alliances between these two poles unlikely.

4.2 Background

The previous chapter explored the theoretical underpinnings of conservative environmentalist interviewees. Conservative respondents positioned themselves as offering pragmatic solutions to environmental issues and critiqued progressive or liberal legislation as being "unrealistic" or a "pipe dream". This chapter of the thesis compares self-identified conservative environmentalists with self-identified progressive environmentalists focusing on the four tenets of environmental justice (EJ): restoration justice, procedural inequities, recognition injustice, and restoration justice.

4.2.1 Movement/Countermovement

Countermovements emerge when social movements challenge the status quo and threaten elite interests (Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996; Gale 1986; Almeida, 2019: 140). The environmental movement threatened industrial economic interests, resulting in the formation of a corporate funded climate change denialism countermovement (Farrell, 2015a, 2015b; Brulle, 2020, 2021; Brulle & Aroncyzk, 2019; Dunlap & Brulle, 2020; Bohr 2017; Boussalis & Coan, 2015; Dunlap & McCright, 2015). Dunlap and Brulle (2020: 50) summarize the climate change denialism countermovement:

> "This chapter provides an overview of the key sources and amplifiers of climate change denial in the US, which constitute a large 'ecosystem' of actors that has evolved over the past three decades…These include fossil fuels and other major corporations and their trade associations, conservative philanthropists and their foundations, conservative think tanks, public relations firms, various front groups and coalitions, 'astroturf' groups designed for short-term campaigns, a small number of contrarian scientists, a vast conservative 'echo chamber' (consisting of conservative TV and radio outlets and a few newspapers, denier bloggers, and denial advocates on social media) and nearly the entire Republican Party."

Previous chapters of this thesis show the evolving environmental movement/countermovement ecosystem has a new adaptation within the conservative countermovement niche: acceptance of anthropogenic climate change, with solutions oriented towards creation of new markets.

There is ample research explaining the environmental movement (i.e. Steele, 2020; Kline, 2022; Gale, 1986; Ganz & Soule, 2019; Brulle et al., 2007; Carmichael, Jenkins, & Brulle, 2012; Johnson & Frickel, 2011; Giugni & Grasso, 2015; Rootes & Brulle, 2013; Cherry, 2019) and the conservative countermovement (i.e. Brulle, 2021; McKie, 2018; Farrell, 2015a 2015b 2019; Farrell, McConnell & Brulle 2019; Boussalis & Coan; Bohr, 2016; 2020; McCright & Dunlap 2010, 2017; Dunlap & McCright, 2015; McCright et al., 2015; Lamb et al., 2020). Despite being intimately linked, the environmental movement/countermovement literature rarely interviews activists from both poles in the US concurrently. For example, the previous chapter used Hess and Brown's (2016:74) conclusion that "conservative environmentalism is part of the conservative movement, not a synthesis of progressive and conservative environmentalism" as a baseline. Hess and Brown (2016) make this conclusion through interviews with conservative politicians and analysis of content from "clean energy conservative"

organizations, with no interviews or analysis of progressive environmentalists. Thus, Hess and Brown (2016) use their expansive background knowledge to assume the progressive environmental movement would be antithetical to the conservative clean energy countermovement. The research presented in this chapter benefits from interviewing activists on both poles of the environmental movement/countermovement dynamic, comparing members of the progressive environmental movement and conservative countermovement. Since both conservative and progressive interviewees brought up environmental justice as a way of distinguishing themselves, I use this salient topic as a guidepost to contrast the two.

4.2.2 Environmental Justice

Notably absent from Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax* (Geisel, 1971/2010) are the people. The only people are the Once-ler, the family of the Once-ler, and the children listening to the Once-ler's story of a bygone era. When the Lorax can't conserve the Truffula trees and the ecosystem, he preserves the wildlife species by searching for an alternative home. Dr. Seuss wrote *The Lorax* in the early 1970s when the mainstream environmental movement focused on the conservation of ecosystems and nonhuman species, with people being of secondary concern (Kline, 2022). Environmental justice (EJ) critiques the primarily white, middle and upper class, environmental movement's overemphasis on conservation which overlooks the social inequities of pollution and extraction on impoverished and/or minority communities (Mohai, Pellow, & Roberts, 2009; Schlosberg, 2013).

The EJ movement began in Warren County, North Carolina when civil rights activists blocked roads to prevent the dumping of soil contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in North Carolina's most African American county by proportion (Mohai, Pellow, & Timmons Roberts, 2009; Timmons Roberts, Pellow, & Mohai, 2018; Taylor, 2014; Kline, 2022). Warren County was the impetus for the United Church of Christ's (UCC) seminal national-level study *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States* which found that the most robust predictor of hazardous waste site location is race (Timmons

Roberts, Pellow, & Mohai, 2018, Mohai, Pellow, & Roberts, 2009, Bullard et al., 2008). This focus on social inequality, and in particular racial inequality, distinguishes EJ from the larger conservation-focused environmental movement. An illustrative example is the 1991 Principles of Environmental Justice, which "embrace a synthesis of anti-racism and ecological sustainability but also support anti-militarist, anti-imperialist, and gender-justice politics. The Principles also recognize the inherent and cultural worth of nonhuman natures" (Pellow, 2018: 4). The nascent EJ movement was further demarcated from the broader environmental movement by Bullard's (1996: 495) now classic definition: "all people and communities are entitled to equal protection of environmental and public health laws and regulations." EJ focuses on extractive industry and causes of pollution, with its early years spent on mostly quantitative studies, revealing the national trend that impoverished and minority communities faced inordinate environmental burdens (i.e. UCC, Bullard et al., 2008). Contemporarily, "hundreds of studies" find that minority and low-income communities face inordinate environmental burdens (Mohai, Pellow, & Roberts, 2009: 406).

A recent shift in EJ studies towards qualitative methods (Agyeman et al., 2016) adds needed context and nuance by focusing on proposed or current geographical loci where extraction and/or pollution could/is occurring and the experiences and stories of the people who live there (i.e. Malin 2015, Bell 2016, Gilio-Whitaker 2019, Hoover 2018, Riofrancos 2020, LaDuke 2020, Wylie 2018). I contribute to these efforts by focusing on two virtual communities (Rheingold, 1993; Hine, 2015; Kozinets, 2020; Addeo et al., 2019; Wilson & Peterson, 2002): Conservative Environmentalist Organization (pseudonym; CEO) and Progressive Environmentalist Organization (pseudonym; PEO).

I examine potential points of divergence in understandings of EJ among conservative and progressive environmentalists based on the four tenets of EJ: distributive inequities, procedural inequities, recognition injustice, and restoration justice. I provide a definition of each tenet below, drawing from Schlosberg (2004), Bäckstrand & Lövbrand (2016), and Swyngedouw (2011):

- Distributive inequities refer to the disproportionate location of environmental 'bads' such as pollution, toxins, and noxious facilities, as well as lack of access to environmental 'goods' near impoverished or minority communities (Schlosberg, 2004; Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2016).
- Procedural inequities refer to who gets "a seat at the table" and the systematic exclusion of non-dominant communities from decision making apparatuses including the lack of access to useful information to make decisions (Schlosberg, 2004; Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2016).
- Recognition injustice refers to which opinions matter when seated around the table, with disempowered groups acknowledged but not given the same legitimacy or authority as other groups in the decision-making process (Schlosberg, 2004; Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2016).
- Restoration justice refers to acceptance of alternative perspectives to the current market-based socioeconomic system which entail more equitable and sustainable systems (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2016; Swyngedouw, 2011).

4.3 Methods

The conservative environmentalist sampling and interview methods are the same as the previous chapter. For progressive environmentalists, I used a convenience sampling approach, contacting various members of a well-known progressive environmental organization via email beginning with my name and status as a researcher before explaining the impetus of the project. If the receiver showed interest, I set up a 15-minute unrecorded virtual meeting to exclusively go over the informed consent document and answer any questions that potential interviewees had at that time. This meeting also allowed for development of rapport before the formal interview. After mutually agreeing upon a time for the recorded formal interview, I emailed participants the informed consent document for their own records and asked them to reply with a signed and dated one in return. Prior to recording the formal interview, I always asked if the participant had any questions, reiterated to participants the use of pseudonyms and that they could leave at any time or request for the exclusion of their responses from the analysis, and

double checked that they were comfortable being recorded. All agreed and the interview commenced, with the 10 progressive and conservative environmentalist participants' (all names are pseudonyms) listed in Table 4.1. Once again, I do not include race or gender.

Table 4.4: Conservative and progressive environmentalist respondents

Name	Age	Political Orientation	Name	Age	Political Orientation
Sawyer	18	Very liberal	Frankie	22	Moderately conservative
Charlie	18	Very liberal	Jordan	26	Very conservative
Dakota	20	Very liberal	Aspen	22	Lean conservative
Casey	34	Very liberal	Hayden	25	Moderately conservative
Rowan	30	Very liberal	Taylor	21	Very conservative
Addison	24	Very liberal	Kai	29	Lean conservative
Alex	21	Very liberal	Skyler	25	Lean conservative
Peyton	20	Very liberal	Henry	21	Moderately conservative
Avery	23	Very liberal	Quinn	26	Lean conservative
Jaime	35	Very liberal	Dallas	23	Moderately conservative

I used the same semi-structured interview guide discussed in the previous chapter (and available in the appendix) for conservative and progressive environmentalists, replacing the word "conservative" with "progressive" when appropriate. For example, "How does being a conservative shape your environmental views?" becomes "How does being a progressive shape your environmental views?"

4.4 Results

In the following chapter, I compare conservative market optimism, view of the environment as a single issue and conceptualizations of EJ with progressive market skepticism, view of the environment as intersectional, and conceptualizations of EJ.

4.4.1 Conservative Environmentalism

4.4.1.1 Environment as a single issue

The previous chapter established that there are important differences within self-identified conservative environmentalists but a uniform belief in expanding markets as the solution for ecological degradation. This chapter demonstrates that the resolute belief in the market combined with a view of the environment as a single issue divorced from other social issues is the basis for conservative interviewee's "market-driven environmental justice".

In interviews with conservative environmentalists, they would often bring up EJ initiatives as an example of how other environmental organizations engage multiple social issues instead of focusing on the environmental crisis as a single issue. This separation of environmental issues from other social issues emerged as a key theme in conservative environmentalist interviews. Conservative interviewees often claimed to offer a more pragmatic alternative with a narrower focus, which countered the systematic changes promoted by liberal or progressive environmentalism. Frankie, for example, said:

> "I see the issue specifically and I want to work towards goals with that issue specifically, I'm not trying to battle 20 different things at a time. If I'm talking about something or thinking about a solution, I want to just focus on it. I think something that liberals and the current Democratic Party are doing is that they're trying to put out 20 fires at once and I think, at least this is how I perceive it, I think conservative environmentalists and I think young conservatives in general tend to be a little better at focusing on things and issues specifically and offering a specific goal that we need to achieve or work towards."

Taylor raised a similar point when speaking about Sunrise, a progressive environmental organization:

> "Sunrise is supposed to be an environmental organization that can't stop talking about abortion, or letting China commit genocide against the Uighur Muslims. I think they just lack a lot of credibility and that makes you question a lot of what they're saying. They seem very interested in pushing socialism instead of environmentalism, so environmentalism is just a gimmick that they have."

For Taylor, progressive groups address unrelated issues that extend beyond the purview of environmental issues, which lessened their credibility as an environmental organization. From Frankie's perspective, liberals pursue an inordinate number of problems by putting out 20 social and environmental 'fires' at once as opposed to a conservative goal-oriented approach putting out 1 environmental 'fire' at a time. Thus, conservative interviewees viewed the environment as a single issue divorced from social issues.

A further example of viewing the environment as a single issue is nuclear energy. Conservative interviewees brought up nuclear energy unprompted in most interviews, and for many it was a top environmental priority.

- “My biggest issue on the environment is that I'm all about nuclear energy. I think nuclear is gonna be huge in the future, I think it's gonna be where we get the majority of our power in the future, because reliance on fossil fuels is a bit dodgy for me” Tatum

- “It (nuclear) should be the centerpiece 100%. It is arguably the centerpiece. It is the most powerful and least maintenance cost effective source of renewable energies or just energy period.” Aspen

- “The definition of renewables needs to be expanded to all energy sources that aren’t natural gas and coal and then, what else? I guess I’d really like to see more emphasis on nuclear, the current preserving of that fleet because it doesn't need to go anywhere. I think those are the two main things, everything else seems to be getting more than enough policy recommendations” Kai

Conservative interviewees identified nuclear energy as both an alternative to, and lynchpin in, transitioning from a fossil fuel-based system, making nuclear the practical energy choice. For example, when asked if renewable energies could currently support the energy needs of the US, all conservative interviewees said that it could not unless the definition of ‘renewable’ included nuclear energy. Support for nuclear energy was further buttressed by a belief in nuclear plants being the least noxious option for meeting energy needs. Skyler, for instance, said:

> “We need to talk about the numbers and the net effect. I think a lot of people are afraid of going in a plane, but it's not the most rational fear to have because you're more likely to die in a car accident. Statistically, driving is much more dangerous, and I think when it comes to nuclear and carbon fuels, there’s plenty of NIMBYism if you live near a chemical plant that's dumping toxins into the environment, particularly in fixed marginalized communities, if you're at a low elevation or an area near where the sea is encroaching on you, that's your backyard. In switching to nuclear, you do create more risks in some communities and neighborhoods…but we need to convince people that statistically nuclear is far safer, it's like flying instead of driving in a car, it’s not perfect and increased safety isn’t always tangible especially because the accidents have more news attention, but it's hands down much less risky for humanity.”

The view that nuclear energy is safer than it was is a manifestation of the technocentric conservative environmentalist belief. Technocentric approaches prioritize ecologically friendly sunrising technologies

replacing antiquated, ecologically harmful sunsetting technologies (Hess, 2019; Mol, 1996, 2006; Anderson & Leal, 2015; 2018). Taylor explains:

> "I think that there are definitely problems with the old technology, but we've made a lot of progress since the construction of these old reactors in the 70s, newer reactors that we have designs for are more safe than ever before, and it's very unlikely that we would ever have any issues with them. It really just takes investment to put up new reactors that are immeasurably more safe than predecessors"

Kai similarly addressed one of the biggest concerns surrounding nuclear energy, the waste:

> "I'd argue that nuclear waste, the process of storage and just getting rid of it is the safest solution compared to all other energy sources, because at one point it's in a solid case on site, not going anywhere. If you really want to, and this is something we don't do in US is to reprocess it. So, you can reprocess it so it can be reused. Nuclear advocates like to joke that nuclear waste is not waste at all, it's used nuclear fuel that's ready to be reused, because you can build what is called a breeder plant which they have some overseas and basically you just feed the used nuclear fuel and it eats it up. So again, that comes down to if you really want to listen to the solutions, we can give them to you. If you don't want it on site, OK, I would argue then just give it to me. I'll have it in my backyard or under my driveway so I'll never have ice again, but you can put it in a geological depository and that's just fine. The only issue is that it's not a scientific question of whether it's gonna work or not, it's a policy question because politicians are flimsy."

Conservatives expressed support for nuclear energy as a pragmatic, parsimonious, and technocentric solution to energy demand and environmental issues. For conservatives, ecological sustainability requires less fossil fuel consumption, but renewable energies and battery storage cannot currently compensate the removal of fossil fuels, necessitating nuclear energy for a parsimonious transition. A large problem (energy transition) has a singular solution (nuclear energy) that doesn't directly consider systemic injustices associated with the processes of resource extraction. This "environment as a single issue" viewpoint is seemingly antithetical to the tenets of environmental justice which recognize and address systemic inequities associated with environmental issues.

4.4.1.2 Environmental Justice

While conservative environmentalists do not embody all four tenets of environmental justice, they do acknowledge distributive inequities. Aspen epitomizes the conservative recognition of distributive inequities:

> "Nobody wants to live with pollution, right? It causes health problems, it's nasty it's gross. People want to see solutions to pollution, different ways to interact in society without causing the big messes we see today. So, my big focuses as an environmentalist is how to create a sustainable future for the next generation, to actually leave a world that is less polluted and in a better place for the next generation than what previous generations have left for us. I am considerate of, at least this is personal, but really considerate of the equity effects of resolving big environmental problems on people who are disadvantaged. So, one big thing with the Green New Deal and a lot of carbon taxes is that research has shown that it would negatively affect people who have low incomes, minority communities, etc. and well the counter argument to that is sea floor rising and the death of the planet effects these communities much more than this stuff does, and everyone has to make sacrifices, but it doesn't have to be that way. There can be a lot of different solutions other than just let's go for one that requires people to sacrifice the most and roll with it. But I really want to bring that that fiscal responsibility, social equity lens to environmentalism."

Aspen concludes that an expanded government negatively affects minorities and the poor, with alternative limited government approaches as the preferred method to solve both ecological degradation and social inequity. Skyler echoes this sentiment:

> "When it comes to the social issues, we draw on a lot of strength from trying to view people as more self-reliant, and able to control their own destiny. There have been many cases where we go back through history were an expanding government, like many aspects of the New Deal have actually hurt social minorities, and a lot of these pollution causing NIMBY projects probably had a lot of federal, and state, upper levels of government overriding the will of the local community."

Taylor puts it this way:

> "Obviously the effects of climate change will affect communities of color more than everyone else, but overall, I think you can strike a healthy balance of talking about the intersections of climate with economy, climate with social issues without becoming dogmatic or an ideologue in favor of state ownership of everything."

The observations of Aspen, Taylor, and Skyler further highlight what conservatives saw as the main antagonist to conservative environmentalism: solutions to environmental issues that increase the size of the government, such as the Green New Deal. To conservative interviewees, the solution to distributive inequities is to increase market access and wealth in communities that are disproportionately affected by environmental 'bads' leading to few systemic changes outside of increased market access.

It is notable that when conservative environmentalists acknowledge systemic faults, the onus is still on creating change in business practices. Aspen, for example, said:

> "Global warming itself is just a fickle issue because yes, individual people get blamed a lot for global warming, we're told to cut down on your showers, you don't eat meat anymore, try to carpool as much as possible, and do you know my contribution to global warming versus the contribution of the largest 20 companies on planet earth? It's not even comparable. The fact of the matter is if you want to solve global warming, you have to do something with those companies and you either work with those companies to find better solutions for stuff like pollution and emissions or you fight those companies and it's very clear historically that when you try to fight those companies it's a lot uglier than if you try to work with them."

Among conservative interviewees, conceptions of environmental justice are a "market-driven environmental justice" where the invisible hand of the market promotes the most efficient *and* equitable solution to environmental issues.

Among the conservative environmentalists I interviewed, other social issues clearly mattered, but were not connected to, or intersectional with, environmental issues. Conservative interviewees conceptualized the environment as a single issue, which requires increasing market access to solve ecological degradation and then social inequities. Other components of EJ: procedural inequities, recognition injustice, and restoration justice were either defined as being beyond the scope of environmentalism or unrelated to environmental issues. Hayden exemplifies this when they explain how liberal and conservative environmentalism are alike:

> "They're similar in that focus on wanting a healthy environment, but then the left focuses a lot on justice, or how they like to say environmental justice, whereas on the right it's more about heritage, and conserving the past by conserving what we have. They're similar in that they both want the same goal, outcome at the end."

Though the goal may be the same, the process of getting to that outcome differs tremendously.

4.4.2 Progressive environmentalism

Unlike conservative environmentalists, progressives were more skeptical of increasing market access as the solution to ecological degradation and social inequity. Most progressive interviewees outright rejected any solution involving the market on the principle that the market was/is the primary cause of current environmental and societal problems and thus isn't a good starting point to fix them, as Addison explains:

> “I honestly used to think that these corporations that were like ‘we're reducing emissions’ were actually reducing emissions, but they’re not, and then we’re rebelling against the norm or what people see as entities that we need to bow down to basically. I don't see how they're gonna help us in any way, and no corporation is gonna save us, and no billionaire is gonna save us.”

At best, some progressive environmentalists viewed the market as a short-term tool. Rowan, for example, said:

> “I'm actually in favor of using market incentives. I'm just very confident that won't be sufficient, basically I see a lot of proposals from liberal environmentalists as well as conservative environmentalists that I actually think would be positive changes, I just think there needs to be a lot more in addition to that. I think that changes like economic incentives for example just aren't enough.”

Casey succinctly stated:

> “that's great if you can use the free market to get us a little further, but ultimately the free market is part of the problem in the way it functions right now, so it's a band aid on a broken leg.”

Progressive interviewee’s skepticism or outright rejection of market solutions, demonstrated by Addison, Rowan, and Casey above, in concert with a view of environmental issues as intersectional, demonstrated below, requires robust, system-altering solutions. The symphony of market skepticism and intersectionality ultimately leads to the embodiment of all four tenets of environmental justice.

4.4.2.1 Environment as intersectional

Progressive Environmental Organization (PEO) provides a community for individuals who view the environment as intersectional, or intimately connected to other social issues. Rowan explains why they joined PEO:

> “I have some background in other environmental type stuff, I figured focusing on the environment and the climate would make a lot of sense for me, and I like how PEO also brings in economic and racial justice and uses climate as a way of addressing these interlocking problems.”

While Casey explains their social activism awakening as the reason for joining PEO:

> “I think being in the center of anything is generally a good place to be. I don't want to be fringy, but I think that my awakening about social justice really pulled me further left, because I started to realize some of my own implicit biases, and just how bad so many people really have it in order to maintain the status quo I benefit from. So, I think that impacts my environmentalism,

> my understanding of injustice as the cancer at the heart of our society that led me to look at environmentalism in a new way."

For interviewees, PEO provides a community of likeminded individuals who acknowledge systemic inequities and work to create robust solutions to overcome them, blurring the line of what constitutes an environmental or social problem. Rowan joined PEO because it addresses both climate and racial issues as intertwined, while Casey echoes this point: they view environmentalism and social injustice as interconnected rather than independent issues. Addison succinctly summarizes*:* "I feel like tackling it all is what drew me to PEO because they're really intersectional". From the progressive interviewee perspective, separating environmental issues from social issues fails to 'tackle' the entirety of the problem.

Progressive interviewees see the environment as inherently connected to other social issues, so they prioritize an intersectional view of the environment. Peyton provides the definition of environmental intersectionality:

> "So environmental intersectionality would be focusing on or addressing environmental issues while also keeping in mind that environmental issues often disproportionately affect certain demographics, communities of color or low-income communities, those disadvantaged in American society as it is now. So, it really takes into account those inequities and works to solve them rather than ignoring those things as a problem and just focusing on solving environmental issues. I would say a good example of this is white environmentalism promoting, 'oh don't use plastic bags, don't use single use plastic' and getting angry at people who do, without keeping in mind that maybe that's all that they have, maybe they can't afford to have renewable plastic, or renewable water bottles, or reusable bags, or something like that. Whereas intersectional environmentalism focuses less on the individual actions of people and in my opinion focuses more on the big issue which is capitalism and the fossil fuel industry."

This intersectional approach led progressive interviewees to differentiate themselves from the Loraxesque mainstream environmental focus on conservation at the expense of humans affected by ecological degradation, as Charlie explains:

> "My understanding is the old guard placed more of an emphasis on defending nature from the horrible acts of mankind, and a lot more on conservation and preserving wilderness and biodiversity. Whereas the new guard is more focused on issues that affect humans, also shifting towards the idea that humanity isn't necessarily a scourge on the planet but can work in harmony with nature as Indigenous communities in North America have for millennia, rather than using capitalist systems that overexploit the land."

Alex then further expounds the difference between an old school focus on conservation and a new school focus on human needs:

> "Oh I've battled with this because I'm like am I an environmentalist or am I a humanitarian? Because when I think of environmentalism, I would say it's whitewashed, it's very much the penguins and the trees but personally I think environmentalism should be centered around the wellbeing of people. So, access to clean water, access to clean air, and finding the root of those problems and solving that and then worrying about the language itself. So, I think what environmentalism is to me, or (environmental) concerns, are the wellbeing of people especially low income, BIPOC, frontline communities."

EJ also critiques mainstream environmentalism for the overemphasis on conservation of the natural environment, at the expense of focusing on people most affected by environmental degradation, pollution, and toxins (Schlosberg, 2013). Procedural inequities, recognition injustice, and restoration justice prioritize the processes of solving environmental problems, looking beyond a simple distributive snapshot of where environmental 'bads' are disproportionately distributed. This intersectional worldview is a precursor of progressive interviewees collectively embodying all four tenets of EJ

The intersectional worldview espoused by progressives informed an understanding of environmental issues as complex or "wicked" (Rittell & Webber, 1973; Wijen, 2014) problems, without singular, parsimonious solutions. Charlie explains: "My top environmental concerns? That's a weird one because really everything is linked together. So, you can't really bring up one without bringing up a dozen others." Sawyer similarly said: "There are so many aspects of society that it (climate change) affects that it feels like you would need something to address each and every single one of those to really address climate change as a whole."

An intersectional approach broadens the definition of "environmental problem" to include social inequities, whereas conservative interviewees view environmental and social issues as distinct. For example, when asked about what environmental legislation they would like to see in the future, conservative interviewees responded with typical "environmental" issues: addressing climate change

and pollution or increasing capabilities of non-Carbon-based energy sources. Progressive interviewees expressed more concern about the processes associated with solutions, as Charlie states:

> "Lithium is very useful for creating that battery power that we need to sustain our renewable power network, but is it worth poisoning the groundwater of the people that live there? Or disturbing the graves of the people that have lived there for generations? It's an interesting conundrum and nobody really has an answer."

When I asked progressives what type of environmental legislation they would like to see in the future, answers were quite varied. For example, Avery answered that

> "I really would like to see the Civilian Climate Corps, I would really like to see a livable wage, and I really want universal healthcare. Those are the main things. Just socially based programs that help people survive and live."

A livable wage and universal healthcare are not considered typical "environmental" problems, but Avery's intersectional approach necessitates blurring the distinction between social and environmental issues because progressive interviewees view them as interlinked.

The demonstrated intersectional attitudes then create milieux for non-market, alternative discourse critiquing inequities endemic to the capitalist system. Dakota explains:

> "The progressive view right now would be to include wealth taxes and in general, Medicare for all, college for all, things that really challenge the status quo of the elite controlling the government. It also includes an end to certain amounts of lobbying, which have a huge impact on things like the prison industrial complex, military industrial complex all of which are involved in the environment. So as of right now, we just see a very few elite controlling all these different industries, all these different institutions, and we're challenging that, we're giving power back to the people. More housing, healthcare, lowering the wealth gap. We're challenging the power dynamics…a push to socialize medicine and take steps towards a more socialized economy in general would be the end goal of all these different steps, and just getting rid of the system that we have right now, in which very few elite control basically everything."

Conversely, conservative interviewee's staunch belief in the market engendered the view that the environment is separate from social issues, with single environmental issues solved by solutions such as increased market access or nuclear energy. The conservative viewpoint acknowledges the disproportionate location of environmental 'bads' in impoverished and minority communities but eschewed the inclusion of process-based solutions associated with procedural inequities, recognition injustice, and restoration justice to address distributive inequities. Progressive interviewees are more

skeptical of the market, and advocated for an intersectional approach to environmentalism, one that highlights the processes associated with solutions to "wicked" environmental problems in ways that embodied all four tenets of EJ.

4.4.2.2 Environmental Justice

In the following paragraphs, I show how progressive interviewees conceptualized distributive inequities, procedural inequities, recognition injustice, and restoration justice. It is important to point out that not all individual progressive environmentalists expressed all four tenets of EJ, but each manifested at least three of the tenets.

I draw on the work of Schlosberg (2004), as well as Bäckstrand & Lövbrand (2016) to define distributive inequities as "the disproportionate location of environmental 'bads' such as pollution, toxins, and noxious facilities, as well as lack of access to environmental 'goods' near impoverished or minority communities". All interviews with progressive interviewees discussed distributive inequities, with interviewees taking for granted that everyone in the PEO accepts the disproportionate location of environmental 'bads' as a baseline. The intersectionality displayed in the previous subsection necessitated first accepting the distributive inequities exist before creating robust, intersectional solutions to "wicked" environmental problems. Here, I want to showcase how members of PEO went beyond critiquing the disproportionate siting of environmental 'bads' near impoverished and/or minority communities to also show how progressive interviewees conceptualized distributive inequities as the lack of access to environmental 'goods'. For instance, Rowan responds to a question on how being progressive influences their environmental views:

> "Communities that already are relatively disadvantaged tend to bear more of the brunt of environmental issues like climate change and pollution. Recognizing that, solutions should also try to take that into account, and make sure to really benefit those communities, communities that are most affected by it, and it also helps me understand how environmental issues are part of a bigger picture...the exploitation of the environment is linked to the exploitation of poor people, exploitation of people of color, and so on and so forth, and so I believe that ideally we need to tackle these systems as a whole."

This quote begins with the acceptance of distributive inequities as a starting point which then requires solutions that directly benefit communities which are disproportionately affected by environmental 'bads'. Rowan wants structural changes that address the intertwined exploitation of the environment and oppression of people concurrently. From the perspective of progressive interviewees, the environment as intersectional necessitates systemic changes to correct systemic inequities. One of the systemic solutions progressive interviewees stressed was more access to environmental 'goods' for underserved communities.

The expansion of distributive justice to include lack of access to environmental 'goods' was best exemplified by Addison**,** Avery**,** and Alex. Addison stated on the role of technology in their worldview:

> "But he (Elon Musk) could have done something so good with these Tesla's if he made them more affordable for the average person, more people would buy electric cars, but that's not what he did. He was like I'm releasing the average working-class family car at $30,000 and that's not an average price tag a working-class family can afford."

Avery reflected on their own previous experiences noting*:*

> "How do these Indigenous populations, where we are installing things like solar panels, how do we make sure that the profit goes to them and not to the white communities that came in and put them there?"

Alex responded to a question on renewable energy implementation:

> "I think another issue of implementing it is getting it to low income areas, or frontline communities, because if you drive to Orange County or Irvine…there's Teslas, solar panels, LEED certified buildings, but then I go home to Compton right, well we're still relying on these (other) things 'cause it's cheap, it's worked in our area or industry. Chevron funds Wilmington after school programs and things like that, so they prey on low-income communities that rely on that energy…to really have it be equitable is getting that technology to poor folks, BIPOC folks, frontline folks. It's also another obstacle 'cause you can get it to wealthy folks and well-off folks but I think we usually forget about communities that look like Compton, Wilmington, San Pedro."

For Addison, the environmental 'good' is a more sustainable car that is unavailable to most working-class families, for Avery, the environmental 'good' is renewable energy but there is lack of discussion about who receives the benefits from renewable energy implementation. All three show that there is

support for environmental improvements in underserved communities, but these communities are often overlooked for economic reasons. This broadened interpretation of distributive inequities begins to include procedural inequities, or who gets to define what being an environmentalist looks like, and who "gets a seat at the table" determining who is and is not an environmentalist. Implicit in all, but especially relevant in Alex's quote is that 'well-off' folks in Irvine who drive Teslas and install solar panels to reduce their emissions define what is environmentally friendly. Despite interest in less 'well-off' communities, such as Compton and Wilmington in environmental issues, the baseline definition of what environmentalism is becomes economically infeasible, and thus they are not allowed a seat at the table to discuss environmental issues and partake in solutions.

I draw on the work of Scholosberg (2004) and Bäckstrand & Lövbrand (2016) to define procedural inequities as "who gets 'a seat at the table' and the systematic exclusion of non-dominant communities from decision making apparatuses including the lack of access to useful information to make decisions". Progressive interviewees felt their concerns were excluded from the table because political and economic elites promote the current system that benefits them and dismiss radical solutions to intersectional environmental problems. Jaime describes their current feelings on environmental issues:

> "It's been hitting hard lately, really hard lately that we have such little time, and I love getting my story out there, it's just the big guys, the ones on top, they're just not listening. They're not listening fast enough, they're not listening hard enough, they're not listening with their whole heart because if they were they would feel the fear, they would feel people's fear."

Peyton then adds further context when they discuss moving away from the current socioeconomic system:

> "I think that the current administration and the people in power right now would not want that to happen, but I think it is possible with people on the ground working. Like activism, mutual aid, I think those groups of people can really work to make change, but it's definitely gonna be a struggle with fighting against the people in power 'cause obviously they don't want to move away from capitalism, but I think it is possible."

Sawyer comments on the unequal power dynamics then denying some solutions a seat at the table*:*

> "I think a lot of times in universities you have a lot of students and teachers and faculty that come up with a lot of solutions, and I think those voices are rarely heard enough…there's too much money in it (politics), especially from fossil fuel lobbies, or people that are very invested in making sure that our way of life remains as it is, which is unsustainable for a whole lot of reasons."

These quotes express a common view held by progressive respondents that due to powerful interests, radical solutions to intersectional environmental problems are often denied a "seat at the table". Jaime believes that the people at the top don't feel the fear or urgency of frontline communities, Peyton adds further nuance as they believe that the elites who benefit the most from the current socioeconomic system are the least likely to create systematic change, and Sawyer points out the 'unsustainable' ramifications of this belief that more intersectional solutions are not given a "seat at the table". While progressive environmentalists focused on the exclusion of intersectional solutions through procedural inequities, they made sure their own platform acknowledged and addressed recognition injustices.

I draw from Schlosberg (2004) and Bäckstrand & Lövbrand (2016) again to define recognition injustice as "which opinions matter when seated around the table, with disempowered groups acknowledged but not given the same legitimacy or authority as other groups in the decision-making process". Progressive interviewees commented that they actively worked to alleviate recognition injustice through policy specifications, partnerships with other organizations, and discussions of what constitutes a proper intersectional solution. For example, Addison states:

> "When we talk about the Green New Deal, we talk about it as the Green, Red, and Black New Deal…there's the Red New Deal which is the Indigenous viewpoint on the Green New Deal and basically it says climate change can't work until Indigenous people are no longer oppressed or abused and it's 100% true because those are the people affected most by the corporations that exacerbate climate change with the Enbridge pipeline being one of them, and so the Green New Deal at the moment can have some more radical ideas go into it, and we can take politicians out of the Green New Deal because they just use it as performative action at this point and so it's losing its purpose the more that they do that."

While Jaime comments on partnering with other likeminded organizations:

> "I am actually a part of the global climate assembly right now, that the UK is putting together, and they're getting people from the Dominican Republic, from the Philippines, and we were chosen and so I am the community host for a participant, J, and right now we have the plenary sessions…discussing more about climate change, and doing votes, and so they're going to take it

> to COP26 and they're going to present it to them, and they're gonna be like these are the policies and procedures that they came up with as a whole world."

Avery similarly observed that*:*

> "We need to be evaluating and questioning as we 'find solutions'. First and foremost, we need to uplift communities that have been historically underserved which is going to be black, brown, Indigenous communities and I believe that Indigenous peoples need their land back and by that, I mean they should be making the decisions of what happens on these lands. We need to be honoring treaties, there's so many things that should be done, but I think first and foremost focusing on social needs, getting health care to people, we need to be taking care of our peoples before we think about grander things like speed travel through bullet trains…People that are going to be the most affected need to be the ones that are at the table making the decisions, Indigenous people need to be there making those decisions. I think they can best serve their own communities."

Addison starts by showing how PEO as an organization assuages recognition injustice, as all iterations of the Green New Deal receive the same legitimacy and authority as the original. This view of the Green New Deal as a framework that doesn't need legitimation from politicians allows for the incorporation of culturally specific additions, such as the Red New Deal. Jaime then demonstrates civil society and democracy in action in their discussion of a global climate summit in which all members received the same legitimacy regardless of their countries standing in the world hierarchy. The summit then presented the democratically chosen decisions at COP26 as representative of all the world's interests instead of a few powerful countries making decisions on behalf of the world. Avery then rejects complete faith in technocratic solutions, instead they view the processes associated with solutions as more important. They also value the epistemologies of historically marginalized communities through the mechanism of the land back movement. Additionally, Avery's preference for listening to, and improving the lives of people through the example of expanding healthcare instead of using resources to fund technological innovations such as bullet trains hints at discourse associated with the tenet of restoration justice.

I draw from the work of Bäckstrand & Lövbrand (2016) and Swyngedouw (2011) to define restoration justice as "acceptance of alternative perspectives to the current market-based socioeconomic system which entail more equitable and sustainable systems". Restoration justice involves more transformative

thinking than the other tenets in that it entails alternative thought to the taken-for-granted socioeconomic system which can be difficult. Taking the current neoliberal system as the baseline, a transformative alternative system reorients value structures towards a divergent set of solutions. The quotes below demonstrate the difficulties of designing an alternative system centered on restorative justice.

- “I don't know if our current economic system has the full potential to solve climate change. I'm not sure if capitalism as a whole is equipped to solve it, so it's really hard for me to imagine a way that we could ‘solve climate change’ without some kind of really cataclysmic shift to our way of life, and that's even harder to describe how that would go about.” – Sawyer

- “This also gets at some weird ideas about what land ownership is, and means, and is it right for any of us to own land. Like the fencing off, tragedy of the commons stuff, so in my perfect world, nobody would own it, but in a practical one, probably just some trusts that prevent the land from being developed for a certain period of time.” – Charlie

- “A system that prioritizes and thinks everyone's rights is important, everyone’s needs is important, that tries to be genuinely democratic in terms of getting feedback from everyone and making sure that people have control over their lives and over their government, and also respecting the natural world. So, you could call it, maybe a real democracy would be one way of putting it, and what particular name for that, the details of working it out, it's an interesting hypothetical question…I do find it helpful to have an idea of a broader vision in the end, but I don't feel a real need to have a super specific broader vision because we're just not at the point where ironing out all those details is happening. I want to just work together with everyone that shares that general vision, whatever they call it, and try to bring that more into fruition” Rowan

- “I really couldn’t give a shit about the American economy. Everyone's like the money, the money, what about the money. What does it matter if we don't have an environment, if we don't have a world, if we don’t have drinking water, if we don't have clean air, what the fuck does money matter in my mind?...Why are we hoarding that? Like for what? For our deathbeds? We're not going to take it with us, come on. We need to stop hoarding all the resources and help each other out.” Jaime

- “The mindset that our economy needs to be of one of extraction rather than a care economy or a circular economy in which we are focusing on our health and wellbeing and of others first. If your profit motive is the core basis of your society, that's what you're going to be looking at in all aspects, so even climate change I'm sure is going to be commodified in some weird and awful way.” – Avery

In the above quotes, all identify the current socioeconomic system, capitalism, as inadequate to deal with intersectional environmental inequities. However, the creation of market alternative systems is difficult, as Sawyer point out the need for systemic alternatives, but finds them hard to describe, and

Charlie sees both a restorative and practical solution to abolishing private property. Rowan begins to outline a solution, but notes that it needs to broad in orientation, with the details 'ironed out' later. Jaime views money and accumulation as increasing a sense of individualization, preferring a more communal approach. Finally, Avery gives us gives alternatives to the extractive economy with the terms 'care' or 'circular' economy to create a safe and just space for humanity that stimulates a regenerative and distributive economy (Raworth, 2017).

4.5 Discussion

This chapter compared self-described conservative and progressive environmentalists on the four tenets of EJ: distributive inequities, procedural inequities, recognition injustice, and restoration justice. For conservative interviewees, a staunch belief in the market and the environment as a single issue divorced from social issues requires solutions-oriented approaches based on outcomes, such as expanding markets, increasing nuclear energy, or stimulating new technology. This conservative viewpoint recognizes the disproportionate location of environmental 'bads' near underserved communities but identifies increasing market access as the solution which does not embody the other three tenets of EJ. Progressive environmentalists do not view the market as the optimal solution, incorporating other socioeconomic issues, such as healthcare, homelessness, food deserts, poverty, etc. as core *environmental* issues, blurring what constitutes an environmental or social problem. The combined market skepticism and intersectionalism in progressive interviewees requires a more robust set of solutions that include the processes involved with creating a more sustainable future, not just the outcome (i.e. Swyngedouw, 2011). The progressive focus on process-based systemic solutions leads to the embodiment of all four tenets of EJ. Figure 4.1 below summarizes this visually.

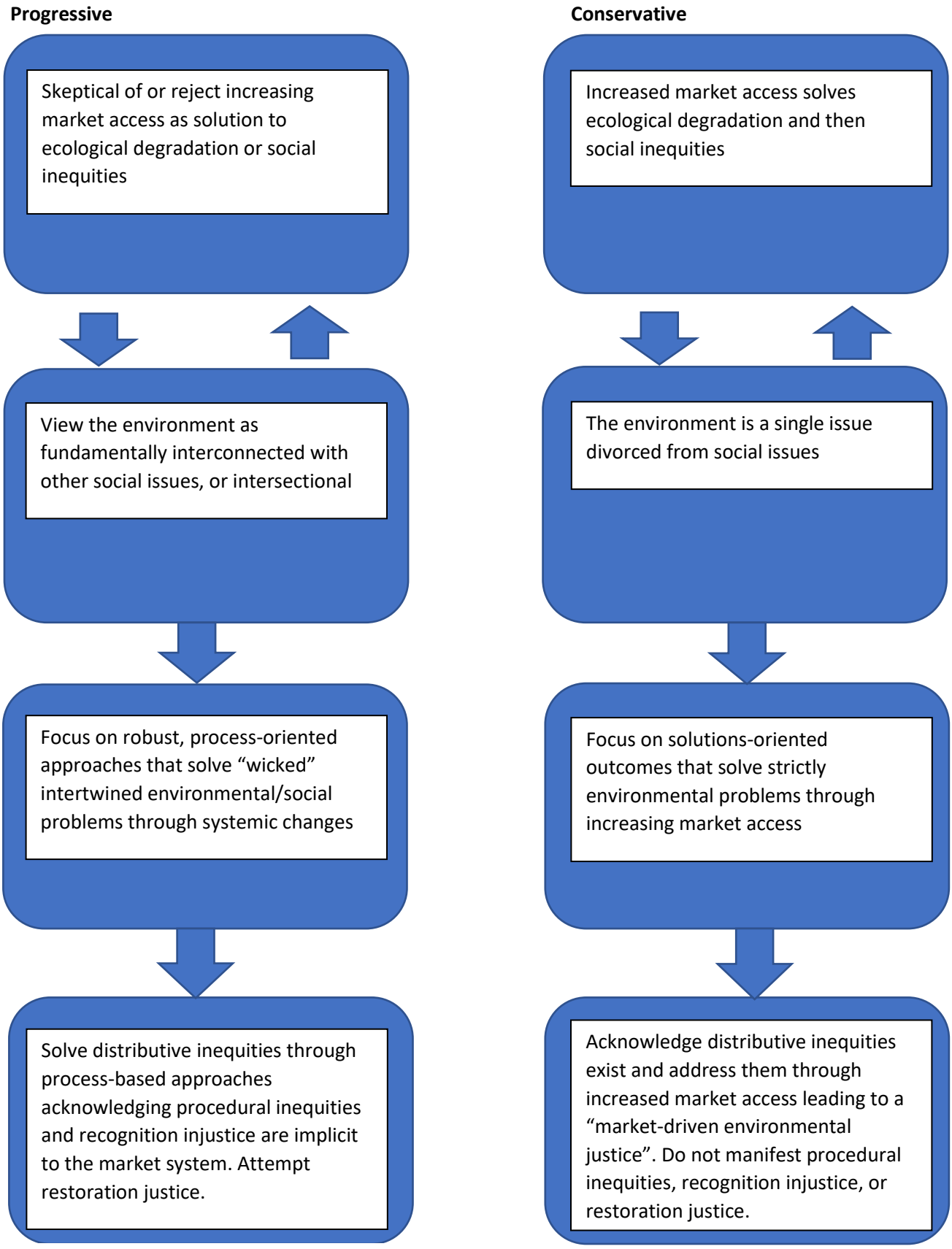
Progressive
Skeptical of or reject increasing market access as solution to ecological degradation or social inequities
View the environment as fundamentally interconnected with other social issues, or intersectional
Focus on robust, process-oriented approaches that solve "wicked" intertwined environmental/social problems through systemic changes
Solve distributive inequities through process-based approaches acknowledging procedural inequities and recognition injustice are implicit to the market system. Attempt restoration justice.
Conservative
Increased market access solves ecological degradation and then social inequities
The environment is a single issue divorced from social issues
Focus on solutions-oriented outcomes that solve strictly environmental problems through increasing market access
Acknowledge distributive inequities exist and address them through increased market access leading to a "market-driven environmental justice". Do not manifest procedural inequities, recognition injustice, or restoration justice.

Figure 4.1

Malin's (2015) theoretical contribution of the triple movement, or sites of acceptance, a riff of Polanyi's double movement, or sites of resistance, is useful in explicating the differences between conservative and progressive interviewees. Sites of resistance embody Polanyi's (2007/1944) double movement prediction that disembedded neoliberal markets would cause incredible amounts of damage to human health through destruction of social safety nets and the environment in the insatiable quest for profit such that activists and citizens would want to reembed markets to curve the vast destruction of corporations. Conversely, Malin (2015) describes sites of acceptance as part of the "triple movement" which view the free market as the ultimate arbiter of social equality, such that "environmental justice" to these communities are concerns about the lack of markets, and industrialization, with the *acceptance* of environmental degradation and pollution as an unfortunate externality of the process. One of the major differences between conservative and progressive interviewees is the belief in market incentives. The metaphorical elephant in the G.O.P.'s understanding of EJ is the view that markets will solve environmental issues and social inequities. In this way, conservative interviewees embody Malin's triple movement (2015: 127), "in which activists mobilize to protect and encourage the free functioning of various market systems because they view these markets as part of their social fabrics and community identities". While this staunch belief in markets and technocratic solutions does have some interesting connections to EJ in acknowledging distributive inequities, the emphasis on markets means contemporary conservative environmentalism is unlikely to address procedural inequities, recognition injustice, and restoration justice since doing so would entail transformative social change. By embracing the processes associated with restoration justice and assuaging procedural inequities and recognition injustice, progressive interviewees emphasize transformative changes to re-embed markets akin to Polanyi's double movement, and Malin's (2015) "sites of resistance" to neoliberal hegemony.

The conservative environmentalist interviewee view of the environment as a single issue acknowledges distributive inequities but not the other three tenets of EJ as defined in this chapter. Progressive

interviewees questioned solutions not only on their predictive outcome but also the involvement of all groups in the decision-making process, were the opinions of all interested parties considered valid, and does the outcome address historical atrocities. For example, progressive interviewees attempt to address procedural inequities by systematically including non-dominant communities, who may not have the same pecuniary interests, or the same cultural valuation of what constitutes a good decision on the nonhuman natural environment. From the conservative environmentalist perspective, local interest and the market should determine procedural inequities such that those with those who have the most financial incentive to gain or lose occupy the "seats at the table". For recognition injustice, progressive interviewees want all interested parties to have the same amount of decision making power when seated around the table. For conservative interviewees, those with the most financial incentive to lose or gain would determine not only who, but which opinions matter the most when seated around the table. Restoration justice requires imagination to create non-market alternative discourse outside of the current socioeconomic system, which progressives attempted, but was completely absent from the conservative environmentalist interviews.

This research is not without limitations. Most notably, theory needs years or decades to understand nuances, so the author's lack of experience in EJ leads to a limited understanding and conceptualization. Additionally, I conducted interviews exclusively within two groups using snowball and convenience sampling. Future research can check if similar groups or self-identified individuals emulate the same logics presented in this chapter. This research is also qualitative in nature, which makes generalizability impossible to ascertain. Finally, virtual interviews have the advantage of attracting a wide geographical range, but the lack of a common geographical locus makes recognition injustice and procedural inequities difficult as there's not a common local event to ask about. Since conversations were more national in orientation, recognition injustice and procedural inequities become broader in orientation.

From a conservative perspective, problems of EJ revolve around (lack of) market access. It is important to note that more libertarian ideologies discussed in the previous chapter (i.e. Anderson & Leal, 2015; 2018) argue that increased market access and strong property rights create markets on pollution and emissions which allows for price discovery to assuage distributive inequities, procedural inequities, and recognition injustice. This puts the onus on individuals to research and make informed decisions on how much they are willing to pay for clean air, technologies that reduce climate change, or the right to judicial action over pollution (Anderson & Leal, 2015; 2018). In essence, increasing market access individualizes systemic problems. Insofar as "environmental justice battles…have never only been about individual illnesses or impacts, but always also about the impact on the social cohesion and functioning of the community" (Schlosberg 2013: 43). It is improbable that conservative environmentalism in its current form will embody the four tenets of EJ. This makes sense given that conservative interviewees position themselves as the pragmatic, outcome-oriented alternative relative to the progressive interviewee's emphasis on systemic, process-based changes.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this thesis I use a mixed methods approach to investigate the seemingly oxymoronic "conservative environmentalism". Quantitatively, I differentiate inter- and intra-ideological polarization on environmental issues. Inter-ideologically, liberals and conservatives continue to diverge in their environmental views. I find that intra-ideologically, liberals are increasingly uniform in their pro-environmental attitudes post the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan such that 2021 is the global minimum of intra-liberal polarization. Conservatives are heterogeneous throughout, with 2021 being within the standard error of the global maximum of intra-conservative polarization. Thus, in contemporary US politics, to be liberal is to be "pro-environment" but to be conservative is to have heterogeneous environmental attitudes.

To qualitatively explore this conservative environmental dispersion, I interview self-identified conservative environmentalists. Conservative environmentalist interviewees show split support between a market-based ecological modernization framework which attracts moderates and lean conservatives and a more libertarian free market environmentalism framework which attracts steadfast economic conservatives. These heterogeneous conservative attitudes towards government regulation unite in the staunch belief of increasing market access as the solution to ecological degradation. I further explore the ramifications of a staunch market-driven solution to environmental degradation by comparing self-identified conservative and progressive environmentalists on the tenets of environmental justice. Conservative interviewees focus on increased market access and the pragmatic outcomes of conservation, which contrasts to progressive interviewee's market skepticism and intersectional focus on the processes that lead to equitable, system-altering solutions to combined "wicked" ecological and social problems.

The key takeaway from this thesis is that conservative environmental views are heterogeneous and complex. This thesis is an example of the interesting and varied conservative perspectives which arise to meet contemporary challenges. The chapter summaries below provide more detail, including the methods used.

In chapter 2 I tested the inter-ideological and intra-ideological polarization on support for government spending on the environment. To test inter-ideological polarization, I replicate and extend McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap's (2014) research to show that conservatives and liberals are continuing to diverge in their environmental beliefs through 2018. I robustly affirm McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap's (2014) finding of 1991 to be the pivot year of environmental polarization through their own methods of ordered logistic regressions and the Index of Ordinal Variation (IOV; Blair & Lacey, 2000) but I note the importance of intra-ideological differences, particularly among conservatives. I then use the IOV to discuss intra-ideological polarization. Intra-ideologically, liberals are more uniform in their environmental attitudes after the 1980 presidential election of Ronald Reagan introduced federal neoliberalism. The global minimum of intra-liberal dispersion occurs in 2021 giving contemporary evidence that to be liberal is to be "pro-environment". Intra-conservative attitudes on the environment are heterogeneous, with 2021 being within standard error of the global maximum of dispersion, giving contemporary evidence that to be conservative is not to be "anti-environmental" but to have heterogeneous attitudes on the environment. I use this quantitative finding that conservatives are not monolithically anti-environmental to transition into a qualitative discussion of self-identified conservative environmentalists.

Chapter 3 uses a qualitative approach, adapting the intertwining methodologies of netnography (Kozinets 2020) and ethnography for the internet (Hine, 2015) culminating in semi-structured virtual interviews (via ZOOM) of self-identified conservative environmentalists. Building on the "conservatives are not an anti-environmental monolith" theme, I show conservative environmentalist interviewees favor two distinct approaches to solving environmental problems: a reformist ecological modernization

orientation and a revolutionary free market environmentalism orientation. An ecological modernization framework theorizes that a proliferating society-wide ecological rationality will demand that governments regulate and incentivize both ecological sustainability and economic growth simultaneously. Free market environmentalism stresses negligible governmental regulation, with the combination of the market, strong property rights, and tort law exclusively creating incentives for ecological sustainability. Most conservative interviewees show a mixture of both, but lean and moderate conservatives tend towards a reformist ecological modernization approach while dogmatic economic conservatives favor the more libertarian free market environmentalism approach. This intra-conservative dispersion on support for government spending on the environment unites in a staunch belief of market-driven approaches to solve ecological degradation.

Chapter 4 discusses the ramifications of a market-driven approach to solving environmental issues by comparing self-identified conservative and progressive environmentalist interviewees on the four tenets of environmental justice: distributive inequities, procedural inequities, recognition injustice, and restoration justice. Conservative interviewees prioritize solutions-oriented outcomes to environmental issues, such as transitioning away from fossil fuels towards nuclear energy, with social and environmental issues as separate debates. The solution of increased market access to solve both ecological degradation and then social inequities leads to a "market-driven environmental justice" which acknowledges distributive inequities but does not manifest procedural inequities, recognition injustice, or restoration justice. Progressive interviewees view social and environmental issues as fundamentally intertwined and are skeptical of increasing market access as a solution to intersectional environmental problems. I show the base of the progressive worldview is acknowledgement of distributive inequities, with a focus on solving "wicked" intersectional environmental problems through process-oriented approaches that address the procedural inequities, and recognition injustice implicit to the current

market-based system. Progressive interviewees then attempt restoration justice through advocating for systematic restructuring.

This thesis is not without limitations. As I highlighted in chapter 2, when using the GSS to test intra-conservative polarization it is plausible that conservative GSS respondents are against increased government spending and/or the environment. Chapter 3 investigates this intra-conservative dispersion, arguing that differences in opinions on the effectiveness of government regulation led to heterogeneous definitions of environmental problems and thus different solutions. As I highlight in the discussion of chapter 3, qualitative methods are not representative, and I am thus unsure if the same market-driven logics are uniform amongst conservative environmentalist individuals or groups. Also mentioned in the discussion of chapter 3, I argue that conservative environmentalists do not view humans as exempt from environmental problems, but exceptional enough to overcome them. I planned to use conservative and progressive responses to the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP), a scale that measures individuals on a unidimensional continuum from support of the New Ecological Paradigm (pro-environment) to support of the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP; pro-neoliberalism) (Dunlap et al., 2000) to fully investigate the exemptionalism vs. exceptionalism argument. The NEP is the "anchor" of the environmental belief system (Xiao, Dunlap, & Hong, 2018) and views environmentalism (NEP) and capitalism (DSP) as two poles of a continuum. Thus, I think it would be fascinating to compare conservative environmentalists, who ostensibly embody both the NEP and DSP simultaneously, with progressive environmentalists, who ostensibly should manifest the NEP wholly. Unfortunately, due to time constraints I was not able to write this chapter.

Fortunately, I was able to write a comparison of self-identified progressive and conservative environmentalists in chapter 4. The same concrete limitations of chapter 3 apply to chapter 4: a lack of generalizability leading to a lack of knowledge of whether the same logics extend to similar individuals or groups. One issue I did not discuss in chapter 4 was the role of the state. I felt the interview guide I

designed couldn't fully explicate the progressive attitude towards the state as progressive interviewees viewed the state both as a coconspirator in ecological and social harm but also as a mechanism through which to curb corporate greed and reach restoration justice. Additionally, there is an interesting parallel between free market environmentalism and Critical Environmental Justice (CEJ; Pellow, 2018) relating to the role of the state. In Pellow's (2018: 12, emp. in original) own words:

> "Much of the literature on theories of justice - whether distributive, procedural, or recognitional - *does* center on the state. This is problematic because the state is one of the primary forces contributing to environmental injustice and related institutionalized violence."

Free market environmentalism and CEJ may seem antithetical, however they do make strange bedfellows in that both agree that "social inequalities…are deeply embedded in society and reinforced by state power, and that therefore the current social order stands as a fundamental obstacle to social and environmental justice" (Pellow 2018: 22). Rephrased into free market environmentalism lingo:

> "The ability of market institutions to resolve conflicting human demands on the environment relies not on benevolent political actors, but on entrepreneurs guided by market prices…the decentralized process of entrepreneurial discovery is much more likely than any central agency or group of scientific management to devise solutions to local and time specific environmental problems" (Anderson & Leal, 2015: 25).

Like chapter 3, though the ultimate sentiment of anti-statism may be the same between CEJ and free market environmentalists, the process of getting there varies tremendously. Pellow (2018) worries about the cooptation of transformative movements by states resulting in the inhibition of direct democracy, whereas FME uses the mechanism of the market to reach the same anti-statist conclusion that states are inimical to assuaging environmental and social inequalities. Future research should explore the potential for unlikely alliances (Grossman, 2017) between CEJ and FME, and the role of the state in the progressive environmentalist worldview.

Finally, the limitation that bothered me throughout writing the thesis was the lack of a definition for "mainstream environmentalism". I use the discursive frames argument to show that conservative and progressive interviewees conceptualize "environmentalism" differently, but each pole still critiqued the

“mainstream” movement as a way of defining what they were not. This lack of a definition for “mainstream environmentalism” spurred me to begin a separate research project trying to define "environmentalism” organizationally through structural topic modeling. Since that research is not yet ready, I used the Lorax as a literary device in chapter 4 to describe “mainstream environmentalism”.

To conclude I use *The Lorax* (Geisel, 1971/2010) once again as an allegory to illustrate the differences between traditional liberal environmentalism and conservative environmentalism. In the story, the entrepreneurial Once-ler plans to take full advantage of a new market opportunity by producing as many Thneeds as possible, in the process cutting down the Truffula trees. This introduces the main character, the Lorax, with the most famous quote of the book: “I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees. I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues”. This is an example of the land ethic a belief in the interconnectedness of ecological and human communities (Leopold, 1949/1986), borne out as environmentalist groups commonly view themselves as the voice of the voiceless nonhuman nature (Kline, 2022). Our ardent capitalist, Once-ler, persists and ignores the Lorax’s warnings, even creating the technological innovation of the Super-Axe-Hacker which whacked down four Truffula trees with one smacker, thus he becomes an ecological extractor. The loss of the Truffula trees then results in an ecological trophic cascade, as the Brown Bar-Ba-Loots must leave due to not having enough Truffula fruits to sustain themselves. Similarly, the Swomee-Swans and Humming-Fish must also leave due to the smog, runoff, and pollution produced by the Thneed factory. The message for environmentalism at the time Seuss was writing was simple: short-sighted greed created by unfettered capitalism and rampant consumerism is the ultimate cause of environmental degradation (Kline, 2022). Drawing on Marx (1867/1976), the owner of the means of production, Once-ler, has a distinctly bourgeoisie response to the plight of the Brown Bar-Ba-Loots “I, the old Once-ler, felt sad as I watched them all go. BUT business is business! And business must grow regardless of crummies in tummies, you know”. The sociopolitical

system is pushing Once-ler towards maximizing profit, regardless of his own feelings towards the ecological destruction his business model produces.

The conservative environmentalist response would applaud the entrepreneurship and innovation of the Once-ler who meets market demands for 'Thneeds' by cutting down the Truffula trees. However, where Seuss views capitalism as the root cause of the ecocide, conservative environmentalists would posit that capitalism did not extend far enough. For example, the Once-ler has a burgeoning new market in Thneeds but his business model wasn't sustainable, as he overuses his resources by cutting down all the Truffula trees, instead of planning a sustainable harvest method. From the conservative interviewee's perspective, the Lorax had the right idea in speaking for the trees, but he didn't come from the position that humans are inherently self-interested, preferring to proselytize to the zealous capitalist Once-ler about how he was morally wrong, instead of using utilitarian economic logic. From this perspective, a better strategy would have been to create a market either on the Truffula tree itself or create a market for sustainably made Thneeds, where conscious consumers would pay a premium for a more sustainably grown product. However, I will say, The-Sustainably-Grown-Truffula-Thing-That-Everyone-Needs just doesn't have the same ring to it. In short, from the conservative environmentalist perspective, capitalism is not counter to environmental sustainability, but rather can yield it. Balancing the pragmatic, profit maximizing, self-interested orientation of the Once-ler with the more communal, ecological nature of the Lorax is the ambivalent oxymoron of conservative environmentalism.

Climate change is a "cultural trauma" that challenges ontological security, established norms and the legitimacy of hegemonic ideology (Brulle & Norgaard, 2019). This thesis presents two diverging views to assuage this daunting cultural trauma. The conservative pole hurriedly sought to relegitimize the current system while the progressive pole rushed to restructure it. Swyngedouw (2011: 269-270) points out that:

> "Stabilizing the climate seems to be a condition for life as we know it to continue…The elites have not only acknowledged the climate conundrum and, thereby, answered the call of the 'people' to take the climate seriously, but are moving rapidly to convince the world that indeed, capitalism cannot only solve the climate riddle, but that it can actually make a new climate by unmaking the one it has co-produced the past hundred years."

Bäckstrand, & Lövbrand (2016: 11) argue that:

> "Central to the ethos of climate governance is that the climate crisis demands far-reaching transformation breaking with the power structures that cause climate change, hunger, poverty, patriarchy and colonialism."

There are multiple solutions to heal the trauma climate change inflicts. These solutions depend on what you define as the ultimate problem. This thesis attempts to showcase the positives and negatives of two solutions: the conservative interviewee's emphasis on market-driven rationality leading to solutions-oriented outcomes as well as the progressive interviewee's intersectionality, skepticism of market-driven solutions and insistence on systemic change. No matter which pole you lean towards, I hope the thesis led to a better understanding of the other. After all, climate change will require action that transcends political divides.

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Appendix

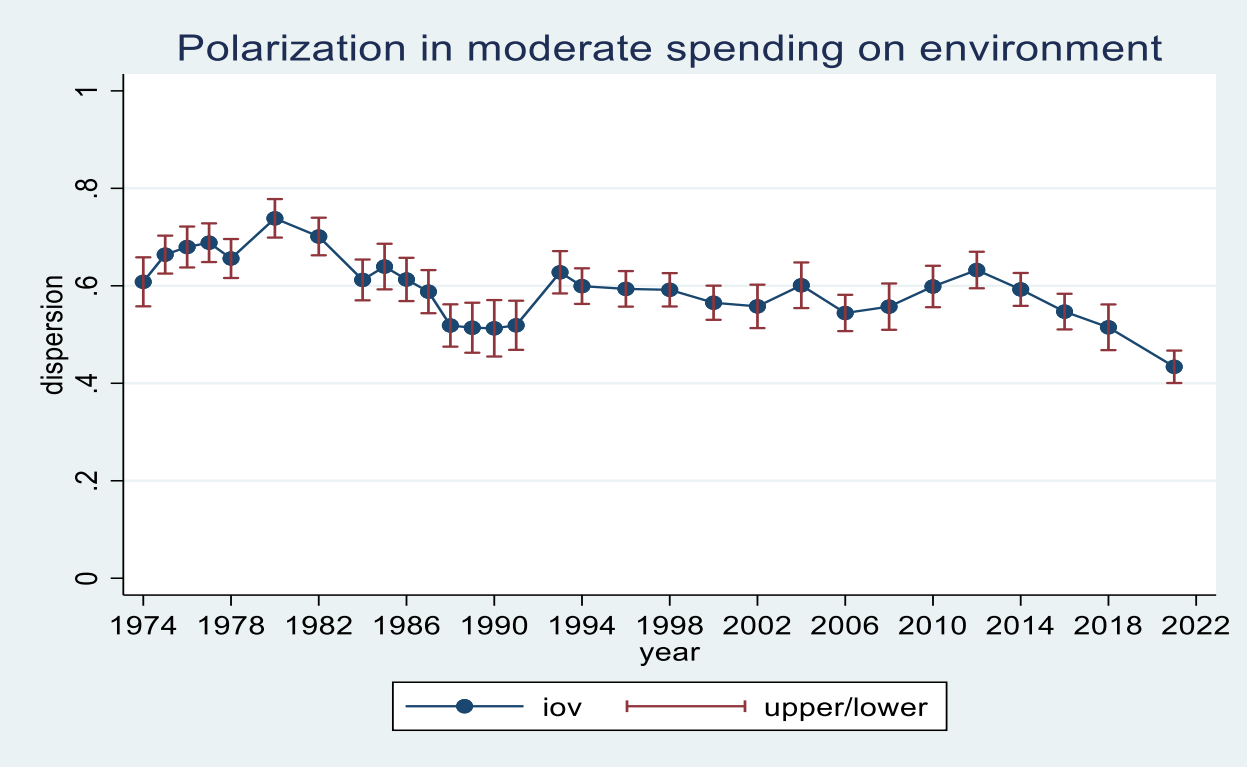

Figure A1

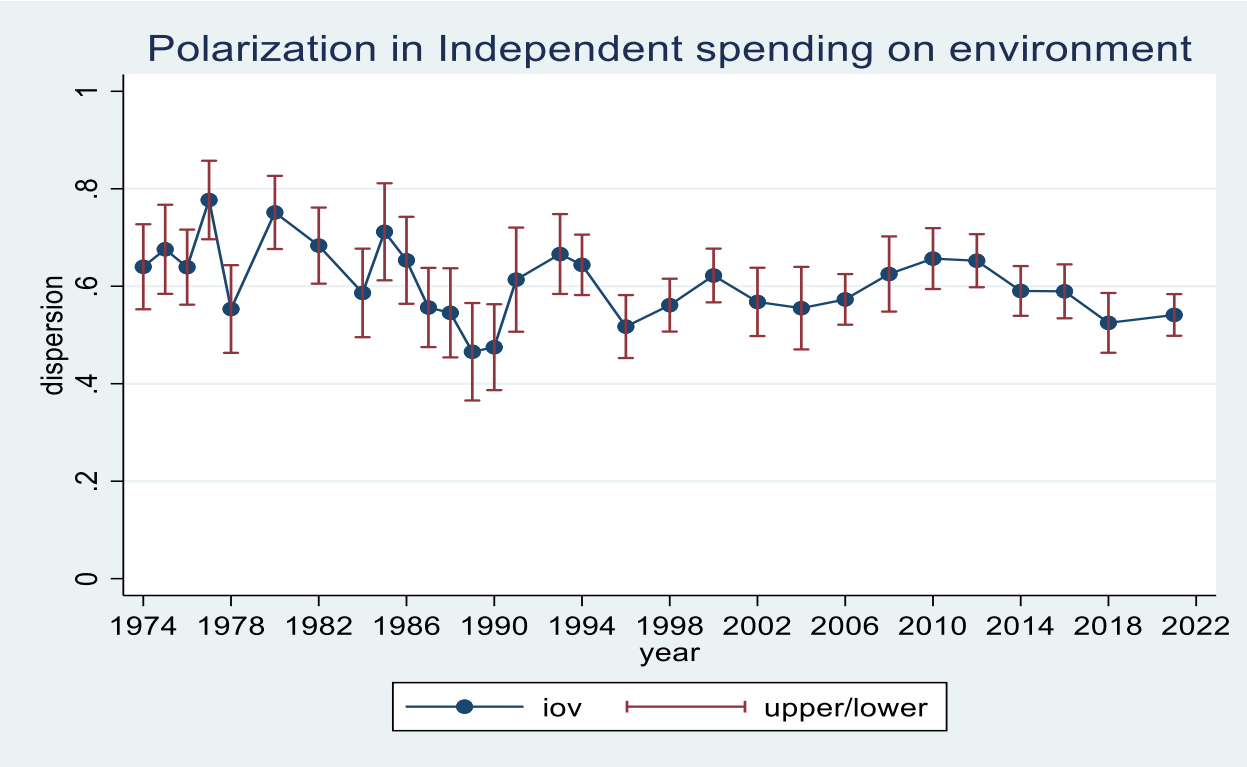
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Figure A2

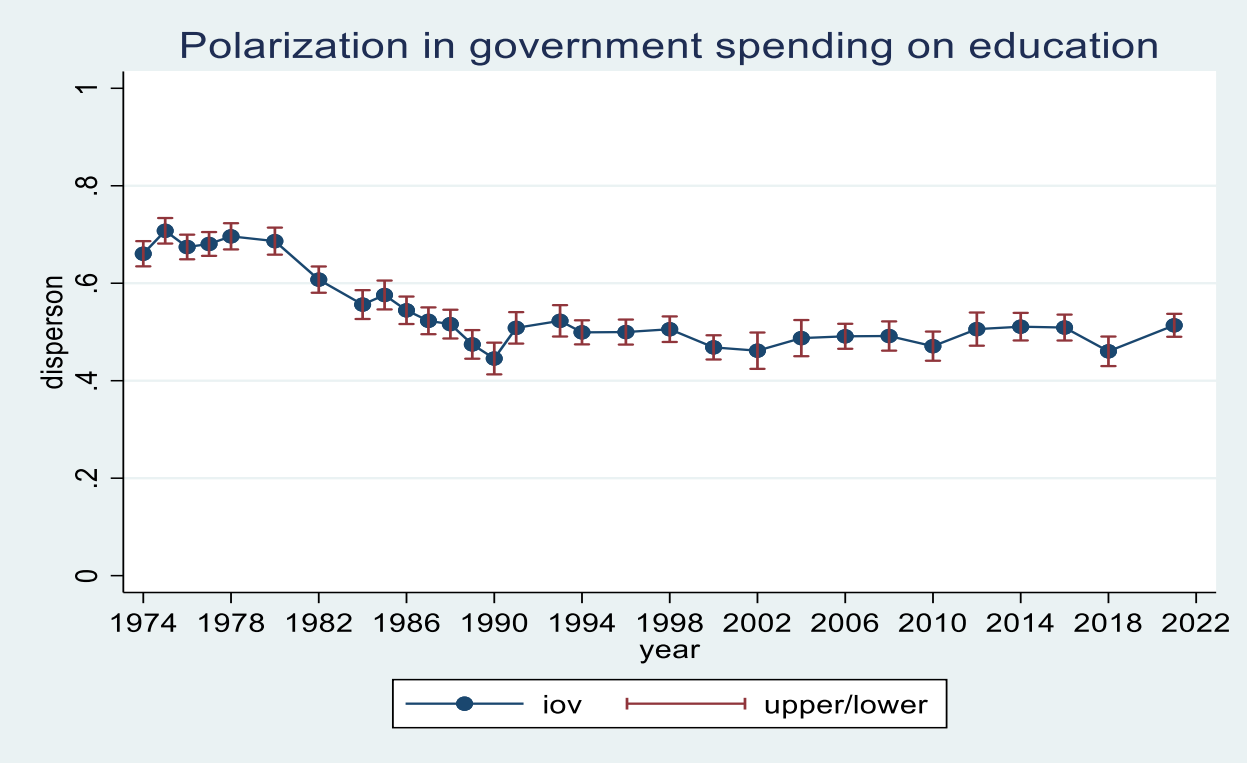

Figure A3

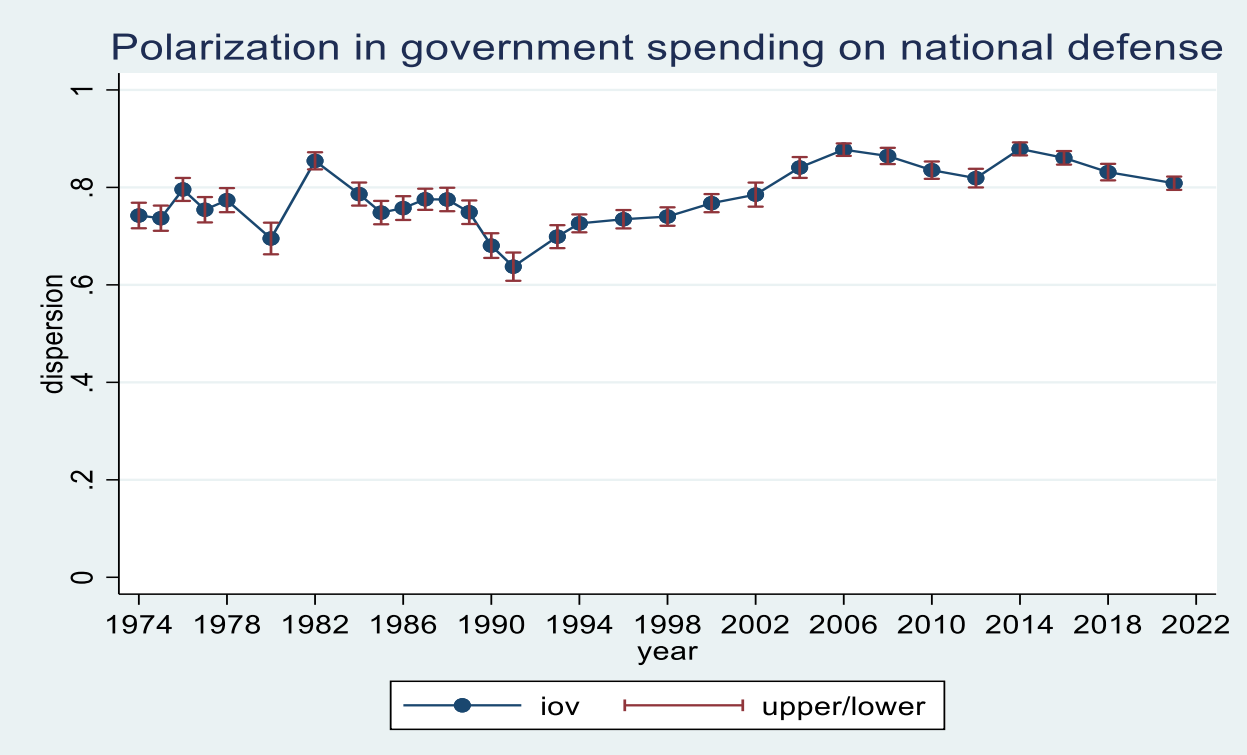

Figure A4

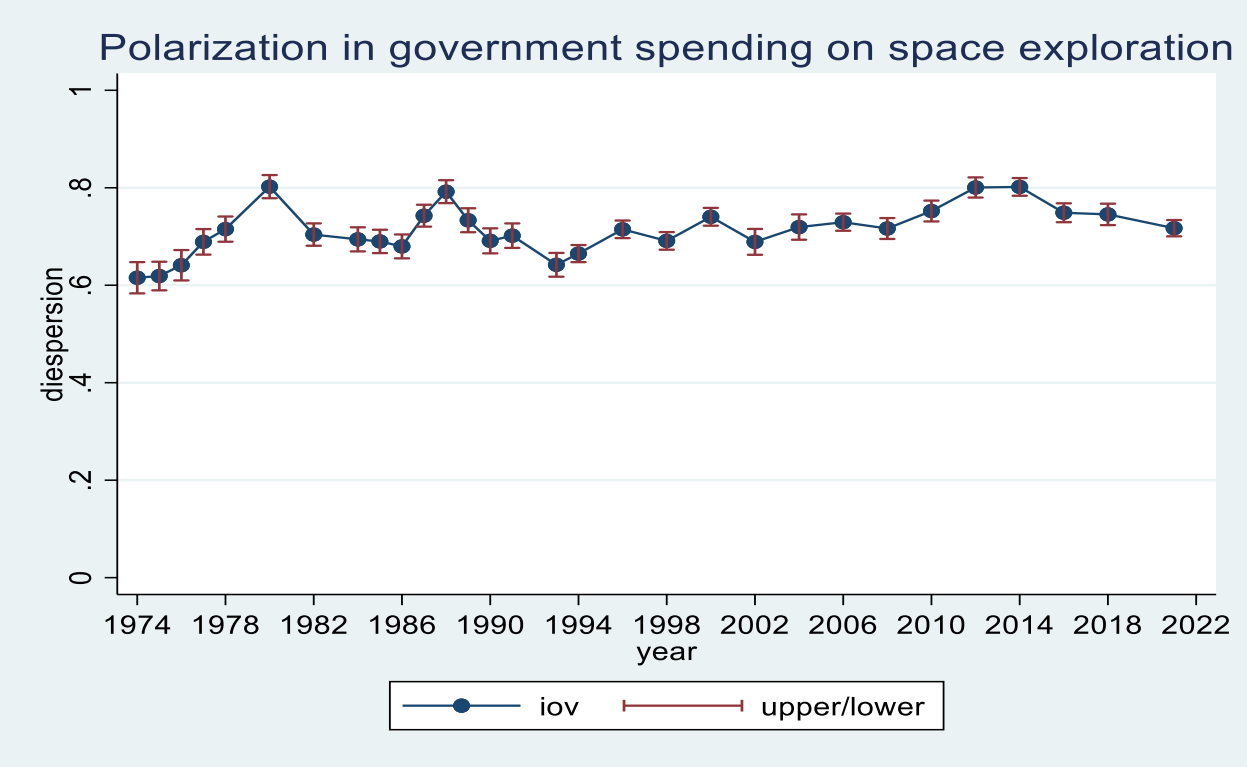

Figure A5

Table A1: Further tests replicating the McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap (2014) study with methodological adjustments listed. Results showcase the robustness of McCright, Xiao, & Dunlap's (2014) findings

Model 3: Replication with 7-point scale	Party Polarization 1974-1991	Ideological Polarization 1974-1991	Party Polarization 1993-2012	Ideological Polarization 1993-2012	Party Polarization 2014-2018	Ideological Polarization 2014-2018	Party Polarization 1974-2018	Ideological Polarization 1974-2018
Party * Year	.97		1.11*		1.34**		1.40***	
Ideology * Year		.86**		1.12*		1.12		1.38***
N	22666	22666	24209	24209	7531	7531	54406	54406

Model 4: Listwise deletion, 3-point scale								
Party * Year	1		1.14*		1.33*		1.50***	
Ideology * Year		.82***		1.15*		1.22		1.37***
N	19012	19012	20003	20003	6453	6453	45468	45468

Table A2: Year-to-year Ordered Logistic Regressions using replication methods (sans "other party") of median imputation and a 3-point scale for Political Ideology and Party Affiliation

Models	Political Ideology	Party Affiliation	Age	Male	Non-white	Education	Income	Spending Index	N
1974	1.320**	1.129	0.980***	1.141	1.810*	1.074**	0.998	1.932**	1423
1975	1.389***	1.112	0.983***	0.684***	1.095	1.005	0.999	2.039***	1473
1976	1.221*	1.039	0.984***	0.882	1.352	1.015	1.010**	2.549***	1492
1977	1.420***	1.073	0.980***	0.959	1.234	1.014	0.996*	2.716***	1516
1978	1.277**	1.075	0.978***	0.580***	1.481*	1.005	0.994**	2.156***	1515
1980	1.496***	1.077	0.978***	0.755*	1.720*	0.995	0.992***	2.640***	1452
1982	1.479***	1.114	0.979***	0.82	1.590***	1.016	1.001	2.706***	1837
1984	1.163	1.349***	0.981***	0.792	0.859	1.040*	1	1.879**	1432
1985	1.188*	1.248***	0.984***	0.977	0.832	1.056*	0.998	3.036***	1505
1986	1.107	1.082	0.983***	1.121	1.421	1.064**	0.998	1.570*	1447
1987	1.117	1.276***	0.981***	0.875	1.279	1.101***	1	1.599**	1788
1988	1.335**	1.136	0.987***	0.87	0.863	1.089***	0.998	1.568*	1457
1989	1.064	1.246**	0.985***	0.775	0.696	1.086**	1.004	2.361***	1510
1990	1.248*	1.149	0.980***	0.878	0.546**	1.122***	0.997	2.661***	1339
1991	0.987	1.387***	0.975***	0.969	0.518***	1.060*	1.002	4.027***	1480
1993	1.427***	1.167*	0.973***	0.865	1.031	1.054*	0.998	2.153***	1568
1994	1.236***	1.450***	0.975***	0.95	0.986	0.996	0.997	2.920***	2907
1996	1.542***	1.378***	0.977***	0.938	0.907	0.995	0.999	2.332***	2802
1998	1.308***	1.417***	0.981***	0.871	0.965	1.008	0.999	4.231***	2757
2000	1.422***	1.356***	0.982***	0.877	0.812	1.013	0.998	3.048***	2759
2002	1.659***	1.305***	0.984***	1.042	1.1	1.018	1	3.763***	1351
2004	1.671***	1.543***	0.984***	0.944	0.86	1.071**	0.999	2.774***	1325
2006	1.532***	1.433***	0.990***	0.844	0.754*	1.057***	1.003	3.121***	2849
2008	1.616***	1.541***	0.991**	0.976	0.706*	1.061**	1.003	3.129***	1984
2010	1.370***	1.809***	0.986***	1.033	0.638**	1.061**	1.001	3.192***	1992
2012	1.432***	1.588***	0.989***	1.028	0.929	1.029	1.003	2.656***	1915
2014	1.603***	1.462***	0.980***	0.984	0.727**	1.052**	0.999	2.508***	2473
2016	1.522***	1.573***	0.982***	0.979	0.682***	1.064***	0.998	3.878***	2790
2018	1.742***	1.748***	0.986***	0.9	0.635***	1.078***	0.998	3.215***	2268

Table A3: Year-to-year Ordinary Least Squares Linear regressions using replication methods of median imputation and a 3-point scale for Political Ideology and Party Affiliation

Models	Political Ideology	Party Affiliation	Age	Male	Non-white	Education	Income	Spending Index	N
1974	1.071**	1.031	0.994***	1.017	1.136*	1.019**	1.000	1.223***	1423
1975	1.112***	1.034	0.994***	0.866***	1.006	1.000	1.000	1.260***	1473
1976	1.058*	1.019	0.995***	0.943	1.077	1.006	1.002**	1.326***	1492
1977	1.116***	1.027	0.993***	0.972	1.057	1.002	0.999*	1.382***	1516
1978	1.086***	1.028	0.993***	0.827***	1.129*	1.000	0.998**	1.287***	1515
1980	1.147***	1.030	0.992***	0.897**	1.163*	0.998	0.997***	1.403***	1452
1982	1.133***	1.043*	0.993***	0.924*	1.112**	1.004	1.000	1.391***	1837
1984	1.041	1.091***	0.995***	0.925*	0.965	1.013*	1.000	1.206**	1432
1985	1.045	1.066***	0.995***	0.977	0.954	1.016*	0.999	1.393***	1505
1986	1.026	1.022	0.995***	1.028	1.083	1.020**	0.999	1.153**	1447
1987	1.028	1.069***	0.995***	0.955	1.056	1.027***	1.000	1.164**	1788
1988	1.063**	1.028	0.996***	0.959	0.966	1.022***	1.000	1.129*	1457
1989	1.010	1.048**	0.997***	0.930*	0.926	1.020***	1.001	1.217***	1510
1990	1.040*	1.025	0.995***	0.974	0.887**	1.023***	1.000	1.236***	1339
1991	0.995	1.073***	0.994***	0.988	0.862**	1.014*	1.001	1.421***	1480
1993	1.117***	1.047*	0.992***	0.957	1.018	1.017**	0.999	1.287***	1568
1994	1.065***	1.115***	0.992***	0.974	1.008	0.998	0.999	1.349***	2907
1996	1.137***	1.105***	0.993***	0.973	0.966	0.999	1.000	1.299***	2802
1998	1.081***	1.107***	0.995***	0.957	0.996	1.002	1.000	1.472***	2757
2000	1.106***	1.092***	0.995***	0.958	0.958	1.004	0.999	1.383***	2759
2002	1.143***	1.088***	0.996***	0.990	1.044	1.004	1.000	1.465***	1351
2004	1.143***	1.121***	0.995***	0.986	0.957	1.017*	1.000	1.330***	1325
2006	1.104***	1.096***	0.997***	0.946*	0.925*	1.014**	1.001	1.342***	2849
2008	1.118***	1.135***	0.997**	0.986	0.921*	1.015**	1.001	1.354***	1984
2010	1.090***	1.211***	0.996***	1.009	0.877**	1.017**	1.000	1.452***	1992
2012	1.122***	1.164***	0.996***	1.002	0.992	1.009	1.001	1.357***	1915
2014	1.144***	1.125***	0.994***	0.994	0.924*	1.015**	1.000	1.334***	2473
2016	1.109***	1.141***	0.995***	0.984	0.916**	1.016***	0.999	1.479***	2790
2018	1.130***	1.150***	0.996***	0.971	0.909**	1.015**	1.000	1.361***	2268

Table A4: Year-to-year Ordered Logistic Regressions using listwise deletion and a 3-point scale for Political Ideology and Party Affiliation

Models	Political Ideology	Party Affiliation	Age	Male	Non-white	Education	Income	Spending Index	N
1974	1.329**	1.130	0.973***	1.286	2.309**	1.086**	1.000	2.038**	1167
1975	1.402***	1.134	0.980***	0.738*	0.896	1.007	0.999	2.416***	1247
1976	1.290**	1.079	0.981***	0.899	1.354	1.020	1.010**	2.682***	1255
1977	1.516***	1.105	0.977***	0.952	0.971	1.039	0.996	3.455***	1246
1978	1.267**	1.089	0.974***	0.606***	1.453	1.027	0.994**	2.253***	1278
1980	1.572***	1.085	0.976***	0.745*	1.959**	1.010	0.993**	2.503***	1241
1982	1.458***	1.074	0.971***	0.810	1.886***	1.015	1.003	3.057***	1493
1984	1.126	1.396***	0.980***	0.800	0.863	1.063**	0.999	2.172***	1218
1985	1.253**	1.244**	0.981***	1.024	0.974	1.058*	0.998	2.744***	1302
1986	1.159	1.131	0.979***	1.290	1.649*	1.072**	0.999	1.655*	1211
1987	1.211*	1.278***	0.979***	0.957	1.252	1.129***	0.999	1.820**	1477

1988	1.337**	1.169*	0.984***	0.918	0.771	1.117***	0.998	1.820**	1241
1989	1.077	1.286**	0.982***	0.855	0.573*	1.107***	1.003	2.447***	1250
1990	1.252*	1.196*	0.977***	0.903	0.541**	1.161***	0.996	2.492**	1128
1991	0.983	1.382***	0.971***	1.004	0.589**	1.069*	1.002	4.973***	1258
1993	1.520***	1.153*	0.972***	0.941	1.014	1.068**	0.997	1.964**	1347
1994	1.221**	1.508***	0.972***	0.982	1.009	1.009	0.997*	3.175***	2386
1996	1.534***	1.384***	0.975***	0.959	0.984	1.005	1.000	2.832***	2281
1998	1.333***	1.439***	0.978***	0.888	0.962	1.037*	0.999	4.297***	2243
2000	1.510***	1.354***	0.979***	0.926	0.851	1.010	0.999	2.969***	2203
2002	1.679***	1.280**	0.983***	1.111	1.149	1.020	1.000	3.861***	1150
2004	1.635***	1.620***	0.983***	1.085	0.927	1.084**	0.999	2.622***	1114
2006	1.565***	1.451***	0.990**	0.836	0.778	1.063***	1.003	3.822***	2399
2008	1.841***	1.464***	0.991*	0.947	0.815	1.065**	1.004*	3.035***	1638
2010	1.422***	1.771***	0.986***	0.963	0.617**	1.063**	1.001	3.140***	1667
2012	1.563***	1.520***	0.988**	1.130	0.978	1.042	1.003	2.470***	1575
2014	1.631***	1.494***	0.980***	0.971	0.651***	1.054**	0.999	2.432***	2126
2016	1.536***	1.642***	0.980***	0.970	0.678**	1.080***	0.998	4.413***	2380
2018	1.785***	1.861***	0.982***	0.825	0.597***	1.063*	0.999	3.683***	1947

Table A5: Year-to-year Ordinary Least Squares Linear Regression using listwise deletion and a 3-point scale for Political Ideology and Party Affiliation

Models	Political Ideology	Party Affiliation	Age	Male	Non-white	Education	Income	Spending Index	N
1974	1.075**	1.031	0.992***	1.051	1.196**	1.022**	1.000	1.230**	1167
1975	1.116***	1.041	0.994***	0.888**	0.942	1.000	1.000	1.323***	1247
1976	1.075**	1.029	0.994***	0.948	1.076	1.007	1.003*	1.335***	1255
1977	1.138***	1.035	0.992***	0.970	0.996	1.009	0.999	1.486***	1246
1978	1.083**	1.034	0.992***	0.839***	1.121*	1.007	0.998*	1.306***	1278
1980	1.163***	1.033	0.992***	0.892**	1.203*	1.002	0.997**	1.386***	1241
1982	1.126***	1.029	0.990***	0.919*	1.177***	1.003	1.001	1.428***	1493
1984	1.029	1.101***	0.994***	0.923*	0.966	1.018**	1.000	1.255***	1218
1985	1.060*	1.065**	0.994***	0.990	0.998	1.015*	0.999	1.360***	1302
1986	1.039	1.035	0.994***	1.070	1.130*	1.020**	1.000	1.172**	1211
1987	1.047*	1.069***	0.994***	0.972	1.053	1.032***	1.000	1.204***	1477
1988	1.063**	1.034	0.995***	0.976	0.940	1.028***	1.000	1.174**	1241
1989	1.013	1.054**	0.996***	0.954	0.887*	1.024***	1.001	1.203**	1250
1990	1.037	1.035*	0.995***	0.977	0.894*	1.029***	1.000	1.193**	1128
1991	0.991	1.073***	0.993***	1.000	0.894*	1.015*	1.001	1.478***	1258
1993	1.141***	1.041	0.991***	0.977	1.014	1.021**	0.999	1.247**	1347
1994	1.059**	1.127***	0.991***	0.982	1.014	1.002	0.999	1.378***	2386
1996	1.135***	1.109***	0.992***	0.978	0.990	1.002	1.000	1.392***	2281
1998	1.085***	1.112***	0.994***	0.959	0.993	1.009	1.000	1.490***	2243
2000	1.127***	1.090***	0.994***	0.972	0.968	1.003	1.000	1.376***	2203
2002	1.146***	1.081**	0.995***	1.015	1.053	1.006	1.000	1.495***	1150
2004	1.133***	1.132***	0.995***	1.023	0.975	1.020**	1.000	1.296***	1114
2006	1.102***	1.099***	0.997**	0.948	0.936	1.015**	1.001	1.397***	2399
2008	1.159***	1.118***	0.997**	0.981	0.960	1.014*	1.001*	1.343***	1638
2010	1.101***	1.206***	0.995***	0.985	0.864**	1.017*	1.000	1.457***	1667
2012	1.154***	1.145***	0.996**	1.035	1.015	1.012	1.001	1.335***	1575
2014	1.152***	1.132***	0.994***	0.993	0.896**	1.016**	1.000	1.332***	2126
2016	1.110***	1.151***	0.995***	0.979	0.916**	1.019***	0.999	1.533***	2380
2018	1.136***	1.160***	0.996***	0.953	0.907**	1.010	1.000	1.396***	1947

Table A6: Year-to-year Ordered Logistic Regressions using replication methods of median imputation and a 7-point scale for Political Ideology and Party Affiliation

Model	Political Ideology	Party Affiliation	Age	Male	Non-white	Education	Income	Spending Index	N
1974	1.182**	1.044	0.979***	1.09	2.114**	1.083***	0.998	2.054**	1343
1975	1.171**	1.076*	0.982***	0.684**	1.065	1	0.998	1.969***	1381
1976	1.126*	1.017	0.984***	0.91	1.376	1.019	1.009**	2.517***	1392
1977	1.223***	1.034	0.980***	0.932	1.257	1.019	0.996*	2.786***	1436
1978	1.172***	1.034	0.978***	0.567***	1.428	1.012	0.994**	2.029***	1419
1980	1.327***	1.02	0.977***	0.742**	1.719*	0.988	0.992***	2.694***	1413
1982	1.214***	1.022	0.977***	0.787*	1.823***	1.009	1.001	2.863***	1719
1984	1.081	1.163***	0.982***	0.789	0.843	1.049*	1	2.017***	1370
1985	1.134*	1.119***	0.983***	0.966	0.861	1.051*	0.998	2.914***	1437
1986	1.120*	1.033	0.982***	1.167	1.438	1.053*	0.999	1.488*	1381
1987	1.079	1.121***	0.981***	0.954	1.234	1.115***	1	1.600*	1655
1988	1.180**	1.081*	0.986***	0.857	0.777	1.098***	0.998	1.614*	1396
1989	1.056	1.131***	0.984***	0.799	0.617*	1.095***	1.004	2.279***	1420
1990	1.171**	1.086*	0.979***	0.872	0.546**	1.150***	0.997	2.663***	1283
1991	1.044	1.139***	0.975***	0.962	0.545**	1.066*	1.003	4.035***	1423
1993	1.219***	1.100**	0.974***	0.895	1.017	1.054*	0.998	2.148***	1515
1994	1.153***	1.179***	0.974***	0.958	0.946	1.008	0.997*	2.834***	2770
1996	1.312***	1.161***	0.976***	0.945	0.943	0.998	0.999	2.330***	2648
1998	1.221***	1.165***	0.981***	0.868	0.988	1.014	0.999	4.582***	2617
2000	1.233***	1.142***	0.982***	0.891	0.827	1.01	0.998	2.847***	2589
2002	1.355***	1.145***	0.983***	1.07	1.123	1.016	1	4.121***	1298
2004	1.396***	1.212***	0.984***	1.007	0.855	1.070**	0.999	2.696***	1289
2006	1.328***	1.159***	0.990**	0.834	0.742*	1.051**	1.003	3.088***	2760
2008	1.343***	1.213***	0.991**	1.001	0.710*	1.058**	1.003	2.907***	1890
2010	1.224***	1.309***	0.987***	1.048	0.622**	1.058**	1.001	3.290***	1912
2012	1.258***	1.199***	0.990**	1.006	0.967	1.029	1.003	2.579***	1812
2014	1.353***	1.165***	0.980***	0.957	0.709**	1.046**	0.999	2.415***	2365
2016	1.305***	1.220***	0.982***	0.961	0.675**	1.057**	0.998	3.961***	2664
2018	1.339***	1.337***	0.985***	0.919	0.604***	1.060**	0.999	3.059***	2146

Table A7: Year-to-year Ordinary Least Squares Linear Regressions using replication methods of median imputation and a 7-point scale for Political Ideology and Party Affiliation

Model	Political Orientation	Party Affiliation	Age	Male	Non-white	Education	Income	Spending Index	n
1974	1.041**	1.011	0.994***	1.004	1.172**	1.021**	1	1.243***	1343
1975	1.052***	1.025*	0.994***	0.865***	0.988	0.998	1	1.248***	1381
1976	1.038**	1.007	0.995***	0.949	1.083	1.007	1.002*	1.312***	1392
1977	1.065***	1.011	0.993***	0.963	1.062	1.003	0.999*	1.396***	1436
1978	1.054***	1.013	0.993***	0.820***	1.117*	1.003	0.998*	1.262***	1419
1980	1.099***	1.009	0.992***	0.892**	1.154*	0.996	0.997***	1.405***	1413
1982	1.065***	1.01	0.992***	0.911**	1.154***	1.002	1	1.409***	1719
1984	1.021	1.045***	0.995***	0.925*	0.961	1.015*	1	1.228***	1370
1985	1.032*	1.034***	0.995***	0.972	0.957	1.014	0.999	1.371***	1437
1986	1.031*	1.009	0.995***	1.039	1.087	1.016*	1	1.132*	1381
1987	1.018	1.030***	0.995***	0.976	1.046	1.029***	1	1.159**	1655
1988	1.032*	1.017*	0.996***	0.958	0.94	1.023***	1	1.138*	1396
1989	1.01	1.026**	0.996***	0.936*	0.903*	1.021***	1.001	1.196***	1420

1990	1.028*	1.015	0.995***	0.972	0.896*	1.027***	1	1.222***	1283
1991	1.009	1.029***	0.994***	0.988	0.877**	1.015*	1.001	1.414***	1423
1993	1.062***	1.029**	0.992***	0.966	1.014	1.017**	0.999	1.280***	1515
1994	1.042***	1.051***	0.992***	0.975	0.993	1.002	0.999	1.338***	2770
1996	1.080***	1.050***	0.992***	0.974	0.975	1	1	1.307***	2648
1998	1.058***	1.045***	0.995***	0.957	1	1.003	1	1.496***	2617
2000	1.060***	1.041***	0.995***	0.964	0.957	1.004	0.999	1.356***	2589
2002	1.082***	1.045***	0.995***	1.002	1.037	1.004	1	1.496***	1298
2004	1.089***	1.053***	0.996***	1.005	0.961	1.017*	1	1.316***	1289
2006	1.072***	1.038***	0.997***	0.947*	0.922*	1.012**	1.001*	1.331***	2760
2008	1.074***	1.056***	0.997**	0.993	0.924	1.013*	1.001	1.310***	1890
2010	1.058***	1.090***	0.995***	1.013	0.869**	1.016**	1	1.461***	1912
2012	1.077***	1.062***	0.996**	0.998	1.001	1.009	1.001	1.344***	1812
2014	1.089***	1.050***	0.994***	0.988	0.917*	1.014*	0.999	1.323***	2365
2016	1.067***	1.061***	0.995***	0.98	0.910**	1.014**	0.999	1.482***	2664
2018	1.067***	1.073***	0.996***	0.976	0.905**	1.01	1	1.332***	2146

Table A8: Year-to-year Ordered Logistic Regressions using listwise deletion and a 7-point scale for Political Ideology and Party Affiliation

Model	Political Ideology	Party Affiliation	Age	Male	Non-white	Education	Income	Spending Index	n
1974	1.172**	1.053	0.973***	1.282	2.328**	1.086**	1.000	2.017**	1167
1975	1.177**	1.075*	0.979***	0.740*	0.883	1.007	0.999	2.374***	1247
1976	1.168**	1.024	0.981***	0.904	1.373	1.019	1.010**	2.683***	1255
1977	1.283***	1.054	0.977***	0.942	0.952	1.037	0.996	3.461***	1246
1978	1.175**	1.040	0.974***	0.606***	1.459	1.026	0.994**	2.281***	1278
1980	1.391***	1.033	0.976***	0.740*	1.929*	1.010	0.993**	2.464***	1241
1982	1.205***	1.027	0.971***	0.814	1.904***	1.013	1.002	3.093***	1493
1984	1.072	1.170***	0.980***	0.782	0.838	1.065**	0.999	2.174***	1218
1985	1.189***	1.109**	0.981***	1.025	0.962	1.059*	0.998	2.790***	1302
1986	1.174**	1.051	0.980***	1.309*	1.611*	1.073**	0.999	1.668*	1211
1987	1.120*	1.136***	0.979***	0.954	1.201	1.132***	0.999	1.825**	1477
1988	1.169**	1.092*	0.984***	0.932	0.747	1.116***	0.998	1.817**	1241
1989	1.056	1.141***	0.982***	0.859	0.540**	1.108***	1.004	2.443***	1250
1990	1.184**	1.099*	0.977***	0.894	0.524**	1.161***	0.996	2.519**	1128
1991	1.046	1.139***	0.972***	1.003	0.583**	1.071*	1.002	4.965***	1258
1993	1.258***	1.104**	0.972***	0.949	0.945	1.072**	0.997	1.955**	1347
1994	1.163***	1.202***	0.971***	0.978	0.975	1.010	0.997	3.147***	2386
1996	1.298***	1.174***	0.975***	0.959	0.941	1.007	1.000	2.833***	2281
1998	1.248***	1.173***	0.979***	0.897	0.953	1.037	0.999	4.177***	2243
2000	1.290***	1.147***	0.979***	0.927	0.837	1.007	0.999	2.864***	2203
2002	1.358***	1.149***	0.983***	1.098	1.110	1.022	1.000	3.815***	1150
2004	1.365***	1.215***	0.984***	1.102	0.925	1.082**	0.999	2.586***	1114
2006	1.339***	1.182***	0.991**	0.836	0.731*	1.060**	1.003	3.705***	2399
2008	1.426***	1.177***	0.990**	0.939	0.832	1.061**	1.005*	3.012***	1638
2010	1.257***	1.285***	0.985***	0.986	0.606**	1.060**	1.001	3.060***	1667
2012	1.316***	1.192***	0.988**	1.114	0.970	1.039	1.003	2.419***	1575
2014	1.380***	1.175***	0.980***	0.964	0.648***	1.051**	0.999	2.351***	2126
2016	1.323***	1.240***	0.980***	0.966	0.674**	1.075***	0.997	4.282***	2380
2018	1.326***	1.382***	0.983***	0.835	0.572***	1.056*	0.999	3.670***	1947

Table A9: Year-to-year Ordinary Least Squares Linear Regressions using listwise deletion and a 7-point scale for Political Ideology and Party Affiliation

Models	Political Ideology	Party Affliliation	Age	Male	Non-white	Education	Income	Spending Index	n
1974	1.039*	1.014	0.992***	1.051	1.195**	1.022**	1.000	1.229**	1167
1975	1.053***	1.025*	0.993***	0.889**	0.935	1.000	1.000	1.317***	1247
1976	1.049**	1.009	0.994***	0.949	1.079	1.007	1.003*	1.334***	1255
1977	1.081***	1.017	0.992***	0.967	0.989	1.008	0.999	1.484***	1246
1978	1.054***	1.016	0.992***	0.839***	1.122*	1.007	0.998**	1.308***	1278
1980	1.113***	1.014	0.992***	0.891**	1.190*	1.002	0.997**	1.373***	1241
1982	1.062***	1.012	0.990***	0.920*	1.179***	1.003	1.001	1.435***	1493
1984	1.018	1.046***	0.994***	0.918*	0.958	1.019**	1.000	1.254***	1218
1985	1.045**	1.031**	0.994***	0.990	0.992	1.015*	0.999	1.363***	1302
1986	1.044**	1.014	0.994***	1.074*	1.123*	1.020**	1.000	1.173**	1211
1987	1.028*	1.034***	0.994***	0.970	1.042	1.033***	1.000	1.204***	1477
1988	1.030*	1.020*	0.995***	0.979	0.933	1.028***	1.000	1.174**	1241
1989	1.011	1.028***	0.996***	0.955	0.877**	1.024***	1.001	1.204**	1250
1990	1.028*	1.018*	0.995***	0.976	0.889*	1.029***	1.000	1.193**	1128
1991	1.007	1.030***	0.993***	0.999	0.891*	1.016*	1.001	1.475***	1258
1993	1.072***	1.029**	0.992***	0.979	0.994	1.021**	0.999	1.243**	1347
1994	1.043***	1.057***	0.991***	0.982	1.001	1.002	0.999	1.376***	2386
1996	1.077***	1.054***	0.992***	0.979	0.973	1.003	1.000	1.386***	2281
1998	1.064***	1.048***	0.994***	0.963	0.992	1.009	1.000	1.476***	2243
2000	1.074***	1.042***	0.994***	0.974	0.961	1.003	1.000	1.360***	2203
2002	1.083***	1.045***	0.995***	1.012	1.042	1.006	1.000	1.483***	1150
2004	1.082***	1.052***	0.995***	1.029	0.974	1.020**	1.000	1.294***	1114
2006	1.068***	1.043***	0.997**	0.951	0.922*	1.014**	1.001	1.383***	2399
2008	1.092***	1.048***	0.997**	0.980	0.963	1.013*	1.001*	1.338***	1638
2010	1.066***	1.085***	0.995***	0.992	0.860**	1.016*	1.000	1.439***	1667
2012	1.092***	1.058***	0.996***	1.030	1.009	1.010	1.001	1.329***	1575
2014	1.096***	1.053***	0.994***	0.992	0.893**	1.015**	1.000	1.320***	2126
2016	1.070***	1.064***	0.995***	0.980	0.913**	1.018***	0.999	1.514***	2380
2018	1.064***	1.079***	0.996***	0.955	0.900**	1.009	1.000	1.380***	1947

Appendix Item 1: Interview guide

Tab indicates (potential) follow up question

Opening Script: Hello, I am Elijah Thunell, a master's student at Colorado State University studying environmental sociology, specifically politically conservative environmentalism with the hope of finding bipartisan solutions in the future. I am asking you to take part in a research study. The purpose of this conversation is to help you decide to be in the study or not. Feel free to ask questions of me at any time. When I have answered all your questions, you can then decide if you want to be interviewed or not.

The purpose of this study is to investigate politically conservative environmentalists through interviews. I have a set of interviews questions and will probably think of more as we continue in conversation. After the questions there is a brief 15 item survey asking about your environmental beliefs which I will ask you whether you agree or disagree with the statement and why. I do not foresee any personal risks or benefits coming out of this interview.

I have designed a way to protect the information you share with me, ensuring anonymity. I will be giving your answers a pseudonym after the interview, with a separate sheet connecting your name to the pseudonym. Thus, after the interview your answers will be referred to as Mary or Michael and not as your real name, and no one will be able to guess who you really are. After a set amount of time I will destroy this interview and the paper connecting your name to your pseudonym. Signed consent forms will be kept separate from interviews.

I will be asking few personally revealing questions, but if you ever don't feel like answering a question, just say so, or "next question" and we will move on.

With your permission I would like to record this interview, so I can accurately make a transcription of what you said.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You may choose only to answer certain questions and may end the interview at any time. Do you have any questions about me, my research, or our interview before we begin?

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed, we will now begin the interview.

Comfortable questions

What drew you to CEO/PEO?

How does this organization differ from others?

How would you describe your environmental concerns?

What are your thoughts about global warming?

Do you believe humans are causing global warming?

What are the drivers of global warming?

What is your solution to global warming?

Neoliberal nature

Do you consider yourself to be part of the environmental movement?

How would you define environmentalism?

Do you think the current environmental movement challenges the American economy? Why or why not?

How does the environmental movement interact with the current American system?

In what ways are conservative and liberal environmentalism alike? In what ways are they different?

Would you consider CEO/PEO more conservative or bipartisan?

What would be needed for you to support a Democrat?

Does public or private ownership better preserve natural areas?

Is private enterprise the best way to solve the United States economic problems?

Is private enterprise the best way to solve the United States environmental problems?

There are debates about who should set environmental governance globally, global institutions such as the UN or nation-states like the USA, what is your opinion?

Energy/Environmental justice-ish: I'm not going to transition away from the more philosophical questions and into questions about energy and a bit of environmental justice. The first question is

What is your opinion on alternative/renewable energies?

Can renewable energies support the energy needs of the US by themselves?

What is your opinion on nuclear energy?

What would it take to get to the point where renewable energies are a useful source of energy for all Americans?

What is the role of technological advances? Does it replace the need to make social change?

What are the major issues in implementing renewable energies?

Is the environment a single issue or connected to other social issues?

Framing/elite cues/policies: Thank you for that, I'm going to transition now into a broader discussion of framing and policy, the first question is…

What do you think the media gets wrong when reporting on the environment?

What would you like to see more coverage of?

What sources do you rely on to learn about environmental issues?

Are there specific politicians that influence your environmental views?

Are there non-politicians that influence your environmental views?

Since joining CEO/PEO what has changed about your environmental views?

What do you think of the Green New Deal/ Carbon tax/market?

What environmental legislation would you like to see in the future?

Why do you think conservatives were slower to accept the scientific consensus on climate change?

Are conservatives needed to pass environmental legislation?

What needs to change to get more conservatives involved in the climate debate?

Ambivalence:

How does being a conservative shape your environmental views?

How does being an environmentalist shape your conservative views?

If they didn't consider themselves an environmentalist earlier: You seem to espouse strong environmentalist values, what makes you hesitant to refer to yourself as an environmentalist?

NEP

I'm going to transition a bit away from open ended questions to get your views on a survey commonly used to measure environmental beliefs. There are 15 statements in this survey. I'd like to know if you agree or disagree with the following statements but more importantly why you agree or disagree. The first statement is...

1.) We are approaching the limit of the number of people the earth can support. (Limits)

2.) Humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs. (Anti-Anthro)

3.) When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences. (Balance)

4.) Human ingenuity will insure that we do NOT make the earth unlivable. (Anti-Exempt)

5.) Humans are severely abusing the environment. (Eco-Crisis)

6.) The earth has plenty of natural resources if we just learn how to develop them. (Limits)

7.) Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist. (Anti-Anthro)

8.) The balance of nature is strong enough to cope with the impacts of modern industrial nations. (Balance)

9.) Despite our special abilities humans are still subject to the laws of nature. (Anti-Exempt)

10.) The so-called "ecological crisis" facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated. (Eco-Crisis)

11.) The earth is like a spaceship with very limited room and resources. (Limits)

12.) Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature. (Anti-Anthro)

13.) The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset. (Balance)

14.) Humans will eventually learn enough about how nature works to be able to control it. (Anti-Exempt)

15.) If things continue on their present course we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe. (Eco-Crisis)

Demographics

Tell me about yourself, where are you from? Where did you grow up?

What is your age?

Are you religious?

Which religion?

On a scale of moderate, lean conservative, moderately conservative, or very conservative, how would you define yourself politically?

What's the highest level of education you have?

Ending script: This concludes our interview. I want to thank you for taking time out of your day to answer these questions. Your answers will be invaluable. Do you have any questions or concerns at this point? If you think of any questions or concerns my email is thunell@colostate.edu, I will put this in the chat or if you wish to contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Lynn Hempel, her email is lynn.hempel@colostate.edu. All research with human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact the committee, anonymously if you wish at (970) 491-1553

I want to thank you again for taking time out of your busy day to do this interview. Your answers are invaluable. Thank you for participating and have a great day.

I'm using a snowball method of recruiting which is where I try to get recommendations from the one interviewee about others that they think would be ideal candidates to chat with. So, I always ask if you know of anyone who would be interested?