Sustainability and the "Greening" of Corporations and Campuses

Sustainability . . . is not an end point, not a resting place, but a process.

—Peggy F. Bartlett and Geoffrey W. Chase, 2004, p. 7

We have defined *sustainability* as the capacity to negotiate environmental, social, and economic needs and desires for current and future generations. But how does one learn what environmental educator Orr calls "the arts of inhabitation"? When should we focus on our individual impacts on the environment and when should we turn our attention to structural change? And who is this "we"?

To attempt to respond to these questions, in this chapter, we introduce you to the fundamental facets of sustainability, critical ways to interpret and to assess corporate "green" products and services, and some of the ways college campuses are responding to the challenges and opportunities posed by unsustainable practices.

Chapter Preview

- In the first section of this chapter, we clarify how sustainability encompasses the 3 Es (environment, economics, and social equity) or the 3 Ps (people, prosperity, and the planet).
- In the next two sections, we describe a "free market" discourse that underlies much of corporate environmental communication. Then, we examine three communication practices of corporations that are used in "green marketing": (a) product advertising; (b) image

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enhancement; and (c) corporate image repair. Through this discussion, we make distinctions between "greenwashing" (the corporate use of deceptive advertising) and "green consumerism" (consumer efforts to buy products to try to live more sustainably through eco-products, fair trade, and sustainable tourism).

- In the final section, we offer a brief overview of sustainability efforts on college campuses, which promote a wide variety of exciting ways to become involved in sustainability efforts.

Although we can identify core values of sustainability, there is no "one size fits all" model. Each ecosystem and community is unique. It is important, therefore, as we go through this chapter, to note overall values and goals expressed in broader discourses of sustainability and observe how they vary in particular contexts with the specific means available. Further, as Bartlett and Chase remind us (above), sustainability is never over, it is an ongoing process that requires continual reflection, dialogue, education, networking, publicity, and reassessment.

Sustainability: An Interdisciplinary Approach

Environmental challenges are rarely met by a single discipline or perspective. Fish-kills in a river may require knowledge of hydrology, soil erosion, and ichthyology (the study of fish). All of those environmental sciences, however, only cover physical relations. But they cannot account for the attitudes of farmers upstream or the ways indigenous people use the river for subsistence fishing or the value tourists in the region place on the aesthetics of the site or the location of the river near an e-waste recycling facility. Interest in sustainability, as a result, has emerged to begin to address these differing perspectives.

Perhaps the most famous definition of "sustainability" was offered in 1987 through The **Brundtland Commission Report** (1987) of the United Nations, which defined "sustainable development" as that which "aims to promote harmony among human beings and between humanity and nature," and, importantly, that which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (sections 81, 1). Since then, sustainability has become a very popular discourse, used by governments, corporations, and communities across the globe. As such, we have begun to fine-tune sustainability as more than an intergenerational, environmental perspective, but one that must recognize that environmental challenges cannot be met by scientific expertise or any one perspective alone.

As noted in Chapter 2, the rhetorical appeal of sustainability "lies in its philosophical ambiguity and range" (Peterson, 1997, p. 36). Nevertheless, the movement for sustainability generally encompasses three goals or aspirations that are called the **Three Es**: Environmental protection, Economic health, and Equity (social justice) or the **Three Ps**: People, Prosperity, and the Planet. That is, "sustainability" explicitly notes a commitment not just to the environment, but also to social justice and economic well-being.

Consider, for example, how U.S. president Barack Obama's speeches addressing the environment switched from "greening the economy" and "green jobs" to moral language about "future generations" and "our children." Environmental reporter Chris Mooney (2013) insightfully notes that it is interesting to consider how the initial statements were responding, in part, to hard economic times and the latter to extreme weather events that have caught the nation's attention. Yet, we want to raise this example to show how either approach depends on a sustainable perspective. That is, the president never speaks just about the environment or planetary goals; he always links those goals to the other two Es and Ps: economics/profits (jobs and new green industries needed) and equity/people (the fate of our children and how ecological disasters already are ruining homes of everyday, hard-working people). The solution requires that we recognize that "saving the planet" is interconnected with saving people and our livelihoods.

As popular as sustainability discourses are in political speeches and throughout the public sphere today, sustainable policies often still struggle to be enacted, nationally and internationally. As environmental justice scholar Julian Agyeman (2005) points out, there is a **sustainability gap**: "In almost all areas of sustainability, we know scientifically what we need to do and how to do it; but we are just not doing it" (p. 40). So, how do we motivate more people to live more sustainable lives? Corporations and campuses are two significant sets of institutions attempting to define and to promote visions of sustainability. Let's look at their choices.

Free Market Discourse and the Environment

Before looking more closely at the diverse forms of corporate communication, it's important to appreciate the ideological premises and sources of persuasion that underlie much of these appeals. Corporate advocacy regarding the environment does not occur in a vacuum. Instead, it often draws upon an ideological *discourse* (Chapter 3) that circulates a set of meanings about business and the proper role of government. This is a discourse about the nature of economic markets and the role of government and is particularly evident in the opposition of corporations to environmental standards.

Behind the discourse of much corporate environmental communication is the belief in a "free market," a phrase that is usually meant to refer to the absence of governmental restriction of business and commercial activity. A **discourse of the free market**, therefore, sustains the idea that the private marketplace is self-regulating and ultimately promotes the social good. As a result, a discourse of free markets constructs a powerful *antagonism* (Chapter 2), that is, a questioning of environmental rules, taking such rhetorical forms as, "We need to get 'big government' off our backs," and "Companies will find the best solutions when left to themselves."

At the core of this rhetoric is the belief held by many business leaders that environmental protection can be secured by the operation of the marketplace through the unrestricted or unregulated buying and selling of products and services. Such faith in the market assumes that "the public interest is discovered in the ability of

private markets to transform the individual pursuit of self-interest into an efficient social allocation of resources" (Williams & Matheny, 1995, p. 21). In the sections that follow, we see the use of *free market discourse* as a rationale for some corporations' opposition to government-imposed standards for environmental performance or public health.

Corporate Sustainability Communication: Reflection or Deflection?

As popular support for the environment has increased, many industries have worked to improve their environmental performance and to link their goods, services, or brand with "green" initiatives. In this section, we highlight three common communication strategies: *green marketing*, *greenwashing*, and *green consumerism*.

U.S. corporations spend several billion dollars a year on public relations related to sustainability, or what is sometimes called *green marketing*. **Green marketing** is a term used to refer to a corporation's attempt to associate its products, services, or identity with environmental values and images. We use the term *green marketing* more specifically in this chapter to refer to corporate communication that is used for three purposes: (1) product advertising, (2) image enhancement, and (3) image repair.

We look at charges that these marketing efforts are a form of **greenwashing**, an attempt to promote the appearances of products and commodity consumption as environmental or "green," while deliberately disavowing environmental impacts. We'll also consider the growing trend of green consumerism, efforts to buy products to try to live more sustainably. Recalling Kenneth Burke's *terministic screens* in Chapter 1, we are continuing to hone our ability to identify what communication about "sustainability" is *reflecting* and what it might be *deflecting*.

Green Product Advertising

The most familiar form of green marketing is the association of a company's products with popular images and slogans that suggest a concern for the environment. Such **green product advertising** is the attempt to sell commodities "that are presumed to be environmentally safe" for retail, "designed to minimize negative effects on the physical environment or to improve its quality," and an effort "to produce, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns" (American Marketing Association, 2014).

Selling Green

The list of products that are marketed as "green" or "eco-friendly" can be lengthy: coffee, cars, water filters, clothing, cars, computers, allergy pills, breakfast cereals, lipstick, and children's toys are only a few examples. In one year alone, the U.S. Patent Office received more than 300,000 applications for environmentally related "brand names,

logos, and tag lines" (Ottman, 2011). Not surprisingly, the brands for these products are often accompanied by visual images of mountain peaks, forests, clear water, or blue skies.

What is being sold at the same time as a product, of course, is often a relationship with the natural environment:

> An advertisement for an SUV shows the vehicle outdoors and . . . ads for allergy medications feature flowers and "weeds." In them, the environment per se is not for sale, but advertisers are depending on qualities and features of the nonhuman world to help in . . . selling [their] message. (Corbett, 2006, p. 150)

In green advertising, the environment offers a seemingly limitless range of possibilities for such images or identifications. From Jeep ads encouraging urbanites to escape to less traveled forest roads to "all-natural" or "organic" breakfast foods, green ads rely on evocative appeals to nature as a powerful rhetorical frame.

A majority (84%) of U.S. consumers are buying green products—environmentally friendly clothing, foods, cleansers, personal-care products, and more (Ottman, 2011, p. 9). And, many are looking for eco-labels in stores. Not surprisingly, Roper's Green Gauge poll has shown a related trend, "a growing tendency towards 'pro-cotting'— buying products from companies perceived as having good environmental track records" (quoted in Ottman, 2003, para. 4). As a play off of *boycott* (noted in Chapter 8 as an environmental advocacy mode to foster corporate accountability), the term **buycott (girlcott or pro-cott),** is "is a concerted effort to make a point of spending money—as well as to convince others to make a point of spending money—on a product or service in the hopes of affirming specific condition(s) or practice(s) of an institution" (Pezzullo, 2011, p. 125). Roper's latest Green Gauge survey finds consumers from at least 25 countries "are still thirsty for greener options" in their stores ("Green Marketing Insight," 2011, para. 2).

Examples of green product ads may be unlimited, but the underlying communication frames for such advertising draw on some common themes. What environmental communication scholar Steve Depoe (1991) first identified over two decades ago still applies. There are three basic frames for green advertising: (1) nature as backdrop (e.g., SUV ads showing mountain terrain), (2) nature as product (e.g., everything from "all-natural" raisins to "natural flavors"), and (3) nature as outcome (e.g., bamboo bowls or a compost bins), through which products do not harm and may even claim to improve the environment.

Another Viewpoint: When Customers Claim Sustainable Is Not Salable

In 2010, the snack company Frito-Lay decided to sell their multi-grain Sun Chips in a 100% compostable package. They launched their new packaging before Earth Day with a green marketing campaign and boasted the bag could disintegrate in 14 weeks. The ad ended with the tagline "That's our small step. What's yours?" They then ended with a website URL for people to respond (greenimpact.com, now defunct).

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This product would seem like a sustainable victory to reduce waste and to encourage everyone to become more sustainable. Next time you are at a grocery store, look at how many plastic bags are sold. It's a large number.

Yet, customers complained the Sun Chip packaging was too loud and rejected the company's attempt to become more sustainable. As a result of the strong customer reaction, Frito-Lay took the bags off the market and did not bring them back until they could design a quieter compostable bag one year later in 2011.

Since most of us probably would not consider chips the quietest foods we eat, it is interesting to consider this initial marketing failure, as well as the subsequent solution that pleased customers and still sold chips for the company. Are there any barriers for you to buying more sustainable products?

For a video with a sound test and review of the old bags engaging this viewpoint, see Kyle VanHemert, 2010, "SunChips' New 100% Compostable Bag Is Hilariously, Ear-Damagingly Loud," Gizmodo at http://gizmodo.com/5616427/sunchips-new-100-compostable-bag-is-hilariously-ear-damagingly-loud.

Regulating Green Labels and Guidelines

Environmentally friendly labels on products include words such as *organic, nontoxic, GMO free, biodegradable, all natural, free range, fair trade, recycled, ozone-friendly,* and so forth. They seem increasingly common and on a wider range of products daily.

As such, a word of caution about green advertising may be in order. This practice is largely unregulated. With the exception of *organic* (which is regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture), most environmentally friendly labels and green product claims in the United States are governed only by voluntary guidelines. The FTC does have regulatory oversight over green marketing claims and publishes its "Guidelines for Environmental Marketing Claims," or "Green Guides." In past years, however, these guidelines have been quite vague, and compliance has been voluntary for corporations. In her analysis of 247 print ads in mainstream British and American magazines, Lauren Baum (2012) found "Firms advertising in US magazines were significantly more likely to employ misleading/deceptive environmental claims than UK firms and magazines. These findings suggest that without increased environmental advertisement regulation, greenwashing will persist as a disingenuous means for corporate reputation enhancement" (p. 423).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture does set standards for organic products under its National Organic Program. (See www.ams.usda.gov/nop.) However, there is no uniform standard for other labels such as *free range* or *cage free.* In fact, "one company's free range label might mean that the animal went outside for 15 minutes a day, while another's might mean that the animal roamed a 10-acre field all its life" ("Consumers Beware," 2006, p. 23A; see also Foer, 2010).

As a result of a loose regulatory landscape, green product advertising may signal a wide range of meanings—from unsubstantiated claims to accurate information about the qualities of the product or the behavior of the corporation. In fact, the business blog *GreenBiz.com* ("Marketing and Communications," 2009) once

trumpeted the opportunities being opened by "the lack of standards for determining what it means to be a green product—or a green company" (para. 1). It also noted that, with the number of consumers who want to buy green as well as the popularity of eco-labeling, an opportunity existed "for just about anything to be marketed as green, from simple packaging changes to products and services that radically reduce materials, energy, and waste" (para. 1).

Green product advertising is making use of the practice of environmental seals or **eco-label certification programs.** The presence of an eco-label on a product ostensibly signals an independent group's assurance to consumers that the product is environmentally friendly or produced in a manner that did not harm the environment. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) *Energy Star* label on light bulbs and appliances is meant to signal their energy savings. And, the Forest Stewardship Council's *FSC-certified* label on wood products indicates that the wood is from an ecologically managed forest.

The use of eco-labels or other certification seals also has grown in recent years. Currently, there are now more than 400 green certification labeling systems. One problem has been that such labels may make broad, unqualified claims about a product. As a result, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has written guidelines to help consumers assess these claims. (See "Act Locally! Check for Deceptive Green Marketing Claims.")

Act Locally!

Check for Deceptive Green Marketing Claims

Have you ever wondered if the label on certain foods, personal care products, or clothing means these products are truly green or environmentally friendly? What does it mean to buy a product that is labeled as recycled, biodegradable, or nontoxic?

The Federal Trade Commission's (n.d.) "Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims" (Section 260.7) states, "It is deceptive to misrepresent, directly or by implication, that a product, package or service offers a general environmental benefit."

The FTC has the power to bring law enforcement actions against false or misleading environmental marketing claims under Section 5 of the FTC Act, which prohibits unfair or deceptive acts or practices.

How is the FTC using its power? Have the FTC's guides given clearer definitions for green advertising claims? Has it taken actions against deceptive green ads? Check out http://www .consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0226-shopping-green. Then, answer the following questions:

- How accurate or helpful are the FTC guidelines for *recycled, biodegradable, compostable, renewable energy,* or *carbon offsets?*
- What enforcement actions against deceptive environmental ads or labels has the FTC taken recently? For specific corporations or products, you can click on the FTC's "Scam Alerts" button, at their homepage: http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/. For example, you will find recent fraudulent activity they discovered after natural disasters with solicitations for donations.
- Overall, how effective do you think the FTC's "Green Guides" are in discouraging false or misleading environmental labels or advertising? Had you ever heard of them before? Can you find them at local stores where you shop?

The only enforcement power the FTC has is Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act. This provision prohibits deceptive practices in advertising. Although its "Guidelines for Environmental Marketing Claims" are voluntary, the FTC can prosecute a corporation if it can be proved the corporation acted deceptively in its claims about a product. And the FTC has brought several enforcement cases alleging false or unsubstantiated environmental claims. For example, in 2009, the commission brought charges against three companies for "making false and unsubstantiated claims that their products were biodegradable" and charged four clothing and textile businesses with "deceptively labeling and advertising these items as made of bamboo fiber, manufactured using an environmentally friendly process, and/or biodegradable" (Federal Trade Commission, 2010, pp. 19–20).

As a result of what some believe are unclear or weak enforcement of guidelines for green marketing claims, a number of independent groups have arisen to monitor or verify environmental advertising claims. The most prominent group is SourceWatch (sourcewatch.org), which monitors corporate funding and behavior, generally. Other groups monitor specific claims, for example, that eggs are from *cage-free* chickens and that vegetables and meat are *natural, free range,* or *humanely raised.*

A few animal welfare groups issue their own labels that certify when products meet certain criteria. For example, the American Humane Society has the American Humane® Certified program (formerly known as the Free Farmed program); its certified label assures consumers of third-party, independent verification that producers' care and handling of farm animals meet science-based animal welfare standards. And Whole Foods has been developing an "animal-compassionate" program that will require that animals be raised "in a humane manner" (cage free, and so on) until they are slaughtered (Martin, 2006).

Finally, Canada has banned the use of eco-labels with "vague claims implying general environmental improvement" (Sustainable Life Media, 2008, para. 1). Instead, Canada's Competition Bureau released a set of guidelines that require companies to stick to "clear, specific, and accurate" claims that have been substantiated. Sheridan Scott, Commissioner of Competition, stated, "Businesses should not make environmental claims unless they can back them up" (Sustainable Life Media, 2008, para. 2).

Green Image Enhancement

Corporations navigate a constantly changing business environment. Doing so often requires an investment of resources to ensure that the public maintains a positive image of a corporation's identity and performance. Promoting a positive, environmental image for a corporation relies on the practice of **image enhancement.** This is the use of PR (public relations) to improve the brand or ethos of the corporation itself by associating it with positive environmental messages, practices, and products.

As environmental values became increasingly popular in the United States and other countries, many corporations refined their communication with the public, bolstering their identities as environmentally responsible corporate citizens. This communication is particularly important when media, the government, or environmental groups question a corporation's behavior or intentions.

In this section, we look at two image enhancement campaigns: (1) the coal industry's touting of "clean coal" as a form of energy and (2) Walmart's "sustainability" initiatives to eliminate waste and reduce its carbon footprint.

Redefining Coal as "Clean Coal"

One of the more visible image enhancements recently has been the coal industry's multimillion-dollar Clean Coal advertising campaign. High-quality-production ads appeared thousands of times on TV, radio, billboards, and online. Starting in 2002, the ads declared that "advancements in clean coal technologies are effectively making our environment cleaner," and assured listeners that "new coal-based power plants built beginning in about 2020 may well use technologies that are so advanced that they'll be virtually *pollution-free* [emphasis added]" (quoted in SourceWatch, 2009, para. 4).

These ads are not trying to sell a product—a ton of coal or a new power plant. Instead, they are intended to reassure lawmakers and opinion leaders that the coal industry is vital to America's energy future and that, because coal is "clean"—that is, coal-burning power plants can produce electricity without causing pollution—the industry should not be regulated. Why? What is changing in the business environment that the U.S. coal industry feels it must navigate in order to survive?

Fundamentally, the business environment for coal is changing. The EPA has proposed tougher standards for pollutants like sulfur dioxide and mercury from coal-burning power plants and is currently proposing to regulate for the first time carbon dioxide (CO_2), a greenhouse gas and a major source of climate change. And, as we saw in Chapter 8, environmental groups have been blocking new coal plants and major financial institutions have begun imposing stricter requirements on loans for the construction of such plants.

As a result, the coal industry invested heavily in a multimillion-dollar "clean coal" ad campaign in an attempt to forestall new regulations on coal-burning power plants. In 2008 alone, industry groups like the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity (ACCCE) spent $35 million to $45 million on image advertising, "most of it on television ads aired during the 2008 campaigns—pitching 'clean coal' as a new environmentally friendly fuel" (LoBianco, 2008, para. 2; see also Mufson, 2008). ACCCE, formerly called Americans for Balanced Energy Choices, is a public relations group for coal mining companies, coal transport (railroads), and coal-electricity producers (SourceWatch, 2009). Many of the TV and billboard ads directed viewers to more detailed information on ACCCE's sophisticated website, AmericasPower.org.

One of the ACCCE (2008) image enhancement TV ads was titled "Adios." It showed an elderly couple sitting on their porch, a young woman driving her convertible, two workers going into a factory, kids waving, and a family at the beach. A (male) voice declares,

> We wish we could say farewell to our dependence on foreign energy. And we'd like to say "adios" to rising energy costs. But first, we have to say "so long" to our outdated perceptions about coal. And we have to continue to advance new clean coal technologies to further reduce emissions, including the eventual capture and storage of CO_2. If we don't, we may have to say "goodbye" to the American way of life we all know and love. Clean coal. America's power. (America's Power, 2009)

The ad draws on the strategy of invoking social norms to suggest ordinary Americans—like "us"—are saying "so long" to "outdated perceptions about coal" and to suggest that coal can continue to power "the American way of life."

The year the ACCE's image enhancement campaign was launched, a public opinion poll found that "72 percent of opinion leaders nationwide support the use of coal to generate electricity, a significant increase over the past year and the highest level of support since the group began polling nearly 10 years ago" (*Business Wire,* 2008, para. 3). In the short term, the campaign may have worked to some degree. Nevertheless, as we discussed in Chapter 8, environmental advocates have pushed back and, as this book goes to press, "clean coal" seems to be a phrase waning in popularity.

Walmart's "Sustainability" Campaign

On October 24, 2005, the CEO of Walmart, Lee Scott, stood before a packed audience at Walmart's home office in Bentonville, Arkansas. Speaking to employees and via a live video feed to its 6,000 stores worldwide and 62,000 suppliers, Scott announced that Walmart was "going green in the biggest way imaginable, embracing sustainability" (Humes, 2011a, p. 100). Walmart was an unlikely corporation to appear to adopt environmental values. Known as the "Bully of Bentonville," the company had been a target for years, attracting "endless bad press, protests, political opposition, investigations, labor problems, health insurance problems, zoning problems, and more than ever, environmental problems" (p. 13). The initiative that Scott would announce on that day, however, would grow over the subsequent years to be one of the most ambitious, but often doubted, green corporate initiatives ever.

In his Bentonville speech, Scott asked rhetorically, "What if we used our size and resources to make this country and this earth an even better place for all of us?" (quoted in Humes, 2011a, p. 102). He then went on to announce what would become Walmart's long-term environmental goals:

1. To be supplied 100% by renewable energy

2. To create zero waste

3. To sell products that sustain people and the environment (Walmart, 2011, p. 1)

Scott's announcement created news headlines and puzzled the company's competitors. While a number of environmental groups expressed interest in Walmart's new, environmental goals, most of them reserved judgment, "waiting to see if the company's actions matched its lofty rhetoric" (Humes, 2011a, p. 104). Other reactions were harsher, ranging from to skepticism that such a large retailer could ever be sustainable to charges of *greenwashing* (Mitchell, 2007).

In the years following, however, Walmart would go on to announce and begin implementing a series of sustainability initiatives—lowering the carbon footprint of its stores, increasing the fuel efficiency of its transportation fleet, and seeking to curb wasteful packaging. In 2006, the company introduced "a green rating system designed to push their 60,000 worldwide manufacturing vendors to reduce the amount of packaging they use by 5%, to use more renewable materials, and to slash energy use" (Ottman, 2011, p. 172).

Then, in 2009, Walmart went further in announcing it would create a Sustainability Index. It would be a scorecard that measured the sustainability of Walmart's entire chain of suppliers. The index would measure a supplier's carbon footprint, use of natural resources, energy efficiency, water use, and so forth. Ultimately, Walmart hoped to translate the data on a supplier's performance into a score for each of its products, "a simple rating for consumers about the sustainability of products—the ultimate dream of green-minded shoppers" (Makower, 2010, para. 6). As a consequence, Walmart intended that the Sustainability Index would influence a wider circle of behaviors by its suppliers by determining which of their products qualified to get onto the store's shelves (Ottman, 2011, p. 168). (For more information about the Sustainability Index, see http://walmartstores.com.)

Public reactions were mainly positive at the time. A *New York Times* editorial praised the index as "a sound idea" and added, "Given Wal-Mart's huge purchasing power, if it is done right it could promote both much-needed transparency and more environmentally sensitive practices" ("Can Wal-Mart Be Sustainable?" 2009, para. 2). Brian Merchant (2009), blogging at Treehugger.com, admitted, "It's getting harder to hate Wal-Mart." While the giant corporation's Sustainability Index "raises plenty of questions," if it succeeds, it "could literally change the face of retail forever" (para. 1). Two years later, Edward Humes (2011b), in a *Los Angeles Times* op-ed, was even more positive: "I'm no apologist for Wal-Mart. The giant retailer is still ripe for criticism on a number of fronts, from hiring and labor issues to its impact on local businesses and communities. But in this area of sustainability, Wal-Mart got it right" (para. 5).

There have also been doubts, and not a little criticism, from others. Some critics reminded Walmart that it cannot separate its sustainability goals from related concerns for the company's impacts on people and the environment. Writing in the *Penn Political Review,* Melissa Roberts (2011) argued that, while environmentalists had pushed for years for corporations to include sustainability in their bottom lines,

> true environmentalism cannot separate environmental and social responsibility. If a company buys organic cotton but underpays farmers so that they have to use unsustainable farming practices [or] burn through the Amazon rainforest, there is no net gain for the environment. (para. 3)

Likewise, criticism is made of Walmart's anti-union activities with their own employees (Mieszkowski, 2008).

Other criticism came from some who believed that Walmart and other big box retailers were fundamentally fueling an unsustainable economy. As they saw it, "no matter how genuine the effort and positive the result, sustainability only distracts the press and public from the fact that the real problem is the big-box economy itself" (Humes, 2011a, p. 227; see also Humes 2011b).

Whether Walmart's sustainability initiatives ultimately succeed at image enhancement or helping foster a more sustainable world remains to be seen. In 2013, environmental organizations (including Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network, and the Sierra Club) wrote a letter to Walmart claiming their efforts have fallen short (Sheppard, 2013). Since, Walmart appears to have renewed its public commitment to sustainability. President and CEO Doug McMillon acknowledged the road to sustainability remains a process: "A great deal of innovative work is happening every day, but there are still too many gaps and missed opportunities" (Green Retail Decisions, 2014). Given the impact of transnational corporations on energy, food, and transportation systems, what is clear is that environmental advocates cannot afford to ignore what Walmart does or does not do next.

Green Corporate Image Repairs

One form of corporate communication that is pivotal to a company's success in difficult times is the repair or recovery of its credibility. This practice of **image repair** (also called *crisis management*) is the use of PR to restore a company's credibility after an environmental harm or accident. Corporations that engage in wrongdoing often face a crisis of public trust and possible legal or economic repercussions. Corporate image repair, therefore, attempts to minimize the harm and any public perceptions that might "cause the organization irreparable damage" (Williams & Olaniran, 1994, p. 6). Image repair is vital to a company's continued operations, but the practice can be controversial, especially when a corporation's communication is viewed as insincere.

As we write in 2014, BP is still struggling to recover from the blow to its credibility from the 2010 rupture of its oil wellhead in the Gulf of Mexico. Called "the worst man-made environmental disaster in U.S. history," the explosion "killed 11 workers, causing more than 200 million gallons of oil to spew into the Gulf of Mexico" (Democracy Now!, 2014).

Immediately after the event, the Obama administration launched a criminal and civil investigation into the corporation, and civil lawsuits piled up. Still, BP initiated a number of efforts to try to restore its credibility. After the accident, the company began running TV ads and full-page ads in major newspapers like the *Wall Street Journal, USA Today,* and the *Washington Post,* as well as local ads in the Gulf States.

One ad in the *New York Times* carried a photo of workers placing a boom to protect the shoreline from the oil slick. The tagline read, "BP has taken full responsibility for cleaning up the spill in the Gulf of Mexico. . . . We will make this right" ("We Will Make This Right," 2010, p. A11).

BP's crisis management during the oil spill, however, quickly became a case study of ineffective image repair. The corporation's credibility certainly was not helped by its CEO, Tony Hayward, in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. Hayward complained publicly about how much time he was spending on the disaster, saying, "I would like my life back," and he sought to play down the spill's ecological impacts. The Gulf is "a big ocean," he said; and "the environmental impact of this disaster is likely to be very, very modest" (MSNBC.com, 2010, para. 4).

In 2014, petitions continue to be delivered to the EPA to ask for BP to be held accountable. According to Jaclyn Lopez, staff attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity, the petition was "signed by over 50 organizations representing millions of Americans. It was independently signed by another 66,000 people who all recognize that BP needs to be held accountable by being prohibited from future contracts with the American government" (Democracy Now!, 2014). Questioning BP's credibility to run operations years after the accident suggests that its image repair remains in crisis.

AP Photo/Patrick Semansky

| Photo 11.1 | Former BP CEO Tony Hayward, center, speaks at a news conference in Port Fourchon, Louisiana, during the worst offshore oil spill in U.S. history. |

Greenwashing and the Discourse of Green Consumerism

Corporate practices of "green" advertising, image enhancement, and image repair have not been without their critics. In this section, we describe two criticisms in particular: (1) the charge that corporate green marketing is a form of *greenwashing* and (2) a discourse of *green consumerism,* the belief that purchasing environmentally friendly products can help save the Earth.

Corporate Greenwashing

In an earlier study of corporate opposition to environmental regulations, Jacqueline Switzer (1997) noted that often corporate "public relations campaigns—called 'greenwashing' by environmental groups—[are] used by industry to soften the public's perceptions of its activities" (p. xv; see also Corbett, 2006). *Greenwashing* is an attempt to promote the appearances of products and commodity consumption as environmental or "green," while deliberately disavowing environmental impacts. Since the number of products with "green" claims seems to increase annually, it may be useful to explore the idea of greenwashing further.

Environmental groups routinely use the term *greenwash* to call attention to what they believe is deception by a corporation—an effort to mislead or divert attention from a corporation's poor environmental behavior or products. For example, Greenpeace (2008) gave the oil company BP its Emerald Paintbrush award in

> recognition of the company's attempts to greenwash its brand over the course of 2008, in particular its multimillion dollar advertising campaign announcing its commitment to alternative energy sources . . . [and its use of] slogans such as "from the earth to the sun, and everything in between." (para. 4)

Using internal BP documents, Greenpeace claimed that, in 2008,

> the company allocated 93 per cent ($20bn) of its total investment fund for the development and extraction of oil, gas and other fossil fuels. In contrast, solar power (a technology which analysts say is on the brink of important technological breakthroughs) was allocated just 1.39 per cent, and wind a paltry 2.79 per cent. (para. 5)

BP, on the other hand, insists that the company is committed to developing new, renewable energy sources (BP, 2009). (For rhetorical analyses of BP and ExxonMobile greenwashing, see also Plec & Pettenger, 2012; Smerecnik & Renegar, 2010.)

How, then, can someone tell if a corporate advertisement is greenwashing or the report of a legitimate environmental achievement? Most critics point to a basic standard of deception. Has the ad conveyed information or an impression that is countered by factual evidence? Many times, the truthfulness of a claim may be difficult for the

ordinary consumer to determine. In other cases, there are groups such as SourceWatch (www.sourcewatch.org) that monitor the statements and behavior of corporations, provide information about their compliance with environmental regulations, and even evaluate specific marketing campaigns. As mentioned in Chapter 4, a life-cycle-assessment approach requires we consider a wide range of interrelated activities.

In a more general effort, the environmental marketing firm TerraChoice has identified the main patterns of greenwashing and calls them "Sins." (See "FYI: The Seven Sins of Greenwashing.")

☞ F Y I   The Seven Sins of Greenwashing

The environmental marketing firm TerraChoice has identified patterns used by companies that greenwash that it called the Seven Sins of Greenwashing. Here are the sins:

1. *Sin of the Hidden Trade-Off*: Suggesting a product is "green" based on a single environmental attribute (the recycled content of paper, for example, which may not account for chlorine use in bleaching).

2. *Sin of No Proof*: An environmental claim that cannot be verified by easily accessible supporting information or by a reliable third-party certification (facial or toilet paper, for example, that claims recycled content).

3. *Sin of Vagueness*: A claim "so poorly defined or broad that its real meaning is likely to be misunderstood by the consumer" (such as "all-natural," which isn't necessarily "green" if you consider natural elements like arsenic and mercury).

4. *Sin of Worshipping False Labels*: "A product that, through either words or images, gives the impression of third-party endorsement where no such endorsement exists; fake labels, in other words."

5. *Sin of Irrelevance*: "An environmental claim that may be truthful but is unimportant or unhelpful for consumers seeking environmentally preferable products" (CFC-free is an example, since CFCs are illegal).

6. *Sin of the Lesser of Two Evils*: "A claim that may be true within the product category, but that risks distracting the consumer from the greater environmental impacts of the category as a whole" (e.g., organic cigarettes).

7. *Sin of Fibbing*: "Environmental claims that are simply false," such as those claiming to be Energy Certified but are not.

SOURCE: TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc. (2010).

The practice of greenwashing is actually quite high in the United States and Canada. TerraChoice (2010) claims, "more than 95% of consumer products claiming to be green were found to commit AT LEAST ONE [emphasis in original] of the 'Sins of Greenwashing.'" What labels do you see the most? Which ones do you trust?

Discourse of Green Consumerism

Green marketing and discourses based on the free market raise another important question for students of environmental communication: Can consumers minimize damage to, or even improve, the environment by their purchase of certain products? That is, can we reduce air pollution, end the clear-cutting of national forests, or protect the ozone layer by buying recycled, biodegradable, nontoxic, and ozone-free products? Many people appear to think so. As we saw earlier, Roper's Green Gauge poll reported consumers' tendency toward *pro-cotting,* or buying products from companies that are perceived as having good environmental track records. Irvine (1989) was the first to refer to this "use of individual consumer preference to promote less environmentally damaging products and services" as **green consumerism** (p. 2). This is the belief that, by buying allegedly environmentally friendly products, consumers can do their part to help make the world a little more sustainable.

Why is the idea of green consumerism popular? Most of us do not wish to harm the environment, and we suspect that most of us believe we can consciously choose to lessen our impact on the Earth through our actions. While we both have bought reusable bags for our groceries, we both feel more skeptical about shampoos that offer a "truly organic experience" despite including ingredients with artificial colors and fragrances. Both of us believe at some level, that what we buy or do not buy reflects our values to some degree.

Helping to sustain this commonly held belief is a wider set of beliefs, buttressed by green advertising, that invite a specific identity. In her provocative book, *The Myth of Green Marketing: Tending Our Goats at the Edge of Apocalypse,* Smith (1998) argues that green consumerism is not simply an act—the purchase of a certain product—but a discourse about the identity of individual consumers. (In Chapter 2, we described *discourse* as a pattern of knowledge and power communicated through linguistic and nonlinguistic human expression.) Smith explains that our purchasing does not occur in a vacuum but is "an act of faith"; that is, "it is based on a belief about the way the world works" (p. 89). Our actions have effects, and among these is the effect of our purchasing on producers of products. In other words, the discourse of green consumerism assures us that, when we buy more sustainable products, our buying can affect the actions of large corporations, such as persuading coffee companies to use organic, fair trade practices, and, as a result, can transform our more unsustainable habits of pesticide pollution and exploitative labor practices.

Smith argues that the idea of green consumerism resonates with us because the act of purchasing is cloaked in an aura of other, authoritative discourses that buttress our identities as purchasers. She explains that our belief that we can do well for the environment by green shopping is underwritten by certain discourses that encode our buying with significance. Two discourses in particular assign meaning to our purchasing decisions: the discourses of market forces and of participatory democracy.

First, green advertising affirms the belief that the market can be an avenue for change; that is, that by doing our bit, we contribute to the *free market* theory of economics, and as "all the little bits are counted, the consequence will be a net good"

(Smith, 1998, p. 157). Second, the discourse of participatory democracy nurtures the belief that, in a liberal democracy, each of us is entitled to a voice in deciding about issues that matter to us. Thus, "Customers vote at the cash register" (quoted in Smith, p. 156). In each case, consumers are encouraged to believe that their purchases exercise a democratic influence: "Voting" through what we do or do not buy affects retailers directly in determining which products succeed and which are in disfavor, and it affirms the consumer's identity as someone who acts responsibly toward the Earth.

The discourse of green consumerism can be an attractive magnet, pulling one toward a persuasive identity as a purchaser. "Green consumerism makes sense," explains Smith (1998). "That is why people are attracted to it; they are not irrational, immoral, or uninformed. Quite the opposite: they are . . . moral in their desire to do their bit" (p. 152). It is hard to argue against the fact that buying and using a reusable water bottle, for example, usually is cleaner, cheaper, healthier, and less polluting than buying, drinking, and tossing bottled water every day.

Nevertheless, Smith believes that green consumerism also poses a danger by co-opting a more skeptical attitude toward the social and environmental impacts of excessive consumption. In a provocative charge, Smith claims that green consumerism serves to deflect serious questioning of a larger **productivist discourse** in our culture, one that supports "an expansionistic, growth-oriented ethic" (p. 10). Indeed, whether green consumerism can be a real force in the marketplace or a subtle diversion from the questioning of our consumer society is a question that invites serious debate in our classes and in research by environmental scholars.

Courtesy of the University of Oregon

Photo 11.2   The buildings we live and work in communicate values and possibilities to us, as well as shape our financial costs (through energy bills, for example) and impact on ecological systems (such as carbon footprint). The world's primary certification system of sustainable architecture is LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). This image shows a platinum-LEED building on the University of Oregon campus, including sustainability features such as rooftop solar panels, use of local building materials, and climate-appropriate landscaping.

In summary, the practice of green marketing is now widespread. It involves subtly and skillfully associating corporations' products, images, and behaviors with environmentally friendly values. As we saw, this effort to construct a green identity can serve any of three purposes: (1) product promotion (sales), (2) corporate image enhancement, and (3) image repair in the aftermath of negative publicity about a company. As we see in the following section, college campuses are becoming living learning laboratories for thinking through what differences individual choices and structural choices can make physically and culturally.

Communicating Sustainability on and Through Campuses

Higher education in the United States and, arguably, globally is going through a radical reassessment period, brought on by the emergence of new media technologies and global unsustainable crises (economic stress, cultural divisions, and ecological challenges). Where we learn, through which media, and about what are all under radical reassessment at this point in history. As such, it perhaps is not a surprise that sustainability initiatives rapidly are developing on campuses through energy, food, materials, governance, investment, wellness, curriculum, interpretation, and aesthetics (Thomashow, 2014). Communication studies have much to offer these initiatives. We highlight two areas worthy of our attention: curriculum, or what we are teaching and learning, as well as infrastructure (or materials), the physical elements where we are teaching and learning.

Communicating Sustainability Curricula

As teachers and consultants, we (Robert and Phaedra) both have been to many meetings about sustainability curricular goals and assessment to talk about what we think should be taught and how we can judge whether or not students have learned those subjects. Inevitably, communication is listed as a key outcome for sustainability education whether or not we are a part of the discussion. A core competency desired by employers and expected by interdisciplinary faculty teaching about sustainability, according to a recent report of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA, n.d.), is "the ability to generate support for change through strong communication skills, consensus building strategies, and with openness to the ideas and struggles of others" (n.d., p. 22).

Common curricular goals for sustainability educators include the following:

- Improved oral and written communication skills for a variety of audiences and goals
- Capacity to work well independently and in small groups or organizations
- Ability to navigate ambiguity, risk, and resilience in ways that account for particular contexts and constraints
- Ability to develop argumentation and advocacy (how to research, organize, and analyze information and ideas, as well as articulate them)

- Fostering critical thinking about practices in relation to a range of media texts
- Engagement in related rhetorical concepts of democracy, citizenship, culture, and community

All of these competencies are developed in the wheelhouse of communication studies, particularly as they apply to sustainability.

The International Environmental Communication Association (IECA) provides an online resource of syllabi showing a range of courses that focus on these sustainable teaching goals, including environmental advocacy, environmental journalism, communicating sustainability, environmental conflict resolution, health literacy, media and the natural environment, writing for the environmental industry, public relations in natural resources, and much more (for the full list, see http://theieca.org/courses).

For what we are teaching and learning in sustainability, however, it must be clarified that a sustainability approach is not just focused on environmental facets. What differentiates a **sustainability curriculum** from an environmental curriculum is that the former must engage all three facets of sustainability (the Three Es or the Three Ps). So, an environmental scientist cannot teach a course on mapping climate changes through maps and claim that course is central to sustainability unless she or he also engages economic and social impacts and/or constraints. Further, while most schools have developed degree programs in an interdisciplinary approach to sustainability, more and more appear to be considering how sustainability should be taught across college curriculums, whether or not sustainability is the final focus (for more on this approach at Northern Arizona University, see Chase & Rowland, 2013).

It bears repeating that each campus has its own mission and location because sustainability must be contextually imagined; so, a sustainability curriculum at the University of Texas in El Paso should not look the exact same as one at the University of Ghent in Belgium or Songdo Global University in Korea. Clinical psychologist, author, and Spelman College president Beverly Daniel Tatum notes that in 2002 she was not sure what the mission statement of her school, a prestigious, historically black all women's school in Atlanta, Georgia, had to do with sustainability. Today, she has no hesitation. The mission is for their students to improve the world, but also to empower students: "An ethic of conservation, an ethic of self-care, and an ethic of commitment to our mission: together these values will help ensure a sustainable Spelman" (Tatum, 2013, p. 162). The College of Menominee Nation, a tribal school in Wisconsin, expands the three dimensions of sustainability usually noted to six in order to reflect their mission, which includes land and sovereignty, technology, and institutions (Van Lopik, 2013, p. 107).

Communication Through Infrastructure

In addition to sustainability shaping the content of what is being taught at universities today, it also is shaping the infrastructure. **Sustainable infrastructure** refers to the physical elements needed to allow an organization to operate (including everything from the chair you sit on in class to the light bulbs used in the stairwells to the energy

Albright Garden/Flickr

Photo 11.3 Sustainable campus initiatives include reducing energy use in dorms, reducing waste at university sports events, reselling student furniture and other secondhand items at the end of the year, and much more. This is an image of a community garden at Albright College, where they use permaculture to teach students about agriculture, food, working with a team, and leadership skills. Does your campus have a garden yet? Does it share produce with dining services or the local food banks? Is it a part of your sustainability curriculum?

source used to heat water in dorms). The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) (2005–2012) focuses on eight categories of campus operations: buildings, climate, dining services, energy, purchasing, transportation, waste, and water (see aashe.org/resources/campus-operations-resources/).

Considering how sustainable infrastructure can help an institution become more sustainable is important, of course, but as students of environmental communication, it also is important to recognize the communicative dimensions of these physical choices. Put another way, where we learn not only has physical consequences, but also rhetorical ones. Scholars who study this mode of communication call it **material rhetoric**, the interpretation of how humans and the physical world (including buildings and bodies) constitute meaning.

Communication scholar Carole Blair (1999) has been at the forefront of theorizing how rhetoric is not just symbolic or instrumental, but also material. She provides five insightful questions that rhetorical critics might ask of a text (broadly understood as an object or event that is interpreted) materiality:

1. "What is the significance of the text's material existence?" (pp. 30–37)

2. "What are the apparatuses and degrees of durability [or vulnerability] displayed by the text?" (pp. 37–38)

3. "What are the text's modes or possibilities of reproduction or preservation?" (pp. 38–39)

4. "What does the text do to (or with, or against) other texts [in its surrounding environment]?" (pp. 39–45)

5. "How does the text act on person(s)?" (pp. 45–50)

When it comes to sustainable infrastructure, a material rhetoric approach can help us take into account how we learn from where we are learning. Consider how your campus, for example, does or does not communicate sustainability as a value: Do you have accessible recycling or composting bins? Are your uses of energy and water on campus motion-activated or not to conserve money and resources? Is your campus bicycle-friendly? Are there educational signs pointing out the sustainable features of buildings and water fountains on your campus? Can you earn course credit for service-learning opportunities to improve infrastructure in low-income neighborhoods near your campus? Overall, how does your campus's infrastructure encourage you to think and to act more sustainably or not?

No matter whether your campus is known to be one of the leaders of sustainability or one that is lagging behind, there always is more to be done when one understands that sustainability remains an ongoing process.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we focused on corporations and campuses as key institutions that are shaping our future as sustainable or not every day. We emphasized that sustainability is a process that involves making connections between specific, local places and larger social, cultural, and physical conditions globally.

- In the first section of this chapter, we clarified how sustainability involves an interdisciplinary approach that accounts for the 3 Es (environment, economics, and social equity) or the 3 Ps (planet, profit, people).
- In the next two sections, we described a free-market discourse underlying much of corporate environmental communication. Then we explored in more detail the practice of corporate "green marketing" through three ways of communicating: (1) product advertising; (2) image enhancement; and (3) corporate image repair. We also shared debates over greenwashing and green consumerism.
- Finally, we highlighted a range of sustainability efforts happening on and enabled through college campuses, which promote a wide variety of exciting ways to become involved in sustainability efforts, including through curricular approaches and infrastructure.

Given the popularity of sustainability initiatives today, it is clear that many corporations and campuses have come to appreciate the environmental values embraced by the general public, consumers, and the media, as well as recognize the ways communication is vital to bringing about a more sustainable world. Nevertheless, other institutions and individuals appear to be appropriating the language of sustainability for its persuasive appeals without grappling with the more complex, dynamic, and substantial challenges of an unsustainable world. It is important for all of us to develop our ability to clarify the grounds on which we judge competing claims of sustainability. In the next chapter, we focus on public participation in government forums to further consider the ways we can make spaces for multiple voices to be heard and negotiate the most viable sustainable choices agreed upon in particular contexts.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- A regular topic of *TED Talks* is sustainability (www.ted.com/topics/sustainability). One presented by Jason Clay, a World Wildlife Federation vice president, is about his work with multinational corporations to transform global food markets to become more sustainable: http://www.ted.com/talks/jason_clay_how_big_brands_can_save_biodiversity.

- In 2005, Dow Chemical launched an image enhancement campaign called "The Human Element" (youtube.com/watch?v=vsCG26886w8). A countercampaign spoofing the original was launched one year later (youtube.com/watch?v=lbpuSPL-FNU&feature=related). Watch both. Compare the soundtracks, words, and images.

- In 2001, Chevron launched an image enhancement campaign called "Human Energy." The tagline was: "WE AGREE. DO YOU?" It involves pro-environmental messages such as, "Oil companies should put their profits towards good use" and "Protecting the Planet is Everyone's Job." Then, audiences can click on a tab below these statements to concur: "I agree." According to their global counter on the website, over 500,000 clicks have indicated support for one of these statements. The same day, the Rainforest Action network and professional tricksters the Yes Men launched a spoof site with a fake press page and press statement, focusing on their grievances of environmental injustice in Ecuador. Discuss what you perceive to be the value and/or the risks of this environmental advocacy tactic.

- For more on countercampaigns challenging image enhancement campaigns, see media studies scholar Kembrew McLeod's 2014 book, *Pranksters*. For crisis communication advice on how corporations might adapt to such campaigns, see Gidez, 2010.

- The documentary film, *Food Inc.* (2008), directed by Robert Kenner and featuring Michael Pollan (*The Omnivore's Dilemma*) and Eric Schlosser (*Fast Food Nation*), shares perspectives on green marketing and sustainability initiatives from the voices of farmers, businesses, everyday parents, and more.

- Go to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)'s website (aashe.org/) to see how your campus is doing, compares to others, or could be doing something different in relation to sustainability. They have a Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System™ (STARS) represented through a global, interactive digital map at https://stars.aashe.org/.

KEY TERMS

The Brundtland Commission Report   264

Buycott (girlcott or pro-cott)   267

Discourse of the free market   265

Eco-label certification programs   269

Green consumerism   266

Green marketing   266

Green product advertising   266

Greenwashing   266

Image enhancement   270

Image repair   274

Material rhetoric   282

Productivist discourse   279

Sustainability curriculum   281

Sustainability gap   265

Sustainable infrastructure   281

Three Es and Three Ps   264

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Search online for examples of sustainability diagrams. What types of examples can you find? A range of sustainability efforts incorporate graphic designs with different words and colors overlapping, cartoons, and photographs. What are the rhetorical constraints (limitations or possibilities) of communicating sustainability through a diagram? Try to design a diagram of your own. What choices did you make?

2. Can green consumerism help to protect the environment? Can we have some effect—even if small—on air pollution, clear-cutting of our national forests, or global warming by buying products that are biodegradable, nontoxic, recyclable, reusable, and so forth?

3. Can Walmart or other multinational corporations ever be sustainable? How credible is Walmart's claim to be helping the environment while making a profit? What evidence do you find credible for assessing their green labels and claims? What additional evidence would you like to have?

4. Some universities have sustainability offices that focus on infrastructure of the university (energy, food sources, etc.) and separate academic sustainability programs that focus on curriculum; others combine them to coordinate efforts. Do you think it is important to keep these two missions separate? Why or why not?

PART V

Citizen Voices and Environmental Forums

Public participation requires research of relevant information and rhetorical judgments about what to say to whom and how. In a 2010 U.S. congressional hearing on whether or not to reform the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act, the American Chemistry Council president and chief executive officer Calvin M. Dooley held up his BlackBerry to illustrate technological progress made possible by limited regulation of the chemical industry. In the image above, Environmental Working Group president Kenneth A. Cook asked to borrow the same device to contend: "This ought to be as safe as a pesticide" (Hogue, 2010).