

The Politics of Protection and Promotion:
the Case of the Coal Industry in Environmental Politics

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Abstract

Business actors have historically been an important point of discussion for environmental sociologists. However, theoretical assumptions of business as an environmental actor provide divergent understandings of business's role in environmental problems, politics, and improvements. Also, empirical studies of business actors primarily examine how individual firms or industry-funded organizations participate in specific environmental controversies or in the attempted implementation of specific environmental policies. Although these approaches have been instrumental in understanding the roles power, privilege, and resources play in environmental politics, they present an understanding of business engagement in environmental issues as reactionary rather than sustained. Such a characterization neglects the long-term political strategies of business entities in environmental politics. A more comprehensive understanding of business political engagement, particularly of the organizations, claims, and tactics these actors use in environmental politics and how these change or remain the same over time, is needed to help clarify and evolve theoretical assumptions and empirical examinations of business actors.

Taking the case of a coal industry-funded organization, currently known as the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, this study documents how a group of business actors in the coal industry organized and engaged in environmental politics over a 15-year period. Findings suggest these business actors collectively organized and pursued a political strategy of protection of their interests and positive promotion of their products and processes.

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Abbreviations

ABEC	Americans for Balanced Energy Choices
ACCCE	American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity
CEED	Center for Energy and Economic Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

Although many solutions to environmental problems have been focused on individual actions, a greater understanding of the need for systemic changes has begun to emerge. Global environmental problems, such as climate change, present some of the greatest challenges to humankind and will require international policies and a myriad of changes from personal to structural levels to actualize a sustainable global community. Some of the most pressing structural changes are directly related to the use of natural resources, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, which supports the current social system. This use, however, is rooted in a worldview that neglects to incorporate ecological principles and limits. Indeed, what is required is a complete paradigm shift that is rooted in ecological consciousness and actions that move away from unsustainable practices.

Such a shift, however, also represents the potential loss of power for groups that currently benefit from the present unsustainable system. In examining actors participating in environmental politics, businesses, particularly those with direct links to environmentally harmful practices, have historically resisted the establishment of long-term environmental policy and critique of their practices (Kraft and Kamieniecki 2007). Several case studies have documented the claims, tactics, and partnerships used by business entities to influence environmental political contests (Useem and Zald 1982; McCright and Dunlap 2000; 2003; Beder 2003, 2006a, 2006b; 2010; Bonds 2010; Cripps 2011). However, these studies rarely document the long-term political engagement by these actors since they focus on how business operates in regard to specific

environmental issues. This case study provides a different view of business as a political actor within environmental politics by discussing the political intentions and strategies of a business actor over time. Taking the case of coal industry-funded organizations, the Center for Energy and Economic Development, the Americans for Balanced Energy Choices, and the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, this study examines how business actors engage in environmental politics over time.

This thesis contains six chapters following this introduction. Chapter II provides a brief overview of the social sources of environmental problems. These include *cultural* and *institutional* sources of environmental problems. It explains why environmental problems are ultimately social problems that require collective action to change.

Chapter III discusses the environmental policy-making process and identifies the various stakeholders that are involved in environmental politics. Scholars have primarily focused upon five actors: 1) the environmental movement; 2) the scientific community; 3) the mass media; 4) the state, and 5) business. In this chapter, I focus on why these actors are involved in environmental politics and what they potentially gain or lose by participating in these contests.

Chapter IV focuses exclusively on the theoretical assumptions of business as an environmental actor provided by two dominant theories within environmental sociology: 1) productivist theories and 2) ecological modernization theory. I give an overview of both of these perspectives and then lay out the assumptions that each of these provides for understanding business as an environmental actor. This serves to situate the case study as an opportunity to challenge, reaffirm, or expand these assumptions.

Chapter V details the methods used in this study. I discuss data collection, data cleaning, data coding, and analytic strategies I used to construct the case study.

Chapter VI contains the results of the case study, which are divided into three sections. The first section details the inception of the first organization, CEED, in order to provide an understanding of the political intentions of the coal industry within environmental politics. Based on in-depth analysis of the publicly available written material from these organizations, this thesis argues that the political intentions of these business organizations are to *protect* and *promote* coal as a product, processes, and industry. The next two sections detail how CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE attempt to accomplish these political intentions through specific political actions and re-framing strategies.

Chapter VII provides a detailed discussion of the results of the case study and how the results challenge, reaffirm, and expand theoretical assumptions of business as an environmental actor. I conclude the thesis by discussing caveats, further research, and final conclusions on business as a political actor within environmental politics.

Chapter 2: Social Sources of Environmental Problems

Human life is dependent upon and embedded within the natural environment. Dunlap and Marshall (2006) suggest that humans use the environment in three interconnected ways: for sustenance and resources, as a waste repository, and as a living space (330-331). Humans can, however, use the environment in an unsustainable manner, which leads to environmental degradation and disrupts natural functions. Indeed, some of the most pressing global problems of the 21st Century are connected to environmental abuse. Environmental sociology has historically had an interest in exposing the social sources of environmental degradation, the collective process that constructs environmental problems, and the complex political contests that emerge surrounding attempts to change human-environment relations. The following section provides a brief overview of sociological understanding of the social sources of environmental degradation, which provides context for thinking about why certain actors are involved in the shaping and outcomes of environmental politics.

Cultural and Institutional Sources of Environmental Problems

Some of the earliest theories of environmental sociology focus on how social arrangements and beliefs contribute to environmental degradation. These perspectives have been instrumental in explaining how environmental problems are created and perpetuated by social systems. Scholars have primarily highlighted two social sources of environmental degradation: 1) *cultural sources* and 2) *institutional sources* (Cable and Cable 1995).

Scholars interested in cultural sources of environmental degradation discuss how beliefs and ideologies, particularly in Western cultural traditions work to support and

legitimize current social relationships to the environment. Catton and Dunlap (1978, 1980) find that cultural sources of environmental problems manifest as anthropocentric worldviews. They suggest that people operate from a “Human Exceptionalism Paradigm,” or “HEP” which is perpetuated in society at large and particularly visible within the academy. Catton and Dunlap (1978, 1980) suggest that the HEP privileges a separation of social and ecological systems. This serves to promote the idea that humans are somehow exempt from ecological principles, which, in turn, encourages practices and policies that assume there are no ecological limits for human systems. Cable and Cable (1995) also identify a number of beliefs that create and perpetuate environmental problems. These beliefs are connected to assumptions that natural resources are inexhaustible and that environmental issues can be fixed through simple technological or market-based solutions.

In addition to cultural sources, scholars have also discussed institutional sources that encourage overuse of the environment. For these scholars, institutional sources refer to the “structural arrangements in society that buttress the belief system and reinforce the abuse of the environment” (Cable and Cable 1995:12). For sociologists, the two most prominent institutions that contribute to environmental degradation are economic and political systems (Cable and Cable 1995). Economic systems and processes have historically been an important focus for environmental sociologists. Since the economy is the institution that is meant to distribute material goods and services in a society, it is directly related to many uses of the environment. Although there are several examples of societies that have economic systems that encourage a cooperative relationship with the environment, contemporary Western economic systems are marked with a history of

negative environmental impacts. Indeed, many environmental sociologists highlight how the economy encourages environmental degradation through production and consumption and unsustainable economic principles (Schnaiberg 1980; Cable and Cable 1995; Foster 2002; 2005; Foster, Clark and York 2009; Rudel, Roberts, and Carmin 2011).

The state also serves as an institutional source of environmental degradation. As the social institution that holds the ability to create and utilize collective power, state support of processes that encourage environmental degradation come in various forms. Within the state, decision-making bodies may forego environmental protection in order to accommodate other social concerns or pressures from powerful actors. For example, within environmental controversies, scholars have found that decision-making bodies will often privilege economic considerations over environmental ones, particularly in times of economic crisis (Schnaiberg 1980; Cable and Cable 1995; Lafferty and Meadowcraft 1996; Beder 2006b; 2010; Kraft and Kamienecki 2007).

Although useful to examine these institutions in isolation, environmental sociologists often explain how economic and political systems are intertwined and have historically encouraged abuse of the environment through their collective forces (Marger 1987). For example, certain political economy of the environment perspectives argue that economic and political institutions have similar goals, particularly within capitalist or market-based societies, which privilege economic concerns over environmental ones (Schnaiberg 1980; Cable and Cable 1995; Foster 2005; Foster, Clark, and York 2009; Rudel, Roberts, and Carmin 2011). Some of these goals include protection of private property, economic prosperity, unlimited growth, and globalization of markets. These

goals are further reinforced by the above cultural beliefs and serve to strengthen and justify institutional practices (Cable and Cable 1995).

When looking at both cultural and institutional sources of environmental degradation, it may be difficult to see how these strong forces could be changed or even resisted, particularly in a market-based social system such as the United States. However, with rise of the modern U.S. environmental movement in the 1960s, these social sources of environmental degradation began to be challenged on a systematic level through political channels. The next chapter provides a background on the birth of the environmental movement, which gave rise to contemporary environmental politics in the United States. I then focus on the diverse actors that participate in this space, centering on their motivations for involvement and types of actions they participate in as political actors.

Chapter 3: Contemporary Environmental Political Actors

Although conservationist and preservationist groups of the early 20th century are considered some of the earliest environmentalists, the modern U.S. environmental movement, which emerged in the 1960s, differs from these early groups because of their focus on the *harms* that result from environmental degradation (Dunlap and Mertig 1992; Cable and Cable 1995). This focus subsequently led modern environmental groups to pursue political avenues to address the sources of environmental degradation and advocate for the creation of strong laws and regulations. By the 1970s, a series of federal environmental regulations as well as the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency in the 1970s provided evidence that environmental issues had become an important political focus at least within the US.

The passage of these regulations, however, also marked the beginning of new political terrain. Environmental problems present a variety of challenges for decision-making bodies based on their unique nature and how they are conceptualized and viewed. Lafferty and Meadowcroft (1996:4-7) identify four characteristics of environmental problems that pose challenges for governments on local, national, and global levels. These characteristics include: 1) the knowledge deficit of the social, physical, and biological sources of environmental problems and the complexity and uncertainty of the science behind assessments of these sources; 2) time-scale effects related to the unfolding of environmental problems; 3) complex geographic patterns of impact and causation of environmental problems; and 4) the redistribution of loss and gain from environmental policy decisions.

The first three characteristics often require that policy-makers rethink how legislation is structured in order to address environmental issues, particularly related to jurisdiction of environmental problems. However, the last characteristic provides insight into the political space that is created in attempts to address environmental problems. If environmental issues are addressed through political sanctions, this often results in changes to material conditions for some actors within society. Lafferty and Meadowcroft (1996) explain:

While the idea that a cleaner environment will benefit everyone – that green policies are good for both rich and poor, industrialists and consumers – is attractive, in reality environmental problems touch different groups in different ways. Any policy that is designed to deal with an environmental problem will have costs: costs that must be borne by someone. Much of what we have come to call ‘environmental politics’ is simply the politics of redistributing such costs and gains. (5)

Such a characterization provides an understanding that environmental politics are also adversarial politics.

Like most political issues, this suggests that environmental politics will attract a variety of actors that try to address environmental harms, particularly if the passage of environmental legislation could potentially positively or negatively affect them. In addition to the environmental movement and environmental movement organizations, scholars have identified a number of other key stakeholders and actors in environmental politics: 1) the scientific community (McCright and Dunlap 2000, 2003; Newell 2000; Miller 2002); 2) the mass media (Ungar 1992; Brossard, Shannahan, and McComas 2004; Nisbet and Myers 2007); 3) the state (Buttel 2000; Mol and Spaargaren 2002; Goldman and Schurman 2001; Austin 2002; Fisher and Freudenburg 2004); and 4) business (Zald

1979; Useem and Zald 1982; Mol 1995; Levy and Egan 1998, 2003; Beder 2010; Bonds 2010; York and Clark 2010).

Literature on environmental politics has provided many different characteristics of these stakeholders as political actors. Although it may be tempting to characterize specific actors as inherently “good” or “bad” within environmental debates, scholars have found that such a simplistic characterization is problematic. When examining environmental politics, the reasons why these diverse actors participate in these spaces, align themselves with other actors, and shape political contests reveal a much more complex story. The following sections provide brief backgrounds on each of these actors and situates how they have historically worked within U.S. environmental politics.

The Environmental Movement

Of all the actors within environmental politics, the environmental movement has received the most scholarly attention (Gottlieb 1993; Dunlap and Mertig 1994; Newell 2000). Indeed, the field of environmental sociology attributes many of its own roots to the rise of this movement and the attention this movement brought to environmental problems (Dunlap and Marshall 2006). Although the radical strands of the conservation and preservationist movements engaged in political struggles at times, the modern environmental movement focused on environmental degradation and harms and possible solutions to environmental problems. Early concessions, particularly the strong federal environmental regulations passed in the 1970s as well as the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency, showed that the environmental movement and environmental consciousness had staying power. Environmental movement groups are vital parts of the policy process as they are often involved in not only the construction of

environmental problems, but also assure that they enter the political arena. Indeed, environmental groups often view policy and litigation as some of the most important outcomes of their work (Cable and Cable 1995).

Although the environmental movement is often cast in a positive light within environmental politics, the internal divisions of the movement suggest differing degrees of radicalism and different reference points of what constitutes environmentalism and the roots of environmental problems (Gottlieb 1993). These reference points also shape how different environmental groups participate in environmental politics. Garner (2011) suggests the terms *radical* and *reformist environmentalism* as useful for encompassing two dominant camps of environmental groups. If groups identify with radical environmentalism, they are critical of the existing power structure and are less likely to trust actors that benefit from that power structure. Radical environmental movement organizations are much less likely to compromise on issues by working with business or the state in attempts to address environmental issues. Greenpeace, Earth First!, the Clam Shell Alliance, and many localized environmental justice organizations are often cited as basing their political actions and purposes off of radical environmental values (Gottlieb 1993; Garner 2011).

Reformist groups, however, are less skeptical of the current social structure and are willing to attempt to address environmental issues through existing political channels and economic processes. These groups see technological solutions vital components of achieving environmental improvements and, at times, are willing to work with and advocate for certain business sectors (i.e. renewable energy). The Natural Resources

Defense Council, Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, and many other groups have been known to advocate for reform environmentalism (Gottlieb 1993; Garner 2011).

Whether reform or radical oriented, environmental movement organizations both participate in public outreach efforts to promote their claims and views related to environmental issues. The tactics and strategies that the environmental movement uses to promote their causes mirror those of many other social movements (Dunlap and Mertig 1992). Lobbying, participation in public hearings, community outreach efforts, flyer distributions, direct action events, and media engagement are all important parts of environmental groups' political strategies (Cox 2006).

The claims-making process of environmental issues that accompanies this outreach, however, is different from other social problems. Although groups participating in the construction of social problems often provide research and sometimes elicit the support of experts, successful construction of all environmental problems requires an empirical basis for claims, which is provided by empirically based scientific research (Hannigan 1995). This requirement makes the scientific community another important actor within environmental politics.

The Scientific Community

Although scientists may not always be willing participants in environmental politics, the many connections that environmentally related claims-making has to science makes scientists important environmental actors. Scientists themselves are often considered objective observers detached from political bias within political contests, which makes the public and policy-makers trust their insights above other actors that may be perceived as operating from a political agenda (Shackley and Wynne 1996; Miller

2002). This assures the scientific community a place within the environmental political process. The legitimacy of environmental problems is often predicated on empirical evidence provided by scientific research (Hannigan 1995; Krogman 1996). Policy-makers rely upon science and scientific testimony to make decisions about environmental problems. Liberatore (1994) explains that “scientific findings and uncertainties are used as arguments for deciding between different courses of action” to address environmental problems (190).

If scientists are too vocal in their assessments of environmental problems, particularly if they deviate from the framing of objective knowledge and tie their research to moral arguments, they are often labeled “activist” scientists, which may serve to delegitimize their claims (Newell 2000). Scientists that receive funding from businesses implicated in environmental problems or from conservative think tanks are also criticized for promoting biased claims (McCright and Dunlap 2000, 2003). This politicization of science serves to complicate attempts to structure policy and garner public support for environmental concern.

Environmental actors recognize the importance of “sound science” as a political tool because of the cultural resonance of this concept (Miller 2002). For environmentalists, science and empirical data are often used to support the claim that a practice or process is problematic and that an environmental harm exists (Hannigan 1995). Business and industry groups that could potentially be negatively affected by environmental regulations often use science to dispel or question such claims of problematic practices or suggestions to take action against such practices (McCright and Dunlap 2000, 2003; Newell 2000). Scientists themselves are also considered important

“popularisers” within environmental controversies because their expertise gives weight to claims made by various actors (Hannigan 1995).

Although scientists are the ones that produce knowledge-claims and the empirical basis for many issues, another important actor in environmental politics, the mass media, is largely responsible for the dissemination of this information to the public.

The Mass Media

The mass media is essential for informing the public and garnering public support for environmental issues. Indeed, Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, which helped spawn the modern environmental movement, first ran as a series of articles in the *New Yorker* in 1961 (Miller 2002). The response from the readership earned enough public support for the articles to be published in book form, which allowed further dissemination of Carson’s insights into the effects of DDT and pesticides on birds and humans. Cox (2006) explains that “[n]ews media acts not only as voices in their coverage of issues and events but as conduits for other voices that seek to influence public attitudes” (28). This situates the media as an “agenda-setting” actor in society, and suggests that the media not only disseminates information, but also has the ability to select how information is presented and which information gets covered in news pieces (Cox 2006). These roles intersect with environmental politics in many important ways.

As newsworthy items, environmental issues pose a number of difficulties for journalists. For one, the complexity of environmental problems makes them difficult to fit into the limited publishing spaces that exist in news formats for individual stories. Environmental issues are only one of many newsworthy items that must also be given ample space in new publication and airtime. Further, journalists are often not trained in

science or do not have the knowledge of the many technical components that go into the empirical evidence of environmental problems (Miller 2002; Cox 2006). The attempt to balance news reports with multiple perspectives also has a large effect on environmental politics. This can have the effect of making environmental issues appear to be much more contested than they actually are. Newell (2000) points out “the media’s inclination to construct binary oppositions creates distortions, in terms of accurate presentation of the degree of scientific consensus that exists on climate change” (81). For example, many media representations of climate change attempt to portray “both sides” of the climate debate by featuring differing opinions on climate change from scientists or other actors. However, there is a strong consensus within the scientific community that climate change is not only a physical phenomenon, but that it is based on human actions and that immediate political measures will be necessary to address it (Athanasiou 1996; Newell 2000; McCright and Dunlap 2003). This portrayal has had the effect of confusing the public on the science of climate change and has delegitimized it as an environmental problem needing immediate attention.

Another key component of media portrayals of environmental issues is related to the ownership of media outlets. Large transnational corporations, some of which are connected to the production of environmental harms and health risks, own most large media groups. Scholars have found that this ownership can affect what kinds of issues are covered in the news (Beder 2006b; 2010; Cox 2006). This is because program producers feel pressure to not report on events that would directly implicate their parent companies. Even if these corporate owned outlets report on environmental issues, the stories

presented rarely direct attention to the processes that created the issues or the actors involved (Cox 2006).

The mass media is essential for garnering support for environmental issues, which, has the potential to push environmental issues on to the policy stage. The state and its institutions deal directly with these policy processes.

The State

As a social institution, the state performs a variety of functions that make it an important actor within environmental politics. The state, by definition, is the institution that possesses the authority to create and apply collective power (Johnson 2000). Since environmental problems primarily represent problems of public and collective goods, the state attempts to facilitate actions that mediate threats from environmental harms through different branches and levels of political institutions and the creation of policy (Kraft and Vig 2010). This is meant to support and create environmental improvements. However, as mentioned earlier, the state also serves the function of promoting and ensuring stable economic activities that can result in the creation of environmental problems (Schnaiberg 1980; Cable and Cable 1995; Buttel 2004; Foster 2002, 2005; Foster, Clark and York 2009). These two roles often make the state simultaneously a *regulator* as well as a *perpetuator* of environmental problems. These dual roles further complicate the relationships that the state has with other actors in environmental problems. State functions are also dependent upon sociohistorical circumstances, which serve to make the state a dynamic actor with regards to all political issues.

As a regulator of environmental problems, states are responsible for the creation and enactment of environmental laws, regulations, and agreements. Within the U.S., the

various state institutions that are used to actualize this responsibility are divided among the three branches of government at federal, state, and local levels (Vig and Kraft 2010). Environmental legislation is typically related to two broad areas: 1) pollution control and correction and 2) natural resource management and conservation (Lazarus 2004). Pollution control and correction legislation is connected to different fragments or mediums within the environment, such as air, water, soil. In contrast, natural resource management and conservation legislation deals with minerals, forests, and animal and plant species as well as scenic areas. This is done to give manageable goals and measurements for environmental improvement.

States also structure the punishments for violation of environmental laws and regulations. Within the U.S., most violations of environmental laws are considered civil offenses, which result in monetary sanctions and, at times, require guilty parties to remedy the environmental harms they have created. However, if the damage to the environment is severe, some environmental offenses carry criminal punishments (Lazarus 2004)

However, many functions of and pressures on the state make it a perpetuator of environmental problems as well. With the creation of the state and the independent policies and uses of the environment within those states, vastly different reference points for acceptable environmental use serve to create and perpetuate environmental problems. Further, the checks and balances system between the institutions and branches of government often times coalesce into gridlocks, which inhibit or delay decisions about environmental issues (Vig and Kraft 2010). Although this can work in the advantage of environmental considerations, particularly if laws or regulations are in danger of being

repealed, many times environmental issues will not reach a stage of implementation because of differences on environmental concern among the branches of government and the policy-makers within those branches. This has particularly been the case with climate change debates in the U.S. (McCright and Dunlap 2000). Also, because environmental decision-making is often spread out within a state, conflicting policies and regulations are often passed simultaneously. And, when environmental issues are taken to court, unless an injunction is passed to halt processes that are claimed to be producing environmental harms, those processes continue while the issue is decided.

The state is also directly responsible for the creation and promotion of environmental harms through its sponsoring of environmentally damaging facilities and projects. In the U.S., the creation of nuclear, chemical weapons, and military facilities, such as Oak Ridge, Rocky Flats, and Los Alamos have all contributed much to environmental degradation, pollution, and harm (Hooks and Smith 2005; Bonds 2010).

Finally, one of the primary reasons the state is considered a perpetrator of environmental problems is because of its promotion and protection of economic processes and actors (Schnaiberg 1980; Cable and Cable 1995; Foster 2003; 2005). The state has an interest in promoting economic processes and businesses in order to maintain its legitimacy. If economic activity declines or if firms leave state territories, job loss and economic hardship potentially falls upon a population. In these cases, the state is often blamed for this hardship. Although in the past, the state yielded a considerable amount of control over economic processes, with the rise of transnational corporations and the continued threat of outsourcing of jobs, scholars have questioned the ability or willingness of the state to exert its collective power for a variety of social and

environmental causes. With the threat of economic decline and subsequent public unrest, the state may be inclined to act in favor of economic concerns over environmental ones (Mol and Spaargaren 2002; Buttel 2004). This not only perpetuates environmental problems, but also may result in their amplification.

Summary of Characterizations of Environmental Actors

This section focused upon the dynamic actors that influence environmental politics. The reasons they are involved, the way their actions help or hinder the creation of environmental policy, and the relationships that exist among these actors provides a more holistic picture of environmental politics. The environmental movement, though often assumed to have a united front, represents a wide variety of orientations to environmentalism. This influences the types of policies and partnerships deemed acceptable for environmental improvement efforts. The scientific community, although not an inherently willing actor within environmental politics, holds significant weight in environmental controversies. From constructing environmental problems and providing the empirical bases for action, science is a crucial part of decision-making related to environmental issues. The media, although instrumental in building awareness in environmental politics, can also create confusion about the science and seriousness of environmental problems. As an environmental actor, the state often serves as both a perpetuator and regulator of environmental problems.

However, one actor, business, has risen as an important focus in the study of environmental politics. As Lafferty and Meadowcroft (1996) point out: “[a]ny policy that is designed to deal with an environmental problem will have costs: costs that must be borne by someone” (5). The role of business as an environmental actor complicates this

assumption of who pays this cost and, more pointedly, if a cost must be paid at all. The next chapter focuses upon business as an environmental actor. I discuss how environmental sociologists have historically understood business through two dominant theoretical perspectives: productivist theories and ecological modernization theory. I then discuss the theoretical assumptions about business as an environmental actor that emerge from these two perspectives and the need for more empirical examples to strengthen or reject these assumptions.

Chapter 4: Business as an Environmental Actor

Business is a major actor within environmental politics. As the actor that is directly or indirectly involved in the creation of many environmental problems, any attempt to make environmental improvements involves business in some way. Thus, environmental policies, regulations, and laws all have the potential to significantly impact business and change business practices.

The study of business in any political context provides theoretical and methodological challenges for scholars. Theoretically, scholars are divided in how they understand power, privilege, and influence within and outside of political spaces, which guides assumptions of how business will participate within political contests. In the context of environmental politics, scholars have primarily examined business through two theoretical orientations: 1) productivist theories, primarily the *treadmill of production theory* and 2) *ecological modernization theory*. The following section provides a brief overview of each of these perspectives and then identifies key assumptions that each perspective holds about business as an environmental actor.

Business as a Creator and Perpetuator of Environmental Problems: Productivist Theories

Some of the earliest theories of environmental sociology explored the relationship between economic systems and ecological systems. Schnaiberg's (1980) influential *treadmill of production* theory on political capitalism provides a focus on the economic drivers that contribute to environmental degradation as well as the powerful social actors that have an interest in perpetuating current institutional arrangements. In this view, business creates environmental problems through its goal to continuously grow and

expand production. This creates a *treadmill of production*, which results in environmental abuse and degradation (Schnaiberg 1980). Scholars that use the treadmill framework suggest that within capitalist systems, an important interlock exists between the state, capital, and organized labor. For differing reasons, these three entities all share an incentive in increasing economic growth through continued production.

However, with the rise of globalization and transnational corporations, this interlock has diminished from a central underpinning for scholars using this theory. Instead of an interlock among different actors, treadmill scholars point to the rise and dominant position of transnational corporations within the global economy. Rather than an agreement across powerful actors within states, treadmill theorists now point to how businesses work together with new international actors, particularly large international economic institutions, to drive the global political agenda to ensure the free movement of capital across state borders (Schnaiberg, Pellow, Weinberg 2002; Beder 2010). This insight also suggests the decline of state power within environmental controversies, particularly on global levels.

These scholars also highlight the actual practices that businesses perform that create environmental problems. Mining, industrial agriculture, manufacturing, and many other production processes are primary producers of environmental degradation. Although most of these perspectives also focus on social dimensions related to these harms (such as health, race, and class), the roles that businesses play in the creation and, at times, denial of environmental problems and harms are also prevalent in these studies (Bullard 1990; 2005; Cole and Foster 2001; Shriver, Cable, and Kennedy 2008). Through

this characterization, business is understood as being directly involved in the creation and perpetuation of the processes that contribute to environmental degradation.

In the context of environmental politics, scholars in these traditions are skeptical that business will play a cooperative role in attempts to address environmental issues. Since environmental regulations have the potential to change production and incorporate ecological limits into business practices, business has much to lose if environmental policies are actualized (Rudel, Roberts, and Carmin 2011). In this perspective, business actors work to protect their current power and the system and processes that provide them with power.

Critics of productivist theories argue that these perspectives are too entrenched in theoretical assumptions about the incompatibility of human-environment relationships and operate from narrow views of economic actors and the state. Buttel (2000) argues that productivist theories have “so overtheorized the intrinsic tendency to environmental disruption and degradation so that there [is] little room for recognizing that environmental improvements might be forthcoming” (60). This elicited a vision of another possible role for business and economic processes in human-environment relationships that suggested business could be a positive facilitator of environmental improvements by using the very power they hold in modern societies.

Business as an Agent for Positive Environmental Change: Ecological Modernization Theory

Although business and their practices are often pointed to as the primary source of environmental problems, other scholars view business and economic processes as potential solutions. These scholars suggest that environmental improvement could

emerge from within the current system and see economic and political actors as facilitators of these changes (Mol 1995; Buttel 2000, Mol and Spaargaren 2005). These perspectives are embodied in *ecological modernization theory*.

Like critical political economists of the environment, ecological modernization scholars see environmental degradation as connected to problematic economic processes. However, scholars explain these behaviors under the larger process of *modernity* rather than as tools of powerful actors or systemic incompatibilities. This presents environmental problems as a part of a historical process that has the potential to be addressed through collective understanding and evolution of social structures (Beck 1992; Giddens 1998). Scholars of the ecological modernization tradition identify the processes of modernization, particularly industrialization, as the primary cause of environmental problems. However, keeping with the tenets of modernity, social actors, such as business, have the tools to recognize and transform their society and social conditions. Seippel (2002) explains:

Modernity is the cause of the environmental problems, the medium through which they are brought to light, understood, and formulated; and the prerequisite for actually coping with the degradation of and threats toward the natural environment” (197).

Therefore, for these scholars, modernization and industrialization serve as not only the source of environmental problems, but also as the potential solutions.

With this strong connection to modernity, ecological modernization perspectives reflect upon how restructuring the state and the economy can lead to environmental improvements. Literature on *the environmental state* (Mol and Buttel 2002; Buttel 2000; Goldman 2001) and *sustainable* or *climate capitalism* (Ikerd 2005; Mitchell 2009; Pralle 2009; Newell and Paterson 2010) capture many of these visions of reform and outline

possible models for incorporating environmental concerns into existing economic and political systems. Scholars suggest that business will likely incorporate environmental considerations and concerns into their practices primarily because this will be understood as good corporate stewardship (Simonis 1989; Mol and Sonnenfeld 2000; Rudel, Roberts, and Carmin 2011).

In these perspectives, business is often assumed to be a willing or at least a necessary participant in attempts to actualize environmental improvements (Levy and Newell 2006). Although scholars do not reject the understanding of business as a powerful actor within political spaces, this power is not seen as a hindrance to creating environmental improvements. Rather than assume that business will reject or fight attempts to actualize environmental improvements, scholars of the ecological modernization perspective suggest that business can play a meaningful role and adapt their practices and processes to incorporate ecological limits and concerns. These scholars see reform to systems as possible and the most realistic path to environmental improvements (Simonis 1989; Mol 1995; Buttel 2000; Mol and Sonnenfeld 2000; Rudel, Roberts, and Carmin 2011).

Critics of this perspective suggest there is little acknowledgement of the power discrepancies that exist between actors involved in environmental politics and that the perspective assumes too much cooperation among actors. Critics also question whether or not business has the incentive or motivation to actualize environmental improvements, particularly those that require massive changes to their current practices or structures (York and Rosa 2005). Further, questions have emerged as to whether or not “environmental improvements” that are pursued through current institutional

arrangements will actually lead to any measurable improvement to the environment or if these will only be symbolic gestures (Foster 2002; 2005).

Summary of Theoretical Assumptions of Business as an Environmental Actor

In examining these two perspectives, scholars have differing views of business as an environmental actor. Productivist theorists suggest the following propositions:

- Business actors are unlikely to participate in meaningful environmental improvements because of the dramatic changes to existing institutional arrangements that are necessary to positively change human-environment relationships.
- Business will attempt to suppress environmental policies and work to deny that business practices produce environmental harms.
- Business will be interested in local, national, and international political contests given their interest in expanding production across state lines.

Ecological modernization theorists present different assumptions about business as an environmental actor. These theorists suggest the following propositions:

- Business can play a meaningful role in creating and envisioning environmental improvements by making changes in their practices and incorporating ecological principles into economic processes.
- Business will be an active and willing participant in environmental politics
- Business will likely support state efforts to actualize environmental policies and, simultaneously, work to produce their own methods for addressing environmental concerns.

With such divergent theoretical assumptions of business as an environmental

actor, empirical evidence is needed to support or reject these assumptions. Several case studies have emerged to help challenge, reaffirm, and evolve these theoretical assumptions (McCright and Dunlap 2000, 2003; Newell 2000; Bonds 2010). This thesis works to add to this body of literature and further clarify the roles of business as an environmental actor by examining how a group of coal industry representatives organized and participated in environmental politics over a 15-year period. Although the above theoretical assumptions are not directly discussed or addressed throughout the case study, they are examined at length in the case discussion and conclusion.

The next chapter introduces the case and provides an overview of the analytical strategies and procedures used to conduct the case study.

Chapter 5: Methods

The case study method is most appropriate for this thesis because of the focus on how a group of coal industry representatives organized and participated in environmental politics over time. Case studies are pursued in order to understand a small sample or cases “because they are substantively or theoretically significant” (Ragin 1999:1138). Further, case studies are ideal for holistic and in-depth examinations (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg 1991). Stake (2000) describes three types of case studies: *intrinsic*, *instrumental*, and *collective*. The intrinsic case study is utilized because a particular case itself needs to be researched and understood. Instrumental case studies provide knowledge and understanding of a particular issue that the case represents. Finally, collective case studies extend instrumental case study purposes to several cases in order to provide better knowledge and facts of larger phenomena or theory.

For this study, I utilize intrinsic and instrumental case study parameters by focusing on the how the coal industry, through the creation of advocacy organizations, participates in environmental politics over time. This study is considered intrinsic in that the coal industry, as a political actor, is an interesting point of study in its own right. However, this case study is also instrumental in that it provides an example of how business participates within environmental politics, which serves to inform theoretical assumptions of business as an environmental actor

Selection of the Case

Coal-industry funded organizations were selected to examine how business participates in environmental politics for three primary reasons. First, ACCCE has a political history of over 20 years. Previously known as the Center for Energy and

Economic Development (CEED) and Americans for Balanced Energy Choices (ABEC), through these three organizations, the coal industry organized and became a political force in a variety of political issues. For purposes of this study, this long political engagement provided the opportunity to examine the evolution of the organization in a variety of contexts and through various environmental and energy related controversies. Second, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE represented corporations and organizations that are connected to coal in some way. These include mining companies, electric utility companies, labor unions, and railroad companies. Although the individual corporations and organizations changed over time, the *types* of companies and groups that the organizations represented remained the same. When combined, these entities present a more complex picture of what constitutes the coal industry. Finally, data produced by each organization, extending from their inception to the present day, were accessible and provided rich descriptions of political activities and claims. These three considerations made ACCCE, CEED, and ABEC an ideal case to examine the coal industry's political engagement in environmental issues over time and provide a broader understanding and example of a sustained political involvement by business in environmental politics.

Although I did not include accounts by individuals or groups as primary data for this study, I did conduct a preliminary Internet search of ACCCE, CEED, and ABEC to garner a sense of the importance of the organizations to environmental politics as a whole. This search yielded reports and analysis of political actions of ACCCE, CEED, and ABEC from large environmental organizations, progressive environmental blogs, and other media sources (Goodell 2006; Hoggan and Littlemore 2009). While the attention that ACCCE, CEED, and ABEC received from other groups is a point of interest in itself,

it is not the main focus of this study. However, such a response from other stakeholders and popular media suggests that ACCCE, as a political actor, has made an impression in the larger field of environmental politics, and, thus, further indicates that ACCCE is worthy of deeper examination and study.

I also found that ACCCE's tactics and political engagement have been discussed in scholarly literature, particularly related to studies of environmental communication (Yanarella, Levine, Lancaster 2009; Cox 2006) and climate change politics (Sovacool 2008; Perrow 2010; Pooley 2010). However, these studies isolate ACCCE's political engagement within the context of specific environmental issues or as examples of counter-claims within environmental politics. Although it is of scholarly interest to discuss ACCCE within these other contexts, such a focus neglects the long-term political strategies, actions, and intentions of coal industry firms that are represented by these organizations.

Analytic Procedures and Strategies

Case study research requires a number of steps that must be carefully designed. Data collection, data cleaning, close reading and coding of data, and writing results all require considerable planning for successful implementation as well as the production of reliable and valid results (Thomas 2006; Yin 2009). This section details the analytic procedures and strategies utilized in this case study.

Data Access

Finding data on ACCCE, CEED, and ABEC required the exploration of new data access and collection techniques. I found that ACCCE's current website provided a variety of documents that highlighted political activities and claims made by the

organization. Websites are increasingly being recognized as important supplements to or primary sources of data for case studies that focus on organizations (Weare and Lin 2000; Markham 2007; Pudrovskaya and Ferree 2004; Rice 2010). Pudrovskaya and Ferree (2004) suggest that websites provide “a new and useful form of data about an organization’s identity and priorities because, unlike media representations of the group, it is self-directed” and, further, that a website “provides an open space for self-presentation to the rest of the world” (118)¹.

However, ACCCE’s current website only provided documents from 2007 to the present. After performing an Internet search, it was clear that the websites for CEED and ABEC were no longer active or “live” or would redirect Internet users to ACCCE affiliated web pages. I was able to find some screenshots that other organizations had taken and posted on their own websites of CEED and ABEC, but no original content produced by CEED or ABEC remained.

One of my colleagues then suggested that I try to see if CEED’s and ABEC’s websites were archived through an Internet archiving system that she had recently discovered. This system, called the WayBack Machine (<http://wayback.archive.org/web/>), is a project of the Internet Archive (the IA). The IA is a non-profit organization with the mission to “build an Internet library,” which “purposes include offering permanent access for researchers, historians, scholars, people with disabilities, and the general public to historical collections that exist in digital form” (IA 2000). Further, the IA “is working to prevent the Internet--a new medium with major historical significance- and other “born digital” materials from disappearing into the past” (IA 2000). The homepage for CEED was archived a total of 191 times. I also typed in

¹ See Appendix A for a deeper discussion of the Internet as a data source.

ABEC's earliest known address, which yielded an archived site as well. The homepage for ABEC was archived 131 times. I proceeded to explore these archives and, satisfied with the amount of content that was provided, I decided that the websites could provide a sufficient amount of data through documents to accomplish this study.

The WayBack Machine has its limitations. It should be acknowledged and noted that this is not an archival system that documents every known website and does not currently document every known change to content even on the pages that it does archive. In a note on all of the "captures," or archived web pages of the project, the IA staff reminds viewers that the archive system does not document each time the particular site changed, but how many times the system "crawled" the website and archived it. That is, the Wayback Machine is not meant to be an indicator of *change* of sites. While 191 captures of CEED's homepage may seem impressive, this does not mean that the homepage *changed* 191 times. Indeed, I found that many pages stayed relatively stable overtime except those that were constantly updating content (such as blogs, press releases, and newsletters).

Further, the archives may not contain all components of web pages, particularly images, videos, and other interactive features. This is an area that the IA is working to improve. It should also be noted that even if a certain page on a website is captured, other pages may not be. There were times when I would click to go to another page on the website, and I received a message which explained that this page, though connected to the other parts of the site at the time, was not archived. For example, for a capture of CEED's homepage in of 1998, under the main section of "Threats to Affordable Energy," I was unable to access the "Visibility and Haze" page. In later captures of the site, I was

able to access the Visibility and Haze page, but I was unable to determine if the same claims were used stemming back to 1998 unless a specific date was shown on the page.

Exact dates of creation were also difficult to determine for some of the documents. I am confident, however, that I was at least able to find the year the documents reflected through time stamps or other indicators of time. Some documents contained a “last updated” date at the bottom of the page or provided a date and time of when content was posted. This was particularly true of blog posts and press releases, which all had date and time stamps on them. Other indicators of time, such as mentions of legislation, major political events or meetings, and other significant historical moments (such as September 11, 2001 and the Big Branch Mine collapse of 2010) also allowed me to place much of the documents chronologically. The homepages themselves served as excellent indicators of time as well. Websites go through redesigns, which allow a degree of certainty related to placing content on webpages on a timeline. For example, CEED’s website went through four major redesigns that corresponded to specific years: 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2005.

The only portions of the sites that I had little success accessing were the “Members Only” sections. At first, these sections only required a password and later a username and password. These sections later disappeared from the main websites, though it is possible that another website was created for members that was not as publicly visible. However, I do believe that I was able to access this area once without a username or password, which yielded three pages associated with CEED and ABEC that portrayed quite different content than what was on the other parts of the site. I assume that the WayBack Machine was able to capture these areas because of a temporary glitch in

CEED's website permissions. I elected to not use these pages in my sample, as they constituted an area that was not meant for public use. While these parts of the website may have had more overt explanations for the organization's purpose and political intentions, I believe that the whole of the public site is able to convey these just as well. Access of these "Member's Only" sections, however, elicits important ethical considerations for researchers using websites. Although I did not access these by hacking into the internal sections of the websites, scholars should carefully consider the way they access these areas and use of documents found on these parts of websites. I suggest that since these areas are not usually available for public viewing, researchers should not include them in samples without permission.

These limitations and challenges, however, proved not to be great hindrances to accessing a large amount of documents for this study. While I fully acknowledge that I may not have been able to access *all* the content that was historically produced by ACCCE and its predecessor organizations, I am confident I was able to access a significant amount of data that illuminated the organization itself and its political intentions.

Data Collection and Cleaning

I conducted the data collection process by examining the archives of each organization's website and gathering any documents that provided insight into the organizations' political activities and claims. The WayBack Machine operates similarly to a search engine except instead of searching through key words, users search for specific web addresses. To examine the archives of a specific website, users type in a web address and are taken to a section that allows them to access any captures of the

website. If users type in a web address and add an asterisk (*) to the end of this address, all URLs associated with this address that are archived will be shown. Using the asterisk in the search allows users to see how many times a page was captured, how many of the captures are duplicates, and how many captures are unique. I examined the websites of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE through both single page searches and by using the asterisk at the end of searches to ensure that I did not overlook any pages for my sample.

The home page web addresses I used in the WayBack Machine search engine were directly associated with CEED, ABEC, or ACCCE:

- <http://www.ceednet.org>
- <http://www.balancedenergy.org>
- <http://www.cleancoalusa.org>
- <http://www.americaspower.org>

The first three addresses are the homepages of the organization's websites. The last of these is associated with a major campaign, America's Power, which was first connected to ABEC and then to ACCCE when CEED and ABEC were merged. These homepages served as the root pages for any other web pages or documents that I found in my search. Table 1 shows the amount of archived pages associated with each homepage that were contained within the Internet Archive.

Table 1: WayBack Machine Captures of pages associated with home page addresses

	Number of URLs captured
CEED	6,767
ABEC	7,336
ACCCE	330
America's Power	1,911

I found that the most efficient and systemic way to search the archives was to begin with the first capture of each homepage and navigate the websites as if they were live pages. Through this exploration process, I found that the websites contained press

releases, policy reports, and newsletters. These documents have traditionally been used in case studies and often provide important insight into organizational activities and claims (Yin 2009). In addition to these traditional documents, the websites also contained informational pages and blogs that I considered new types of documents for analytical purposes (Rice 2010). When I found unique documents, I printed these out, recorded the date or time that the data point reflected, and proceeded to find new documents. If there were repeated documents, I made a note of how long the documents were available on the websites, but did not include any duplicates in my sample. All documents used in this sample were unique, containing new information related to the political activities and claims of the organizations. Table 2 details the final counts and types of documents I found by year. Of these 895 documents, it is important to note that a large amount of these (546) were blog posts from 2007-2009 and the remaining third constituted other types of documents. However, different document types contained different amounts of information. For example, some blog posts only contained one or two paragraphs, whereas a newsletters may have spanned ten pages.

I elected to set the time frame of the case to 1994-2009, which provided a time span of 15 years. I began with 1994 because this was the first year that I was able to find newsletters produced by the organization. I selected 2009 to end the study primarily because the Internet archiving system and the current live website I used to gather the data did not have a sufficient amount of data during 2010, which limited my ability to see how the organization operated during this year. However, I felt that the period of 1994-2009, which spanned 15 years, provided more than enough data to address my primary research questions.

Table 2: Document Types by Year

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	totals
Newsletters/ press releases	3	11	9	9	6	1	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46
webpages	-	-	-	-	4	25	42	14	41	17	40	5*	3*	30	34	38	282
research briefs	-	1	-	-	5	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	18
speeches/con- ference briefs	-	-	-	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
blog posts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	201	330	546
total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	895

*Many webpages for 2005 and 2006 contained repeated information from earlier years, particularly 2004.

Additional Documents

Although the vast majority of the documents examined in this case were produced by the organizations themselves, two additional sources were used to gain understanding of the inception of the first organization (CEED) as well as the lobbying expenditures of all of the organizations. A 1992 report produced by the National Coal Council, an advisory council to the U.S. Secretary of Energy, was cited as an important document for the understanding the inception of CEED. The report was not available on the National Coal Council's current website, but I was able to find this report through the WayBack Machine. The document proved to provide important insight into the inception of the organization and was used in this study.

I also consulted the online U.S. lobby expenditures database provided by the U.S. House of Representatives Office of the Clerk² and gathered the reported lobbying expenditures of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE. I was able to find lobbying expenditures from 2004-2012. It is unclear if CEED and ABEC participated in lobbying activities before this time or if they utilized other firms or organizations to lobby on their behalf. I searched the database using the full names of the organizations as well as individual names of leaders within the organizations. My search yielded 22 reports, which provided monetary figures as well as the stated political issues the organizations lobbied for.

At the time of this writing, all of the documents used for this study are available through the WayBack Machine, on ACCCE's current website, or through the lobbying disclosure database. If scholars wish to replicate this study using the same documents and

² The lobbying disclosure database can be accessed here: <http://lobbyingdisclosure.house.gov/>

web pages I used, hard copies or web addresses of each of the 895 documents as well as the National Coal Council report and lobbying expenditure reports used in this study are available upon request.

Data Coding

Following data collection and cleaning, I organized each of the documents by year and used a multi-step process of coding and thematic textual analysis (Aronson 1994; Boyatzis 1998; Attride-Stirling 2001). Aronson (1994) suggests that “[t]hematic analysis focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of living and/or behavior” (1). For this study, thematic analysis techniques were useful in providing a systemic process for analysis of the documents and development of the descriptive framework of the case.

To begin my analysis, I identified a series of preliminary questions derived from literature on environmental politics and gaps that are present in this literature. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) suggest that this questioning process helps to facilitate the generation of codes and themes, which are then further refined into coherent and comprehensive categories. For this study, I used the following questions to approach my data:

- Who do the organizations represent?
- What are the organizations trying to accomplish?
- What activities are they participating in?
- What environmental policies are mentioned?
- What environmental issues are they involved in?
- How do the organizations characterize what they are doing?
- How do the organizations participate in specific environmental controversies?

- What other actors do they encounter in political spaces?
- What claims are they making?

In the initial coding phase, I read and coded each of the 895 documents line-by-line in order to identify as many codes and themes as possible. I was looking for activities, issues, and claims related to the above questions as well as any thing else that looked interesting. This allowed me to understand any relevant organizational evolution and development and any organizational and ideological tactics used by the organizations.

This process resulted in a broad list of dozens of key concepts. I then re-examined the documents and, through another round of coding, further refined the concepts into six broad conceptual categories: 1) participation in political activities (attendance at public meetings, lobbying, creation of legislation, etc), 2) claims related to environmental issues, 3) claims related to coal, coal-based energy processes, and the coal industry itself, 4) organizational memberships and identities 5) political purpose/mission of the organizations; and 6) public outreach/engagement processes.

Coding 895 documents elicited the need for a coherent data management strategy. I designed a multi-layered database to divide the data chronologically and thematically. This allowed me to understand not only *what* activities, issues, and claims the organizations were participating in, but also *when* these events occurred. The creation of this database enabled me to examine each conceptual category holistically and chronologically and helped to develop a descriptive framework for the case (Yin 2009).

The descriptive framework was derived from the six conceptual categories listed above. Although these categories retained their respective boundaries in the writing of the case, I ordered the categories to allow for a sequential discussion of my findings related

to the political purpose, strategies, and tactics of the organizations over time.

The next chapter unfolds this descriptive framework in three sections. I begin first with an overview of the inception of CEED and the purposes and missions of each organization. This section effectively combines both conceptual category four and five and provides a foundation for understanding the political activities and claims made by the organizations. The next section highlights the specific environmental issues that the organizations were involved in (conceptual category two) as well as their participation and activities in regards to these issues (conceptual category one). The final section provides an overview of the public outreach/engagement activities of the organizations (conceptual category six) and ends with a discussion of the re-framing of coal, coal processes, and the coal industry (conceptual category three).

Chapter 6: The Case Study: Coal as an Environmental Actor

The case study explains how a group of coal industry representatives organized and participated in environmental politics through the establishment of three organizations: the Center for Energy and Economic Development (CEED), the Americans for Balanced Energy Choices (ABEC), and the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity (ACCCE). Although these organizations are separate entities, they were all established and directed by the same core group of coal industry representatives.

The case study is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the circumstances that led to the creation of the first organization, CEED, and the subsequent establishments of ABEC and ACCCE. These circumstances provide an understanding of the political intentions and activities of the organizations: the protection and promotion of coal as a product, process, and an industry. I also provide descriptions of the purposes of each organization. I then describe the internal organizational structures and membership of the organizations, which provides an understanding of who and what firms and associations CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE represented.

The second section provides an overview of the kinds of political activities that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE participated in over time in order to *protect* coal. I focus on the specific political issues the organizations were involved in as well as how they maneuvered these spaces.

The final section focuses on the efforts of the organizations to *promote* coal as a product, coal related processes, and the coal industry as a whole. I first discuss the public outreach/engagement activities that the organizations participated in. I then describe the

way the organizations re-framed coal by discussing three primary themes that emerged from CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE's documents.

Organizational Inception, Evolution, and Purpose

This section provides an overview of the inception and stated purpose of each individual organization. The time span of the three organizations is 1992 to the present day, which represents a twenty-year period of active political engagement. CEED was an active organization from 1992-2008. ABEC was active from 2000-2008. ACCCE was founded in 2008 through the merger of CEED and ABEC. ACCCE continues as an active organization within environmental and energy politics at the time of this writing in 2012.

Origins and Purpose of CEED

The establishment of the CEED is attributed to recommendations made by the National Coal Council, a Federal Advisory Board to the U.S. Secretary of Energy, in January of 1992. In a report titled "Improving Coal's Image: A National Energy Strategy Imperative," the National Coal Council suggested that coal had a "dismal image" and was a "maligned and misunderstood fuel" (National Coal Council 1992). In this report, the Council also stated "coal's image depends upon increased general awareness of coal, the nation's economic reliance upon it, and its environmental acceptability" (National Coal Council 1992). Through this report, the Council made seven recommendations to the coal industry:

1. Implement a coal industry coalition to change public perception and public acceptance of coal.
2. Use the coalition to develop and implement a public information campaign with the goal of improving the public acceptance of coal.
3. Direct the coalition to develop a strategy for use when called upon to support the licensing of new coal facilities when they are challenged at the state or local level on the basis of environmental externality issues.

4. Assist in developing materials which can be readily adapted for use by all entities within the coal industry to provide their individual stakeholders useful information about coal.
5. Direct the coalition to develop a strategy for communicating useful information to specific audiences within the business community, media, and government.
6. Provide sufficient resources to the coal industry for the implementation of a detailed plan of action which assures coal's message will be delivered throughout the education systems.
7. Carry out a strategy developed by the coalition which targets state regulatory officials both elected and staff—for continuing information as to coal's role as an option in meeting new energy needs. (National Coal Council 1992)

In reviewing these recommendations, the Council suggested that the coal industry consider creating a coalition in order to implement political strategies and public engagement activities that promoted a new image of coal and encouraged public acceptance of this new image.

Coal's image problem was only one motivator to establish the organization. In a 1997 CEED newsletter, John Snow, CEED's first Chairman and then President of CSX Railroad, reflected on the first five years of CEED's activities. He cited the political success of a grassroots environmental group as a motivator to organize and start plans for the organization. The environmental group had been successful in passing a referendum, which resulted in the canceling of the building of a coal-fired power plant in Tallahassee, Florida, (CEED 1997b). Snow reflected on this moment with urgency: "Our nation's most abundant energy resource was under attack, placing our energy security in jeopardy. Something more had to be done" (CEED 1997b).

CEED's inception, therefore, can be attributed to two primary concerns that were recognized by coal industry representatives: 1) the need to reorient coal's image and public acceptance of coal and 2) stop or lessen political sanctions ("attacks"), particularly legislation, that would interrupt coal's use and potential future as an energy source.

Both of these concerns provided the foundation and drive to organize meetings to discuss possible ways to address the backlash against coal. In his 1997 newsletter reflection, Snow also provided insight into this process:

In meetings with leading coal producers and shippers, we discussed moving an agenda that would allow consumers and decision makers at the state and local levels to know more about coal and its role in providing low-cost, reliable, environmentally-comparable electricity. New blood was needed to accomplish this task; new partnerships had to be formed. This mission required a grassroots focus that would extend across the nation. (CEED 1997b)

William Payne, the Founding Vice Chairman of CEED, also provided a reflection on the special nature of this industry wide solidarity in the same 1997 newsletter. He stated:

“[n]ever before had these diverse industries joined together in a sustained national grassroots effort to promote their common interests” (CEED 1997b). Although other industry wide coalitions certainly existed at this time, for these particular coal industry entities, the decision to organize collectively appeared to be a new type of advocacy endeavor and represented new strategies of political engagement for these industry representatives. CEED’s materials used the following mission statement from 1998 to 1999:

CEED’s mission is clear and compelling – to work at the regional, state, and local levels to maintain and enhance the option of coal-fueled electricity generation in the U.S. CEED’s efforts complement the work of the National Mining Association, the Association of American Railroads, and other groups that focus on federal issues, as well as state coal, mining, rail, and utility associations.

By far, CEED’s highest priority is to inform regional, state, and local decision-makers as environmental and energy policies are developed so that coal remains a viable fuel source for electricity generation in the U.S. CEED provides the highest quality scientific information, relevant economic analysis, and competent legal counsel to governors, state legislatures, public service commissions, other regulatory boards, administrative bodies, and other opinion leaders. CEED’s staff works in cooperation with its members to see that public policy is based on quality science and sound economics. (CEED 1998, 1999a)

CEED's mission statement was changed in 2000 and remained stable until the creation of ACCCE in 2008:

The Center for Energy and Economic Development (CEED) is a non-profit group dedicated to protecting the viability of coal-based electricity. Working at the local, state, and regional levels, CEED communicates the truth about coal—conducting research, dispelling falsehoods, and educating the public and government officials about coal-based electricity's importance to our way of life. (CEED 2000, 2007)

CEED's mission statements provide an understanding that CEED became engaged in a variety of political efforts, particularly in policy debates and shaping public perceptions of coal as an energy source.

Creation and Purpose of ABEC

The Americans for Balanced Energy Choices (ABEC) was established in 2000. The year 2000 corresponded to a presidential election year in the U.S, which may explain why ABEC was created. In a descriptive section titled “Changing Public Opinion” of one version of CEED's mission statement, a description of ABEC's inception is provided:

Through CEED's leadership, the coal-based electricity industry launched the (ABEC) campaign in 2000. ABEC, a multi-year, multi-million dollar effort, is providing measurable benefits in building support for coal-based electricity's role in America's energy future. (CEED 2003)

This situates ABEC as a long term (“multi-year”) public outreach effort funded by CEED. However, in examining ABEC's purpose and mission statements, ABEC is self-described as a non-profit organization as opposed to a campaign with clear political intentions:

Americans for Balanced Energy Choices (ABEC) is a national, non-profit organization designed to promote a dialogue with community leaders across the U.S. on issues involving America's growing demand for electricity. ABEC will advocate in support of policies that strike the proper balance between protecting the environment and providing for continued economic growth and prosperity for America's working families. (ABEC 2000a)

ABEC's mission statement suggests that the priority of the organization's work was to serve as an active force in discourse related to energy and the environment, particularly political controversies that address intersections of the two.

In reviewing ABEC documents, ABEC is characterized in many ways as a membership-based organization and, at times, is characterized as a grassroots organization. However, it is difficult to garner a sense of the internal processes and possible decision-making structures of ABEC, which would provide more context to these characterizations. A section of the organization's description does provide some limited insight into these:

Our goal is to provide you with the balanced information you will need to participate in a dialogue with other community and business leaders and public officials. (ABEC 2005)

Although ABEC may have considered itself to be a grassroots organization, this kind of participation suggests a top-down approach within the organization and for political engagement and actions. However, ABEC's participation in environmental and energy debates still makes ABEC a type of political actor, grassroots or not.

Evolution into and Purpose of ACCCE

The establishment of ACCCE in 2008 represented a merger of CEED and ABEC. Although both CEED and ABEC were open about the merger process, little explicit insight is given as to what fueled this merger. ABEC made the announcement of the organizational merger on their blog:

ACCCE will bring together the efforts of ABEC and the Center for Energy and Economic Development to continue the mission you've come to expect of shaping public opinion with respect to the use of coal to generate electricity.

Additionally, we will join other national associations to lobby federal policymakers on policies designed to reduce human-made greenhouse gas emissions. (ACCCE 2008b)

In examining this statement, this characterization shows that ACCCE's establishment and organizational retooling was done to combine resources and efforts of CEED and ABEC. This also occurred during an important political moment regarding climate change and potential policies related to climate change. Like ABEC's establishment in 2000, ACCCE's establishment in 2008 was also during an election year. ACCCE's mission statement differs from CEED's statement:

The American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity (ACCCE) advocates public policies that advance environmental improvement, economic prosperity, and energy security. ACCCE believes that the robust utilization of coal – America's most abundant energy resource – is essential to providing affordable, reliable electricity for millions of U.S. consumers and a growing domestic economy. Further, ACCCE is committed to continued and enhanced U.S. leadership in developing and deploying new, advanced clean coal technologies that protect and improve the environment. (ACCCE 2008a)

Rather than explicitly state that ACCCE's purpose is to enhance coal use, ACCCE's statement suggests that the organization is more interested in the creation of public policy that meets specific political and social goals. ACCCE's stated purpose is not to explicitly protect and promote coal. Rather, coal is framed as the vehicle through which other political goals may be met.

Organizational Structures and Leadership

In examining the organizational structure and leadership of each organization, CEED and ACCCE both consisted of relatively small internal staffs and boards of directors made up of coal industry representatives. ABEC had a significantly smaller staff, which, at times, had some crossover with CEED's staff. CEED's staff was divided into regional areas. This leadership structure and regional focus carried over into ACCCE (ACCCE 2008a). All organizations physically operated out of Alexandria, Virginia,

which is in close proximity to Washington, D.C. However, early in CEED's work, the organization's regional offices were located within their respective regions. CEED's regional offices were located in Amarillo, Texas (South Region); St. Louis, Missouri (Midwest Region); Northfield, New Jersey (North Region); and Franktown, Colorado (West Region) (CEED 1999a). Eventually, these offices were all relocated to Alexandria.

Membership

Although the organizations changed over time and eventually came together under ACCCE, this did not appear to be due to major internal restructuring or due to dramatic changes in membership of the organization. Membership lists of the organizations located in newsletters and web pages from 1995, 1998, 2002, 2003, and 2008 provided context to the types of companies and groups CEED and ACCCE represented. The organizations have historically represented a variety of coal-related enterprises and business associations. What is notable about this "membership" base, however, is the high turnover of members. CEED's membership fluctuated from 25 member firms to over 200 firms. By contrast, ACCCE's membership remained steady at around 40 member firms. However, there have been some firms and organizations that have been a part of CEED and ACCCE consistently for ten or more years. These can be considered the core members of the organizations and are listed in Table 3.

These core members are representative of the membership of CEED and ACCCE over time. Member firms and organizations included: rail road companies, electric utility companies, coal-based extractive companies, mining and labor organizations, coal-industry associations, and heavy machinery companies.

Table 3: Core Members: Members for Over 10 years

Name	Type of Company or Organization
Allegheny Power	Utility Company
Basin Electric Power Cooperative	Utility Company
Caterpillar, Inc.	Heavy Machinery Manufacturer
CONSOL Energy, Inc.	Natural Gas and Coal Extraction Company
CSX Railroad	Railroad Company
General Electric	Broad Based Technology Company
Northfolk Southern Corporation	Railroad Company
The Southern Company	Utility Company
Union Pacific Railroad	Railroad Company
Western Fuels Association	Fuel Management Services (non-profit)

All of these entities have a direct tie to coal through economic activities and, by joining CEED/ACCCE, an expressed interest in continuing coal's use in energy production. This membership base truly constitutes what is holistically understood as the coal industry.

ABEC presents more difficulty when one attempts to measure membership. Although self-identified as a non-profit organization, the earlier characterization of ABEC within CEED documents suggests that ABEC was envisioned as more of a campaign. In examining ABEC's documents, however, the organization appears as a membership-based non-profit and, at times, reported membership numbers. In a 2005 press release, ABEC reported membership numbers of 80,000 (ABEC 2005). In 2007, this membership was listed at over 150,000 (ABEC 2007). However, as reflected upon earlier, it is difficult to garner an understanding of how the membership operates internally and what kind of autonomy members have within the organization. It is possible that this number reflects mailing lists or voluntary sign-ups for information.

Support and Funding Disclosure

Unlike some groups that represent industry, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE all disclosed, in their self-produced documents, that they were fully funded and/or supported

by the coal industry. This disclosure, however, may not have always been present in the direct actions that the organizations participated in or in promotional materials. Table 4 lists these disclosures per organization.

Table 4: Support and Funding Disclosure Statements

CEED	The Center for Energy and Economic Development (CEED) is a national, non-profit organization that advocates on behalf of the long-term viability of coal-fueled electricity generation in America through research, information, and advocacy programs. (CEED 1999)
ABEC	Because they recognize the essential role that electricity from coal plays in protecting the environment while providing over half of the electricity used each day in the U.S., America's coal-based electricity industry (producers, transporters, and electricity generators) have provided the primary initial funding for this worthwhile project. (ABEC 2000)
ACCCE	The American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity (ACCCE) is a partnership of the industries involved in producing electricity from coal. We recognize that coal, America's most abundant energy resource, plays a critical role in meeting our country's growing need for affordable and reliable electricity. Our goal is to advance the development and deployment of advanced clean coal technologies that will produce electricity with near-zero emissions. (ACCCE 2008a)

In comparing statements, ACCCE's disclosure statement provides more context to the understanding that the organization is a partnership of coal-related companies than does CEED's statement. CEED's statement suggests that it is an advocacy organization for coal as a product, whereas ACCCE's statement centers on not only advocacy efforts but also on the partnership of coal related industries that have an interest in the continuation of coal and the production of "cleaner" technologies that will ensure this continued use. Although ABEC's statement discloses the funding of the organization, it still suggests that ABEC is an autonomous organization and neglects the initial connection to CEED.

Summary of Organizational Structures and Purposes

The decision to create an organization like CEED provides an example of the political awareness and response to perceived threats by the coal industry as a collective. The addition of ABEC in 2000 was an effort to elevate public engagement through what appears to be a grassroots, membership based organization. The merger of CEED and

ABEC into ACCCE served to combine resources under one organization as well as strengthen a focus on coal as a positive resource to accomplish a variety of political goals.

In examining the purposes and missions of the organizations, a two-fold political strategy can also be identified: 1) to protect coal interests in specific environmental controversies and 2) to promote a new image of coal as a product, as an energy provider, and the industry as a whole. How CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE were used to accomplish these two goals is discussed in the next two sections. The next section details how the organizations participated in protective political efforts by focusing on what types of political issues the organizations participated in and how the organizations maneuvered these political spaces.

Protecting Coal: Environmental and Energy Politics

This section discusses how CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE worked as a political force for the coal industry by providing an overview of the types of political issues the organizations participated in over time. In this section, I discuss the variety of political issues the organizations cited as “threats to coal.” These provide context for answering why the coal industry would be interested in participating as a political actor. These included several environmental and energy policy debates. To further understand this engagement, I provide an example of how the organizations participated in climate change discourse over time.

Political Issues

Throughout their collective history, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE were involved in a wide variety of political issues. Central to this involvement were the potential political

sanctions against coal that could manifest if policies were passed that either impacted the use of coal. In addition, all of these political issues were centered on political controversies directly or indirectly related to the burning of coal as an energy source. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE rarely engaged in discussions or political actions that had to do with coal extraction or coal transport, although in a few instances they responded to issues related to coal ash use and mountaintop removal coal mining. However, by focusing upon the political controversies related to the burning of coal, this still provided many types of issues that required political engagement.

Although environmental issues were a large focus for CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE, other issues related to coal-based electricity generation were also a focus for the organizations. Plant siting, electric utility restructuring, and energy portfolio standards were also issues that the organizations were engaged in because of potential threats to the use of coal. Table 5 details the types of issues that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE were engaged in over time by year. CEED's documents from 1994-2007 referred directly to these issues as the "threats to affordable energy."

The way that CEED, ABEC and ACCCE engaged in political issues that related to specific environmental and energy concerns often focused on two dimensions: 1) science and/or economics behind the issues; and 2) the potential ramifications that would result in passage of legislation or agreements related to an issue. This engagement often suggested that either no action was necessary to address the issues or that any policies passed would be ineffective or damaging. The way that the organizations participated in climate change discussion provides insight into the organizations' political engagement and is worth examining as an example.

Example of Political Engagement and Strategies: The Case of Coal and Climate Change

Of all the issues that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE participated in, climate change consistently remained as a top priority on their political radar. CEED first began making reference to climate change in 1995 as policy-makers were considering how to possibly actualize the Rio Treaty of 1992. In 1998 and 1999, with the launch of its website, CEED was able to have a mechanism to promote its own claims regarding climate change science and politics. This was a timely launch as debates regarding the Kyoto Protocol, which could potentially impact the use of coal, were well underway. CEED provided information in three separate areas: Climate Issue Politics, Kyoto Science, and Kyoto Economics. Within these three areas CEED's claims centered on 1) an alternative version of scientific consensus on climate change suggesting that climate change is not occurring; and 2) the potential damage to the economy if stringent climate change policies were passed. These quotes provide examples of these claims:

Since then, many reputable scientists have publicly stated their disbelief in the dire predictions made by those who advance global warming theories. In fact, many of the scientists who are members of the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change do not share in the body's policy conclusions. Washington

insiders, environmental activists, and the news media have portrayed these scientists as "skeptics." This is an unfair portrayal given that the scientific theories on this issue are far from being proven fact. (CEED 1999f)

As a result, American working families and senior citizens will be forced to pay higher energy and consumer costs and millions of American jobs will be lost to foreign competitors. All of this economic pain for a treaty that scientists can't even agree is necessary. (CEED 1999e)

In addition to claims like the ones above, CEED featured a variety of studies and documents that supported their claims. Two documents, the Heidelberg Appeal and the Leipzig Accord, were used to claim that there was no scientific consensus regarding climate change. Both of these documents have since been revealed as projects of conservative think tanks and industry representatives (Mol 2000). The effect of these documents as well as other actions by industry and the conservative movement served to complicate, confuse, or misrepresent the scientific debate regarding climate change (McCright and Dunlap 2000; 2003). CEED also released a series of studies on damaging effects that the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol would have on US Agriculture, senior citizens, and minorities. All of these studies focused on how rising costs of energy would bring hardship to individuals as well as various economic sectors. In addition to these reports and claims, CEED also provided an extensive PowerPoint presentation on the alleged flaws of the Kyoto Protocol and climate science that they encouraged individuals to examine and share with others (CEED 1999c). Figure 1 provides examples of some of these slides.

In the early 2000s, CEED and ABEC continued to produce claims related to climate change focusing on climate science being flawed or not agreed upon as well as

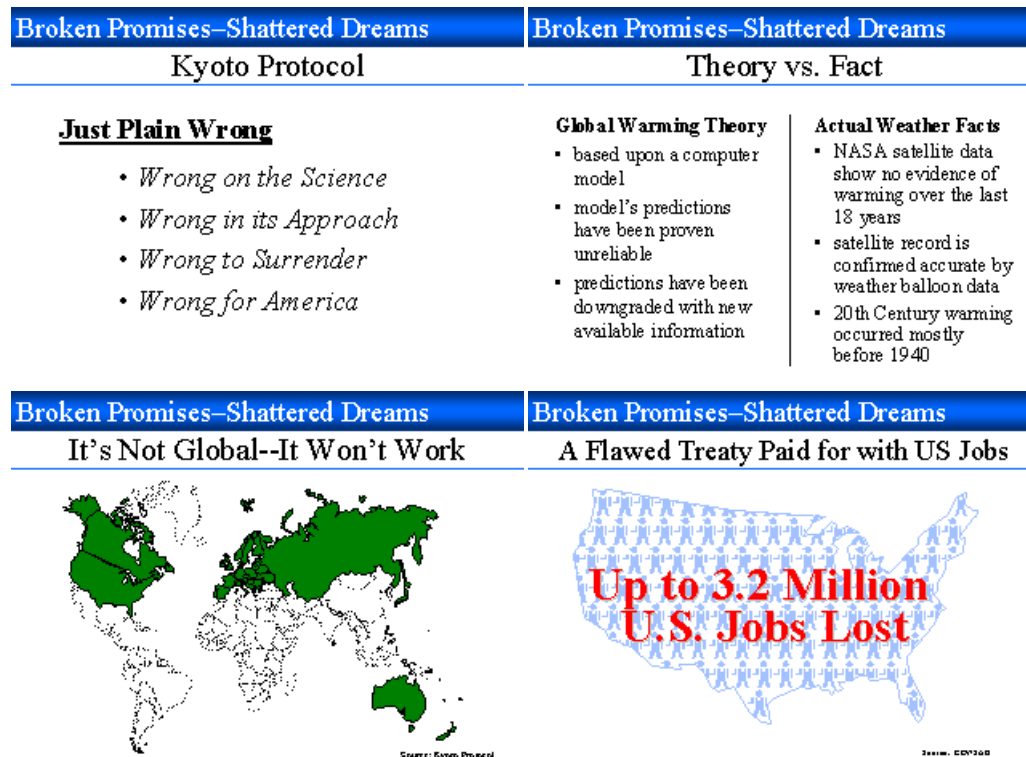


Figure 1: Excerpts from Broken Promises, Shattered Dreams

highlighting the potential failures of agreements and policies that attempted to mitigate climate change. However, the tone of these claims became less aggressive:

Some scientists believe that the one degree of warming that has taken place over the past 100 years is evidence that potential catastrophic climate change is an imminent threat. However, other equally-qualified experts are not so sure. They point to the fact that most of the warming that occurred in the 20th century happened prior to the 1920's - when manmade emissions began a rapid increase. (ABEC 2004a)

Regulating CO₂ - through emissions caps-as a means of addressing climate change concerns is ineffective and comes at a huge cost to the domestic economy. CO₂ regulation is ineffective because most of the projected growth in emissions will occur in countries with rapidly-developing economies (China, India, and others). (ABEC 2004a)

Showing progress on addressing climate change concerns does not have to come at the expense of the crippling the American economy. Given the remaining scientific uncertainties surrounding this issue, commonsense measures - like

sequestration and investing in technology - make more sense than increasing energy costs on American working families and businesses. (ABEC 2004a)

This represents a slight shift in claims for CEED and ABEC. Although suggesting that climate change may not be a reality, the above claims focus on technology as the solution to issues rather than what ABEC considers to be ineffective regulation or policy agreements. This shift may have been due to the progression of popular acceptance of climate change as well as increased discussion of possible technological solutions. By beginning to align solutions to climate change with technology, this provided a possible window for coal processes to be framed as a part of these solutions.

When ACCCE was launched in 2008, however, little discussion occurred over the reality of climate change or climate science issues. Indeed, even the name change to the “American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity” showed a new focus in regards to environmental and energy issues. Rather than focusing upon the science behind climate change, ACCCE actively promoted *clean coal technologies* as part of the solution to climate change and many other environmental problems:

The coal-based electricity sector is committed to continuous environmental improvements in the coal-based electricity sector, including the capture and storage of greenhouse gases. That is why the industry has invested billions of dollars in new advanced technologies - including designs for the world's first pollution-free, carbon-neutral coal-based power plant. (ACCCE 2008d)

The industry also supports federal policies to achieve meaningful reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in the utility sector, while at the same time protecting energy security and fuel diversity and keeping energy costs affordable for consumers. Striking this balance will require hard work, but it can be done. (ACCCE 2008d)

We see climate change is a global issue requiring leadership by the United States and actions by all nations in a spirit of shared responsibility to devise and carry out practical, cost-effective measures by government, business, and citizens to slow, stop, and then reverse the growth of manmade greenhouse gas emissions.

We know that coal has a big role to play in the future, even with the possibility (even likelihood) of future carbon regulations. That is why investing in advanced clean coal technologies for the capture and storage of CO₂ is so important, and we call upon groups that might not have supported coal R&D in the past to reconsider their position on that point. (ACCCE 2008d)

This orientation of claims moves away from the science of climate change and pushes attention towards coal's active participation in seemingly positive attempts to curtail the causes of climate change. ACCCE recognizes the possibility and likelihood of legislation related to carbon control and provides clean coal technologies as a part of that process. ACCCE further points to groups who are skeptical of coal as a possibility, suggesting that research and development efforts related to clean coal technologies should not be a point of contention within the climate change discourse. This shift in claims promotes the coal industry as a responsible part of solutions to environmental problems.

Summary of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE Climate Change Engagement

The above claims provide context to how CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE evolved their claims-making over time with regards to climate change. Earlier claims focused upon skepticism related to the science and possible damaging effects of regulation. The next phase of claims still evoked skepticism of the reality of climate change, but proposed technological advancements as a possible solution to climate change as well as other environmental issues. The evolution of CEED and ABEC into the "American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity" represented another shift in claims, which moved away from discussions of climate change as a physical and scientific reality, and focused solely on framing coal and clean coal technologies as a part of responsible and environmentally sound energy production.

What is important to take from this change in claims, however, is the similar conclusion of all of these claims: that climate change is not a problem. Earlier claims that denied the existence of climate change suggest that the issue is not a problem because it is not real. However, later claims, although accepting the reality of the issue, suggests that climate change is still not a problem because it can be addressed by technological improvements, including clean coal technologies. This evolution of framing is an example of active efforts to create *non-problems* by industry actors in regards to environmental issues (Gaventa 1982; Freudenburg and Gramling 1994; McCright and Dunlap 2000, 2003; Freudenburg 2005a, 2005b; Bonds 2010). Whether denying the science behind an issue or suggesting only technological fixes to complex environmental issues, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE, attempted to frame climate change as a non-problem.

The active framing processes that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE participated in with regards to environmental issues were also coupled with political actions. These actions can be placed under two categories: 1) traditional political engagement efforts, such as lobbying, and attendance at public forums and hearings; and 2) a variety of public outreach efforts. The next section provides an overview of these efforts with notable examples.

Organizational Strategies and Tactics

CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE's political engagement corresponds to major environmental policy debates that were unfolding across the United States in the 1990s and 2000s. All of these debates had the potential to adversely affect coal or could provide an opportunity to promote coal in a new way. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE appeared to harness this dual understanding through the types of political actions and claims-making

processes that they participated in. These include traditional political actions, such as lobbying and participation in political hearings and advisory boards, and public outreach efforts. In this first section, I focus on the traditional political actions utilized by CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE.

Traditional Political Actions: Legislation Focused

Lobbying

Lobbying is considered one of the most traditional political actions in modern political systems. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE all participated in lobbying. Since the passage of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, all organizations and individuals representing organizations are required to report their lobbying expenditures to the Office of the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives. After these expenditures are reported, this information is available for public viewing. I was able to obtain lobbying expenditure reports for CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE from 2005 to 2009. It is unclear if CEED and ABEC filed reports for 1995-2004 or if they were filed under names not affiliated with CEED and ABEC leadership. However, the figures from 2004-2009 still provide a glimpse of the lobbying activities of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE. Table 6 details these expenditures.

Lobbying disclosure cannot provide a holistic understanding of the monetary resources available to organizations for political efforts, but the numbers that are visible through these reports still provide context for partially understanding these resources. When compared to other highly visible environmental political actors, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE, at least through these reported numbers, appear to have an advantage of monetary resources for lobbying.

Table 6: Lobbying Expenditures of ABEC and ACCCE

Year		ABEC	ACCCE
2005	Midyear	\$460,000	
	Year end	\$1,534,329	
	Total:	\$1,994,329	
2006	Midyear	\$569,763	
	Year end	\$1,993,228	
	Total:	\$2,562,991	
2007	Midyear	\$360,000	
	Year end	\$2,660,000	
	Total:	\$3,020,000	
2008	Quarter 1		\$1,870,000
	Quarter 2		\$2,780,759
	Quarter 3		\$3,834,541
	Quarter 4		\$1,459,976
	Total:		\$9,945,276
2009	Quarter 1		\$360,000
	Quarter 2		\$544,843
	Quarter 3		\$246,093
	Quarter 4		\$350,000
	Total:		\$1,500,936

For example, in 2008 ACCCE reported a total of \$9,945,276 in lobbying expenditures.

This was certainly an important political year, as this corresponded to the U.S.

presidential election. In comparison, Greenpeace, one of the largest and most politically active environmental organizations in the U.S., reported lobbying expenditures of \$70,700 for all of 2008. For the same year, another large environmental organization, the Sierra Club, reported \$730,000 for the full year.³

CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE all reported reasons for lobbying to be related to specific environmental policies and usually under the broad category of “Energy/Nuclear” for filing purposes, though in other years, other categories were also selected related to the environment or technology. In addition to their lobbying efforts,

³ Lobbying expenditures can be accessed by visiting the Lobbying Disclosure website of the Office of Clerk, <http://lobbyingdisclosure.house.gov/>

these lobbying expenditures provide a window into the financial resources that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE had at their disposal for formal lobbying and other activities.

Participation in Public Meetings

In addition to lobbying, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE staff also participated in a number of public meetings regarding political issues they saw as potential threats to coal. Although attendance at meetings and hearings is not uncommon for industry representatives, the approach to these meetings for CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE was to have a concrete political strategy in place in order to influence procedures and serve as a voice for coal interests. This further provides an understanding of how CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE actualized their mission statements by voicing absolute support for coal. Although many regard environmental politics as a space of cooperation and compromise (Garner 2011), most meetings and hearings that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE participated in were adversarial with no budging from their core purpose, which was to protect and promote the use of coal.

Examining their participation in public meetings also provided insight into what other actors the organizations perceived as allies or enemies. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE noted cooperative relationships with a number of other actors including:

- Scientists
- Other coal industry-funded organizations
- The U.S. Department of Energy
- Labor Unions, rail and coal centered
- Local and state government officials
- Coalitions of some or all of the above groups

The creation of a coalition in response to hearings about potential legislation that would require utility companies to switch to less environmentally damaging energy sources provides insight into these cooperative relationships:

The CEED Western office developed a Colorado coalition to support coal's position on mandated fuel switching. Members of the coalition, called Coalition to Clear the Air, include CEED member companies, the Public Service Corporation of Colorado, the Colorado Mining Association and the Colorado Railroad Association. The coalition funded a top flight law firm and a scientific expert with superb credibility to work on our behalf on the fuel switching issue in Colorado. We face a number of other important issues in Colorado and the fuel switching issue may well be fought out in the state legislature. (CEED 1995)

This also highlights CEED's use of a scientist as an expert witness within this particular meeting. The name of the coalition frames itself with not only an environmental cause, but also with the popular phrase "clear the air."

CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE also identified and interacted with groups that they deemed as threats to coal when reflecting on these meetings throughout their documents:

- Local environmental organizations
- Large national environmental organizations
- Scientists
- Oil and Natural Gas companies and lobbies
- Renewable energy companies
- The EPA
- Local and state government officials
- Coalitions of some of all of the above groups

Some of these groups may be expected to have adversarial relationships with the coal industry because they advocate for measures to limit coal use and frame coal as a harmful product. For example, as reflected upon in a 1997 newsletter, CEED responded to efforts of a coalition named "SEED" as working to position other types of energy sources as cleaner and more environmentally friendly than coal:

A recently released report by Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) tried to convince the media and the public that coal-fired power plants in Texas are the major cause of environmentally-related health problems. The report dubs the current form of generating electricity the "Brown Plan". Meanwhile, SEED labeled its own plan, which uses more natural gas and renewables to generate electricity, the "Clean Plan"; ironically, SEED's report failed to mention the cost of the plan but used plenty of scare tactics to mislead the uninformed.

The report's purpose is to support efforts by renewable and environmental groups who want to force language into an electric deregulation bill favoring renewables and punishing coal-fired generation. CEED will not only respond to this attack, but would go on the offensive to preserve a viable coal market in Texas. (CEED 1997a)

This response shows how CEED identified this group and their political activities as threatening to coal use stating that these efforts constituted an “attack” on coal.

The above example shows political involvement of the organizations as constituting a reaction to other groups. However, other instances show a more sustained political involvement by the organizations:

Regarding the proposed merger of Public Service Company of Colorado and Southwest Public Service, CEED intervened with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission to be a party in the event anti-coal forces also intervene to preclude the use of coal as a contingency of the Commission approving the merger. Subsequently, a coalition of anti-coal forces has intervened. Along with the utility, CEED will monitor the process to protect coal's interests. (CEED 1996)

This instance shows how CEED preemptively occupied a political space in the event that a group would emerge to threaten coal use. What is interesting about this instance is that CEED prepared for a potential attack on coal use and preemptively established a relationship with the utility commission. This instance shows that CEED's political engagement was not always a reaction to environmentalists' actions or claims. Rather, CEED worked to identify possible situations where coal may be threatened.

Public Outreach/Engagement Efforts

What was perhaps most prevalent throughout CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE's documents was evidence of the many types of public outreach and engagement activities that the organizations participated in over time. These efforts were strikingly similar to grassroots organizations. This section provides examples and descriptions of these

activities, providing examples of exemplary activities. I also discuss how ABEC/ACCCE elevated its outreach efforts during the 2008 election.

Commercials and Advertisements

CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE all sponsored commercials and advertisements promoting their message about coal and coal's role in energy and environmental issues. The variety of outlets that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE utilized to promote their messages varied from conventional sources, such as newspapers, television commercials, and radio broadcasts, to more alternative sources, such as lunch tray inserts, sponsoring college bowl games and golf tournaments, and even creating a special advertisement to be broadcast on airplanes:

The next time you board an airplane, you may hear the flight attendant say something like “coffee, tea ... or electricity from coal.” During the month of June, travelers on United Airlines flights could watch a short subject video produced by ABEC that discusses coal's role in providing reliable, affordable, and increasingly clean electricity for American homes, schools, and businesses. The segment, filmed at the Power System Design Facility located in Wilsonville, Alabama, airs a part of a MSNBC news feature hosted by Matt Lauer. (ABEC 2004b)

Advertisements were timed to correspond with important legislation and other prominent political moments within communities and on a national level.

Educational Engagement

Engagement with various educational institutions and representatives was an ongoing part of CEED, ABEC and ACCCE's outreach efforts. In examining the organizations' documents, several activities were used to influence educational institutions, particularly schools and museums. Below is a list of these activities:

- Sponsorship and attendance at science teacher conferences
- Creation of workshops for teachers regarding coal-based energy

- Facilitating tours for teachers of coal-fired power plants
- Consulting museums on coal exhibits, particularly updating exhibits to include information on clean coal technology
- Creation of curriculum for primary and secondary schools related to coal-based electricity
- Highlighting research efforts of university departments across the country

These activities show that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE were particularly active in promoting coal throughout different levels and kinds of educational and knowledge-shaping institutions. For example, CEED purchased space in the National Science Teachers Association magazine *Science Scope*:

Coal Technology: The Future is Now (described in February's CEEDNews) has officially hit the stands. *Science Scope*, the National Science Teachers Association's (NSTA) magazine, featured the poster, as an insert, and a two-page article entitled Technology and "Buried Sunshine" in its February 1995 issue. The article described the importance of coal technology, the layout of the poster, and suggested educational activities to help students learn about coal. *Science Scope* is distributed to 18,000 middle school teachers throughout the United States. The National Energy Foundation (NEF) estimates that if every teacher hangs the poster on the classroom wall, between 1,740,000 and 2,000,000 students will study it. (CEED 1995)

In addition to these physical outreach efforts, both CEED and ACCCE provided special sections on their websites for teachers and students that detailed coal's role in environmental improvement as well as in electricity generation.

Community Event Attendance

CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE all engaged with community members through attendance at local events. Although representatives of the organizations often participated in environmental and energy related public hearings and meetings, this community engagement consisted of positive public outreach efforts primarily promoting

a positive image of coal. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE representatives handed out literature and engaged with community members at county and state fairs, major sports events (notably many NASCAR events and the 2008 World Series), and on college campuses. This community engagement was usually performed by a “street team,” which usually consisted of 3-4 young individuals (ABEC 2008). The primary purpose of these street teams was to educate the public about coal and engage with community members about their own experiences related to coal.

2008 Presidential Election

Although CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE continuously participated in public outreach efforts, ACCCE’s outreach efforts during the 2008 U.S. Presidential election provide elevated insight into the organization’s political strategies, resources, and tactics. ACCCE participated in public outreach efforts in the months leading up to the election. In order to implement a successful strategy, the organization hired a well-known public relations firm to organize and manage this particular campaign. In a newsletter⁴, the director of the hired PR firm, Suzanne Hawthorne, details how the campaign unfolded and suggested that the group was so successful that they “nearly turned candidate events into clean coal rallies.” Indeed, when examining the well-coordinated efforts of ACCCE’s participation in the events surrounding the 2008 presidential election, ACCCE’s presence could not be denied. ACCCE blog posts from 2007 to 2008 and the Hawthorne (2008) letter revealed a number of activities that ACCCE staff and “street teams” participated in:

⁴ This newsletter is available via Hawthorne’s website
(<http://www.hawthorngroup.com/newsletter/index.BAK.html>)

- Handed out t-shirts, coffee cups, flyers, business cards, restaurant placemat, hats, pens, stickers with “Clean Coal” and “America’s Power” on them at political rallies
- Attended major community and election events, including both the Democratic and Republican national conventions. ACCCE members traveled in flex fuel mini-vans across seven states stopping in 207 cities and towns, which totaled driving over 44,500 miles combined
- Participated in television and radio interviews
- Engaged in massive media campaign buying billboard space, commercial time, and newspaper advertisements
- Sponsored two CNN broadcasts of Presidential Debates
- Taking pictures with candidates in Clean Coal branded hats and t-shirts

This reflects the vigorous branding and public engagement efforts that the hired firm staff participated in throughout the election. In addition, the above activities also reflect monetary resources *in action*. ACCCE was able to hire a professional firm and staff to work and participate in these events surrounding the election.

The goal of this campaign was to reach out to the public as well as present coal as a non-partisan issue. By the end of the election, both major presidential candidates voiced support for clean coal technologies and even alluded to incorporating clean coal development into their energy and environmental agendas. Although difficult to attribute this directly to ACCCE’s efforts, the time and energy that went into this campaign, makes it difficult not to assume that these efforts had some lasting effect.

Summary of Public Outreach/Engagement Activities

In examining the above political activities of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE, the variety of activities the organizations engaged in is impressive. The organizations all participated in traditional forms of political activities through lobbying and attending public meetings. In public meetings, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE represented the coal industry's many interests and often served as a counterforce to environmental groups as well as other groups working to promote other energy and environmental plans that could potentially negatively affect coal use. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE actively participated in these meetings with the sole intention of protection and promotion of coal.

The public outreach efforts that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE engaged in ranged from the creation of commercials and advertisements to direct community engagement. These strategies mirror many efforts of grassroots organizations. As evident from the public outreach efforts surrounding the 2008 presidential election, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE recognized a highly salient political moment to engage with the wider public as well as policy-makers. It is notable that by the end of the election, both major candidates incorporated clean coal into their proposed environmental and energy plans.

The political tactics that the organizations participated in over time provides insight on *how* CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE operated as political actors. However, *what* they were saying during this political engagement was largely related to an attempt to re-frame coal, coal processes, and the coal industry as a whole. The next section details this reframing by focusing on three major frames that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE created and promoted over time.

Fixing Coal's Image Problem: the Reframing of Coal

This final section discusses the reframing of coal by CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE. One of the primary reasons the National Coal Council suggested that an organization representing coal be created was because of “coal’s image problem.” This charged CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE with the challenge of reorienting and reframing coal as a desirable or at least non-problematic energy source. Scholars have identified this process as “diversionary reframing” (Freudenburg and Gramling 1994; Krogman 1996, Bonds 2010). The careful reframing that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE promoted with regards to coal and coal processes can be understood under three broad categories: 1) community-based and American; 2) responsible and clean; and 3) necessary and non-negotiable.

Coal is American Communities

One of the primary themes found throughout the organizations’ outreach materials and framing of coal related to how coal was an essential part of American communities and a part of everyday American life. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE continuously utilized this frame to draw attention to not only U.S. dependence on coal as an energy source, but also how coal worked within community structures as a job source, as a cheap and reliable energy resource, and a part of the daily lives of people. The following four excerpts provide context to this frame:

Coal reserves are found in 38 states, and the production of coal creates jobs in the mining, transportation, and other related sectors. Coal is consumed in all 50 states, with the generation of electricity being the overwhelmingly major use for coal mined in the U.S. (CEED 1999d)

Flip on a light, turn on your computer, pop dinner in the microwave... chances are you are using coal-based electricity. In fact, 56% of all electricity consumed by American households and businesses comes from coal. (ABEC 2000C)

The fact is -- low-cost electricity is important to consumers ... both big and small. Access to affordable electricity keeps manufacturing and other business costs low, creating jobs for American workers; less money spent on household energy costs means more resources available for other necessities. (ABEC 2004a)

Currently, over half of the electricity that heats our homes, lights our schools, and powers our businesses come from coal. That is more than from all other energy resources combined. (ABEC 2004d)

This frame is meant to establish a consciousness about how coal is already a component of community life and, further, an essential component of the everyday experiences of people. By focusing upon the everyday experience and use of coal, this frame attempts to highlight the positive and existing role that coal plays in American society.

Within this frame, there was also a strong connection to coal being a domestic, or “American,” energy source. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE often discussed coal in connection to issues of energy security, national security, and economic security:

Coal, America’s most abundant energy resource, provides low-cost, reliable, environmentally compatible electricity for millions of American households, schools, small businesses, and industrial users. Coal-fueled electricity powers a competitive U.S. economy. (CEED 1999a)

Our reliance on inexpensive coal-based electricity enhances our nation's energy security, because coal is a domestically abundant energy resource. (ABEC 2000C)

One way to increase our energy security is to use the affordable and reliable energy from American coal. Coal generates electricity at one-third the cost of other fuels – and our country has more than 200 years of available coal reserves. We need to wean ourselves off foreign oil and start putting our most abundant domestic fuel to use on the road. (ACCCE 2009)

This framing connects coal to other issues besides environmental problems. By diverting attention away from environmental harms caused by coal, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE attempt to connect coal use to being a part of solutions to other social problems. These other social problems, energy and economic security, also connect to social problems that many believe are more important than environmental issues. This has the potential to

create a hierarchy of concern for individuals where they recognize other issues as more important than environmental problems related to coal.

Coal is Responsible and Clean

The second prominent framing of coal constructed and promoted by CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE suggests that coal and the coal industry are responsible environmental actors. This situates coal not only an essential part of the community, but also as a part of the solution to environmental problems. This framing is clearly a direct response to other framings of coal as a “dirty” energy source. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE attempt to challenge this framing in two primary ways. First, there is a focus on the way that coal has historically been a responsible environmental actor. This framing situates coal as an active part of environmental improvements:

America's environment is getting better. In fact, sulfur dioxide emissions are lower today than in 1920. Coal-fueled utilities have led the way in reducing these emissions through the use of new technologies. (CEED 1999d)

Since 1970, the industry has invested over \$50 billion in cutting-edge technologies to clean the air we breathe and protect our environment. (ABEC 2000b)

There has never been an environmental challenge facing the coal-based electricity sector for which technology has not provided the ultimate solution. (ACCCE 2008e)

Even as the use of coal for generating electricity has nearly tripled over the past 30 years, emissions from coal-based power plants have been dramatically reduced through the use of advanced technologies. Today's coal-based electricity generating fleet is 70% cleaner than it was in 1970 (based upon emissions per unit of energy produced). (ACCCE 2008e)

This framing attempts to show how the coal industry has historically been an active and willing participant in environmental improvement efforts. Although not denying

environmental issues outright, this framing brings focus to how coal-based processes and companies have been actualizing what they consider to be environmental improvements.

In addition to highlighting the alleged environmental improvements made by the coal industry, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE also draw attention to new and future technological enhancements to coal processes.

These innovative devices make it possible for existing coal-based power plants, as well as newly constructed facilities, to meet more stringent environmental performance standards. The use of clean coal technologies has made it possible to rely upon America's vast reserves of coal to produce affordable, environmentally-friendly electricity for American homes and businesses. (CEED 2003a)

Technology experts agree, that we'll meet this challenge, and that coal will remain a low-cost energy option in the future even considering the cost of new technologies to capture and store CO₂ - a common greenhouse gas. (ACCCE 2008e)

This framing aligns “clean coal technologies” with current and future environmental concerns. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE attempt to show that the coal industry is being responsible in addressing environmental concerns as well as considering how to address future concerns. This frame connects to popular belief that technology is the answer to environmental problems (Cable and Cable 1995). This framing suggests that evolving current industrial processes, such as the burning of coal for electricity, may solve environmental issues. Such a suggestion is tied to popular belief that technological advancements are the primary key to addressing environmental problems.

Coal is Necessary and Non-Negotiable

The final re-framing of coal promoted by CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE suggests that coal is a necessary and non-negotiable energy source. This framing relies on assumptions of continued economic growth, current financial hardships for families, and suggestion that other forms of energy will be unable to meet energy demands:

Given the sheer size of U.S. coal reserves and technology's ability to improve the environmental performance of coal-based generation, electricity from coal must remain a cornerstone of America's energy future. Our continued economic growth and energy security depend on it. (CEED 2003b)

So when somebody says that the cost of energy doesn't matter - remember that every dollar spent on energy expenses is one less dollar left to cover health care, educational or other necessities. (ACCCE 2008c)

And even assuming – as we do – that renewable energy sources will generate more and more electricity over time, the Energy Information Administration estimates that coal will produce more, not less, of our electricity by 2030. (ABEC 2008)

This is remarkable progress when you consider that the growth in the U.S. population and increased economic activity will continue to increase the demand for electricity...electricity that will come largely from coal. (CEED 1999d)

This re-framing of coal appears to be a response to the larger energy and environmental debates regarding possible transitions away from fossil fuels. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE work to establish that such a transition would still require the use of coal. However, this re-framing further suggests that coal will still be an important part of energy because of the assumption of continued economic and population growth. However, coal use is still not problematic because of the technological advances.

Summary of Reframing Coal

Through these three reframings of coal, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE attempted to create a new image for coal that would influence public understanding of coal as an energy source. The first reframing attempts to orient attention to how coal is a part of American's daily lives and of their communities as a whole. This frame also presents coal as an American energy source. The second reframing presents coal, coal processes, and the coal industry as environmentally responsible. By framing coal as “clean” this serves to redirect assumptions that coal is an environmentally damaging and dirty energy source.

Further, the coal industry is presented as an environmentally friendly actor rather than one that commits environmental harm. Finally, by reframing coal as a necessary and non-negotiable energy source, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE attempt to redirect the visions for sustainability by suggesting that coal will continue to be an important energy source for the near future. This suggests that processes to develop clean coal technologies must be actualized regardless of how certain groups understand coal. Even if individuals understand coal to be a “dirty” energy source, the above three reframings provide alternative understandings of coal that have the potential to complicate public discourse related to environmental and energy issues.

CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE were charged with re-framing coal’s image. Whether or not this has been successful within larger public discourse is difficult to measure. However, these three reframings work on many different levels to where coal has, at the least, become a more complex energy source, industrial process, and environmental actor.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion of the Case

This chapter provides a discussion of how the case study challenges, reaffirms, and evolves theoretical assumptions about business as an environmental actor by examining CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE's political intentions and actions through productivist and ecological modernization perspectives. I then conclude this thesis by discussing limitations of the case, possible avenues for further research, and final reflections on the case study.

Theoretical Assumptions: Challenges, Affirmations, and Needed Evolution

How does this case study connect to existing theoretical assumptions of business as an environmental actor? When examining CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE through a productivist lens, the case appears to support and give context to more productivist assumptions than ecological modernization assumptions. Productivists understand business as an environmental actor that is unlikely to participate in meaningful environmental improvements, is likely to attempt to suppress environmental policies and deny environmental harm, and is likely to participate in environmental contests on local, national, and international levels in order to continue their production across state lines. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE's political intentions and actions suggest that the coal industry, through these organizations, were participating in environmental politics with a clear mission: to continue the use of coal and coal processes. Although CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE's political actions and strategies evolved over time, their core reference point of continuing coal use drove these actions and strategies. This core reference point supports many of the theoretical assumptions provided by productivist perspectives.

Do any of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE's political intentions or activities support ecological modernization perspectives? In some ways, yes. Ecological modernization perspectives suggest that business, as environmental actor, has the potential to play a meaningful role in creating and sponsoring environmental improvements, is likely to willingly participate in environmental politics, and is likely to support state efforts to actualize environmental policies. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE were incredibly active in environmental politics and appeared to be interested, particularly in the late 2000s, in the actualization of environmental improvements through the creation of "clean coal technologies." However, if one goes beyond the surface level of these observations, the core reference point and political intentions provide a much different perspective of the motivations behind these actions. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE, although participating in environmental politics, privileged other concerns, particularly their continuation as an industry, above environmental improvements. Although ecological modernization perspectives would likely suggest that the promotion of clean coal technologies constitute attempts of environmental improvements, this neglects the many other political actions and core intentions of these groups and industries within environmental politics.

Beyond these theoretical assumptions, I suggest that this case provides insight into three major areas: 1) how and why business organizes to respond to political threats; 2) the types of political actions business participates in when responding to these threats; and 3) the role that business plays in larger political discourse.

This case study provided an example of how business collectively organizes in response to what they perceive to be political threats. In examining the creation and stated purposes of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE, three important observations emerge.

First, these organizations provided the structure and means for the coal industry to actively participate in public outreach efforts and political engagement related to issues concerning the use of coal. This provides an understanding that business can organize and serve as an active participant in political contests. CEED's inception provides insight into the collective decision-making and recognition of common grievances by individual firms. This is reminiscent of the collective recognition of grievances that social movement participants engage in. Also, in recognizing the concessions received by social movement organizations, the establishment of CEED provides an example of how business collectively responds to perceived threats or loss of political power. By establishing a politically focused organization, the coal industry established itself as an active political force through the very creation of CEED.

When examining the kinds of firms and organizations that came together to form CEED, this provides insight into the types of broad-based coalitions that can be formed across sectors and within an industry. CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE primarily engaged in political issues related to the burning of coal. However, many of the firms and organizations involved in CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE were primarily involved in coal extraction or coal transport. This shows that these firms considered potential threats to any part of the cycle of coal as worthy of political intervention. In addition to focusing on policy, this group of firms and associations also recognized the larger image of coal as being important for public acceptance of coal processes and coal use. By recognizing the need to intervene in both the political issues and the larger discourse related to coal, the leadership of these firms, such as John Snow, CSX's former CEO, show a collective political consciousness. The decision to collectively create a political organization

provides an opportunity to scholars to better understand business and business leadership as political actors.

Second, in seeing the evolution of the organization's mission statements over time, it is clear that the organizations were created for the purpose of protect and promotion of coal as a product and energy source. This purpose served as the core reference point for decision-making, campaigning, and any other political actions that the organizations participated in over time. This draws attention to the political intentions of these groups. Although some scholars suggest that business may be an active force in creating and envisioning environmentally sustainable products and processes, in this case other political goals and motivations were of more importance to business. Even as the organization evolved over time, this core reference point, the protection and promotion of coal, was still central to all political activities, participation in environmental discourse, and framing of coal as an energy source and environmental issue.

As political actors, the political activities that CEED, ABEC and ACCCE participated in provide insight into organizational and political strategies of the coal industry. Although business is widely known for its traditional political engagement, the public outreach efforts that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE participated in mirror many strategies of grassroots social movement organizations. Just as other social movement organizations borrow and learn from other movements (Whittier 2004), this case provides evidence that other actors, even powerful actors, also participate in this borrowing and learning process.

CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE's public outreach efforts also call attention to the resources that business brings to political spaces. Although it is important to recognize

alternative types of resources and the strengths of many actors within political contests, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE, by virtue of their monetary resources had the ability to not only have a voice in these spaces, but a much louder voice. The outreach efforts that ACCCE participated in with regards to the 2008 presidential election show not only an effective public outreach strategy, but also the ability of the organization to promote themselves in a variety of political moments. The individuals promoting ACCCE, the materials they were handing out, the buses that they drove, and the air time and advertising that they bought, all had to be funded. While it may be false to suggest that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE had access to unlimited funding, as an industry-funded organization, it is not a stretch to assume the organization had a vast amount of monetary resources.

Finally, the active efforts of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE to reframe coal, coal processes, and the coal industry as a whole suggests that business can and will respond to negative assumptions about their products, practices, and identities. The reframing efforts that CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE all participated in were a response to the negative framing of coal that had been promoted by the environmental movement and appeared to be a part of larger public consciousness at the time. This reframing effort not only provided a new reference point for popular consciousness about coal, but also served to complicate discussions about actualizing environmental improvements within a society.

Limitations

The qualitative case study of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE found many significant results for understanding business, particularly the coal industry, as a political actor within environmental politics. However, this study has limitations. First, I only utilized

documents and archival data to build this case. Incorporating interviews with individuals within the organizations or past employees of the organizations may have helped to provide more insight into the political decisions that were made within the organizations over time. Early in the study, I elected to not pursue avenues to reach out to these individuals primarily because of the plethora of documents I was able to find. However, incorporating interviews would help with reliability related to this study.

Second, casting a wide time period for this study limited my ability to provide insight into more minute details of the organizations' political activities, particularly in relation to specific environmental issues. As noted in Table 5, CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE participated in a number of environmental and energy policy spaces. Although important to witness the overarching political strategies of the groups, perhaps narrowing my approach to focus upon how the organizations moved through one political issue over time would have provided different insights. However, with this case study and all of the data gathered, this may be a future research avenue.

Future Research

Many paths for future research can be found in both my findings and caveats. I suggest that industry-funded organizations continue to be studied through a sociological lens, as they are important representatives of business within environmental politics. The study of industry-funded organizations has the potential to further define a type of business-based environmental actor, which would serve to provide more clarity on the role of business within environmental politics as well as other political areas.

To enrich this area, scholars could focus on other industries to examine how similar broad-based industry-funded organizations participate in environmental politics.

Further, it would be interesting to know if more industries have long-term political groups that mirror the work and purpose of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE or if their political strategies differ. Also, it would be interesting to know if industry-funded organizations such as these are found across the globe. Are there certain social conditions that encourage the rise of industry-funded organizations? Or, with the rise globalization, do industry-funded organizations preemptively occupy and suppress environmental politics in other areas?

In addition, focusing upon the internal processes of industry-funded organizations would provide many avenues for scholarly work. Although access may be difficult for scholars, gaining insight into the collective identity of industry-funded organizations would provide valuable knowledge about political identities within environmental politics. Since industry-funded organizations are clearly important political actors, the individuals that make up those organizations should receive some attention. I wonder what they think of their jobs, if they enjoy their work, and if they identify as environmentalists.

Further, as was seen in my case, this group of coal-industry funded organizations encountered groups that advocated for the use of natural gas and oil. It would be interesting to know if there is any interaction with other industry-funded groups that represented different industries. How do these organizations perceive one another? My case suggested that there was a division between fossil fuels industries, which may suggest some fragments within capital. This area needs more discussion and focus.

As ACCCE is still an active organization, it would be useful to revisit ACCCE's work in a few years to see if they still exist and what kind of evolution had occurred with

the organization. This research could extend from this case by focusing on ACCCE's larger political engagement or perhaps focus on one environmental issue that they engage with over time. From looking back at the 20 years of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE, it is very possible that they will continue to be a political force within environmental politics for years to come.

Finally, aside from environmental politics, I encourage scholars to consider using Internet archives a tool to build or strengthen case study research. Methodological considerations related to Internet archives need to be further developed in order for this to become a more widely used and acceptable data source.

Conclusions

This thesis examined how a group of coal industry representatives, through their creation of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE, established itself as a long-term political force within environmental politics. I first provided an overview of the social sources of environmental problems, which gives insight into why certain actors are interested in environmental politics. The environmental movement, the scientific community, the mass media, the state, and business have all been identified as important environmental actors. This thesis provided context to how business works as an environmental actor by focusing on the political strategies and actions of coal-industry funded organizations over time. Findings from the case suggest that this group of business actors collectively organize and pursue political strategies of protection of their interests and positive promotion of products and processes.

Organizations such as CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE matter for the larger field of environmental politics. They matter because they show industry political engagement is

sustained, conscious, and intentional. They matter because they complicate the discussion of environmental improvements, highlighting the dependency our social systems have on unsustainable practices, and questioning our ability and our desires to move towards a system with more sustainable practices. They also matter because they have massive resources and expertise to promote their message and vision of themselves, which potentially crowds out discussions of alternative futures and human-environment relationships.

They also matter because their presence and participation in environmental politics shows that nothing is certain within these political spaces. The coal industry recognized that changes in institutional practices and public perception could manifest in drastic changes to their ability to continue their practices and make a profit through coal use. However, this recognition came only after the rise in public support for and desire to see changes to human-environment relationships. This is a key part of environmental politics and business's actions within these spaces. The politics of protection and promotion provide context for understanding how business works as a *political* actor within environmental controversies. Without recognizing how and why business politically participates in environmental politics, a larger understanding of the political, ideological, and material intentions of business within these spaces is neglected and theoretical assumptions miss the intricacies of environmental politics.

ACCCE continues as of this writing to participate in the politics of protection and promotion of coal, coal processes, and the coal industry as a whole. In regards to political engagement, ACCCE is currently participating in issues surrounding the EPA's New Source Performance Standards, which they believe to be a part of the EPA's "war on

coal” (ACCCE 2012b). On the public outreach front, ACCCE recently started sponsoring NASCAR drivers Dale Earnhardt, Jr. and Cole Whitt and will be traveling to NASCAR events to promote their messaging throughout the summer and fall of 2012 (ACCCE 2012a). NASCAR events average viewerships are well into the millions, which provide another space for public engagement for ACCCE. With the 2012 U.S. Presidential election approaching, ACCCE is preparing for another intensive outreach campaign that engages with the wider American public as well as with policy-makers about coal related issues.

Although difficult to measure the success of CEED, ABEC, and ACCCE’s success as a political force, it is clear that the coal industry, through these organizations, is here to stay and engage with the public and policy makers on issues connected to coal.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Methodological Appendix: The Internet and Social Science Research

All of the data used for this study was accessed through and collected from the Internet. The Internet serves as an important point of study for scholars as a social phenomenon itself and as a dynamic data source (Weare and Lin 2000; Pudrovskaya and Ferree 2004; Markham 2007; Rice 2010). Markham (2007:330) conceptualizes the Internet in three interconnected contexts: as a *tool*, a *place*, and/or a *way of being*. As a tool, Markham suggests that the Internet is used for “retrieving or transmitting information and connecting with others” (2007:330). As a place, Markham explains that the Internet is also a social place for communication and connection. Finally, as a way of being, the Internet allows for identities to be formed, mediated, and negotiated, and, Markham suggests, for some becomes an “ephemeral territory of exploring the ways individuals in a computer-mediated society construct and experience themselves and others because of or through Internet communication” (2007:330). Indeed, from the perspective of social scientists, all of these contexts provide many opportunities and challenges for research.

Scholars have used the Internet to either supplement or expand traditional research methods. How the Internet may impact and aid survey based research (Anderson and Gansneder 1995; Zhang 1999), content analyses (Haas and Grams 2000, Sohini 2006) and ethnographies (Hine 2000; Markham 2007) have all been explored by scholars. However, how the Internet can contribute to case study research, particularly case studies focusing upon organizations, has received little scholarly attention. This appendix serves as a reflection on my own experience with data searching, selection, and collection through live and archived websites and discusses various challenges and opportunities

that I encountered during this process.

The Internet and Case Studies: Opportunities and Challenges

Case study research relies upon the use of multiple data points to understand social phenomenon. Yin (2009) suggests that multiple types of data help with reliability and validity concerns for case studies. For my own research, the Internet served as an essential resource for documents and archives produced by industry-funded organizations. Without these websites, it would have been difficult to find historical data on organizations that no longer exist or evolve rapidly.

The live and archived websites of these organizations provided a variety of traditional documents and new types of documents, such as web pages and blog posts, that are exclusive to Internet content. In addition, websites also provide multi-media data points such as recorded interviews, commercials, and other many visuals that provide data on organizations. Websites themselves are visual experiences for users and give insight into organizational self-presentation. Pudrovskaya and Ferree (2004) suggest that websites provide “a new and useful form of data about an organization’s identity and priorities because, unlike media representations of the group, it is self-directed” and, further, that a website “provides an open space for self-presentation to the rest of the world” (118).

Scholars who have used websites to either discuss how organizations utilize the Internet to promote their messages or as a general data source for to examine organizational activities. For example, Gibson and Ward (2000) studied how different political parties and candidates utilize the Internet to promote themselves and the success of this usage. For Gibson and Ward, Internet usage was the focus of their analysis.

However, Rice (2010) utilized organization's websites to understand how different organizations represent the relationship between gender equity and trade liberalization. Rice is not interested in how the organizations use their websites as a resource. She primarily focused upon the overall framing strategies used by the organizations.

However, it should be noted that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Studies that focus on the messaging or self-presentation of individuals or organizations may also highlight how the use of the Internet is important for an organization. For example, Rice (2010) discussed language representation on the websites she used as data sources, and suggests that this is important for understanding the audience that the organization is attempting to use through their website. Although Internet usage itself was not the focus of Rice's study, mentioning important components of the websites that relate to her research question is still relevant discussion. For my study, Internet usage over time was interesting to examine because it could be considered an organizational tactic and strategy. However, I primarily used the websites as a point of data collection rather than a point of study in their own right.

Using Internet data provides many challenges that require careful consideration in research design. However, many opportunities exist with Internet content that make it an important and useful data source. This next section provides a brief overview of these challenges and potential strategies for addressing them. I also highlight some opportunities for research that Internet content provides, particularly for case study research of organizations.

Challenges and Opportunities Using Internet Content

Scholars choosing to use the Internet for research are presented with a variety of challenges that must be addressed in research design. Many of these challenges mirror other considerations that scholars have historically used in case study research design. However, even these traditional considerations are slightly different when concerning the Internet. One challenge of Internet content relates to sampling. Questions related to sampling and sampling frames are important to consider because of the sheer size and availability of Internet content (Weare and Lin 2000). This size and availability, however, does not necessarily have to be viewed as a limitation for research—but serves as an opportunity to allow for selective delimitations to manifest. To address this concern, researchers may pick organizations or websites and elect to only discuss content within those sites. Also, scholars may consider selecting specific keywords in order to find organizations or content within websites, which could serve to lessen the amount of content of researchers to sift through.

It is also important not to assume too much importance about Internet content or the reach of the content to the public. With the sheer size of the Internet and the many different actors that utilize the Internet, one set of claims on one website may not be important for the whole scope of the public sphere. A possible way to measure Internet reach is through the use of page counters, which track the number of “hits” that a page receives. However, not all pages contain these. For this challenge, researchers should be careful with attributing too much importance to the websites, particularly if they are attempting to measure outreach or the saliency of claims.

Finally, the Internet is a continuously changing data source, such makes the data contained on the Internet subject to rapid change or quick loss. Web pages or content

contained on web pages can be deleted, added, or changed within a matter of seconds. Although some websites, particularly web versions of newspapers, make the effort to show when they have changed, corrected or made updated to stories, this is not true of all organizations or even media outlets. However, if scholars are able to document or capture these changes, this provides discussions about changes in claims made by organizations. One strategy for addressing this concern is to take screenshots of web pages at different times of day, particularly if there are particular pages that constantly change. If scholars are less interested in daily changes, but still want to document some changes over time, using PDF software is useful. For example, Adobe Acrobat has a feature that allows users to create a full PDF version of a full website or parts of a website, which is then a searchable document. Although this only captures a website at one point in time, this still may be a useful tool, particularly if organizational evolution is of interest to research. PDFs are commonly used in electronic content analysis tools, so these are already in the necessary format.

Another strategy to recover or examine expired, lost, or “dead” websites is to utilize Internet archive systems. Internet archive systems serve as important tools for examining evolution of websites and especially for finding content contained on expired or dead websites. This next section details my own experience with using an Internet archive system called the WayBack Machine⁵.

Internet Archives: the WayBack Machine

The use of Internet archives was essential for my case study. Without the archived websites and the content contained on those websites, I would not have been able to

⁵ To access the WayBack Machine, visit <http://archive.org/web/web.php>.

answer my research questions and would have had to completely rethink my research design. I began my research assuming that I would not be able to find data on ACCCE's predecessor organizations, CEED and ABEC, and was perplexed about how to move forward with documenting this vital history. The majority of the information about CEED and ABEC were contained on other organizations' websites with a clear environmental or anti-capitalist bend, and while useful records and important insight into the perception of these, this was far from enough data to complete this study.

One of my colleagues then suggested that I try to see if CEED's and ABEC's websites were archived through an Internet archiving system that she had recently discovered. This system, called the WayBack Machine (<http://wayback.archive.org/web/>), is a project of the Internet Archive (the IA). The IA is a non-profit organization with the mission to "build an Internet library," which "purposes include offering permanent access for researchers, historians, scholars, people with disabilities, and the general public to historical collections that exist in digital form" (IA 2000). Further, the IA "is working to prevent the Internet--a new medium with major historical significance- and other "born digital" materials from disappearing into the past" (IA 2000). As luck would have it, this site had been extensively archived. The homepage for CEED was archived a total of 187 times. I also typed in ABEC's earliest known address, which yielded an archived site as well. The homepage for ABEC was archived 125 times. I proceeded to explore these archives and, satisfied with the amount of content I saw (which was vast), I decided that I could expand this case study to discuss the evolution of this actor over time.

The WayBack Machine has its limitations. It should be acknowledged and noted

that this is not an archival system that documents every known website and does not currently document every known change to content even on the pages that it does archive. In a note on all of the “captures” of the project, the IA staff reminds viewers that the archive system does not document each time the particular site changed, but how many times the system “crawled” the website and archived it. That is, the Wayback Machine is not meant to be an indicator of *change* of sites. So while 191 captures of CEED’s homepage may seem impressive, this does not mean that the homepage changed 191 times. Indeed, I found that many pages stayed relatively stable overtime except those that were constantly updating content (such as blogs, press releases, and newsletters).

Further, the archives may not contain all components of web pages, particularly images, videos, and other interactive features. This is an area that the IA is working to improve. It should also be noted that even if a certain page on a website is captured, other pages may not be. There were times when I would click to go to another page on the website, and I received a message which explained that this page, though connected to the other parts of the site at the time, was not archived. For example, for a capture of CEED’s page in of 1998, under the main section of “Threats to Affordable Energy,” I was unable to access the “Visibility and Haze” page. In later captures of the site, I was able to access this, but I am unable to determine if the same claims were used stemming back to 1998 unless a specific date was shown on the page.

Exact dates of change are also difficult to determine for some parts of the content. It is relatively easy to pinpoint dates when a “last updated” date is posted or a specific date is tied to content (such as blog posts, which all had date and time stamps on them). I am fairly confident, however, that I have been able to at least find the year of all the

content that I used for this study and usually can also pinpoint the month. Other indicators of time, such as mentions of legislation, major political events or meetings, and other significant historical moments (such as September 11, 2001 and the Big Branch Mine collapse of 2010) also allowed me to place much of the content, and, therefore, many of the claims chronologically. The homepages themselves also served as excellent indicators--websites themselves go through redesigns, which allow a degree of certainty related to placing content on a timeline.

The only portion of the sites that I had little luck accessing were the “Members Only” sections. These sections required at first only a password and later a username and a password. I do believe, however, that I was able to access this area once, which yielded three pages that portrayed quite different content than what was on the other portion of the site that was not a “Members Only” section. These “Members Only” sections later disappeared from the main websites, though it is possible that another website was created that was not as publicly visible. While these parts of the website may have had more overt explanations for the organization’s purpose and political intentions, I believe that the whole of the public site is able to convey these just as well, though they obviously need more critical analysis. These public pages are more interesting for this sociological inquiry, which is interested in the evolution of claims in the public sphere.

These limitations and challenges, however, proved not to be great hindrances to accessing a large amount of content for this study. While I fully acknowledge that I may not have been able to access *all* the content that was historically produced by ACCCE and its predecessor organizations, I am confident I was able to access a significant amount of data that illuminated the organization itself and its political intentions.

Conclusions

Internet content has the ability to serve as either the main or a supplemental source for many types of social research. Case research related to organizational identities and evolution, use of media, and public outreach techniques will likely find websites and content contained on websites important data sources. With well thought out sampling frames, understandings of the limitations of Internet content, and considerations of how to access expired websites, researchers should find the Internet as a useful tool for case study research, particularly for organizations.

Vita

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