

**Faith-Based Environmental Groups  
in the United States and  
Their Strategies for Change**

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## **NOTE TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS FROM THE AUTHOR**

When you read this thesis, you will notice that its language and style are very academic in nature. Of course, this is how it should be as it was, largely, an academic endeavor, meant to be used by the scholarly community, as much as by those in the field of religious-environmentalism. When I selected this topic – the faith-based environmental movement in the United States – it was because, as a student of Environmental Studies, I was interested in defining what environmental problems existed in the world, and also in learning about how people were working to solve these problems through a lens that tended to stress morality. Since I had both a personal and an academic interest in religion, when I learned of the work that was being done by religious-environmental organizations, work that often discussed the moral implications of the environmental crisis, I knew that I had found my subject. The fact that it married two of the topics I like most to talk about over dinner with friends – religion and the environment – further supported my decision to study the movement. The academic nature of the paper resulted when I was told by my advisor that I must write something empirical in nature (i.e., researched), and that purely philosophical musings about nature and religion would be insufficient to earn me a degree!

I did not know how life-changing this thesis would be for me. While all of the time and energy put to writing it certainly are not yet foregone memories – how can I ever forget transcribing 14 hours a day for weeks on end?! – the conversations that I had with the many passionate, articulate, and invested individuals working in religious-environmentalism impacted me the most. This impact was academic to be sure; it spurred me to consider new questions, new theories, and to want to represent your stories in the most valid and comprehensive way possible. But, and perhaps more importantly, it impacted me personally, challenging me to view things in different ways and inspiring me more than I can aptly represent here in these pages. The ways in which I view my work on the environment are profoundly different now, the conversations that I have with others about morality and the environment have been shaped in large part by the concepts to which you have introduced me, and I have been able to draw on your sense of hope and optimism as a newcomer to the field of environmental work when I become frustrated at what I think is my lack of success in changing things. I am both comforted and inspired by your work.

There are times when words cannot fully describe the deeper purpose and meaning behind one person's work, one social movement's impetus, one people's struggle for a more just society. I have attempted as best I can to give justice to your work, but I know that I cannot adequately represent the passion, determination, and sometimes frustration in your voices. I have understood these emotions, however, and I too have felt them, and the power of this movement, in ways not easily expressed. Still, I hope that you will gain as much pleasure in reading about the movement of which you are an important part, as much as I have enjoyed learning about it from you. Thank you truly for sharing your time, your thoughts, and your passion with me.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Note to Research Participants from the Author.....	ii
Additional Acknowledgments.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Figures.....	viii
Executive Summary.....	ix
<b>I. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. LITERATURE REVIEW: RELIGION AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE MODERN-DAY UNITED STATES .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>A. Faith-Based Environmentalism.....</b>	<b>8</b>
1. Beginnings of the Faith-Based Environmental Movement.....	9
2. The National Religious Partnership for the Environment.....	11
3. Faith-Based Environmental Initiatives in Appalachia.....	12
<b>B. Origins of Religious -Environmental Thought     in the United States.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>C. Empirical Studies on Religion and the Environment.....</b>	<b>15</b>
1. Models of Christian-Related Eco-Theology among Faith-Based Environmental Groups.....	19
<b>D. Environmental Philosophy and Activism within     Christianity and Judaism.....</b>	<b>23</b>
1. Protestantism.....	24
2. Catholicism.....	31
3. Judaism ( <i>CURRENTLY UNDER REVISION</i> ).....	35
<b>III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>A. Research Questions: Background Definitions.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>B. Research Questions: Hypotheses.....</b>	<b>38</b>
1. Internal and organizational group factors.....	38
2. External factors.....	39
<b>C. Research Design.....</b>	<b>39</b>
1. Case selection.....	40
2. Research data.....	42
3. Data analysis and limitations.....	44
<b>IV. RESULTS.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>A. Group Demographics.....</b>	<b>46</b>
1. Denominational Affiliation.....	50
2. Staff and Volunteer Demographics.....	55
3. Funding.....	57
4. Collaboration with Other Faith-Based and Secular Environmental Groups.....	67

<b>B. Ethics-Based Work versus Issues-Based Work.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>C. Philosophical Bases for Work.....</b>	<b>85</b>
1. Reasons for Founding.....	85
2. Primary Philosophies.....	86
3. Primary Goals.....	89
4. Activities and Issues.....	91
<b>D. Tradeoffs between Ethics-Based and Issues-Based Work.....</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>E. Hypotheses.....</b>	<b>108</b>
1. Internal and organizational group factors.....	108
2. External factors.....	114
<b>V. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS.....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>A. Conclusions.....</b>	<b>121</b>
1. Hypotheses.....	121
2. Trends.....	122
<b>B. Future Directions.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>VI. WORKS CITED.....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>VII. APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>A. Appendix 1: Aldo Leopold’s Land Ethic.....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>B. Appendix 2: Ethics and the Modern-Day Mainstream     Environmental Movement.....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>C. Appendix 3: Insights from the Social Movements Literature.....</b>	<b>142</b>
1. Personal and Private Non-Committed Action as Movement Support.....	142
2. Frame Construction Processes.....	143
3. The Use of Framing Processes.....	146
4. Contextual Influences on Frame Alignment Processes.....	147
5. Collective Action Frames and the Present Research.....	148
<b>D. Appendix 4: Christian-related Eco-theological Ethics     among Organizational Proponents in the U.S.....</b>	<b>149</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Comparison of geographical location of groups with extent of collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups.....	72
Table 2.	Comparison of means across three variables measuring amount of ethics-based and issues-based work.....	81
Table 3.	Correlation between total paid staff, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	109
Table 4.	Correlation between amount of group emphasis on the connection between social justice and environmental concerns, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	110
Table 5A.	Means of scope of group work by percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	111
Table 5B.	One-way ANOVA results showing relationship between scope of group work, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	111
Table 5C.	Correlation between scope of group work, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	112
Table 6.	Correlation between age of group director, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	113
Table 7.	Correlations between gender of director and staff, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	114
Table 8A.	Means of geographical location by percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	115
Table 8B.	One-way ANOVA results showing relationship between geographical location, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	115
Table 8C.	Correlation between geographical location, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	116
Table 9.	Correlation between ease of locating funding, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	116
Table 10.	Correlation between degree of collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	117
Table 11.	Correlation between degree of collaboration with secular environmental group, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	118
Table 12.	Correlation between group time spent engaged in policy advocacy work, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	119

Table 13.	Correlation between group belief in importance of engaging in policy advocacy work, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.....	119
Table 14.	Correlation between time spent engaged in policy advocacy work and group belief about importance of engaging in policy advocacy work.....	120

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Number of groups founded by year.....	48
Figure 2.	Percentage of groups by geographical region.....	49
Figure 3.	Group denominational affiliation.....	51
Figure 4.	Faith-based environmental group collaboration with denominations (grouped by larger denominational category).....	53
Figure 5.	Faith-based environmental group collaboration with denominations not grouped into larger categories.....	54
Figure 6.	Ages of paid staff and regular volunteers.....	55
Figure 7.	Gender of paid staff and regular volunteers.....	57
Figure 8.	Difficulty of locating funding.....	58
Figure 9.	Availability of funding.....	58
Figure 10.	Number of funding sources.....	59
Figure 11.	Percentage of groups by number of funding sources.....	59
Figure 12A.	Number of groups by funding source.....	60
Figure 12B.	Average percent of group funding provided by each source.....	61
Figure 13.	Influence of funding availability on group work.....	64
Figure 14.	Number of paid staff by percentage of groups.....	65
Figure 15.	Annual budgets of faith-based environmental groups.....	67
Figure 16.	Frequency of collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups.....	68
Figure 17.	Type of collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups.....	68
Figure 18.	Frequency of collaboration with secular environmental groups.....	69
Figure 19.	Type of collaboration with secular environmental groups.....	69
Figure 20.	Number of groups experiencing problems with other faith-based and secular environmental groups.....	74
Figure 21.	Who initiates contact – faith-based, secular, or both equally.....	78
Figure 22.	Percentage of groups’ rankings of ethics-based and issues-based statements as the top two statements representing their driving philosophies for how to best bring about lasting environmental change.....	82
Figure 23.	Percentage of groups by their classification of their main work.....	82
Figure 24.	Percentage of groups by which type of work they believe should occur first in order to best bring about lasting environmental change.....	84
Figure 25.	Percentage of goals by ethics-based, issues-based, community building, and other categories.....	90
Figure 26.	Number of groups by ethics-based and issues-based goals.....	90
Figure 27.	Number of groups by issue engagement.....	99
Figure 28.	Comparison of number of groups in present study with number of groups in Feldman and Moseley’s (2003) study by issue engagement.....	100

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis is about the faith-based environmental movement in the United States and the strategies that it uses to bring about long-term environmental change. In particular, the present research is concerned with the religious environmental movement because it works explicitly and primarily to instill and strengthen environmental ethics, in addition to pursuing the more issues-based work of secular environmentalists. This research addresses two questions:

- 1) What are the general characteristics of faith-based environmental groups?
- 2) What factors influence the degree to which they pursue ethics-based versus issues-based work?

Ethics-based work is defined as that which calls for broad attitudinal and lifestyle changes, aside from any particular issue, and which seeks to provide individuals with a generalized framework within which to view their responsibility to the natural world. Issues-based work is defined as that which refers very specifically to a certain environmental topic, such as global climate change, and which only calls for behavioral changes as related to the particular issue of concern.

To answer the research questions, semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with forty-two representatives of faith-based environmental groups in the United States. These groups were primarily of Judeo-Christian affiliation and comprise the entire population of such groups with the exception of three who did not participate. Information about groups was also gathered to a lesser extent from group websites. Quantitative and qualitative data collected was used to identify trends among groups, to generate descriptive statistics, and to conduct correlation analyses to test my hypotheses.

With respect to the first research question, there were a number of important commonalities regarding group characteristics. First, groups overwhelmingly engage in ethics-based work as compared to issues-based work. This is perhaps the most important distinguishing characteristic of the movement. Second, they tend to be highly collaborative, working with individuals and congregations from a wide variety of denominations, both Judeo-Christian and otherwise. They also partner very frequently with other faith-based environmental groups and secular environmental organizations as well, although their collaborations with these latter groups tend to occur slightly less often and less consistently. Third, most groups were founded only recently, beginning in the early 1990s. Fourth, most operate nationally with equal and lesser percentages of groups focusing their work statewide and locally. They also tend to be clustered geographically in regions that are more ideologically liberal. Fifth, lack of adequate funding imposes significant limitations on groups' ability to work and expand their efforts. Few have sufficient staff sizes, and many rely primarily on volunteers. Sixth, despite these impediments, the faith-based environmental movement is characterized by a sense of hope and optimism that is unique and that enables them to continue doing ethics-based work when they might more easily receive funding by engaging in more issues-based work.

With respect to the second research question, only three of the factors which were hypothesized to be related to amount of issues-based work engaged in by a group were found to be

significantly correlated. These were: 1) amount of collaboration with secular environmental groups, 2) time spent engaged in policy advocacy work, and 3) importance of engaging in policy advocacy work to a group's achievement of its goals. The greater the religious-secular collaboration, time spent in policy advocacy, and importance of policy advocacy work, the more an organization participated in issues-based work.

This thesis contributes to the academic literature by increasing the limited base of knowledge that currently exists about the faith-based environmental movement. It also provides insights into current debates within the environmental community about the importance of ethics in environmental advocacy. Finally, this research sheds light on what conditions work best for groups who seek to promote an environmental ethic and for those who wish to direct their energies to more issues-based efforts.

## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

**“We’re very careful not to be perceived as the Sierra Club at Prayer... our basis has to come out of theology...”**

*–Director and Co-Founder of Interfaith Environmental Group*

This thesis is about the faith-based environmental movement in the United States and the strategies that it uses to bring about long-term environmental change. In particular, the present research is concerned with the religious-environmental movement because it works explicitly and primarily to instill and strengthen environmental ethics, in addition to pursuing the more issues-based work of secular environmentalists. The primary message of religious-environmental groups is that the intrinsic, intergenerational, and spiritual values of nature are as important, if not more so, than the utilitarian and economic values that are stressed more commonly throughout United States culture. This emphasis on different values by the faith-based environmental movement provides not only the broader society, but also its primary constituents - the “people in the pews” - with an alternative environmental ethic, stressing human responsibility to care for the earth as a matter of faith.

A primary objective of the present research is to determine whether certain factors, both internal and external to an organization, might lead some faith-based environmental groups to engage in more ethics-based work (that having to do primarily with values and behavior) and others to focus more on issues-based work (that concerning specific environmental problems, such as global climate change or biodiversity). These two types of strategic work are not viewed as mutually exclusive, but rather as complementary, each acting in different ways to elicit environmental change. The attendance of religious-environmental groups to both kinds of strategies contrasts sharply with the issues-based tactics primarily employed by the secular environmental movement. That faith-based environmental groups also vary in the degree to which they engage in ethics-based and issues-based work, while more strongly espousing the former, indicates that there may be certain conditions under which an environmental ethic is more easily perpetuated than others.

This thesis argues that there may be certain internal or organizational factors, and external or societal factors, that work to determine the extent to which a faith-based environmental group engages in either ethics-based or issues-based work. Understanding these factors and their relationship to ethics-based and issues-based work provides interesting and useful insights into what conditions work best for those who seek to develop an environmental ethic and for those who wish to focus their efforts primarily on solving specific environmental problems. In addition, if such factors can be identified, groups can more readily structure their activities to better correspond to the situations in which they work so that they focus on issues when most appropriate, or work to cultivate situations which are more amenable to ethics-based work. Such research may also be beneficial to secular environmental groups as it can encourage examination of mainstream strategies and their effectiveness as well. Finally, because little research has been conducted on this subject, any work done will serve to help broaden knowledge in

the field about both the faith-based environmental movement in general, and about different strategies for environmental change.

### **A. Research Questions**

The two primary research questions of this thesis are:

- 1) What are the general characteristics of the faith-based environmental movement in the United States?
- 2) What factors influence the degree to which faith-based environmental groups engage in ethics-based work versus issues-based work?

*Ethics-based* work is defined as that which is undertaken with little reference to any particular environmental issue, although, of course, examples of current problems may be used to illustrate a point. This type of work calls for broad attitudinal and lifestyle changes to be made and seeks to provide individuals with a generalized framework within which to view their responsibility to others and the natural world. *Issues-based* work is defined as that which focuses very specifically on a certain environmental topic, such as global climate change or renewable energy, and which does not necessarily call for broad ethical or behavioral changes except as related to the particular issue being discussed. This distinction between ethics-based and issues-based work is based on earlier literature that implicitly suggests such a dichotomy as well as preliminary research the author conducted examining group websites and interviewing representatives of a small number of faith-based environmental groups.

Two sets of factors are hypothesized to influence an emphasis on ethics rather than issues-based advocacy. The first set aims to examine internal and organizational group characteristics and their relationship to the amount of ethics-based and issues-based work engaged in by a group. Specifically, it is hypothesized that:

- 1) The smaller the staff size, the more likely the group will engage in issues-based work.
- 2) The more a group's philosophy ties social justice and environmentalism together, the more likely the group will engage in issues-based work.
- 3) Groups which operate more locally will undertake work which is more ethics-based.
- 4) Staff and volunteers who are young will engage in more issues-based work.
- 5) Gender will have little bearing on whether a group does ethics- or issues-based work.

The second set of hypotheses tests certain external factors and their relationship to ethics-based and issues-based work. Specifically, it is hypothesized that:

- 6) Groups located in traditionally liberal geographical regions will engage in more issues-based work than will groups located otherwise. There will be some regions where faith-based environmental groups are nearly non-existent.
- 7) The inability to secure adequate funding will cause a group to do more ethics-based than issues-based work.
- 8) The greater the collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups, the more likely a group is to engage in issues-based work.
- 9) The more involved with mainstream environmentalists a faith-based-environmental group is, the more issues-based work they will do.
- 10) Groups whose actions fall primarily within the public policy realm will tend towards more issues-based work.

## **B. Significance of the Present Study**

While only having an important established presence for the past fifteen years, and while small relative to the secular environmental movement, religious environmentalism has become increasingly influential over time, both within the faith community and within society at large.<sup>1</sup> First, the movement has received increasing attention from the mainstream press in recent years (Goodstein, 2005; Harden, 2005; Janofsky, 2005; Parnes, 2004; Tierney, 2006). Articles have been published with some regularity highlighting the call of faith-based environmental groups for greater federal action surrounding the issues of global climate change and energy efficiency, for example.

Second, faith-based environmental groups have attracted attention because of a crisis of conscience in the secular environmental movement, which has been criticized for its failure to promote broader ethical principles (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2004). Recently, a number of environmental activists have suggested that the secular environmental movement has been ineffective in bringing about widespread and deep seeded changes in values and behavior (see Appendix B, *Ethics and the Modern Day Mainstream Environmental Movement*, for a broader discussion of this claim). They point to mainstream environmentalism's penchant for technocratic, legal, scientific, and policy-oriented solutions to specific issues to explain its neglect in developing a longer-term ethic (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2004). One scholar has suggested that the faith-based environmental movement, with its focus on values, actually grew in order to "fill a void" created by mainstream environmentalists whose priorities tend to lie elsewhere (Kearns, 1996). Whatever the reason for the creation of faith-based environmental activism, it has become increasingly clear over time that while science, policy, and technology have been instrumental in the passing of key environmental legislation, the environmental crisis can most effectively be solved through a change in individual and societal ethics that guide how humans relate to the earth.

Third, faith-based environmentalism is seen as a site to recapture the earlier concern of the environmental movement with questions of ethics; questions that are still discussed but which have become less prominent in recent decades. Consideration of the need for an environmental ethic began in earnest with Aldo Leopold who argued in his renowned essay, "The Land Ethic," that the ethics that we have developed to guide our relationships with each other must be extended to our engagement with the natural world if widespread degradation is to cease (see Appendix A, *Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic*, for a brief discussion of modern-day environmental ethics). Since his time, there has been much discussion about the need for such an ethic, yet most would probably agree that his ideal, or even a variation of it, has not yet been realized.

This research is also significant because of the core importance of ethics to successful environmental advocacy. That the development of an environmental ethic is necessary seems clear. It is impossible to strategically and sufficiently address each environmental issue as it arises in a timely and sustainable manner. New problems constantly emerge that are often of such a complex nature that it is difficult for the average citizen to inform herself and to take appropriate action with respect to each issue

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<sup>1</sup> The movement was instrumental in safeguarding the Endangered Species Act in 1994, for example (Kearns, 1997).

as it arises. In addition, solutions to one particular problem are rarely easily applied to another, so that each issue requires its own examination and response. Thus, while work on specific issues, such as water conservation, will always be vital, strategies aimed primarily at promoting an environmental ethic may ultimately prove more successful in bringing about lasting change.

This is because ethics influence people's values. As such, they necessarily transcend the particularities of specific issues since the tenets of an ethic are generally applicable to most problems. An environmental ethic inherent in the lives of nearly all individuals would change lifestyles and social structures in such a way that the number of environmental issues arising would dramatically decrease. In theory, people would simply live justly and responsibly with the earth, and there would be no conflict between whether or not to drill for oil in a national refuge, for example, or to better promote public transportation since one would simply know what the ethically correct solution to such a problem would be. In other words, providing individuals with an ethical framework within which to view their relationship with the natural world would enable them to choose certain ways of living, aside from any particular issue. It would also give people a way to think about the world so that they could more easily decide what they believe and how to respond when different issues are presented to them.

Finally, this research contributes to the academic literature on faith-based environmentalism. While much scholarship has been published with respect to secular environmentalism, eco-feminism, and the environmental justice movement, this is much less the case with religious-environmentalism. To date, very little academic research has been undertaken to examine the faith-based environmental movement, and none of it has considered the conditions under which ethics-based strategies are most easily employed. Instead, most of the research has been largely descriptive in nature, attempting to shed light on a young and growing social movement that is only now beginning to be known more widely.

Considerably more scientific research has been conducted looking at social movement strategies for constructing values, or frames, but little of it has examined the processes which influence the various ways in which a movement's values are created, disseminated, and adopted by its constituency (see Appendix C, *Insights from the Social Movements Literature*, for a detailed discussion of values construction by social movements). Because it has been proposed in the social movement literature that the creation and employment of effective frames might be more essential than organizational, tactical, and political variables in helping a movement achieve its goals, it is especially important to examine under what conditions work on environmental values tends to most readily occur.

### **C. Methods and Data Sources**

Creating an environmental ethic is important if sustainable global change is to occur. Since the mainstream environmental movement has been criticized as ineffective in changing people's values, it is important to look to other components of the environmental movement that might be more actively working to change people's values *per se*. Given the faith-based environmental movement's focus on environmental values, it is a logical site of research on an ethics-based environmentalism.

In order to test hypotheses regarding faith-based environmental groups and the factors that might influence the extent of their involvement in ethics-based environmentalism, a complete list of religious-environmental organizations active in the United States was compiled. Based on criteria such as length of existence and rationale for group work, this list was narrowed to forty-five organizations. These groups comprise the complete universe of faith-based environmental organizations that operate in the United States that meet certain criteria for inclusion. They have an established web presence, have been in operation for at least one year, and provide a spiritual or religious reason for their work which is mainly environmental in nature. In addition, they are headquartered in the United States and work primarily domestically, they are mainly of Judeo-Christian affiliation, and they are not housed within a formal religious denomination or movement. Finally, groups in the present study are not spirituality centers or educational institutions, were not created by secular environmental organizations, and do not confine their work solely to one congregation.

A structured interview questionnaire was developed and phone interviews conducted with forty-two of the forty-five organizations. Data gathered from group websites was used to determine whether or not a group met my criteria for inclusion, and was also used to a lesser extent to supplement information obtained during the phone survey. Both quantitative and qualitative data was gathered during the interview. Answers to all qualitative questions were transcribed verbatim and then systematically coded and analyzed in order to discover commonalities among organizations. Quantitative data was also coded and entered into two databases, MS Excel and SPSS 14.0. These databases were used to generate descriptive statistics to further identify certain trends among the groups. In addition, correlation analyses examining relationships between the hypothesized variables and the degree to which a group engages in ethics-based and issues-based work were conducted.

#### **D. Situating Religious-Environmentalism within the Broader Environmental Movement**

It is important to note that faith-based environmental groups often view efforts aimed at changing values as lying squarely within their realm of expertise, because they see spiritual and religious values as inherent parts of environmental work. Other religious groups have been historically important in the furthering of ethics surrounding civil rights, the abolishment of slavery, and other social issues; faith-based environmental work is grounded in and able to draw from religion's tradition of engagement in efforts of this sort. It is likely because of religion's orientation towards values-based work that changing the worldviews and ethics of individuals is the primary goal *as well as* a strategy for the majority of groups involved in the faith-based environmental movement.

Of course, religious-environmental groups are not the only segment of the environmental movement which has spoken directly of the links between environmentalism, spiritualism, and values. Indeed, the modern environmental movement has its roots in the spirituality of its forebears such as Thoreau, Pinchot, Muir, and others. Today that spirituality can be still be seen in the secular, ecofeminist, and environmental justice segments of the present-day environmental movement.

Secular environmental organizations, for instance, frequently partner with faith-based environmental groups. Some also sponsor and fund faith-based initiatives, and there is general recognition among mainstream environmental leaders that many of their adherents are drawn to environmental work because of the spiritual and religious values that they hold (Sierra Club, 2006; The Humane Society of the United States, 2006; West Michigan Environmental Action Council, 2006).

In addition, there are a number of environmental activists, such as Bill McKibben, Wendell Berry, and Terry Tempest Williams who make reference to the connections between religion, values, and the environment in their writings (Pope, 2004). In an essay entitled, "Christianity and the Survival of Creation," for instance, Wendell Berry uses Biblical scripture to make the case that environmental degradation of the earth is a form of blasphemy. He asserts that such destruction is essentially equivalent to "flinging" God's gifts into His face, as if they were of no worth beyond that assigned to them by our destruction of them" (Berry, 1993). He also chastises "respectable Christian behavior" that is discrepant from Biblical instruction, arguing that "many if not most Christian organizations now appear to be perfectly at peace with the military-industrial economy and its 'scientific' destruction of life" (Berry, 1993).

There are also a number of ecofeminist writers, such as Rosemary Radford Ruether and Sallie McFague, who make links between theology, environmental degradation, injustice, and patriarchic domination (McFague, 1993; Ruether, 1992; Ruether, 1994; Ruether, 1995). These writers call for a different set of ethics to be promoted, those that are more egalitarian and community-oriented, that resist domination and violence, that integrate justice into ecological spirituality, and that "reawaken a sense of kinship with all living things" (Ruether, 1995: 85). They argue that these alternative ethics can be found throughout the Bible alongside those that are less desirable. Solving the environmental crisis, then, partly becomes a matter concerning which of these competing ethics to accept in order to preserve the integrity of the planet (Ruether, 1995).

Environmental justice activists, likewise, frequently invoke religion, spiritualism, and values in their work. The preamble to the "Principles of Environmental Justice" (1991), for instance, discusses people's "spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of... Mother Earth." The names of some environmental justice groups, such as "Jesus People Against Pollution," further reflect the movement's ties to religion. In addition, many environmental justice activists frequently draw on their religious beliefs to guide and sustain them in their struggles to create safer and healthier environments for disadvantaged communities (Lerner, 2005; Roberts & Toffolon-Weiss, 2001). They tie the values of justice and responsibility that are inherent in scriptural teachings to the campaigns on which they work, frequently open and close protest meetings with prayers, and regularly use churches as a focal point of organizing a community (Roberts & Toffolon-Weiss, 2001).

## **E. Chapter Outline**

This thesis has four chapters. The second chapter consists of a Literature Review in which research on and characteristics of faith-based environmental initiatives, and the

history and status of religion and the environment, in the United States are examined.<sup>2</sup> The Research Design and Methodology chapter presents the research questions, hypotheses, and eligibility criteria, and also explains the methods used in collecting and analyzing the data. The Results chapter contains a presentation of general trends identified among religious-environmental groups. In particular, demographic characteristics of the groups are discussed, and an examination is made as to whether and how they embrace ethics-based work in their philosophies, goals, and activities, as well as the challenges inherent in doing so. Also presented are the results of hypothesis testing that sought to determine what factors might influence the extent to which an organization engages in ethics-based or issues-based work. The final chapter contains Conclusions drawn from the results and a summary of the trends that have been identified. The thesis concludes with a short discussion of directions for future research concerning this topic.

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<sup>2</sup> Other sections included in the original main body of the thesis have been moved to the Appendices. These include discussions on Aldo Leopold's *Land Ethic*, the *Death of Environmentalism* literature and its critique of the mainstream environmental movement's alleged neglect of values and vision, and the role of values in social movements. These are all relevant to the present work, not only because Leopold's *Land Ethic* and the *Death of Environmentalism* literature helped to provide the impetus for the current research, but also because they provide a greater context for the debate about environmental ethics and values in which the religious-environmental movement participates. However, in the interest of providing research participants with a more concise paper, these sections have been moved from their original position in the thesis to the appendices.

Appendix A, *Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic*, ties the present research on the religious-environmental movement to a long tradition of thought regarding environmental ethics and provides background into the thinking of various scholars about the need for such an ethic by presenting an overview of the best known environmental ethic of modern day, the *Land Ethic*, developed by Aldo Leopold in the 1940s.

Appendix B, *Ethics and the Modern-Day Mainstream Environmental Movement*, and Appendix C, *Insights from Social Movement Literature*, focus on the roles of values in social movements in order to explore the challenges of engaging in an ethics-based environmentalism. There has been widespread discussion among environmentalists, both secular and religious, about the alleged failure of the broader environmental movement to perpetuate certain environmental values and its subsequent lack of success in achieving its long-term goals. The mainstream movement's focus on science, policy, and technology to solve problems, and its corresponding neglect of ethics-based work, implies that there are important challenges to promoting environmental values. Because of this, two disparate bodies of literature are considered—one focusing on ethics and the other on value change and social movements—in order to understand the challenge of pursuing a modern-day ethics-based environmentalism of the type engaged in by faith-based environmental groups.

## **Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: RELIGION AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE MODERN-DAY UNITED STATES**

Within the last couple of years, there has been increasing attention paid by the mainstream press to the faith-based environmental movement. However, very little is known about religious-environmental organizations aside from what can be gathered through newspaper and popular magazine articles. The literature which does exist about religion and the environment focuses primarily on understanding how individual attitudes, behavior, and beliefs are related to concern for the environment. There has also been some work conducted examining the connections between religious texts and environmental thought, in an attempt to better understand what certain teachings convey about humanity's relationship to the earth. However, very few studies have been conducted with faith-based groups who organize themselves explicitly around concern for the environment, and so less is known about this important and growing segment of the environmental movement.

This chapter begins with a summary of the state of the research conducted to date on the subject of faith-based environmentalism so as to examine what scholars have learned about the movement thus far. Next, a brief overview of modern day American thinking about religion and the environment is provided. This is done first by examining twentieth century debates surrounding the relationship between religion and the environment, and secondly by highlighting results from several important empirical studies conducted to examine the religion-environment connection. Finally, the chapter concludes with a thorough discussion of how the primary individual faith traditions examined in the present research - Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism - view the connection between religion and the environment, and translate those philosophies into action.

### **A. Faith-Based Environmentalism**

Discussions about the relationship between the environment and religion began in earnest in the broader faith community following the 1967 publication in *Science* of Lynn White's paper, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis." In this paper, White alleged that much of the current environmental crisis could be accounted for by the Judeo-Christian paradigm in which humans believed they were given divine permission to use the earth for their needs in whatever way they saw fit. Throughout the 1970s, theologians debated the contribution of Judeo-Christian philosophy to the widespread environmental degradation that was garnering increasing attention from legislators and the public. The secular environmental movement also began in earnest around this time and became instrumental in passing many of the key environmental statutes that continue to operate today.

The following section details academic studies thus far published about faith-based environmental organizations in the United States. It begins with a brief historical overview of the movement. It then profiles a particularly prominent faith-based environmental organization, the Natural Religious Partnership for the Environment, and concludes with a discussion of religious-environmental initiatives in Appalachia.

### Beginnings of the Faith-Based Environmental Movement

Faith-based groups in the United States have a long history of activism, political and otherwise. They have worked on a wide variety of issues, most of which were viewed as having moral implications, including the abolishment of slavery and apartheid, the rights of labor and of racial minorities, civil rights, abortion (both for and against), the advocacy of temperance, and tax reform (Wood, 2003). Most recently, faith-based groups have taken up the cause of environmentalism. Framing their work in various ways, faith-based environmental organizations generally seek to bring about lasting positive environmental change through creative and diverse methods. While they may each ground the rationale for their work in different theologies or philosophies, by and large, their aim is to increase awareness about the present ecological crisis among Americans, particularly among those who are religious. They seek to bring about change at the individual, congregational, national, and societal level. Many believe their work to be a natural extension of religion and the social justice work that faith traditions have long supported. Most importantly for the present research, they all agree that humans are ethically and morally responsible to care for God's creation.

Most of the faith-based environmental organizations currently active in the United States were founded in the early 1990s, although there are a number of groups who formed in the 1980s, and at least one dates back to the 1923. Some believe that the rise in the number of groups in the 1990s was a response to the anti-environmental agenda of the Reagan administration (1980 to 1988) (Kearns, 1997). Others claim that the groups formed largely in response to the "Open Letter to the Religious Community," issued in 1990 and signed by thirty-four prominent scientists, including Carl Sagan, Freeman Dyson, and Stephen Jay Gould (New York Times, 20 January 1990). This letter declared the environmental crisis to be so serious that it must be "recognized from the outset as having a religious as well as scientific dimension," and it helped to spur the faith community to action (Shibley & Wiggins, 1997). People of faith were further incited to assume environmental work when, also in 1990, Pope John Paul II stated in a World Day of Peace address that all Christians were morally responsible for and obligated to protect God's creation (Vaillancourt, 1997). In addition, national assemblies of both Catholics and mainline Protestant denominations began formulating official church statements about environmental concerns around this time, some of which were accompanied by the creation of departments charged specifically to carry out environmental work (Feldman & Moseley, 2002). The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in which there was a significant religious presence, might have also provided a certain amount of impetus for the creation of a faith-based environmental movement at that time. Finally, the movement may have also been invigorated by the anti-environmentalism of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1994 (Kearns, 1997).

In attempting to explain the rise of faith-based environmentalism, some have also suggested that faith-based environmental groups stepped in to "fill a void" created by public policies and secular environmentalists who embraced scientific and technical solutions to problems while ignoring values in the 1980s and 1990s (Kearns, 1996; Porter, 1999). Some scholars have contended that the mainstream environmental movement's initial concern with "knitting together ecological values and action together" was supplanted with political activism, proposals of technocratic solutions to

environmental problems, and too great a focus on maintaining mass membership (Dowie, 1992; Dunlap & Mertig, 1992, both as cited in Kearns, 1996). Recent critiques of the mainstream movement, discussed in detail below, have further asserted that the reason for secular environmentalism's diminished success in bringing about environmental change is primarily due to its failure to articulate a broad vision and shared values to the American people (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2004). In addition, many Christian ecologists who had been members of secular environmental organizations became frustrated at being unable to voice their religious understandings of the ecological crisis within these groups (Kearns, 1997).

The idea that religious-environmentalism may have grown partly in response to the failure of the mainstream movement to address ethics is supported by a 1995 study published by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This study found that most Americans view nature according to the spiritual or religious values that they hold, regardless of their political ideology. In general, they do not consider the natural world through a prism emphasizing utilitarian (i.e., nature is a valuable resource) or aesthetic (i.e., nature is beautiful) values of the kind typically invoked by the secular movement. The authors of the study interpret their findings to mean that "divine creation is the closest concept American culture provides to express the sacredness of nature. Regardless of whether one actually believes in biblical Creation, it is the best vehicle we have to express this value" (Kempton, Boster, & Hartley, 1995). If Shellenberger and Nordhaus (2004) and Kempton et al. (1995) are correct then, faith-based environmental groups may have grown up in part because of the need for values and vision within the greater environmental movement itself. Paul Gorman, founder and director of one prominent faith-based environmental group, the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, has said that environmental activism, in focusing almost exclusively on technical and legislative issues, has ignored "the kind of moral and spiritual commitment and endurance that comes when people of faith commit themselves to great social struggles" (AtKisson, 1995). In other words, the religious community, with its long history of involvement in social issues, knows how to "carry on a struggle over decades, not merely two-year sessions of Congress," unlike their secular counterparts (AtKisson, 1995). Whatever the cause or causes for their sudden flourishing, the number of faith-based environmental groups active in the United States has only continued to grow with each year.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> While the faith-based environmental movement is growing, the proportion of the adult American population that is Christian has declined from 86% in 1990 to 77% in 2001 (Kosmin, Mayer, & Keysar, 2001). The percentage of non-Christian adults has remained fairly steady, only increasing in ten years by 0.4% to reach 3.7%. In addition, there is a trend wherein the percentage of adults who identify themselves with a particular religious denomination has steadily declined from 90% in 1991 to 81% in 2001. For instance, Mainline Protestant denominations have seen their membership numbers reduced by a third so that the religious market share of the eight leading Mainline Protestant denominations fell from 15.9% in 1965 to 9.1% in 1998 (McKinney, 1998). Evangelical Christian churches and those that are non-denominational, on the other hand, have seen the most significant increases in membership over the past decade. The Roman Catholic church, bolstered by immigrants, has likewise seen an increase in number of adherents (Kosmin, Mayer, & Keysar, 2001). That being said, an additional group that has witnessed important increases in numbers consists of individuals who profess no religion. This suggests that these changing patterns have as much to do with a rejection of faith as they do with the seeking of different faiths among Americans (Kosmin, Mayer, & Keysar, 2001).

Faith-based environmental groups tackle a diverse set of environmental issues (see Results chapter below) that are similar to those with which the mainstream environmental movement is also concerned. The strategies that religious-environmental groups employ to accomplish their goals are equally varied and similar to those used by secular environmentalists. These tactics range from political lobbying at every level of government to establishing community gardens in local neighborhoods. Still, while religious and mainstream environmental organizations do share many strategies to bring about change, some of the tactics used by the faith-based movement remain distinct from those utilized by secular environmentalists. One such strategy is to address the moral and ethical dimensions of the environmental crisis. This is logical since faith-based environmental groups ground their work in spiritual and religious terms and as such believe that God has mandated humans to be responsible environmental stewards (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of the belief structures of Christian and Jewish environmentalists).

Unfortunately, there has been little empirical research conducted with faith-based environmental groups in the United States. Those academicians who have researched the subject have directed their inquiries solely to Christian environmental initiatives. Therefore, there is little known about the philosophies and activities of Jewish, non-Judeo-Christian, or interfaith environmental organizations. As a result, it is impossible to present a comprehensive view of the movement, and little can be said about how successful it has been in achieving its goals.

#### The National Religious Partnership for the Environment

The National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE) is one of the few faith-based environmental organizations which has received scholarly attention. A well-known and well-organized faith-based environmental organization, it has also attracted a great deal of attention from the mainstream press, relative to other groups in the present study. This may be, at least in part, because its organizational structure is unique in the movement.

The NRPE was formed in 1993, partly in response to the “Open Letter to the Religious Community” issued in 1990, and partly as a culmination of environmental

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With respect to the demographic characteristics of religious Americans, older individuals are more likely to describe their outlook as being “religious” than are younger Americans (Kosmin, Mayer, & Keysar, 2001). This may partly explain why major Christian and Jewish denominations have aged significantly since 1990. For instance, Catholics, Methodists, Lutherans, and Presbyterians have three times as many adherents over the age of 65 than between 18 and 35 years. For Jews, the ratio is two to one. Non-Judeo Christians, particularly Buddhists and Muslims, appear to have the highest percentages of adults under thirty, but the lowest percentages of women (the percentage of women in Judeo-Christianity is between 49% and 60% whereas for Buddhists and Muslims it is 35% and 34%, respectively). Finally, individuals who identify themselves with a denomination are much more likely to be married than those who do not. Adults who are Evangelical/Born Again Christians having the highest proportion of married adherents (74%). Although the religious population of the United States is aging and identifying itself less frequently as Christian or with specific denominations, at least half of Americans continue to attend religious services at least once a week or more, and 75% describe their outlook as “religious” or “somewhat religious” (National Council of Churches, as cited by Economist, 2004). This indicates that faith-based environmental groups still have a considerable constituent base from which to draw supporters and direct their efforts.

work which had taken place in many mainline denominations for a number of years (AtKisson, 1995; Shibley & Wiggins, 1997). Initially, the NRPE undertook a three-year, \$4.5 million dollar interfaith effort to “green” 53,000 congregations nationwide. An umbrella organization made up of a coalition of other independent groups including the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCC), the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), the National Council of Churches in Christ (NCC), and the Coalition of the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL),<sup>4</sup> it has since grown into what is arguably one of the most influential organizations of the movement (Shibley & Wiggins, 1997).

In the beginning, the mission of the NRPE was to “integrate issues of social justice and environment” (Shibley & Wiggins, 1997). Not an entirely new perspective, as the environmental justice movement, incited by a United Church of Christ 1987 report on toxics and race, had been tying such issues together for a number of years, it nonetheless articulated a growing environmental ethic within the religious community: eco-justice (Shibley & Wiggins, 1997). To accomplish its goals, the NRPE acted as a facilitator for its four member groups, each of which had the task of articulating its mission through the development of resource materials for use by local congregations that would utilize the most appropriate theological and political justifications for environmental action for the faith traditions with which they were affiliated. The member groups drew from denominations, seminaries, and religious research institutes when compiling their materials.

The materials created by the groups were grounded in various values and beliefs about how best to solve environmental problems. Groups differed in their views, for instance, as to whether environmental degradation resulted from individual weakness or structural problems, and each proposed changes corresponding to their beliefs. They also varied in whether or not the ethic that they espoused was primarily that of stewardship or eco-justice (Kearns, 1996). The three groups – EEN, USCC, and COEJL – who promoted stewardship stressed an evangelical interpretation of the scriptural mandate for humans to take care of the earth. Only the NCC grounded its work strongly in an eco-justice ethic, emphasizing the connection between social justice issues, such as poverty and hunger, and environmental problems.<sup>5</sup> Research indicates that because stewardship was the principle ethic endorsed by the majority of these groups, it also became the principle ethic adopted by local congregations, despite intentions by the NRPE to more fully integrate social justice and environmental concerns (Shibley & Wiggins, 1997). Indeed, researchers studying faith-based environmental initiatives in Appalachia five years later found the ethic of stewardship to most prominent among the different values promoted by religious-environmental activists in the region.

### Faith-Based Environmental Initiatives in Appalachia

David Lewis Feldman and Lyndsay Moseley (2003) published what is perhaps the only scholarly article on the subject of faith-based environmental groups and the mechanisms by which these organizations translate their beliefs into action. Earlier papers devoted time to considering the ethics in which different types of groups grounded their work, but they gave little attention to how these ethics were expressed through

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<sup>4</sup> Each of these organizations has its own mission statement, board of directors, and annual budget.

<sup>5</sup> Although to a much lesser extent, the USCC and COEJL also developed an eco-justice ethic.

practical action (Kearns, 1996; Shibley & Wiggins, 1997). Feldman and Moseley (2003) attempted to correct this by studying twenty Christian faith-based environmental initiatives in Appalachia.

Appalachia is a unique cultural and geographical region in the United States, and its traditions have shaped both Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity in the area (Feldman & Moseley, 2003). In addition, there is a history of environmental degradation, poverty, and exploitation in the region which distinguishes it from other areas in the country. As a result, Christian culture in Appalachia differs from mainstream Protestant practices elsewhere in the country. A detailed discussion of these differences is beyond the scope of the present research, but it is worthwhile to note that these variations may serve to make faith-based environmental groups in Appalachia distinct from those located outside of the region. Also, because this study focused exclusively on Christian organizations, no conclusions can be drawn about Jewish, non Judeo-Christian, or interfaith groups who also organize around concern for the environment.

Still, the main themes and ways of disseminating messages present in Appalachian faith-based environmental initiatives seem to essentially mirror those that exist elsewhere. Appalachian groups were founded primarily in the early 1990s and for reasons such as those mentioned earlier. They have three common goals: 1) to “increase awareness of the connection between Christian faith and environmental responsibility, 2) to transform personal attitudes towards the environment, and 3) to encourage the adoption of more earth-friendly practices” (Feldman & Moseley, 2003). These goals are accomplished through a variety of activities such as education and raising awareness, collaborating with other groups, and engaging in policy advocacy work. The idea behind the activities of organizations is to spiritually and practically support individuals and communities so that they are better able to bring about the lifestyle changes seen as necessary for environmental sustainability. For many of the Appalachian faith-based environmental initiatives, undergoing such personal transformation, or changing ethics, must be the precursor to any other action, or issues-based work, if lasting environmental reform is to be achieved (Feldman & Moseley, 2002).

Stewardship is the predominant ethic espoused in Appalachian faith-based environmental initiatives, although it is often an ill-defined concept, perhaps because activists are more occupied with effecting change than positing definitions (Feldman and Moseley, 2003). Interestingly enough, the ethic of eco-justice is less developed and less accepted in Appalachia than is the ethic of stewardship which seems to fit better with the religious cultures and traditions of the area. This is surprising given the region’s considerable history of social ethical struggles. Feldman and Moseley (2003) speculate that the reticence of some churches to engage in eco-justice work reflects the passivity of faith traditions in the region which insist that their congregants “strictly adhere to Biblical authority and defer to clerical leadership.” Eco-justice as a model requires much more activism aimed at challenging the status quo of social and political structures. Because of this, the fact that Appalachian faith communities resist radical social change may preclude them from any significant engagement with an eco-justice ethic.

## **B. Origins of Religious-Environmental Thought in the United States**

One of the earliest individuals of the modern day to make a connection between religion and the environment was Gifford Pinchot, Chief Forester of the United States from 1899 to 1910. Pinchot was influenced heavily by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century “Social Gospel,” or Christian socialism, movement that aimed to apply Christian principles to modern social problems (Taylor, Kaplan, Hobgood-Oster, & York, 2005). As such, he believed that natural resources should be used fairly and responsibly, for the good of all citizens, present and future, and especially for the benefit of the poor. He also felt that developing natural resources for these purposes would help to uphold “democratic ideals against powerful corporate interests” which were “unwisely (despoiling) the country’s natural heritage” (Taylor et al., 2005). His goals, although worthy enough, were at odds with the views of his contemporary, John Muir. While Pinchot’s environmental ethic was largely utilitarian in nature, Muir maintained that natural entities held intrinsic value that justified their preservation regardless of what purpose they might serve for humankind. Pinchot argued that Muir’s preservationist stance ignored a religious duty to develop natural resources for the good of humankind, clearly drawing on his progressive Christian values in making that claim. In order to translate his beliefs into action, Pinchot used his considerable influence to successfully promote projects that he felt would accomplish this purpose, such as dam building in the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite (ERN, 2005). Muir believed that this project desecrated what he saw as the sanctity of nature, saying that there was “no holier temple” than the Valley. The debate between the two philosophies has continued ever since.

The historian Roderick Nash (1967) has called the Hetch Hetchy conflict a “spiritual watershed” in American environmental history. It is true that since that debate a spiritual thread has been seen to run through environmentalism, albeit in a variety of different forms and to varying degrees (Taylor et al., 2005). Given this fact, one might also wonder about whether or not religion, as one source of spiritual authority, has discussed environmentalism to the same extent that environmentalism has pondered the sacred. In 1949 Aldo Leopold wrote that religion had not yet taken up the cause of environmentalism. While Pinchot and Muir had certainly invoked religion and spirituality when justifying their different environmental philosophies, Leopold was essentially right that organized religion itself had not yet addressed the question of how best to deal with the land. This remained largely the case until 1967 when two works addressing the relationship between religion and the environment were published.

In 1967, Clarence Glacken published his book, “Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century,” outlining the complex relationships between Western religions and nature for the first time. Of more lasting importance, however, was the appearance of Lynn White Jr.’s controversial paper, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” published in *Science*, also that year. In this article, White asserted that the current poor state of the environment resulted primarily and directly from western, monotheistic religions, particularly Judeo-Christianity. He believed these religions to have fostered “human arrogance and self-importance” in such a way that degradation of nature was sanctioned, if not encouraged, in order to meet human desires. White traced this attitude to Genesis 1 where God instructs humans to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it;

and have dominion... over every living thing that moves upon the earth,” arguing that this text had been used to justify environmental exploitation by humans. He further contended that Genesis 1 had been interpreted so as to separate humans from the rest of the natural world, thereby erecting a false hierarchy wherein humans could do as they pleased with the rest of God’s creation (White, 1967). Although White (1973) (as cited in Fowler, 1995) recognized that not “all ecologic damage is, or has been, rooted in religious attitudes,” he asserted that “Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen,” and he believed that this anthropocentricity served to legitimate environmental degradation (White, 1967). His thesis was, as can be imagined, incredibly controversial, and it remains so, although perhaps to a lesser extent. While many have not given credence to White’s analysis, many others have agreed with him, both within and outside of Judeo-Christianity. As a result, a whole body of literature has grown up, responding to and testing his hypothesis.

Beginning in the 1970s, scholars debated about whether White’s thesis held any validity, and what the implications of his claims might mean for religion and the environment (Wolkomir, Futreal, Woodrum, & Hoban, 1997). In general, they concluded that Genesis 1 could be interpreted in a number of different and even conflicting ways. Some scholars agreed with White. Others felt that the passage could be read as a divine instruction for humans to care for the earth.<sup>6</sup> Some pointed to additional Biblical texts that they believed also instructed humans to act as environmental stewards rather than as exploiters of the land (Wolkomir et al., 1997). The debate remained largely intellectual in nature until a number of research studies were conducted in the mid- to late-1980s. During this time, an attempt was made to better elucidate the relationship between Judeo-Christianity and environmental degradation through empirical studies. The research has relied nearly exclusively on survey data and on how a person’s religious beliefs influence her attitudes towards the environment (Shibley & Wiggins, 1997). Although the research designs of some of these studies appear to have been somewhat flawed, they remain useful as examples of the types of questions being investigated.

### **C. Empirical Studies on Religion and the Environment**

In 1987, Ronald Shaiko questioned members of non-faith-based environmental organizations and found that those individuals who were Christian differed from those who were Jewish and non-religious in that they more often believed that humans should have “mastery over nature.” He interpreted this result as indicating that there were two distinct ways in which Judeo-Christians were oriented towards nature: the first was in keeping with White’s thesis that “dominion” had been read to mean “domination,” and the second was that it had been interpreted to mean “stewardship,” or the responsible caretaking of nature. While it is important to remember that Shaiko only sampled environmentalists who likely held environmental attitudes already different from those of the general public (Eckberg & Blocker, 1989), Wolkomir, Futreal, Woodrum, and Hoban (1997) agreed with this interpretation, albeit for different reasons.

Their study, using data gathered in 1992 from a national telephone survey of 850 individuals, built off of Shaiko’s work and tested whether or not dominion belief (here

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<sup>6</sup> This interpretation matches most closely with that of the Christian stewardship ethic described below. It is also the predominant ethic of the current faith-based environmental movement.

synonymous with “mastery-over-nature” belief), and denominational differences in predispositions towards dominion belief, predicted environmental concern. Their results agreed with those of Shaiko (1987) and further indicated that while Conservative Protestant denominations do tend to adhere more closely to dominion belief than Liberal Protestants, dominion belief in and of itself does not significantly predict level of environmental concern (Wolkomir et al., 1997).<sup>7</sup> Instead, it appeared that scriptural interpretations, and attitudes and behavior towards the environment varied considerably both among and within denominations. In fact, an individual’s environmental beliefs seemed to have more to do with their demographic characteristics than with the denominations to which they belonged, or the degree to which their denominations believed in “mastery-over-nature.” Thus, while Christians, Jews, and others may have held different beliefs about the meaning of dominion, within those groups, subdivided into numerous denominations, environmental support could not be predicted by that belief. Because of this, Wolkomir et al. (1997) argued, alongside of Shaiko (1987) and others, that the dichotomy proposed by White – that of domination of nature versus unity with it – was insufficient to describe the different ways in which Judeo-Christians view the natural world. They asserted that White’s dichotomy failed to take into account the myriad ways in which the Bible can be read, including the interpretation of “dominion” to mean “stewardship.” Doing so, they argued, neglected the potential of Judeo-Christianity to positively change environmental behavior (Shaiko, 1987; Wolkomir, Futreal, Woodrum, & Hoban, 1997; Woodrum & Hoban, 1994).

Interestingly, an earlier 1984 study conducted by Hand and Van Liere in Washington found results which were both similar to and different from those of Wolkomir, Futreal, Woodrum, and Hoban (1997). First, they found that, although varying considerably by denomination, Judeo-Christians were more likely to believe that humans ought to dominate nature than were non-Judeo Christians. In addition, they discovered lower levels of environmental concern among Judeo-Christians as compared with others. Hand and Van Liere (1984) interpreted these findings to mean that the greater the belief in “mastery-over-nature,” the lower the concern for environmental issues (Guth, Kelstedt, Smidt, & Green, 1993; Hand & Van Liere). Their interpretation varied markedly from later conclusions drawn by Wolkomir et al. (1997).

Wolkomir et al. (1997) suggested that it was individual demographic characteristics, such as age and education, rather than differences in dominion belief, that tended to predict environmental concern; it is the latter of these conclusions that seems most plausible for two reasons. To begin, while Wolkomir et al. (1997) were able to actually predict certain outcomes, Hand and Van Liere (1984) based their conclusions merely on a demonstrated relationship between dominion belief and environmental concern. In other words, they assumed causation when, in fact, there may have been only association. Secondly, Wolkomir et al. (1997) were not the only religion and environment researchers who had found a link between demographic variables, particularly age and

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<sup>7</sup> I am making use of the denominational categories, Conservative Protestant and Liberal Protestant, as employed by the authors of the study discussed. Many political scientists and sociologists now consider these categories to be outdated and misrepresentative of the populations considered to belong to them. Please see my Results section for a more in-depth discussion of the differences between the categories presented in this section and those which are more frequently used today.

education, and level of environmental concern (Greeley, 1993; Guth, et al., 1993). These other scholars had concluded that being young and well educated predicted environmental concern at least as much as any particular religious variable, such as dominion belief. Seen in this light, Wolkomir et al.'s (1997) conclusions are more probable than Hand and Van Liere's (1984). This is because not only do people of all ages and educational levels belong to denominations with differing dominion beliefs, but dominion belief in and of itself has been found insufficient in predicting environmental concern on its own.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the critiques of Hand and Van Liere's (1984) work were addressed in 1985 when a representative sample of 300 people were interviewed in Tulsa, Oklahoma about their religious beliefs and environmental concerns (Eckberg & Blocker, 1989). In an attempt to more directly test the main premise of Lynn White's hypothesis, research participants were asked questions about religious orientation (including religious affiliation, subjective significance of religion to the respondent, and belief in the Bible), concern for environmental issues (use of the environment for the economy, protection of the environment, local concerns about air and water pollution and waste disposal), and social background. Results of this study indicated that it was only belief in the Bible, not religious affiliation or subjective significance of religion, that predicted environmental concern, such that the more literal the belief, the less the environmental concern. While this result was moderately weak, it was consistent and independent of other social background variables which, with the exception of geographic location, the authors did not include in their article. (In other words, it cannot be determined from their paper whether they examined a potential relationship between age and education and environmental concern as did Greeley (1993), Guth, et al. (1993), and Wolkomir, et al. (1997).)

The findings of Eckberg and Blocker (1989) suggested that the reasons behind Judeo-Christian environmental exploitation have more to do with Biblical interpretation than with any particular characteristic of Judeo-Christianity itself. In addition, the more conservative denominations, those which interpret the Bible more literally, were shown to be less amenable to environmental activism. However, as previously discussed, later research suggested that level of environmental concern might have more to do with certain individual demographic characteristics than with the denomination to which one belongs. The authors of this research, though, did not inquire into literalistic Biblical belief, which has been shown by others besides Eckberg and Blocker (1989) to predict environmental concern (Wolkomir, et al., 1997). Nonetheless, according to Robert Booth Fowler (1992:4), it has been the liberal and mainline denominations, those which

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<sup>8</sup> It should perhaps be pointed out here that while there has been criticism of Hand and Van Liere's (1984) work, it has been of a different sort than that presented here. Eckberg and Blocker (1989) critiqued the survey used by Hand and Van Liere (1984) by pointing out that they used no measure of religious belief, instead relying on denominational affiliation, did not draw a distinction between abstract concern for the environment and concern for local, concrete issues, and focused significantly on population control questions which some have found to be conceptually distinct from other environmental concerns (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1984; Eckberg & Blocker, 1989; Van Liere & Dunlap, 1981). This analysis, while probably valid, also applies to at least some of the survey questions utilized by Wolkomir et al. (1997). Thus, the two studies suffered from similar problems. Nevertheless, both studies have provided valuable insights into the relationship between religion and environmental attitudes, and as such remain useful to consider.

interpret the Bible less literally, that have led the way in “a vigorous environmental engagement between Protestantism and the ecology movement.” Indeed, until fairly recently, fundamentalist churches rarely addressed environmental issues. And, even though environmentalism has become more prominent within them, it has not achieved the same degree of concern as it has in the less conservative denominations (Guth et al., 1993).

That there might exist factors influencing environmental concern beyond simple adherence to a Judeo-Christian worldview was also demonstrated via a study of non-environmental religious activists in 1991 (Guth, Kelstedt, Smidt, & Green, 1993). Utilizing multiple measures of religion and environmental concern, conservative, mainline, and liberal Protestants, and Roman Catholics were surveyed to determine whether or not religious perspectives affected the activists’ environmental attitudes. Consistent with Eckberg and Blocker’s 1989 findings, evangelical Protestants were “by far the palest green,” giving environmental issues low priority among other national concerns. Mainline and liberal Protestants and Catholics were much more environmentally friendly (Guth et al., 1993). In addition, the findings of Guth et al. (1993) supported those of earlier researchers in that they too were able to demonstrate that fundamentalist literal belief in the Bible was an important predictor of environmental concern.

The authors also put forth some interesting hypotheses as to what reasons might lie behind the differences observed in conservative, and mainline and liberal denominations. They suggested, as have others, that fundamentalist Protestantism’s dispensationalist stance, its belief in “End Times,” precludes it from demonstrating much environmental concern. For those denominations who read the Bible in more literal terms, the Rapture is seen as imminent. As a result, it is believed that humans ought to spend their time preparing for the Second Coming, rather than attempting to save the planet (Fowler, 1995; Guth et al., 1993). Also of interest, although perhaps not surprising, was Guth et al.’s (1991) finding that political ideology is the best predictor of environmental concern, and that those who are conservative religiously are also conservative politically. Of course, as the authors rightly pointed out, theological perspectives are strong predictors of political philosophy in general. Because of this, it is more likely the case that fundamentalism, for example, leads to conservative political ideology than vice versa, and conservative politics typically do not count environmentalism among its issues (Greeley, 1993; Guth et al., 1993).

Finally, in one of the only studies including a significant number of Catholics, Greeley (1993) tested an hypothesis asserting that Eckberg and Blocker’s (1989) findings were less the result of a literalistic belief in the Bible than the fact that literalists tend to have a sterner image of God and are more rigid in how they “approach” morality and religion than are non-literalists. He wrote, “religion is a narrative imagery before it is anything else. This imagery, strongly influenced by one’s relationship with parents and parents’ relationships with one another, is the foundation upon which all else is superstructure... Even the way one shapes one’s denominational affiliation is a function of religious stories that one absorbs (early in life)” (Greeley, 1993). His proposal that those whose stories involve a more gracious image of God, or whose denominations use

natural entities such as fire and water as metaphors for God, would be more likely to support environmental measures than those which do not, bears out.

Catholicism is a sacramental religion which draws heavily on natural metaphors for God, while viewing God as essentially benign. Protestantism, particularly fundamental Protestantism, in contrast, has less gracious images of God. In keeping with his hypothesis, Greeley (1993) was able to show that Catholics were indeed more likely to support environmental spending than were Protestants (although they are not as likely to do so as non-Christians). In addition, he demonstrated that it was the tendency of biblical literalists to view God more harshly, to be rigid in their morality, and to be politically conservative that predicted low environmental concern rather the literal belief itself. He found that those who believed in the Bible literally, but who were less morally rigid and more politically liberal, were as likely to demonstrate environmental concern as those for whom the Bible was simply a collection of tales. Because of this, Greeley (1993) believes the Bible is used as a pretext for those who would not be likely to support environmental reform anyhow. He therefore suggests that earlier findings suggesting negative religious effects on environmentalism might be spurious (Greeley, 1993). In support of this claim, Kanagy and Nelsen reported findings in 1995 demonstrating that negative associations between conventional indicators of religiosity and environmentalism were significantly reduced with the addition of minimal controls.

To sum, it is evident from studies examining religiosity and the environment that the relationship between the two is complex and dependent on many different factors. It appears that Christians hold dominion belief to a greater extent than do Jews and non-Judeo-Christians. In addition, Judeo-Christians, particularly those who believe more strongly in “mastery-over-nature,” appear to be less environmentally concerned than are their non-Judeo-Christian counterparts. Also, denominational membership does not predict environmental concern per se, but rather literal belief in the Bible, which is associated with more conservative denominations and related to lower concern for environmental matters. Finally, individual demographic characteristics, such as age, education, and political ideology, are as strong as religious variables when predicting environmental concern.

#### Models of Christian-Related Eco-Theology among Faith-Based Environmental Groups

The studies just discussed all focus primarily on examining individual religious beliefs and their relationship to environmental attitudes, whether those individuals participate in the faith-based environmental movement or not. As noted in Chapter 2, there have been very few scholarly studies conducted examining the religious-environmental movement in the United States. Because of this, more is known about how members of the faith community in general view environmental matters than about how the religious-environmental community sees and engages in them. One field study of the Christian environmental movement helps to remedy this situation.

This study, conducted between 1987 and 1992, identified three broadly defined “ethics” or “models” emerging within the faith-based environmental movement which seem to persist to this day (Kearns, 1996). These models are, to use the language of the groups studied, “Christian stewardship,” “eco-justice,” and “creation spirituality” (Kearns, 1996). (See Appendix A for Kearns’s table outlining the various characteristics

of these ethics more completely.) Each of these three models should be seen as an ideal type, according to Kearns (1997). As with religion in general, there is a wide degree of diversity and overlap among the proponents of these models. Eco-feminism might also be considered a fourth model in that a number of its supporters consider themselves to be Christian, and as such have written on the relationship between religion, women, and the environment (Feldman & Moseley, 2002; Kearns, 1996). However, not all eco-feminists are religious, with some even denouncing Judeo-Christianity. Thus, although eco-feminism has clearly influenced the thinking of the faith-based environmental movement, the present research will not consider it separately.

According to Kearns (1996), “Christian stewardship focuses on an evangelical interpretation of the biblical mandate for humans to take care of the earth... eco-justice... [links] environmental concerns with church perspectives on justice issues such as the just sharing of limited resources... and creation spirituality focuses on reorienting humans to their place as one part of a larger, panentheistic creation... [so that they] recognize the need to preserve the whole.”

Kearns’s paper (1996) focuses primarily on those groups who subscribe to the Christian stewardship and creation spirituality models. She notes that these groups are primarily parachurch in nature, meaning that they exist outside of potentially related denominations (Kearns, 1996). The reason for this, according to Wuthnow (1988, as cited by Kearns, 1996) is simple. By focusing on a particular issue, such as environmentalism, parachurch groups provide a niche within the larger religious community. They are therefore better able to obtain stronger commitments from their members than are diverse and complex denominations, or even local churches, who divide their time among a number of different concerns. Because denominations have limited space, resources, and sometimes inclination, to introduce new topics for consideration to their constituency, parachurch groups can serve the purpose of responding to those people who nonetheless feel an issue important to address religiously. They are particularly important for evangelicals, since evangelical denominations are generally less receptive to members’ special interest concerns (Kearns, 1997). Eco-justice groups, on the other hand, are not normally parachurch. Instead, they tend to be firmly tied to mainline denominations and denomination-specific special purpose groups (Kearns, 1996).

### *Christian Stewardship*

The concept of environmental stewardship was a core concept of the mainstream environmental movement for decades before the onset of the faith-based environmental movement in the 1990s. The word “stewardship,” while having its roots in Old Norse, assumed its modern meaning – environmental caretaking - in the 20<sup>th</sup> century following the 1949 publication of Aldo Leopold’s book, *A Sand County Almanac* (Murray, 1993).<sup>9</sup> This new notion of stewardship represented an important new trend away from a secularization that began in Renaissance Europe and towards the idea that the earth was “a priceless gift to posterity” (Murray, 1993). Many in the faith-based environmental movement have adopted the word “stewardship” in its modern form, while also imbuing it with additional spiritual meaning.

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<sup>9</sup> Although it should be noted that the modern *ideal* of “stewardship” was promoted even earlier in the writings of Henry David Thoreau and George Perkins Marsh, for instance (Donahue, 2004).

Christian stewardship groups believe that environmental change must result from change undertaken by individuals. Grounding their work in the Bible, they draw primarily on the Genesis 2:15 command to “till and keep” the garden [of Eden] and to be good stewards of it (Kearns, 1997). They use this passage as a counter to the historical and common interpretation of dominion found in Genesis 1:26-28 wherein the “dominion” that God gave humans over the earth is equated with “rule and exploit.” In general, Christian stewards reinterpret this passage to mean that people are meant to act as protectors of the environment, rather than as rulers or exploiters of it, even if they do remain morally “above” the rest of creation (Kearns, 1996). The fact that humans have failed to be good stewards and that environmental degradation has occurred is the result of human sinfulness. In particular, this sinfulness is seen to arise from a secularism that is considered directly opposed to Christian biblical teachings, and which encourages arrogance, selfishness, individualism (at the expense of others), and greed (Kearns, 1996). Christian stewards frequently believe that the ecological crisis will cease when humans repent their transgressions and behave more in accordance with God’s mandates.

Christian stewardship is evangelical in nature. It seeks to spread a message of creation care. As Kearns (1996) points out, this orientation is evident in the mottos used by Christian stewardship groups: “to be Christian is to be ecologist” and “to be saved means saving the creation.” The evangelical world, however, is generally more focused on saving individual souls rather than on saving the planet. This is because many evangelicals embrace dispensationalism, or the belief in End Times and the Second Coming of Christ. Those that do subscribe to these beliefs assert that their time is better served in preparing their souls for the arrival of Jesus. In addition, many view the Rapture as imminent, and ecological disasters as indicative of the Coming. Because of this, they see little reason to spend time and energy in working on environmental matters. (This topic is discussed in more detail below).

Christian stewardship groups are often frustrated with this stance. They therefore direct their message largely to that part of the evangelical world that dismisses caring for the earth in favor of individual redemption and other-worldliness. They often believe that the conservative Christian focus on these latter concerns has led them to a worldview wherein humans have a right to rule over nature, thereby causing them to care little for, and even contribute to, environmental degradation (Kearns, 1996). Christian stewardship groups are additionally wary of the conservative Christian tendency to espouse creationism as they believe that this has led to, at best, a viewing of ecology as irrelevant, and at worse, a strong bias against it (with its theory of evolution, in particular). They believe that without integrating science into plans for environmental change, faith-based environmentalism risks being unsuccessful. In addition, they are concerned that even those Christians who do want to save the planet will not have the scientific knowledge needed to do so (Kearns, 1996). As Cal DeWitt, a member of the Evangelical Environmental Network, has said, “It is only when you give either science or the scriptures short shrift that you run into problems” (Kearns, 1997).

Because of these factors, some Christian stewardship groups feel that one of the most effective ways to bring about environmental change is to reform the church, making it a “creation awareness center.” By doing so, it is thought that both individual and institutional belief patterns about humanity’s relationship to and responsibility for nature

can be changed. This task is not easy, particularly in conservative churches, because some of the environmental messages of Christian stewards are antithetical to conservative Christian ways of thinking. For instance, conservative Christianity tends to believe strongly in capitalism and “the American way.” Thus, any discussion of economic changes meets with resistance. The same is true with questions of overpopulation, for instance, since discussions about birth control and abortion are generally taboo (Kearns, 1997).

### *Creation Spirituality*

Creation spiritualists assert that humans are actually but one part of a larger whole, and not any more important than any other piece of God’s creation. Their reinterpretation of Genesis 1:26-28 is rather different than that of Christian stewardship groups who believe that while humans ought to protect the earth, they are still hierarchically superior to nature. To counter such thinking, creation spiritualists introduce a new creation story, often referred to as the Universe Story. This narrative draws on evolutionary theory and science in general, positing that there is a common origin for all peoples, and that we are all part of the same story (Kearns, 1996). Rather than using science as a method for instituting an environmental ethic as done by the Christian stewardship groups, however, creation spiritualists use religion to understand the “revelations of science.” They do so because they believe that the scientific and evolutionary processes which unfold in the universe “constitute for the human community the primary revelation of that ultimate mystery wherein all things emerge into being” (Berry, 1987, as cited by Kearns, 1996). In order for the environmental crisis to be solved then, humans must come to see the holistic nature of the universe and to believe that God is inherent in creation, rather than outside of it. By acknowledging this, humans can surmount the dualism many see as inherent in Judeo-Christianity. Unlike with Christian stewardship then, sin is not the primary reason for environmental degradation. Instead, it is the imposing of a false hierarchy that fails to recognize the interrelatedness of all creation that harms the environment. Views such as these indicate that supporters of the creation spirituality ethic might be less conservative than their counterparts who subscribe to the Christian stewardship ethic.

### *Eco-Justice*

The eco-justice model is markedly different from both the Christian stewardship and creation spirituality models. As noted previously, eco-justice proponents attempt to tie together traditional social justice issues with those that are environmental; thus, the term “eco-justice.” As such, they place responsibility for environmental degradation, and its effects on both humans and the rest of creation, on the social structures which have encouraged such exploitation. Proponents of eco-justice extend the Christian social doctrine which calls on people to be in “right relation to each other” to include being in “right relation to the natural world” (Kearns, 1996). This is different from the other models which focus their attention primarily on the individual and on spirituality to bring about change. Instead, the concerns of eco-justice lie more with community and action. This difference is manifested in eco-justice’s overt political focus, and in its emphasis on

changing institutional and structural factors so as to abolish injustice, in particular for humans, but also to a certain extent for the rest of nature as well.

### *Criticisms of the Models*

None of these three models are without their critics. Christian stewardship can find itself caught in the middle between mainline Christians who find its message to be too conservative, and evangelical Christians who believe it to be too secular (Kearns, 1996). Creation spiritualists are, as might be predicted, charged with new-ageism, a “naïve anthropology,” a “romanticized view of nature,” as well as an “unrealistic vision of the problems that must be overcome” (Ruether, 1990, as cited by Kearns, 1996). Eco-justice advocates are argued by some to be too political and secular for people interested in spirituality, and too religious for individuals desiring social and political change (Kearns, 1996). Despite this, they each hold important pieces of the types of environmental ethics promoted by Leopold (1949) and Shellenberger and Nordhaus (2004).

### **D. Environmental Philosophy and Activism within Christianity and Judaism**

Aside from the study just discussed which focused on Christianity in general, rather than on particular segments or denominations of Christianity, research about religion and the environment has mostly considered differences in theological belief and in levels of environmental concern among conservative, mainline, and liberal Protestant denominations, and Catholics, Jews, and non-Judeo-Christians. The authors of these latter types of studies demonstrate that differences exist between these groups in terms of dominion belief, literal belief in the Bible, and environmental concern. Therefore, it is possible to reason that there might be philosophical differences within these faith traditions, leading them to differing interpretations of the Bible or to varying attitudes regarding environmental support. Unfortunately, there has been little scholarly work published on this topic. A thorough review of the literature using Academic Search Premier, LexusNexus, Google Scholar, and other library databases turned up only one book written on Protestantism, two academic articles on Catholicism, and two articles and two books on Judaism, and the environment.<sup>10</sup> Most work has come from within each religious tradition via official denominational statements, through the writings of various theologians tied to a particular faith, or through articles appearing in official denominational publications. Of course, these sources shed light on work being done around certain environmental problems, as well as the theological and ethical rationales used to help explain the need for such work. However, they do not provide critical examinations of the relationship between each tradition and the environment in the same way that would be present in scholarly or peer-reviewed work. Nonetheless, a brief overview of the three different religions primarily being studied in the present research, and their thinking about environmental issues, may prove useful.

The following three sections broadly highlight the place of environmentalism in Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish thought at present. Of course, individuals within these

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<sup>10</sup> Because it is outside the scope of the present study, a search was not conducted to see if any literature has been published concerning the relationship between non-Judeo-Christian traditions and environmental support.

traditions have been considering their relationship to the natural world for hundreds of years. However, a lengthy and detailed analysis of the history of the thinking that has taken place is beyond the scope of the present work. In addition, many present day theologians within each tradition have put forth their own ideas as to how humans ought to relate to the earth. A number of these theologians, such as Thomas Berry or Matthew Fox in Catholicism, Larry Rasmussen, Paul Santmire, and John B. Cobb, Jr., in Protestantism, and Aharon Lichtenstein and Everett Gendler in Judaism, have proven highly influential in promoting certain ways of thinking about religion and nature. However, as with an historical overview of changing thoughts, a detailed discussion of their contributions must be left to a later discussion.

### Protestantism

Protestant environmental thinking, while having historical roots, first became truly prevalent with the onset of the secular environmental movement in the 1970s (Fowler, 1995: 2). During this time, Protestant interest and engagement in the area was strong. One reason for this may have been that the environmental movement followed directly on the heels of the Civil Rights movement, which, although different in many respects from environmentalism, had also seen significant Protestant involvement. Environmentalism, therefore, may have been a logical next “cause” for the religion to take up. In addition, as noted above, it was during this time that the Lynn White Thesis sparked a debate about the role of religion in bringing about environmental degradation, causing believers to critically question religion’s responsibility to the earth to a larger extent than ever before. Coupled with the tangible evidence of a planet in peril, evidenced by burning rivers and the like, the time for Protestant involvement with environmental issues might have been ripe.

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, however, interest in environmentalism faded among Protestants, perhaps because of the general trend at that time towards materialism and individualism, and away from concern for social problems that typified the 1960s and early 1970s. By 1990, this changed, and green Protestantism once again saw resurgence (Fowler, 1995: 2). Various suggestions, discussed in Chapter 2, have been made to account for the increased involvement of faith traditions in environmentalism at that time and continuing until today. Led initially by denominational elites, clergy, and bureaucrats, interest in environmental matters has spread among grassroots organizers as well. Environmentalism, while still often a secondary concern relative to other social issues, is now a more or less permanent concern for the religion and its members (Fowler, 1995: 13-4).

Protestant denominations are frequently classified as conservative, mainline, or liberal. Although many scholars now view these categories with skepticism, I will make use of them here in order to be consistent with the authors from whose work I am drawing (see Results section for more discussion on this topic). Within the conservative, mainline, and liberal classifications lie numerous denominations, and within each denomination, thousands of individuals with differing backgrounds, political ideologies, and ways of viewing the world. As a result, there is no one single Protestant way of viewing nature, or how humans and the environment ought to interact. There are certainly general differences between the varying branches of Protestantism so that the more

conservative denominations tend to be less environmentally concerned than those who are liberal. However, Protestantism, true to its roots of challenging the status quo to found new faiths, is a diverse and complex tradition. As such, it is unwise to make generalizations about Protestantism and its relationship to the environment without first noting the great plurality that exists within the religion. That being said, there are certain characteristics of Protestantism that tend to be generally true with respect to its thinking on the environment. It is those aspects of the faith that will be the focus of this discussion.

From the beginning of their engagement with environmentalism, Protestants have adopted numerous issues on which to work, and employed a variety of methods to disseminate their messages. The first major work they created coincided with the first American energy crisis, and focused on changing existing energy policy. Later years saw activism around problems of land use, pollution, overpopulation, water resources, general lifestyle patterns, and, most recently, global warming (Feldman & Moseley, 2003; Fowler, 1995: 14-5). Protestant environmentalists have spread their messages through the publication of newsletters and books, the organization of retreats and conferences, the development of new “creation” liturgies and sermons, the sponsoring of outdoor and other environmental educational experiences, and additional innovative ways. Nearly all of the major Protestant denominations, conservative and liberal alike, have passed resolutions on a wide array of environmental issues, some grounding their concern in theological terms, and most indicating how actions called for in the resolutions might be implemented policy-wise (Fowler, 1995: 16). A number of these denominations, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), the United Methodist Church, and the Episcopal Church, have gone one step further to create departments whose purpose is to execute these resolutions, usually through educational or policy initiatives. Often, these departments exist more on paper than in practice, and frequently their existence is short-lived, but their mere creation points to the growing concern for environmental issues throughout Protestantism (Fowler, 1995: 16).

### *Basis for Work*

The environmental work that has been undertaken by Protestants has been guided primarily by a sense of urgency about the environmental crisis, the notion of stewardship, belief in the Bible, and feelings of hope for the future. “Stewardship” has been, by and large, the main buzzword and ethic of the Protestant environmental movement (Fowler, 1995: 76). To a good number of green Protestants, stewardship means “caring for and loving nature.” For those who subscribe to the stewardship model, God is seen as the sacred Creator who formed all of nature. Since God created nature, and since God is sacred, the natural world must also be holy. Thus, destroying God’s work is wrong. It is this “link with God through creation (that) is absolutely central for religious environmentalists and forms the moral ground for the care of nature, quite apart from particular biblical verses” (Fowler, 1995: 77). To honor God and the life He creates requires revering all of creation, not just humanity, and working to ensure the health of the planet.

Still, despite stewardship being a common theme among Protestant environmentalists, there is a significant amount of disagreement over its definition, and a

quick perusal of denominational websites and publications demonstrates this fact (Fowler, 1995: 89). For Fowler (1995: 89), these arguments are less an indication of any weakness, or lack of cohesiveness, within the Protestant environmental movement, than they are “signals” about the importance of stewardship as the “religious foundation stone for green Protestantism.” In other words, the definition is argued over because it’s worth being contested. Additionally, it makes sense that there would be varying viewpoints on a topic of such importance given the diversity of opinion within Protestantism itself.

A further and related point of contention concerns the role God gave humans to play in the natural world. While there is little disagreement within Protestantism that humans are integrally connected to all of God’s creation, there is much debate about where in the hierarchy they fall. Were humans given the earth by God for their use without regard for the rest of creation, or were they intended to act as His servants by caring for it, for example? Are humans and natural entities equal - a very ecocentric and Leopoldian way of viewing the world - or were humans granted special status by God? Proponents of stewardship believe that the earth was not gifted to humans for their rule, but rather that humans were meant to care for it in honoring its sacredness as God’s creation. Seen in this light, stewardship, rather than being ecocentric, as some critiques might assert, is essentially theocentric in nature. In addition, it challenges an anthropocentric worldview, indicating a significant shift from earlier Christian thinking which has often been accused as the driving force behind western environmental degradation (Fowler, 1995: 80; White, 1967).

In addition to considerations of stewardship, discussions about how to interpret certain biblical texts which seem to discuss the relationship between humans and nature are an important part of the Protestant environmental debate. While the more mainline and liberal denominations typically view the Bible only as a guide for human action in the world, conservative denominations believe that it is the literal word of God (Fowler, 1995: 28). No matter what the stance concerning the true nature of the Bible, however, all denominations make use of it in attempting to discern the proper role of humanity in nature as determined by God. Numerous biblical passages (for instance, Genesis 1:26-30; Genesis 2:15; Genesis 9:8-17; Isaiah 11; Luke 12:6; Matthew 6:25-34) have been used to either justify or refute a divine mandate to care for God’s creation. A detailed discussion of them, though, and the debates surrounding them, is beyond the scope of this paper. It is possible, however, to classify the ways in which the Bible has been read regarding this issue in three main ways. According to Fowler (1995: 30, 39), interpretations have asserted that: 1) the most important relationship in creation is that between people and God, and that nature is therefore a secondary concern, 2) humans and nature are more interrelated, but humans were still created apart from the natural world, and thus are meant to act as “controller and modifier” of it, under God’s direction, or 3) people are part of nature, but are also separated from it because they are ethical and historical beings. This latter interpretation implies that people have the capacity to be stewards rather than conquerors of the land, and ought to act accordingly. (This view is reminiscent of Leopold’s assertion that our ability to recognize right and wrong and to use nature for our own ends obliges us to take better care of the earth.)

Protestant investment in the Bible as a guide to God’s will about how humans should deal with the earth is, not unexpectedly, distinctly different from the views of it

held by the mainstream environmental movement. Wendell Berry (as cited by Fowler, 1995: 31) contends that there is a fair amount of anti-Christian bias within the larger, secular movement and argues that this prejudice fails to acknowledge those parts of the Bible which can inspire and sustain environmentalists, many of whom feel spiritually about the earth. While acknowledging that Christianity and environmental degradation have a long history together, Berry believes that this is a problem with Christians, not with their sacred texts.

Many Protestants agree with this assessment. According to them, it is human sin, or spiritual crisis, that occurs when people fail to live “by and for God,” which has caused failed stewardship (Fowler, 1995: 21; William Dyrness and Loren Wilkinson, cited in Fowler, 1996: 156). This sin is sometimes seen to result from individual selfishness, or from people focusing on themselves to the exclusion of others and the rest of nature (Sallie McFague, as cited in Fowler, 1986: 131). Generally, it is thought to result from individual choices that lead to alienation from God. It is also seen to arise from institutional and social factors, often referred to as “structural sin” (Fowler, 1995: 79). Despite belief in the reality of sin for some Protestants, however, and the subsequent linking of sin to environmental exploitation, most remain optimistic about the future as for them, sin is neither permanent nor inevitable (Fowler, 1995: 79). Stated differently, sin may have caused environmental degradation, but God allows humans to repent for past transgressions. Because of this, humans can seek forgiveness and change their future interactions with the natural world.

Hope in the future because of God, therefore, plays an important role in green Protestantism. That, along with the Protestant belief that the ecological crisis is actually a “crisis of creation and of humans as servants of God and His creation,” is what largely distinguishes it from the mainstream environmental movement (Fowler, 1995: 4, 21). Protestant hope brings more optimism to environmentalism than is present in the secular movement. While not replacing human action or relieving the acute sense of crisis that is also present in Protestantism, its message – that individual people can make a difference for the good – is positive and inspiring (Fowler, 1995: 21). Because of faith in God’s love and mercy, even if humanity might not deserve to be saved, it nonetheless has the power to be if people decide to act (Fowler, 1995: 7, 20). Thus, the notion that one must actively work to save the environment is instrumental to Protestant environmental thinking.

### *Protestant Environmental Agendas*

There are three main agendas within the Protestant environmental movement in which action takes place. The first approach to achieving environmental good is to work on specific policy proposals or issues, the second is to focus on transforming values, or ethics, through altering peoples’ “ecological consciousness,” and the third is to create structural reforms that will bring about a healthier environment (Fowler, 1995: 141).

Oftentimes, green Protestants employing the single issue approach are difficult to distinguish from mainstream environmentalists. As noted in Chapter 2, the secular movement has been criticized for proposing short-term technological policy fixes to environmental problems rather than defining a long-term vision, and some Protestant environmental work could rightly be criticized along the same lines. There is no denying that both mainstream and Protestant environmentalists do important work to further their

causes and that their intentions are noble. However, since Protestants ground their work in a different rationale than that used by secularists, they need to be more cognizant of how their Christian values fit together with their policy proposals if they are to maintain their identity, even while working together with mainstream groups (Fowler, 1995: 143-4).

Protestant environmental thinking “proceeds from the prophetic sense that it is in conflict with the corrupt world around it” (Fowler, 1995: 145). Calls for change in the social order are therefore prominent within the movement, and are usually framed using the language of “values.” Green Protestants point to the central Western values of selfish individualism, oppressive hierarchies, economic development, profit-making and income inequalities as those which lead to an uncaring social order that is bringing about the destruction of the earth (Fowler, 1995: 145). While they can disagree about which values or ethics to promote in their place, the idea that values need to change is commonly accepted. Often when green Protestants discuss the need for a new morality that seeks to protect rather than harm the earth, they are talking about the need for both individual lifestyle and institutional change within the broader society. It is thought that people need to change their lifestyles. Ultimately, this involves their coming to live more simply and in better concert with nature, accepting the reality of limited resources, and consuming and wasting less. The entire economic system, as well as other societal institutions, must also be made sustainable, so that the existing social order changes from one of harming to one of protecting the earth. Individuals have a large role to play in bringing about these changes through their own private actions.

Besides valuing simple and more harmonious living, justice is of primary importance within Protestant environmentalism. The term “eco-justice” is used frequently throughout the movement, especially in mainline and liberal denominations. According to Fowler (1995: 150), eco-justice “combines the two objectives that overlie all... Protestant ecological considerations: environmentalism and justice.” The vision of eco-justice put forth by green Protestants is largely that of economic justice, or substantive economic quality, alongside ecological sustainability (Fowler, 1995: 150).

Many Protestants ground their eco-justice work in the Bible. They argue that God is not only committed to social justice (Leviticus 25:10-12), but He has instructed humans to act as caretakers of the earth (Genesis 2). Because of these two mandates, humans must therefore take action in both realms. Others invoke biblical teachings about human responsibility to aid the weak and the vulnerable. Since it is the poor and the environment who are vulnerable at this time, Christians must aid them, rendering justice in the process (Fowler, 1995: 151). Eco-justice, then, enables Protestants to work on behalf of their fellow humans as well as for the environment. By doing so, they can avoid some of the criticism leveled at the secular movement that it cares more for the environment than it does about people.

Not all Protestants work within the realm of eco-justice, however. Despite the fact that eco-justice work is viewed positively by most, it should be noted that there is a fair amount of frustration within the broader Protestant environmental movement because social justice issues, whether tied to ecological concerns or not, usually take precedence over ecological work in most denominations (Fowler, 1995: 152). As a result, green Protestants often find their issues taking the backseat to those which are more human-

centered, especially if their work does not fit the “eco-justice” mold. Since many see any environmental work, human-centered or not, as necessarily being integral to the betterment of the human condition, this situation is logically frustrating.

### *Protestant Strategies for Change*

Protestant environmental thinking has the potential to be radical, but by and large it is practical and uncertain about dramatic change (Fowler, 1995: 160). This stance can be seen in the strategies it typically employs to realize its goals. While green Protestant methods have included everything from promoting environmental education to sponsoring theological internships on organic farms, there are three strategies which have become primary in the movement. These include working through churches, supporting government action, and engaging in politics.

Perhaps the primary way that Protestant environmentalists attempt to bring about change is through the church. Bhagat (as cited in Fowler, 1995: 160) has said, “There is no question that the key to environmental crisis is the power inherent in churches. They have the potential to fire the conscience of their membership into renewed activity on behalf of the earth.” By and large, green Protestants believe that the church, as distinguished from religion (which is the backdrop against which church activities occur), is the best place to alter people’s values, especially through consciousness-raising (Fowler, 1995: 161). Green Protestants attempt to accomplish this goal by educating the clergy and laity about environmental issues and stewardship, especially in local churches. They also devote considerable resources to making individual congregations more earth-friendly, both in spirit and in action. Whether it be promoting the purchasing of fair-trade coffee for Sunday morning coffee and donuts, or conducting energy audits of the building, Protestant environmentalists are convinced that the place to begin bringing about their desired changes is the local church (Fowler, 1995: 163-4). They believe that small changes at the local level add up, and that each ecologically sound action helps to transform people’s ethics (Fowler, 1995: 164).

Support for government action as a strategy for change is also popular among green Protestants (Fowler, 1995: 165). In this, they are similar to mainstream environmentalists who have been heavily invested in the promotion of government environmental regulations since the 1960s and 1970s. Even as green Protestants locate most of their work in the church, they acknowledge that there are some realms in which the government may be better situated to have a positive environmental impact. For instance, environmental regulations are often needed, and it is only the government which has the means needed to enforce them (Fowler, 1995: 166). Some Protestants believe that a larger government is a threat to human liberty under God, and therefore hesitate about passing more environmental laws. However, most view it as the “best single means to build a sustainable society, or to control technology, or to educate people in ecological consciousness, or to discipline strip mining, or to institute long-term planning, or to redesign tax laws to benefit the environment” (Fowler, 1995: 166).

Politics can be defined as the contest among different groups for position, influence, and gain (Fowler, 1995: 168). It involves agreement and disagreement in the public sphere, and while green Protestants accept politics as an inevitable part of life, they remain largely ambivalent about how helpful politics can be, and whether or not

religious individuals ought to engage in them. Part of the problem Protestants have with politics is likely a reflection of the general, historic American skepticism of politics. The ambivalence is also an indication, however, of the reality that politics do not necessarily provide for the types of action according to the time scales desired by Protestant environmentalists. As stated before, green Protestants feel a sense of crisis about the environment, but engagement in politics can often be a long and drawn out process in which, unlike with changing ethics, the result is often short-term and never guaranteed. Additionally, Protestants seek to foster community among people, and among people and nature, and so to take part in a contest of wills is counter to their philosophies and long-term goals. Many also see in modern political thought the perpetuation of the very values which they are seeking to change: individual selfishness and capitalistic economics, for example (Fowler, 1995: 6). Finally, American Protestantism believes firmly in the separation of church and state, and so is nervous about engaging in politics because it does not want to cross a self-imposed line. Thus, while green Protestants may recognize the need to engage in politics, and do so by lobbying, creating citizen action networks, forming political coalitions, and the like, “politics and truth, politics and purity, and politics and salvation are... ill-suited bedfellows” (Fowler, 1995: 168, 171). As Fowler puts it, “Problems of compromise are real for any movement... (but they) are doubly so for green Protestants” (Fowler, 1995: 169).

#### *Science and Protestantism*

Before concluding this overview of Protestant environmentalism, some space should be devoted to two aspects of the movement which have been influential in the formulation of its philosophies and actions. The first is the relationship between green Protestantism and science, and the second concerns fundamentalist Protestant thinking with regard to humans and nature. While neither of these features is as predominant within green Protestantism as those previously discussed, their influence is nonetheless real and important.

Lynn White argued that, in addition to encouraging environmental degradation through its belief in mastery-over-nature, Christianity had nourished a modern science and technology that served to further exploit the planet (Fowler, 1995: 59). He asserted that the roots of modern science and technology were essentially Western, and as such reflected the Judeo-Christian worldview of dominance over nature (White, 1967). Much of Protestant environmentalism, along with secular environmentalism, seems to agree with White’s contention. Nonetheless, green Protestants will invoke science as the “ultimate authority” at times, to support their claims of an ecological crisis, to understand the general ecology of nature, and to demonstrate how an alternative and better society might look (Fowler, 1995: 5). They do not, however, believe that science is as useful a means to effect change for the good as the other strategies that they employ. While scientists may score higher on trust than politicians with Protestant environmentalists, scientific philosophy does not compare to religious truth and wisdom. Thus, science, like politics, is viewed with ambivalence (Fowler, 1995: 170). In addition, Protestants place an almost unlimited trust in the natural world, and “in the holistic model of nature, there is little room for the give and take of ethical argument or political (or scientific) disagreement” (Fowler, 1995: 170). For Protestant environmentalists, some matters are

self-evident, and therefore, simply do not need to be supplemented by scientific knowledge (Fowler, 1995: 170).

### *Protestant Fundamentalism and Environmentalism*

There are four different ways in which fundamentalist Protestants typically view environmentalism: with indifference, with hostility, with sympathy, or with a significant fixation about the Rapture, or “end times” (Fowler, 1995: 45, 49). It is the latter of these viewpoints which deserves mention because the conclusions drawn by those fundamentalists concerned with “end times” leads them to markedly different conclusions about the environmental crisis than those more mainline and liberal Protestants.

For fundamentalist Protestants, there are several problems with the secular and Protestant environmental movements. First, environmentalism focuses its energies on the earth rather than on heaven. Because of this, many fundamentalists believe that it might actually work to assist the triumph of the world government (which is to say, the rule of the Anti-Christ) at the expense of the long-awaited Second Coming of Christ (Fowler, 1995: 46-7, 49). Secondly, they believe that, particularly within the secular movement, environmentalism can be and has been made into an eco-centric religion where nature is seen as god, a belief that is clearly at odds with fundamentalist Protestantism (Fowler, 1995: 48). Finally, while fundamentalists also subscribe to the belief that the earth was created by God and given to humans to use under the care of divine rule, they more firmly attribute the environmental crisis to sin rather than to exploitation of nature as do other Protestants. Because of this, they feel that the “answer to environmental problems lies not in the environmental movement, but rather in preparing one’s soul for Christ’s return” (Fowler, 1995: 57).

The fact that environmental degradation is sometimes taken as evidence that the end is near further distances fundamentalists from environmentalism as they tend to look to the Rapture with anticipation and joy (Fowler, 1995: 53). Also, since the end times are inevitable and even imminent, taking action to save the environment is essentially futile according to fundamentalists (Fowler, 1995: 53). “I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns,” James Watt, a fundamentalist Protestant and Secretary of the Interior from 1980 to 1983, stated in arguing against promoting environmental conservation (Fowler, 1996: p. 47; Werbach, 2005).

To conclude, it is clear that Protestant environmental philosophy is as diverse and complex as the strategies and approaches it employs to effect ecological change. To be sure, there are numerous other ways in which Protestants view their relationship with the natural world than those elucidated in the present discussion, but their general feelings about the issue have been included. The next section discusses the place of environmentalism in Catholic thought at this time.

### Catholicism

The Catholic Church in the United States has, in the past, been progressive on a number of social issues, such as the economy and peace. It has also been involved in addressing environmental problems, although it admitted in the mid-1990s that its environmental ethic was not yet well formed (Shibley & Wiggins, 1997). Catholic work

on environmental issues has received considerably less attention than Protestant environmentalism, both in academia and the mainstream press, but Catholics have engaged in environmental work for some time now, and Catholicism houses numerous theologians considering the relationship between spirituality and the environment (Guth et al., 1993; Marlett, 1998). As early as 1923, the Catholic Church was engaged in supporting rural and ecologically sensitive agricultural work via the National Catholic Rural Life Conference (NCRLC) in Des Moines, Iowa. The issues of concern to NCRLC have much in common today with those addressed by the mainstream environmental movement: sustainable agriculture, genetically modified foods, and opposition to factory farming, to name a few. Of course, a good number of these issues have arisen only recently in time, and the focus of Catholic rural work has changed over the decades. Nevertheless, the presence of the NCRLC indicates that Catholics have been actively engaging in conversations about how humans should relate to nature, at least through the lens of agriculture, since long before other faith traditions in the United States took up the cause. Because there is little scholarly work available on the subject of Catholicism and the environment, the NCRLC can be used as an example of at least one variety of thinking that might typify Catholic thought.

Catholic agrarians who were active with the NCRLC during its early days felt that spiritually and ecologically sensitive farming provided a necessary counterbalance to the increasingly technical world of the time, and that it offered the most genuine existence possible (Huff, as cited in Marlett, 1998). Virgil Michel, OSB, wrote in 1937, “Catholic life must be close to nature, for the supernatural in the dispensation of God builds on the natural. Instead of a commercial exploitation of the soil... we must get back to cooperation with the forces of nature for more wholesome Christian living” (Marlett, 1998). To cooperate with and respect nature meant to care for one’s soul. To properly honor God’s gift of the land required people to use sustainable agricultural practices. These notions echo those heard later in Protestant environmentalism, and point to an important overlap between the two faiths concerning how they view their relationship to the natural world.

The NCRLC, of course, while perhaps serving to demonstrate the longevity of the Catholic environmental movement, is but only one small part of American Catholicism. Because Catholicism is well-known for its strict hierarchy, and because that hierarchy has limited the spread of the Catholic environmental message, any discussion of the movement must really involve the Vatican and other Catholic policy agencies who more or less control the direction and scope of Catholic activism on a variety of issues.

#### *The Catholic Hierarchy and Environmentalism*

Pope Benedict XVI was elected to his office only recently, on April 19, 2005. Many believe that the close ties he had with the previous pontiff, John Paul II, indicate that the policies he promotes will follow closely those espoused by his predecessor. If that is the case, then he will likely be a proponent of environmental reform throughout the world.

Historically, involvement in environmental issues by the Vatican has varied. Popes Pius XII (reigned 1939 to 1958) and Jean XXIII (reigned 1958 to 1963), as well as the Second Vatican Council (held 1962 to 1965), made passing comments about the

beauty and necessity of respecting nature, but it was not until Pope Paul VI (reigned 1963 to 1978) that any real discussion of environmental issues began at the Vatican (Vaillancourt, 1997). During his papacy, Paul VI issued an encyclical entitled, "Populorum Progression," in which he addressed materialism and population growth, among many other social issues. He also made pro-environment declarations to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1970, to the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, and on world Earth Day in 1977. In his final environmental message later that year, Paul VI asserted that the ecological crisis was becoming more and more serious, that it was caused largely by industrialization, and that humans had to change their lifestyles so as to waste less. He believed in the intrinsic beauty of nature and felt that humans were obliged to treat it with respect and with moderation. Paul VI further instructed Catholics to consider the environmental implications of development, speaking essentially in terms of sustainable development before the term had actually been coined (Villancourt, 1997).

Pope John Paul II was elected in 1978 and grew increasingly active in considering issues of environmental importance. Between the time of his election and 1988, he spoke of the environment sixty-seven times in various texts. Following the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987 which outlined numerous guiding principles for sustainable development, John Paul II significantly increased the number of environmental messages being issued from Rome. In general, he spoke of ecology and the harmony of creation, of the duty to protect and share limited natural resources, of the environmental damage incurred by industrial processes, and of the moral responsibility of humans to respect and care for, rather than control, the earth. As with many Protestants, Pope John Paul II considered the environmental crisis to be essentially moral in nature and thus told Catholics that their behavior towards the earth was connected directly to their faith. He further contended that certain social structures were equally at fault in bringing about environmental degradation, stating that "man will never achieve a just ecological balance if the structural forms of poverty which exist in the world are not directly attacked" (John Paul II, 1991, as cited in Villaincourt, 1997; translated by author from original French). In making this assertion, the pope linked poverty and environmental destruction in the same ways that Protestant eco-justice activists had done. As a result, environmental justice became the primary focus of Catholic environmental work, at least within the higher echelons of the Catholic hierarchy.

The main American policy agency for all Catholic bishops, derby and parishes, is the United States Catholic Conference (Motavalli, 2002). Through its Environmental Justice Program (EJP), created in 1993, the Conference has followed the lead of the Vatican and engaged in work on a wide variety of environmental issues. Besides agricultural concerns, Catholic environmental work has dealt with issues including pesticides and farmworkers, child exposure to toxic s, takings/Fifth Amendment questions, global warming, urban sprawl, brownfield remediation, energy use, and overconsumption (U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, 2005). The methods used to disseminate information about these issues have included publishing scholarly texts, hosting conferences, distributing educational materials and other resources, and writing numerous formal letters to lawmakers on specific topics of concern (U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, 2005).

The philosophies which guide the environmental work of the Conference are very similar to those that steer green Protestantism. The mission of the EJP, for instance, is “to educate and motivate Catholics to a deeper reverence and respect for God’s creation, and to engage parishes and dioceses in activities aimed at dealing with environmental problems, particularly as they affect the poor.” This statement encompasses the same Protestant belief in local churches as being the best avenue to change, and stresses respect for, rather than mastery over, nature.

One clear difference between Protestant and Catholic environmentalism, however, is again the Catholic emphasis on the ethic of eco-justice, a focus which is apparent in the name of the EJP program itself. Whereas in Protestant environmentalism, eco-justice is only one among many approaches to solving the environmental crisis, within Catholicism, as noted above, it seems to hold greater weight. The four main policy areas for the Conference support this conclusion. The bishops who established the EJP mandated that priority be given to environmental justice, sustainable development, worker protection, and protecting the global commons as shared resources (U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, 2005). All of these combine human and environmental needs together, and there seems to be little that *official* Catholic environmentalism does which is solely ecological in nature. As Rob Gorman (as cited in AtKission, 1995), a Catholic social worker in Louisiana, states, “... it’s not humans versus the environment. It’s humans and the environment, or ain’t neither of us going to be here.” Because of this, it appears that Catholic environmentalism can sometimes be more human-centered than Protestant environmentalism. That being said, it is difficult to know from the existing literature how Catholic environmentalists view their relationship to the environment, or which issues they hold to be most important. While the official church body may focus primarily on social justice concerns, its members may work more broadly on issues of ecological importance.

#### *Catholic Nuns and Environmentalism*

One area in Catholicism where activism is focused more on purely ecological concerns can be found in work done by some Catholic nuns (Taylor, 2002). In particular, there are a number of religious sisters, popularly called “green nuns,” “green sisters,” or “eco-nuns,” who are “building new ‘earth ministries’” and “reinhabiting their traditional community lands in more ecologically conscious ways” (Taylor, 2002). The environmental work undertaken by these nuns is more localized, often confined to their homes and the local community in which they live. It often involves practicing sustainable agriculture, constructing buildings of renewable materials, launching clean-water campaigns, celebrating planetary seasons and cycles, and operating earth centers where the laity can go to experience nature first-hand or take part in environmental education programs. Green nuns tend to be less anthropocentric and less hierarchical than other Catholic clergy, and they are more open to celebrating nature in ways which border on eco-centrism. Managing thirty earth spirituality centers and ministries throughout the United States, with more being added each year, their presence points to a more diverse Catholic environmental movement than is evident from official church stances (Taylor, 2002).

### *Similarities between Catholicism and Protestantism*

Although the present researcher was unable to locate literature in support of the following conclusions, glancing through the websites maintained by Catholic and Protestant environmental groups indicates that besides the differences that one would expect to find as a result of the two religions' structural dissimilarities, and the differences in emphasis on eco-justice discussed above, the general bases for Catholic and Protestant environmental involvement seem to be fairly comparable. For instance, most Catholic environmentalists, similar to many of their Protestant counterparts, believe that "Praising the Creator while we ruin creation is blasphemy" (J. LaChabce, 1994, as cited by AtKisson, 1995). Both Catholics and Protestants look to the Bible for guidance in how to conceptualize humanity's relationship to nature and both use the language of stewardship. Also, some Catholics, like Protestants, view the ecological crisis as being the result of "an exaggerated individualism, which sees community as nothing more than people united for mutual benefit..." (Feiss, 1993, as cited by Porter, 1999). Finally, both Catholicism and Protestantism have their fair share of critics who assert that humans were intended by God to control nature, and that religious environmentalism is too eco-centric, ascribing divine status to nature when it only properly belongs to God (in Catholicism, these charges are led in particular by Catholic priest, Robert A. Sirico, with the Michigan-based Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty) (Motavalli, 2002).

Further research should examine more closely the connection between Catholicism and environmentalism, so as to provide a more accurate picture of what must logically be a complex and interesting relationship.

### Judaism

**THIS SECTION IS CURRENTLY BEING REVISED.  
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### Chapter 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

The present research aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the general characteristics of the faith-based environmental movement in the United States?
- 2) What factors influence the degree to which faith-based environmental groups engage in ethics-based versus issues-based work?

In this section, it is explained what is meant by ethics-based and issues-based work, the hypotheses that were tested are presented, and the method for collecting the data used to test these hypotheses is described.

#### A. Research Questions: Background Definitions

In order to fully understand what the second research question is attempting to ask, it is first necessary to define what is meant by “ethics” and “issues.” The proposed research considers *ethics-based* work to be that which can be undertaken with little reference to any particular environmental issue, although, of course, examples of current problems may be used to illustrate a point. This type of work calls for broad attitudinal and lifestyle changes to be made and seeks to provide individuals with a generalized framework within which to view their responsibility to others and the natural world. While ethics-based groups might also work to some extent on particular environmental issues, and in ways that are akin to issues-based groups, they tend to spend more of their time than these others in directly promoting an environmental ethic. They likely believe that it is important to create such an ethic first, and that desirable individual responses to current and future environmental issues will naturally follow. An organization that engages in ethics-based work, for instance, might hold a discussion in which people talk about their responsibility to be good stewards of the earth in accordance with God’s mandate in Genesis 2 “to till and keep” the garden of Eden, but it might not discuss the need to curb global climate change or to protect biodiversity except only generally as a way of providing examples of what stewardship actually means.

*Issues-based* work, on the other hand, is considered to be that which focuses very specifically on a certain environmental topic, such as global warming or renewable energy, and which does not necessarily call for broad ethical or behavioral changes except as related to the particular issue being discussed. Such work likely invokes certain values that are consistent with the spiritual theology or philosophy of a group as a reason for undertaking such work. However, the primary purpose of issues-based groups is not to promote any particular worldview separate from that related to the issue of concern. Stated otherwise, groups whose work is primarily issues-based do not have as a main focus the transformation of individual environmental ethics in and of itself. They may believe that individual values need to change so as to be more environmentally sound, but they see this occurring primarily through direct engagement with a particular issue, or as a secondary strategic focus. Directly working to create an environmental ethic *per se* is not of primary concern for issues-based groups. A group which is undertaking issues-based work might, for example, encourage individuals to write letters to public servants indicating their opposition to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge without addressing the personal fuel consumption habits of those same individuals.

The distinction used in the present research between ethics-based and issues-based work is based on earlier literature and preliminary research conducted examining group websites and interviewing representatives of a small number of groups. Earlier articles implicitly discussed this distinction by noting that the secular environmental movement, rather than promoting environmental values, tended instead to focus on solving specific environmental problems, such as improving energy efficiency, through the use of more policy-oriented, scientific, and technical solutions (Kearns, 1996; Porter, 1999; Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2004). In addition, preliminary interviews with group representatives indicated that this distinction was valid and helped people to categorize the different kinds of work being undertaken by various segments of the environmental movement. Finally, early research examining group websites suggested that this dichotomy might exist given the different names of the faith-based environmental groups themselves. For instance, some groups are named “Interfaith Power and Light,” “Interfaith Climate and Energy Campaign,” or “Religious Campaign for Forest Conservation,” identifying themselves with specific environmental problems, whereas others are called “New Community Project” or “Eco-justice Ministries,” invoking certain values above and beyond any particular issue.

#### *Operationalizing the ethics/issues distinction*

The present research seeks to determine only whether the *majority* of a group’s work is ethics-based or issues-based as it seems to be only rarely, if ever, that a group can readily be classified as *solely* one or the other. (As noted above, this is likely because the nature of the work is such that there must necessarily be some cross-over between the two (i.e., ethics-based probably refers to global warming and issues-based work probably invokes ideas of stewardship.)) Thus, even if a faith-based-environmental group’s stated mission and work encompasses more completely one or the other of these approaches, for a variety of reasons its work may fall out differently in practice.

In attempting to quantify the amount of ethics-based and issues-based work engaged in by faith-based environmental groups, the present study utilized three separate questions which were asked of respondents during a structured phone interview (described below). First, organizations were asked to name their top three goals or the top three changes that they hope to bring about through their activities. After systematically coding answers to this question, percentages were calculated representing how many of each group’s goals are ethics-based and how many are issues-based, according to the definition of these categories given above.

Next, groups were presented with a list of eleven statements, each one corresponding to ethics-based or issues-based work, again as previously detailed. “Developing programs aimed at reconnecting people with nature” was an ethics-based statement, for instance. “Enlisting as many people as possible to work on campaigns such as those to save the Endangered Species Act” represented issues-based efforts. Respondents were asked to answer “yes” only to those statements which they believed represented the driving philosophies behind their groups’ work in trying to best bring about lasting environmental change. They were then asked to choose the two statements they felt to be most important in furthering change from among those to which they had responded affirmatively. Again, percentages of ethics-based and issues-based statements

endorsed were calculated, and the rankings of their top two statements were classified as ethics-based or issues-based accordingly.

Finally, organizations were asked whether they considered the type of work they did to be primarily that of promoting an environmental ethic, such as changing people's values and behaviors, working on a particular issue or issues, or something else. If a respondent answered "something else," she was asked to explain her answer, and also asked whether or not she felt ethics-based or issues-based work ought to come first when working to best achieve global change.

## **B. Research Questions: Hypotheses**

In order to explain the varying degrees to which an organization works on ethics or issues-based advocacy, a range of explanatory factors was investigated. Following the precedent set in social movements research, a distinction was made between those structures which are internal to the organization being studied, and those which are external such as the political and cultural context in which a movement is located. The proposed research intends to examine both aspects as it is the interplay of both the internal and external which influence the thinking of groups and their actions. **Factors** therefore include those things internal or external to the faith-based environmental group which influence the degree to which they engage in ethics- or issues-based work.

The following hypotheses were put forward and tested in order to answer the first research question:

### Internal and organizational group factors:

- *Hypothesis 1 – Staff Size:* The smaller the staff size, the more likely the group will engage in issues-based work because ethics-based work seems to involve more interpersonal interaction and therefore more time and manpower than does issues-based work. In addition, even a small group of people can link up fairly easily with a larger issues-based campaign,
- *Hypothesis 2 - Philosophy:* the more a group's philosophy ties social justice and environmentalism together, the more likely the group will engage in issues-based work. Because people already have a developed social ethic to guide their interactions with others, and because social justice issues can nearly always be tied to human health and well-being, there may be less need to engage in ethics-based work since the ethics for dealing with other individuals are much more developed than are environmental ethics. Because of this, groups who strongly emphasize social justice might have more time and see more worth in the addressing of specific issues rather than the explicit perpetuation of an environmental ethic.
- *Hypothesis 3 – Scope of Operations:* groups which operate more locally will undertake work which is more ethics-based than issues-based because ethics-based work seems to require more one-on-one interaction (in other words, more grassroots activism) than does issues-based work wherein groups can simply e-mail their members to call their legislators about a particular issue, for example.

- *Hypothesis 4 – Age of Staff and Volunteers*: staff and volunteers who are young will engage in more issues-based work because they are less likely to be invested in the prevailing social and institutional structures given their stage in life, and issues-based work can be somewhat anti-establishment in nature, seeking to change the structures of society.
- *Hypothesis 5 – Gender of Staff and Volunteers*: most research to date on the relationship between religious belief and attitudes towards the environment has shown gender to be of little predictive importance. Because of this, it is hypothesized that gender will have little bearing on whether a group does ethics- or issues-based work.

External factors:

- *Hypothesis 6 – Geographical Location*: because those engaged in environmental work are usually more liberal in their ideology than those who do not, and because liberals have historically been engaged in political activism and protest, groups located in traditionally liberal geographical regions will engage in more issues-based work than will groups located otherwise.
- *Hypothesis 7 – Funding*: the inability to secure adequate funding will cause a group to do more ethics-based than issues-based work. While there are conceivably educational materials which can be developed to promote an ethic, in general, issues-based work is likely more expensive given the advocacy and outreach work it usually entails. Ethics-based work can simply be disseminating messages to congregations through sermons.
- *Hypothesis 8 – Faith-Based Collaboration*: the greater the collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups, the more likely a group is to engage in issues-based work. Because of the potentially inherent difficulty in groups of different religious affiliation agreeing on a common set of values, interfaith alliances may choose to more actively engage in issues-based work which may be less contentious to those involved.
- *Hypothesis 9 – Secular Collaboration*: the more a faith-based environmental group partners with mainstream environmentalists, the more issues-based work it will do since this seems to be the strategy of the traditional environmental groups more so than ethics development. In addition, such collaborations might also tend towards less controversial, more issues-based work because of possible difficulties in locating common values around which to organize.
- *Hypothesis 10 – Policy Advocacy*: groups whose actions fall primarily within the public policy realm will tend towards more issues-based work because, although lawmakers frequently call for a change in “values,” or invoke certain values as cause for legislation, they generally do so only insofar as such values relate to a particular issue.

### **C. Research Design**

The hypotheses were tested using a population of 42 faith-based environmental groups in the United States. Data for each organization was collected through a phone survey. Data from the survey was then coded and entered into two databases. The

databases were used to generate descriptive statistics describing the 42 religious-environmental groups as well as to conduct correlation analyses examining the relationship between the hypothesized variables and the degree to which a group engages in ethics-based versus issues-based work. Finally, the answers to several open-ended questions in the survey were qualitatively analyzed.

### Case Selection

The objective in case selection was to identify all potential faith-based environmental groups active in the United States who met eligibility criteria as outlined below. Groups were identified primarily via four different processes. Relevant groups were located first and foremost through lists maintained by other faith-based environmental groups, such as the Web of Creation, the Coalition on Environment and Jewish Life, and the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. In addition, lists of religious-environmental organizations compiled by a small number of academic programs, such as Harvard's Forum on Religion and Ecology (FORE) and Drexel University's Departments of Sociology and Environmental Science,<sup>11</sup> were used to identify possible study participants. Groups were next found by employing a snowball approach wherein individuals participating in preliminary and formal interviews were asked to suggest other groups who might also be interested in participating. Once a verbal reference had been made during an interview, the website of the group referenced was accessed, and the group included if deemed appropriate for study. The fourth way of locating groups was to access the websites of groups mentioned in scholarly and popular articles written on the subjects of faith-based environmental groups, and religion and the environment. If a group not before researched was referenced in some such article, their website was accessed and they were included if relevant. Finally, the fifth and least utilized method was to examine the affiliations of the signatories of several letters and documents written on various environmental issues that were sent primarily to public officials. (These letters were found via links on the websites of a number of faith-based environmental groups.) Any affiliation which might reasonably be that of a faith-based environmental group (i.e., the affiliations of individuals whose association was with a church rather than with another type of organization were not included, for example) were examined to ascertain whether said affiliation was, in fact, an applicable group for study.

A group was interviewed if it met the following criteria:

- 1) *It had to maintain a website.* In order to separate out those groups who might be acting at a higher organizational level, or with greater resources, from those that were very informal and loosely organized, only those groups which had websites were included. The definition of "website" was very liberal and inclusive, so that even if a group only had one page posted in which they discussed their work, they were deemed eligible.
- 2) *It had to provide a spiritual or religious reason as rationale for its work.* Groups that worked on issues of religion and the environment, but who did so purely from

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<sup>11</sup> Dr. Robert J. Brulle, Associate Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies at Crexel University, maintains a list of several faith-based environmental groups on the internet.

an academic point of view, or for some other reason that was not spiritual or religious in nature, were not included.

- 3) *It had to have headquarters located within the United States.* Groups who were headquartered in other countries, even if they had ties to the United States, were not included.
- 4) *Its work was primarily undertaken domestically.* Some groups are headquartered in the United States, but all of their activities are directed abroad, particularly in developing countries. In order to be eligible for inclusion in the present research, the majority of a group's work was required to take place within the United States. This was because comparisons would be difficult to make between those groups operating in the U.S. and those operating abroad, given the different social, cultural, and political milieus in which the two types of groups would work.
- 5) *It was in existence for at least one year* so that it had some time to organize itself, establish a philosophy, go through a funding cycle, and begin its work.
- 6) *It was primarily of Judeo-Christian affiliation, or was interfaith with Judeo-Christian membership.* Some research has already been conducted looking at Judeo-Christian and Christian environmental groups. Examining groups of this affiliation allowed me to build off of this previous work. Such a grouping is also theoretically supported as both Jewish and Christian environmental groups primarily call on text from the Old Testament of the Bible (also known as the Hebrew Bible in Judaism) when presenting reasons for their work. Furthermore, there are very few faith-based environmental groups of other, non Judeo-Christian affiliation, so comparisons of them would be difficult to make.
- 7) *Its work was primarily environmental in nature.* A number of groups undertake environmental work, but it is a secondary or tertiary focus of their efforts. For these groups, environmental activism seems a natural extension of the type of primary work that they are doing (e.g., poverty, hunger, vegetarianism, rural issues), and thus some attention is paid to it, but not to the same extent as those groups who were included in the present study.
- 8) *It was not a formal program housed within a particular religious denomination or movement.* The large majority of religious denominations and movements have published official statements on the environment, although the extent to which action has been taken to implement the changes called for in the statements varies significantly. Some denominations and movements have created groups or programs whose purpose is to undertake the environmental work they deem is necessary, and these groups work specifically on behalf of their associated denomination, and are responsible to that denomination when carrying out their work. Groups which fall into this category were not included, primarily due to time constraints, but also because their organizational structure likely differs in important ways from those of independent groups. For example, formally affiliated groups receive institutional support in a variety of ways - financial, staffing, etc. - that the independent groups do not.

- 9) *It did not consist solely of a website.* Groups who have established internet sites and who exist only in that capacity (i.e., they do not interact with other people, etc.) were not included.
- 10) *It was not a spirituality center.* Although there are a number of spirituality centers around the country, primarily operated by Catholic nuns, these tend to undertake activities such as operating organic farms and providing educational hands-on activities for children (like gardening), for instance, primarily within the confines of the center. While they do interact with their local communities by, for example, providing produce to community soup kitchens, in general it appears that their outreach work is limited primarily to those who go to the center.
- 11) *It was not created by a secular environmental organization.* There are several secular environmental organizations that have created faith-based initiatives and groups, most likely in an attempt to broaden their outreach and to engage other, more diverse populations in their work. Groups which were created in this way, as opposed to those which were initiated by the faith community itself, were not included.
- 12) *It was not an educational institution.* There are several educational institutions, usually, but not necessarily, housed within religiously-affiliated colleges, that have developed curricula aimed at teaching students about environmental stewardship through the lens of religion. Most of these schools also support engaged projects, or collaborate to some extent with faith-based environmental groups as I have defined them. However, the schools remain qualitatively distinct from groups in that their primary purpose is to provide an overall education to their students so as to prepare them for their future careers.
- 13) *Its work did not take place solely within one congregation.* Groups whose entire work took place only within one congregation were not included because of difficulty in locating these groups (most are probably so informal that they do not maintain websites), and the fact that the large numbers of them made them unrealistic to study given the constraints of the present research. Groups housed within a single congregation, but whose work extended beyond that congregation, however, were included.

At the end of this selection process, 45 organizations met the selection criteria and 42 were included in the sample.

### Research Data

For the purpose of the present research, data were collected primarily through two sources: group websites and interviews with representatives from faith-based environmental groups.

### *Group Websites*

Websites were accessed and a thorough reading of their contents undertaken in order to determine whether or not a particular group was eligible for the study based on the criteria outlined above. Of course, some groups provided much more extensive information via their websites than others, so it was necessary to ask follow-up questions

of certain groups via the telephone in order to decide whether they were eligible to participate.

Those groups who had well developed websites generally included information about:

- 1) location of group headquarters
- 2) date of founding
- 3) mission and/or vision statements outlining the group's broader goals
- 4) additional discussion about the philosophical, theological, and/or spiritual beliefs in which they ground their work
- 4) lists and information about environmental issues on which the group is working
- 5) lists of partners and regional affiliates with whom the group collaborates
- 6) lists of the different faith traditions with which the group engages
- 7) lists of print, audio, and/or video resources relevant to the group's work, and
- 8) the different strategies that the group uses in achieving its goals

In addition, a good number of groups included information about how and why their group was founded, staff size, number of individuals serving on the Board of Directors, and profiles of staff and Board members. Mention of mainstream secular environmental organizations with which they collaborate was also sometimes made, although, for the most part, groups simply provided links to mainstream organizations without explicitly saying that they partnered together with them on certain specified projects.

### *Interviews*

Forty-two interviews were conducted with representatives of faith-based environmental groups between November 2005 and February 2006. Nearly all of those interviewed were the directors of the groups included in the study. Interviewing, while undertaken in part to supplement information collected from the websites, was primarily conducted so as to gather data specifically pertinent to my research question. While some websites certainly seemed to indicate that some groups were more ethics-based than issues-based, and vice versa, there was no valid way to ascertain this from the websites alone.

Websites included either a phone number or e-mail address to be used when contacting a group. For those which provided both a phone number and an e-mail address, attempts to contact groups were made first via the telephone, and e-mails were sent only if calling proved to be unsuccessful. For those with only an e-mail address, messages were sent electronically. In both instances, the purpose of the project was explained, and the duration and layout of the interview also discussed. Once the correct person to interview had been identified, interviews were scheduled and conducted. Four individuals asked that a list of questions from the survey be sent to them so as to help them prepare before the interview was conducted. For these individuals, a list of fifteen representative questions taken directly from the interview itself, but which did not include the answer options for the close-ended questions, was e-mailed. A few individuals sent additional printed or electronic materials to the author upon the completion of the interview.

The interview consisted of 69 questions. Each interview lasted, on average, one and one half hours. The interview was divided into two basic sections. The first section

included primarily forced-choice questions which inquired into basic group organizational structure such as location, scope of work, staff size and age and gender composition, collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups and secular environmental organizations, and funding. These questions were by and large quantitative, although there were a few qualitative questions included as well. The second section was almost entirely qualitative, the questions being open-ended and asking about group philosophy, reason for being, primary goals and objectives, activities, and beliefs about the best ways to bring about lasting environmental change. Broadly, the questions aimed to understand internal and external structural and philosophical differences between the groups participating in the study, and to determine whether or not their work could best be classified as ethics-based or issues-based according to the definitions outlined above.

An addendum of seven additional questions was created following the completion of nearly all of the 42 interviews when it was realized that information not gathered during the initial interview would be needed to more fully test two of the hypotheses. In addition, based on responses to certain questions in the original interview, the author wished to follow-up more specifically on specific aspects of the ethics- and issues-based work questions. All of the original interviewees were able to complete this addendum. The addendum took, on average, around ten minutes to complete.

## Data Analysis and Limitations

### *Data Analysis*

In order to test the hypotheses and highlight trends in the faith-based environmental movement, interviewee responses were transcribed verbatim (some parts of conversations were excluded from transcription if they were not at all relevant to the subject at hand, although this was rare). Qualitative data was systematically coded in order to identify themes, but also to locate particularly interesting comments. Only one qualitative question was transformed into quantitative data; the results of this are discussed in the Results Section of the thesis. Quantitative data was entered into a MS Excel spreadsheet which was used to generate basic statistics describing the organizations surveyed. Data was also entered into SPSS 14.0 in order to conduct more sophisticated analyses specifically in an attempt to test the hypotheses discussed above. Because all of the hypotheses concern only one independent variable and one dependent variable, testing each of them involves conducting zero-order correlations in order to determine if the hypothesized relationship exists.

### *Limitations*

Some participants were unable to answer certain questions in the interview because they had not been in their position for the entire existence of the organization, or because they simply did not know the answer to a particular question for a variety of reasons. In these cases, attempts were made to locate answers on group websites, but since the vast majority of questions for which participants did not know the response were quantitative and related to issues unlikely to be discussed on websites, information gained in this way was generally insufficient. Thus, most of these questions were entered as “don’t know,” and results were calculated without including these cases.

A further limitation concerns the amount of variability in the groups with respect to which do ethics-based and which do issues-based work. Nearly all of the groups in the present study orient themselves primarily to ethics-based work; only two groups engage primarily in issues-based activities. As a result of this limited variation, it is statistically difficult to draw conclusions about what factors might lead one group to engage more heavily in one type of work than in another.

In addition, the population of faith-based environmental groups studied was relatively small ( $n = 42$ ). It is difficult to achieve statistical significance with a small group of cases, but it is impossible to increase the number of cases in the present study because the entire population of these organizations is already being evaluated.

A final limitation concerns the methodology used in coding qualitative data. While the coding was undertaken in a systematic way, it was based on the author's subjective judgment rather than on objective measures. Quantitative results were compared with qualitative results that had been translated into quantitative data in an attempt to determine which groups were more ethics-based and which more issues-based, and these results were found to be comparable. Aside from this, though, none of the qualitative data was compared to quantitative results, and so the analysis, while allowing conclusions to be drawn and comparisons to be made, is still largely subjective.

## **Chapter 4: RESULTS**

This chapter includes a presentation of the results of the present study. First, certain general characteristics of religious-environmental groups are discussed. Most of the organizations in the present study were found to be established only recently and to collaborate regularly with many different denominations and other faith-based and secular environmental groups in similar ways and on similar issues. Difficulty locating funding and the subsequent limitations imposed on groups' work because of inadequate financial support is also a strong and consistent theme among organizations.

Second, whether and how groups embody ethics-based work in their philosophies, goals, and strategies is examined, as well as the challenges inherent in doing so. The majority of religious-environmental groups in the current study see engagement in ethics-based work as most integral in bringing about lasting environmental change, although they also tend to believe that issues-based work and efforts aimed at building community are also important, sometimes equally so. The emphasis on changing values and ethics is evident in the rationales given for group founding as well as in the philosophies and the goals to which organizations subscribe.

Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of the results of data collected specifically with respect to the hypotheses in order to determine what factors might influence the extent to which an organization engages in ethics-based or issues-based work. Few significant relationships were found to exist between the hypothesized variables and the extent to which a group engages in ethics- or issues-based work. Collaboration with secular environmental groups, and the amount of time spent in and the importance of engaging in policy advocacy work were the only independent variables found to be significantly related to issues-based work.

### **A. Group Demographics - *Who are faith-based environmental groups?***

The faith-based environmental movement is relatively new. As discussed in the literature review section of my thesis, this movement grew subsequent to the secular environmental movement which began in the late 1960s. Religious roots to modern environmentalism can easily be traced back to early preservationists and conservationists who often gave spiritual reasons for their work. However, there was little formal organization of faith-based groups around the issue of environmentalism until the 1980s (with the notable exception of a handful of religious organizations who had worked on rural issues such as agriculture as far back as the early 1920s). Despite the fact that secular environmentalism had been active already for ten to fifteen years, and that theologians and others were debating the Lynn White Thesis throughout the 1970s, there were few religious-environmental groups who existed in the early 1980s. In fact, it was not until the late 1980s that the faith-based environmental movement began to grow. Consistent with hypotheses suggesting that this movement began in earnest as a result of one or a coalescence of several key events in the early 1990s, the number of groups created then was considerably higher than in the entire decade of the 1980s when only 17% were formed. In contrast, 20% of the existing groups were formed from 1990 to 1994, and 33% from 1995 to 1999, demonstrating that the movement grew more or less consistently during this time.

The number of new groups formed has decreased, however, since 2000 so that only 20% were created between 2000 and 2004. This is most likely the result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City. The number of groups founded in the year following the attacks was zero. Several interviewees have suggested that the availability of funding during this time was much less than usual due to the large decline in the Stock Market following the attacks. As a result, new groups may have found it impossible to begin work because of funding difficulties. It has further been indicated that the funding situation has been reversing somewhat. This does seem to be the case since the number of groups founded in 2005 rose considerably over those created since 2002 (see Figure 1). However, the rise could just as easily be due to an increased sense of urgency among people about the environmental crisis as about better availability of funding. In all likelihood, there are a number of factors interacting here.<sup>12</sup> That being said, there does remain theoretical evidence for the trends represented by the current data as noted above as well as anecdotal evidence presented by participants in the present research. As one respondent said,

“In 1990... you would never have come up with (this many) organizations to interview... you would have come up with two or three.” [director of interfaith group]

A representative of another group founded in 1987, in discussing a 1997 Board Meeting of her organization, stated

“... we realized more and more groups were coming up, either being spun off or independently, either being evangelical or Catholic or Orthodox and everything. There was a huge sea change in consciousness between 1987 and 1997.” [member of ecumenical group]

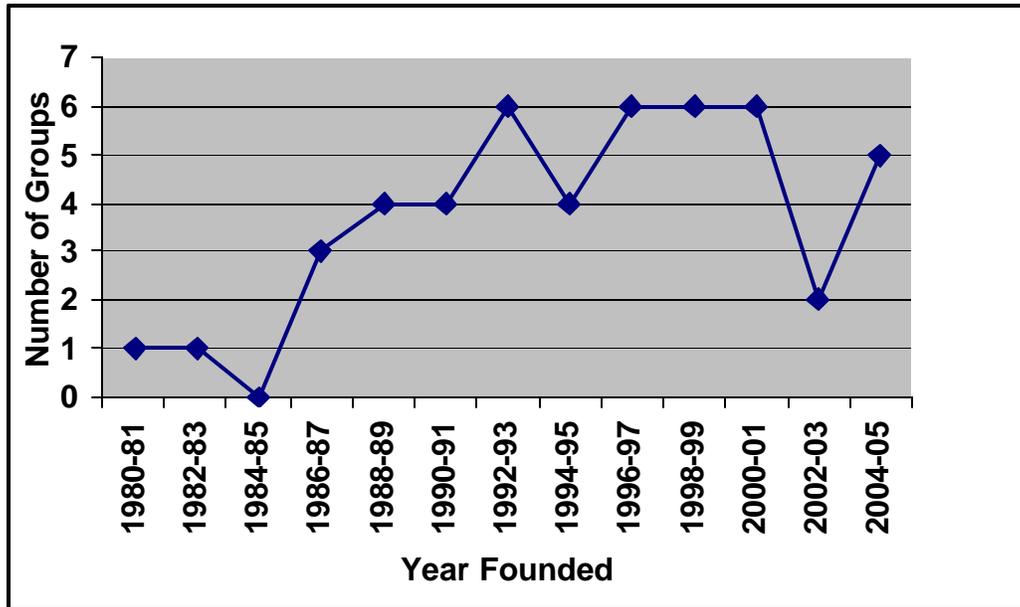
These statements indicate that the decade of the 1990s did in fact witness important growth in the number of organizations created.

Those faith-based environmental groups that formed fall into several broad categories with respect to the scope of their work and how they define themselves. A little less than half of them, 41%, work nationally, with 24% working locally, 21% working statewide, and only 14% regionally. The first three of these categories correspond easily to different levels of political jurisdiction whereas the latter does not, thereby providing a possible reason for this finding. However, there is no significant correlation between level of engagement in policy advocacy and scope of work. Likewise, there is no significant correlation between scope of work and group difficulty

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<sup>12</sup> Please note that there is likely some bias represented in these findings as natural attrition is not accounted for in the current study. Because the present research did not concern itself with documenting all of the groups which were active at one time, but that no longer exist, it is impossible to know whether the trends represented here are entirely accurate. It is possible that the reason there were fewer groups formed in 1990, for instance, is because some organizations that began then no longer existed to be included in my study. Additionally, the reason there may be more in 2005 might be that they have not yet had a chance to become unsuccessful and disband.

**Figure 1. Number of groups founded by year.**



*Note* – The groups shown here for 2005 were not included in the present study because of failure to meet eligibility criteria. Also the three other groups who were eligible for inclusion in the present research, but who did not participate are also shown.

The number of groups created in 2002 was actually zero; the two groups represented in the category “2002-2003” were both formed in 2003.

One group included in the present study was founded in 1923. This group is not represented in this figure.

A few groups were formed in an effort to revitalize or restructure older organizations which no longer exist; the dates of foundation of these earlier, now defunct groups were not collected.

of locating funding, or between scope of work and limitations to work imposed by lack of sufficient funding.

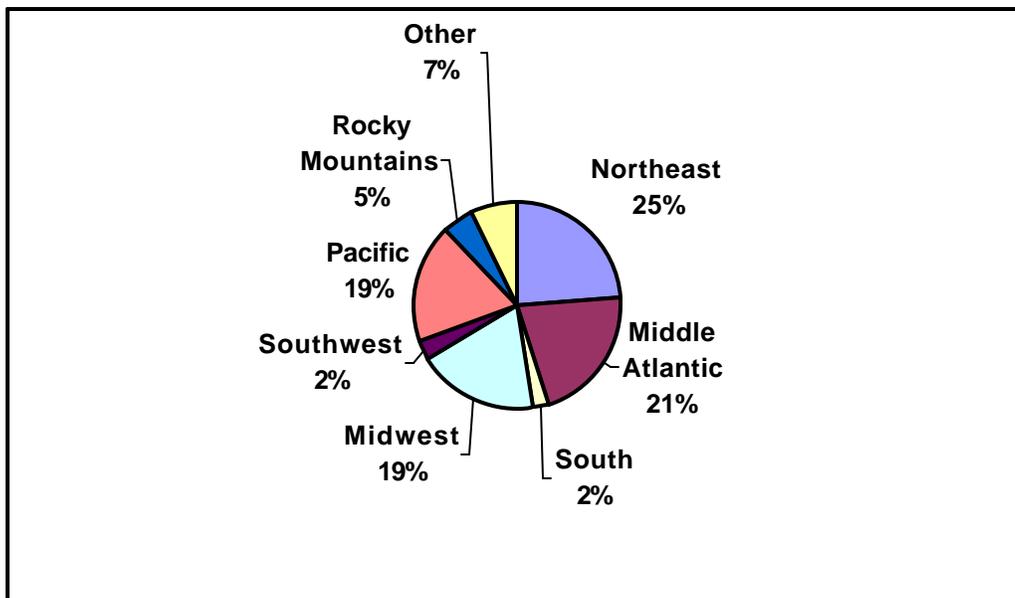
Instead, groups tend to choose the scope of their work based upon a deliberately chosen model created according to their beliefs about how they can most successfully bring about the kind of changes they desire. Some believe working locally to be most effective whereas others choose a more national focus. A few organizations must match the scope of another group that houses and funds them and so the reach of their work is often constrained in that way. In addition, modern technology has increased the ease with which these groups can work on a broader scale. Thus, even those with limited infrastructure can easily communicate with others across the country via telephone or e-mail, thereby enabling them to increase their reach more than might have otherwise been possible even a decade ago. This suggestion is supported by the finding that 66% of the groups who operate virtually and without an official office, home or otherwise, work at the regional and national levels whereas only 34% of groups without an office work locally (21% of the groups operate without any office and 21% work out of a home office).

Geographically, it is interesting to note that the overwhelming majority (87% of the 39 groups who do not classify the scope of their work as being “across the United

States”) of groups are located in more liberal states.<sup>13</sup> Twenty-three of fifty states are represented by at least one religious-environmental group (nineteen are included in the present study). Most of the groups in the present study are located in four geographical regions in the United States: 25% in the Northeast (includes all of New England and New York), 21% in the Middle Atlantic (includes Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania), 19% in the Midwest (includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin), and 19% in the Pacific (California, Oregon, and Washington) (see Figure 2). There was only one group each in the South and the Southwest. Two groups were headquartered in the Rocky Mountain Region, both being located in more liberal towns in Colorado, according to 2004 presidential election results. The states where groups are located tend to be clustered together, so that there are clear regional patterns to where groups currently exist.

Part of the explanation for these patterns may simply be that regions where faith-based environmental groups are located are major centers of population, more so than those areas where they are not, so organizing may be easier. Another explanation could be that there are other groups which exist in the south, southwest, and Rocky Mountain regions, but that they did not meet my eligibility criteria and so were not identified for inclusion in the present study.<sup>14</sup> In addition, there might be more environmental problems where there are many people living together, but since the issues that groups work on tend to be more national and global in scope, rather than local, this reason is not as plausible.

**Figure 2. Percentage of groups by geographical region.**



<sup>13</sup> Liberal states are considered those who voted for John Kerry rather than George W. Bush in the 2004 presidential election (see Hypothesis section below for more detailed discussion about using the election results as a proxy for liberal or conservative ideology).

<sup>14</sup> It is true that one faith-based group in Texas, for example, was ineligible for the present study: its work was not primarily environmental in nature.

The more likely reason probably has more to do with the ideology of residents in liberal, or blue, and conservative, or red, states than it does with anything else. In a later section, I discuss how some faith-based environmental groups have noted that they would be hesitant to partner with secular organizations or to use the word “environment” when working in certain regions that correspond more or less to the red states. This was because many in those areas are seen to associate environmentalism with a broader liberal agenda to which they are generally opposed. Also, in some regions of the country, particularly in states bordering the eastern Rocky Mountains, there is a history of conflict between environmentalists and farmers, ranchers, and others wherein the latter view the former, somewhat justifiably, as destroying jobs. As a result, discussing environmental matters in any venue, including a religious institution, let alone founding a viable faith-based environmental group, may prove more difficult there than in other areas where little such history exists.

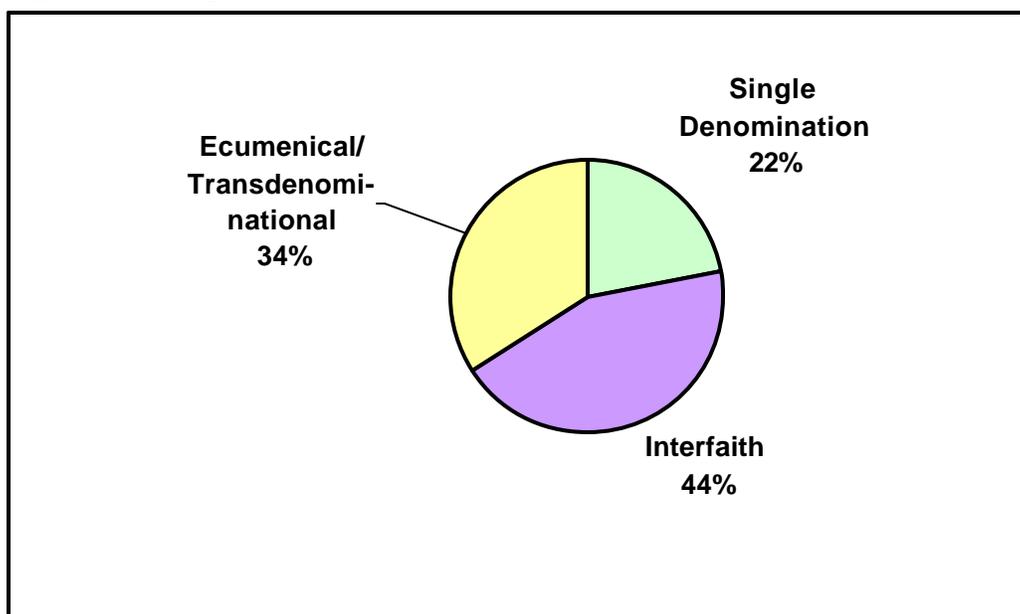
### Denominational Affiliation

By and large, the faith-based environmental movement is typified by groups who work across multiple denominations. Forty-four percent of them are interfaith, meaning that their work is neither solely Christian nor solely Judaic. Thirty-four percent of the groups are ecumenical, meaning they work with a variety of Christian denominations, or transdenominational, meaning they work with a variety of Jewish movements (see Figure 3). Groups who work primarily within one faith tradition were in the minority of those studied. Seven of the nine groups who fall into this latter category were created by a group of individuals, all belonging to the same denomination, who felt that their own particular faith tradition had been slow to address environmental problems and so have concentrated the majority of their work there.

While the extent of involvement by denomination and by group was not measured in the present study, these results nonetheless point to a movement that can generally be characterized as open and collaborative. Even those groups who are primarily affiliated with one certain denomination collaborate considerably with other faith-based groups who are likely to be interfaith or ecumenical. As a result, they have contact with other denominations in this way, or through the sharing of materials. Many of the denominations and movements with whom these groups work have considerably different theologies and worldviews which might seem to make collaboration across denominations difficult. Thus, it is significant that they have been able to find common ground around which to organize with respect to environmental matters.

There are some classes of denominations which seem at first glance to be more active in the faith-based environmental movement than others (see Figure 4). Despite this, hypothesis tests demonstrate that there are no statistically significant differences in participation rates among Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Orthodox, and non Judeo-Christians. In addition, it should be noted that the number of adherents to particular categories of denominations varies greatly, so the results of the present research might simply be proportionate to the number of individuals who fall within these different classes. There is, however, anecdotal evidence from a couple of interviewees that Black Protestants are less involved on average. One respondent suggested that this may be because, at least in her area, Black churches are occupied with more immediate concerns,

**Figure 3. Group denominational affiliation.**



such as racism or poverty in their immediate neighborhoods. Because of these concerns, such churches may not have sufficient time and resources to address environmental problems.<sup>15</sup> This is interesting because, although little academic research has been done on the subject, Black churches have been historically associated with the environmental justice movement (Bullard, 2003; Lee, 2006; National Council of Churches, 1998; North American Coalition for Christianity and Ecology, 1994; University of Maryland, 2006). This result, therefore, may not accurately indicate the extent of their involvement with environmental problems, but rather the degree to which they work with faith-based environmental groups. In other words, Black Protestants may simply be organizing themselves around environmental problems in different ways, or around different environmental problems.

When asked about the different denominations with which they worked, not all groups were able to give comprehensive lists. Most listed the denominations that they could recall most immediately. Thus, we can assume that those which were named were those with which the groups work most frequently. Some organizations were unable to list individual denominations and instead made use of the common categories of

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<sup>15</sup> Wolkomir, Futreal, Woodrum, and Hoban (1997) also suggest that limited resources and energies among minorities mean that the attention of Black churches has been directed more to issues of housing, employment, or civil rights concerns than it has been to environmental problems. One of the reasons for this, they argue, is that African Americans “still experience considerable exclusion and largely are affiliated with segregated churches (so) it is understandable that a more collectively based sense of priority over environmental concerns and behaviors in more distinctive of them.”

“Conservative,” “Mainline,” “Liberal,” and “Black Protestant” to encompass all those denominations which they considered fell into those categories.<sup>16</sup>

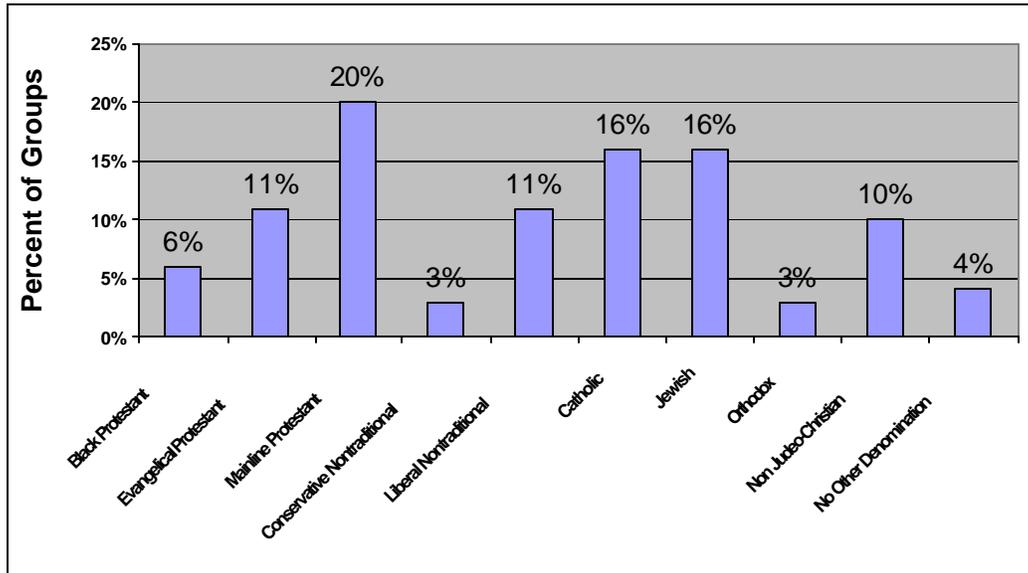
In attempting to quantify participation by denominational category, denominations explicitly mentioned were placed into the appropriate class based on Steenland et al.’s (2000) system. Answers of “Conservative Protestant” were placed in the “Evangelical Protestant” class by assuming that while the overlap might not be significant, it was a closer proxy than were the other potential categories. “Liberal Protestant” was moved to “Mainline Protestant,” and “Mainline Protestant” remained in the same category. As a result of the two ways in which denominational collaboration was reported, two graphs are presented: one which uses the broader categories and the other which includes individual denominations so as to provide a sense of which specific faith traditions might be more active on matters of religion and the environment. As noted above, denominations which were listed individually were also grouped into the broader categories (see Figures 4 and 5). It should be noted that the latter graph was not adjusted for number of adherents by denomination in the United States, however, and so is meant to be used only as a snapshot of denominations involved in the movement. The fact that the denomination most often mentioned is Catholic should not be interpreted to

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<sup>16</sup> These classifications have been the most widely used in both popular and academic literature since their development in 1990 by T.W. Smith, thus explaining their familiarity to several participants in the present research. Political scientists and sociologists in recent years have devised significantly different classification systems based heavily on the development of American religious traditions. These new systems also clearly locate denominations within their social contexts. Research has shown these new schemes to more accurately reflect the distinctions between denominations. As a result, the present research utilizes a revised classification system developed by Steenland, Park, Regnerus, Robinson, Wilcox, and Woodberry in 2000. Informal discussions with several other researchers in the field affirmed this decision as did knowledge of the lack of consensus among theologians and others engaged in religious life about the earlier categories (Feldman, 2006; Green, 2006; Olson, 2006; Tryggestad, 2006). In addition, using the newer system helps to avoid confusing belief, such as “conservative” or “liberal” worldviews, with membership in institutions as there are conservatives and liberals in all denominations (Green, 2006). For example, a recent study compared Catholics and Evangelicals having the most orthodox religious beliefs, the most religious engagement, and the most conservative viewpoints on cultural and policy issues, with those who were least orthodox, least engaged, and most liberal. It found that there were greater differences in political behavior among most and least Orthodox Catholics than among orthodox Catholics and Evangelicals (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2005). The scheme that is used in the present research employs the categories “Black Protestant,” “Evangelical Protestant,” “Mainline Protestant,” “Conservative Nontraditional,” and “Liberal Nontraditional” when classifying denominations other than Catholic, Jewish, or non-Judeo Christian. Black Protestant and Evangelical denominations are similar in most respects. However, the former stress different aspects of the Christian doctrine, such as the significance of freedom and search for justice, are usually more liberal on various economic attitudes, and are conservative on social and family issues (Steenland, et al., 2000). Evangelical Protestant denominations are generally characterized by their desire to remain separate from the broader culture, their focus on missionary work and individual conversion, and their firm adherence to certain religious doctrines. They are associated with fundamentalist, Pentecostal, charismatic, or evangelical religious movements (Steenland, et al., 2000). Mainline Protestant denominations usually emphasize an “accommodating stance toward modernity, (and) a proactive view on issues of social and economic justice, and pluralism in their tolerance of individual beliefs” (Steenland, et al., 2000). The latter two classifications, Conservative and Liberal Nontraditional include those denominations that are of other affiliation and who are either conservative or liberal with respect to religious, political, and social attitudes ((Steenland, et al., 2000).

mean that Catholics are more environmentally active than others. Twenty-three percent of the American population is Catholic, and so it should be expected that they be named more frequently than a denomination with fewer members (Official Catholic Directory, 2003).

**Figure 4. Faith-based environmental group collaboration with denominations (grouped by larger denominational category).**



*Note:* The average number of different denominational categories with which faith-based environmental groups work is 3.64.

*Black Protestant includes:* African Methodist Episcopal Church (n = 9)

*Evangelical Protestant includes:* Amish; Assembly of God; Charismatic; Church of Christ; Conservative Anglican; Evangelical (unspecified); Full Gospel; General/Nondenominational/Other Evangelical; Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; Mennonite; Other Baptist (unspecified); Pentecostal; Seventh Day Adventist; Southern Baptist; Wesleyan (n = 18)

*Mainline Protestant includes:* American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.; Congregationalist; Disciples of Christ; Episcopal Church; Evangelical Lutheran Church of America; Moravian; Presbyterian (various); Quaker; Reformed; United Brethren; United Church of Christ; United Methodist Church (n = 34)

*Conservative Nontraditional includes:* Christian Scientist; Mormon (n = 4)

*Liberal Nontraditional includes:* Spiritualist; Unitarian Universalist; Unity (n = 17)

*Catholic includes:* Catholic; Dominican; Earth Sisters; Jesuit; Roman Catholic (n = 26)

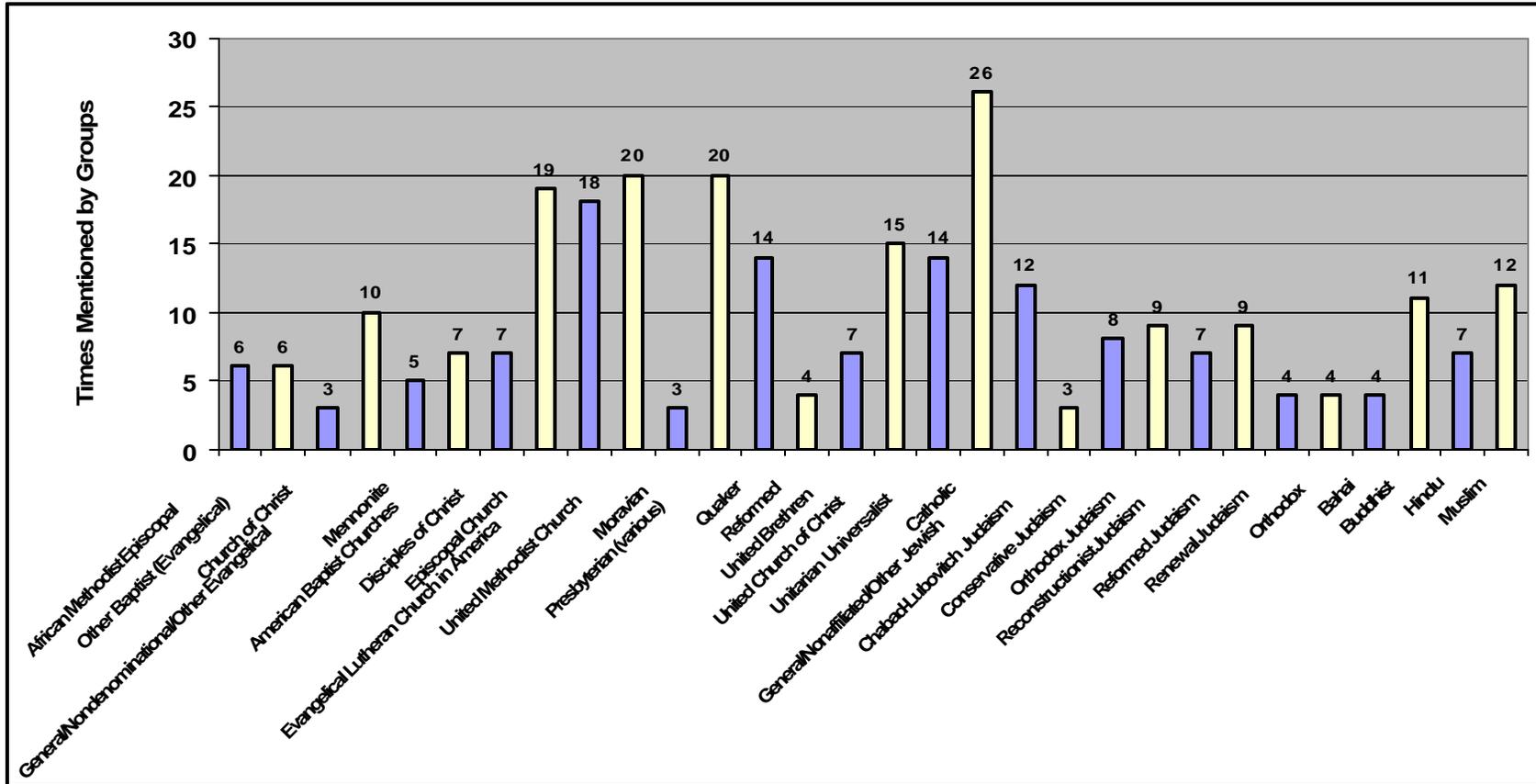
*Jewish includes:* Chabad-Lubovitch; Conservative; General/Nonaffiliated/Other; Orthodox; Reconstructionist; Reformed; Renewal (n = 25)

*Orthodox includes:* Antiochan; Armenian; Coptic; Eastern; Greek; Malankara Orthodox Syrian; Orthodox Church in America (n = 4)

*Non-Judeo-Christian:* Bahai; Buddhist; Jain; Muslim; Pagan; Sikh; Sufi; W ican; Zorostrian (n = 16)

*No Other Denomination:* those groups who only work within one denomination or movement (n = 6)

**Figure 5: Faith-based environmental group collaboration with denominations not grouped into larger categories.**



*Note:* Denominations named only one or two times are not included. Ten groups indicated they worked with Evangelical Christians without specifying specific denominations. Evangelical Christians belong to any number of Evangelical denominations, to nondenominational or para-church organizations, and also to several formal denominations which include “evangelical” in their name. It is likely that some of the Evangelicals counted here would be more accurately placed in a category corresponding to a specific Evangelical denomination, but since “evangelical” also describes a cultural movement, I have left it here. Twelve groups indicated they worked with Jewish groups without specifying specific Jewish movements. Jews also belong to several specific Jewish movements and can be non-affiliated as well. It is likely that some of the Jews counted in this category would be more accurately placed in one of the categories corresponding to a specific Jewish movement. However, since “Jewish” also describes a culture as well as a certain type of movement, I have left it here.

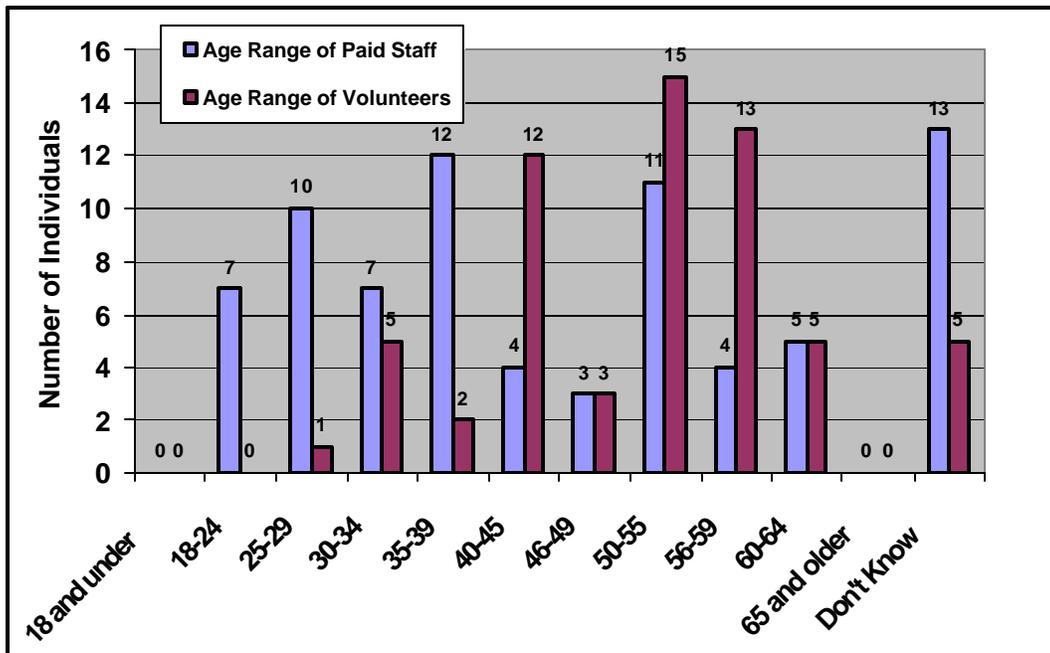
### Staff and Volunteer Demographics

The present research only inquired into the age and gender of the staff and volunteers working with the faith-based environmental groups interviewed. It did not ask interviewees about the race and ethnicity of their employees, co-workers, or volunteers because third-person reporting of this construct was thought to be unreliable given the complexities of how one defines oneself with respect to race. Furthermore, marital status, educational level, income, and other demographic questions typically utilized in social science research were not asked because knowledge of them was not required to answer my research question, and because third-person reporting was thought to be unreliable as well.

#### Age

Staff and volunteers of faith-based environmental groups are of diverse ages, ranging from eighteen to eighty years. Paid staff are typically younger with volunteers generally falling into older age groups and, since only three groups have no volunteer help, organizations typically have a mix of both younger staff and older volunteers (see Figure 6). That volunteers tend to be older than paid staff makes sense as older individuals probably have less familial and career obligations than do those who are younger, therefore allowing them more time to devote to causes that they find important. Directors of faith-based environmental groups also tend to be older, on average, than their staff. Among the organizations that have at least and not more than one director (n = 36; four have no director and two have more than one director), the mean age of directors is 51 years old.

**Figure 6. Ages of paid staff (full-time and part-time) and regular volunteers.**



*Note:* Only groups which had ten or fewer regular volunteers were asked to give the ages of those volunteers.

It is interesting to note that most of the directors in the present study have changed careers at some point in the last decade or two. If their average age is 51 years, and the movement has really only been in existence for 15 years, many of the directors were necessarily employed in other positions before they began their current work. A number of them did, in fact, confirm this trend in the interview. The previous jobs of directors may have been related to either religious or environmental work, but not necessarily. Especially for those who are older, these earlier positions enabled them to “build up a nest egg” [director of interfaith group] that has provided them with a financial cushion so that they can do this work for little money.

### *Gender*

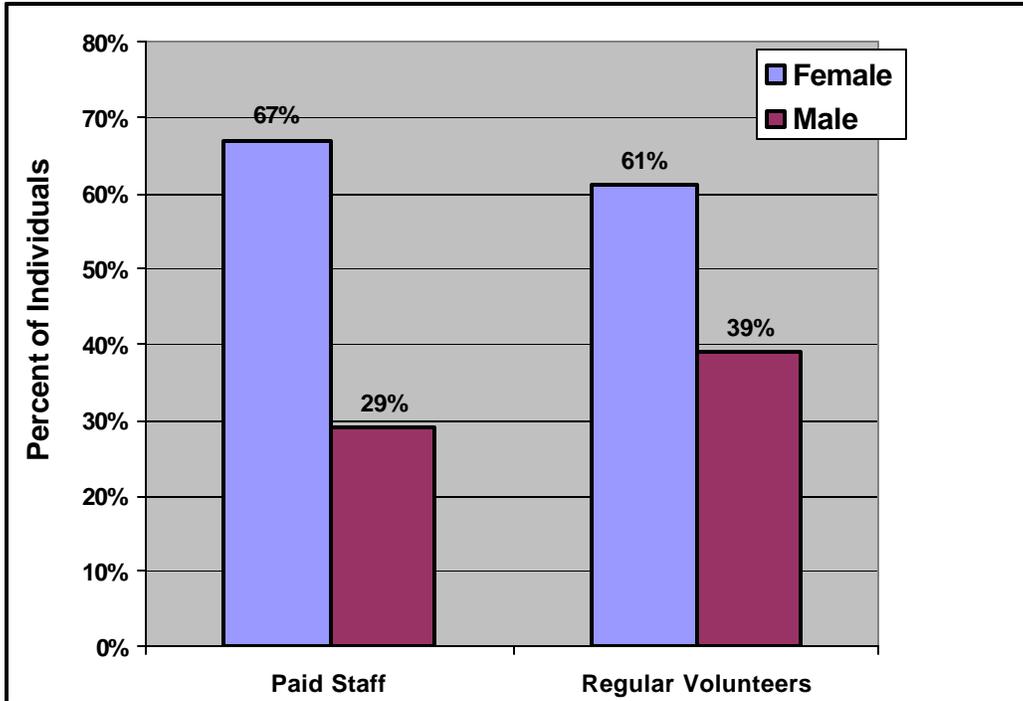
There are many more women than men employed by and volunteering for the religious-environmental groups studied in the present research, and hypothesis tests indicate that these differences in participation are statistically significant (see Figure 7). One respondent indicated that he believes “women (to be) most interested in this stuff” [director of ecumenical group]. Another suggested that women just “get” the work that is being done in part because “they’re just very spiritual beings” [director of interfaith group]. According to one interviewee who attempted to explain the disparity between participation rates of male and female staff and volunteers,

“I work at a couple of different jobs cobbled together... in the environmental arena and... in the faith community, and it’s overwhelmingly white middle-aged women who are doing this stuff... (because) I think (perhaps) these are softer issues that women are more willing to put time into than men... in some cases it’s because women have husbands who have good salaries that free them up to do poorly paying jobs... unfortunately that’s a sexist reality, but I think it’s the reality.” [director of interfaith group]

Whatever the reason, it is particularly interesting to note that, with the exception of directors (around 53% are female), men determine the overall direction and finances of the groups much more so than do women. Although no question was asked specifically about the gender composition of an organization’s Board or Executive Committee – those who are generally responsible for the broad management of an organization - examining the websites of groups who list their Board members indicates that there might be two times as many men as women serving in these positions. Thus, although not involved in the day-to-day operations of a group and generally welcoming of staff input, the individuals who decide upon the overall direction of an organization are mostly male, while those who translate these directives are generally female. One interviewee believes that her Board “started out as being largely men because that’s the hierarchical model (of patriarchy)” [member of ecumenical group]. Of course, there is no arguing that patriarchy has something to do with it as this pattern is seen more generally throughout most types of organizations in the United States. It is also, however, probably a reflection of the fact that, while the number of female clergy has been increasing since the 1970s, most still tend to be predominately male (Chang, 1997). In fact, only 14.3% of clergy in the United States are female (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Since religious-environmental groups

hope to disseminate their messages primarily through faith communities and religious institutions, it is logical that they would seek the advice of those most intimately connected with them.

**Figure 7. Gender of paid staff (full-time and part-time) and regular volunteers.**

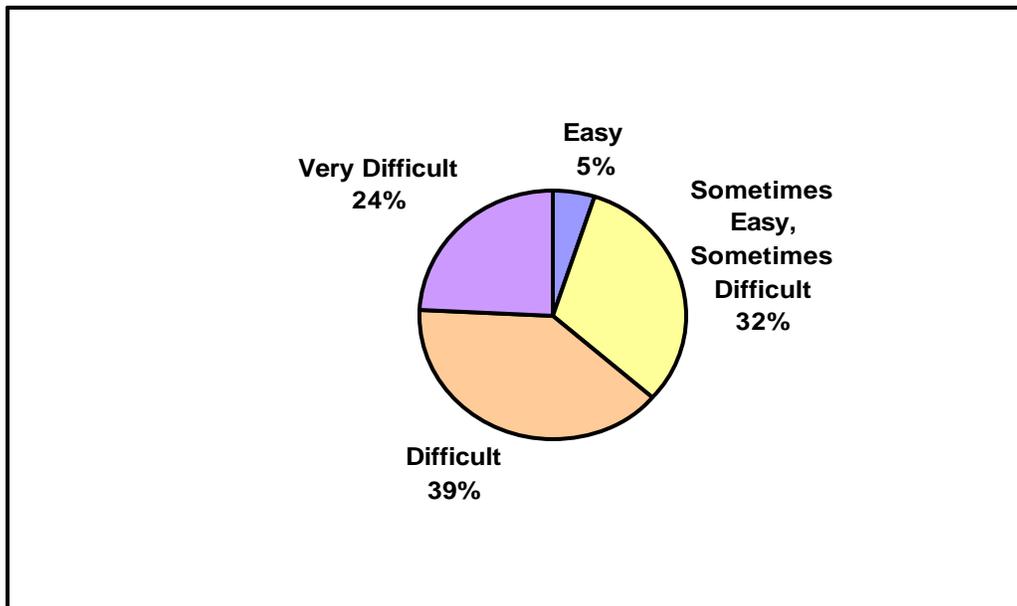


### Funding

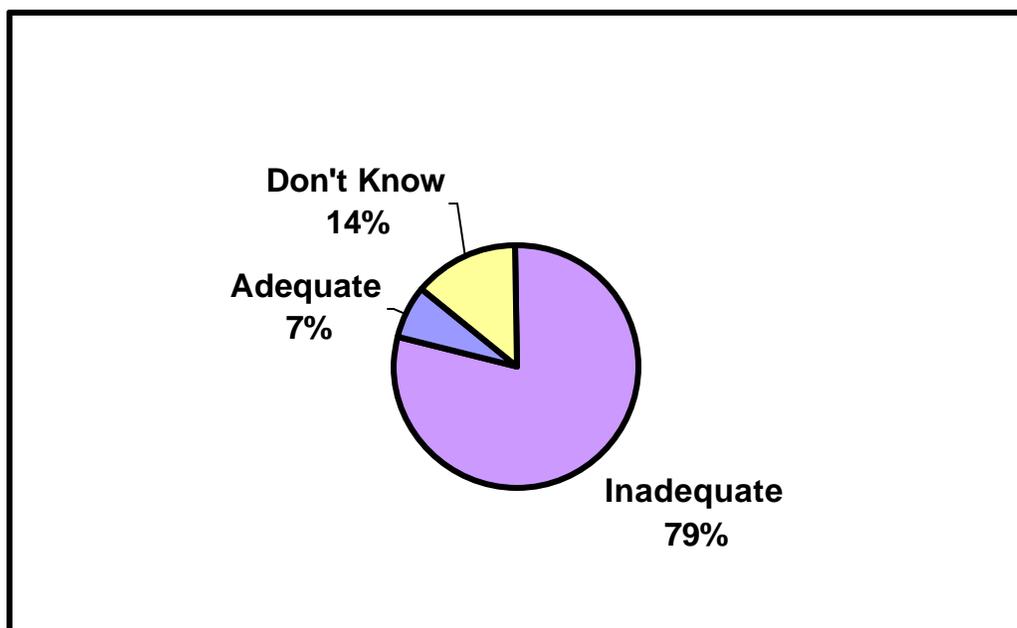
It is perhaps not surprising that the large majority of organizations interviewed felt that obtaining funding was difficult and that their work, whether it be ethics-based or issues-based, was limited as a result (see Figure 8). They also believed that the amount of funding available to faith-based environmental groups in general was inadequate (see Figure 9). Of course, this is to be expected as nearly all of these groups are small, non-profit organizations (even if a few do not yet have formal 501C3 status, most still operate according to non-profit guidelines with formal advisory boards, etc.). Locating adequate funding is problematic for any group with limited capacity, no matter what the field of work involved.

What is more interesting in these results concerns the two groups who indicated that they did not have trouble locating funding. Both of these engage in ethics-based and issues-based work, although one espouses ethics-based work more strongly than the other. However, no significant relationship exists between funding and extent of engagement in ethics-based and issues-based work. In addition, the engagement of these two organizations in ethics-based and issues-based work is generally reflective of the overall pattern of all groups in the present research, and thus it is unlikely a factor in their ability to easily locate financial support. Furthermore, neither of these groups is

**Figure 8. Difficulty of locating funding.**

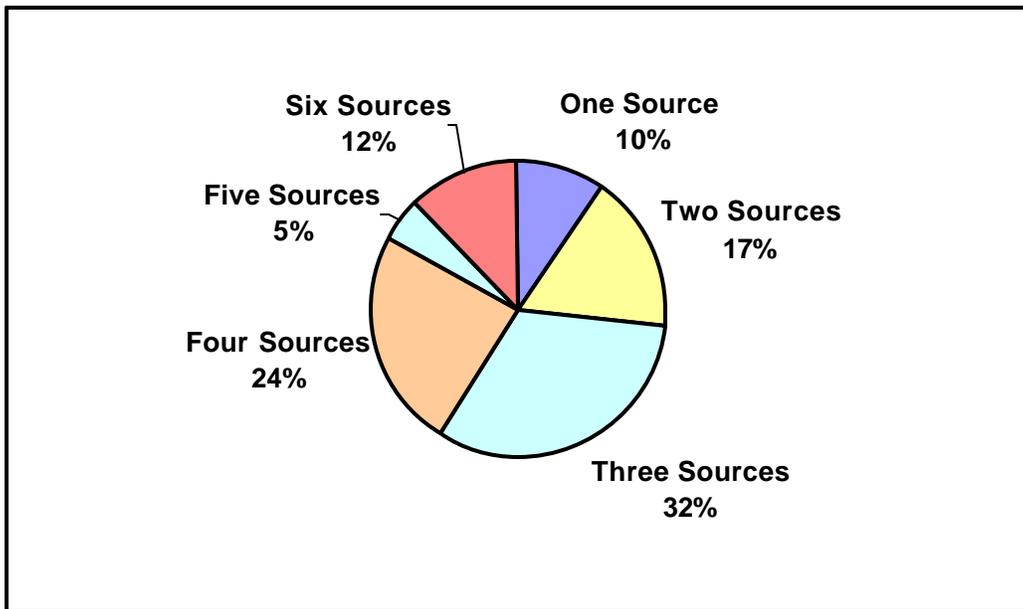


**Figure 9. Availability of funding.**

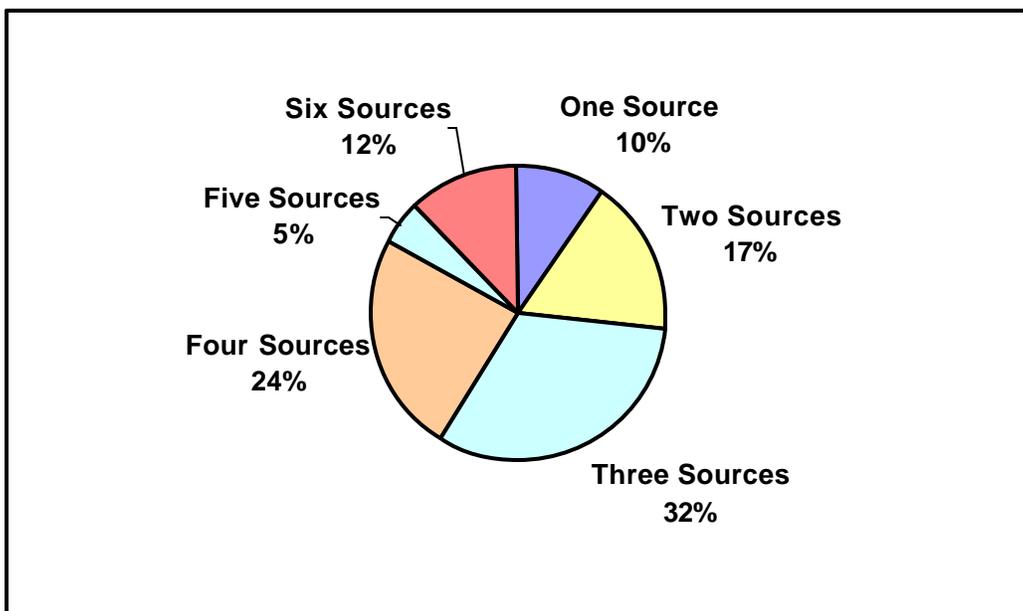


significantly different from the others in terms of the number of funding sources that they use—the average number of funding sources is 3.34 (range 1 to 6 sources; see Figure 10) with only few groups dependent on a single source—but they do differ in what those sources are. The two groups that do have not funding concerns neither apply for nor receive foundation grants nor depend on member or individual donations for support (see Figures 11 and 12A and 12B). There are other groups who also do not receive foundation grants, but by and large they are heavily dependent on money that they can raise from

**Figure 10. Number of funding sources.**



**Figure 11. Percentage of groups by number of funding sources.**

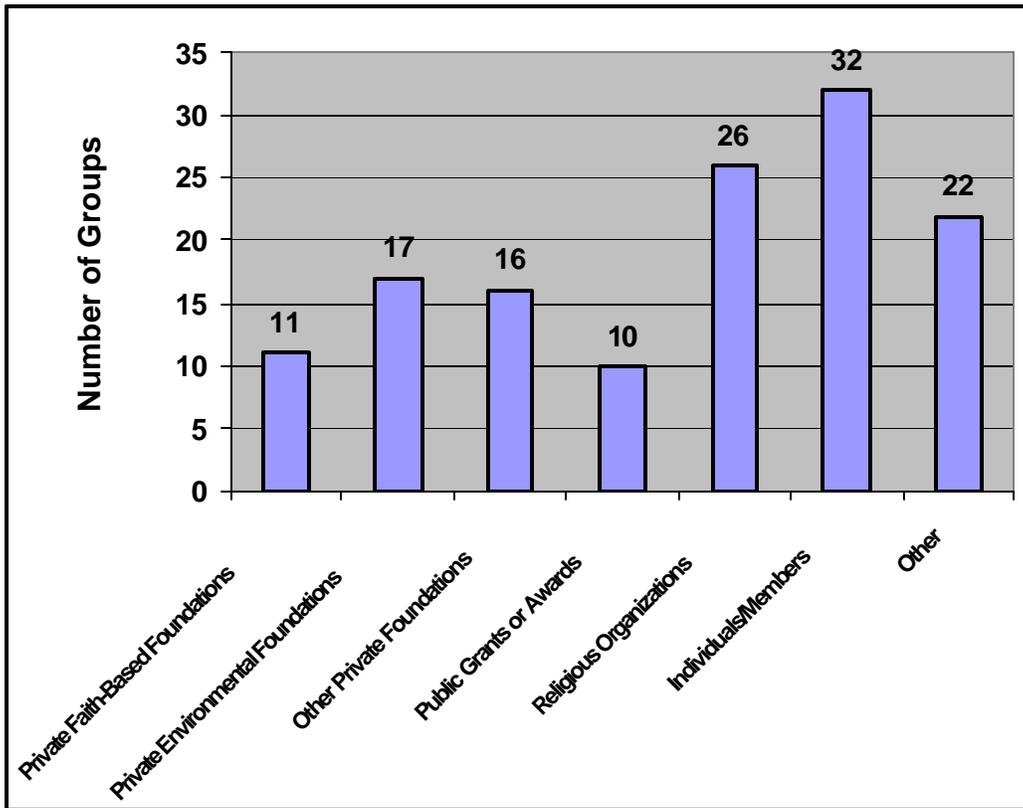


individual donations. Like foundation money, these sources are likely not as consistent as others because they are generally contingent on the current state of the economy and so forth. Those groups who have an easy time locating funding seem to be alike only in the regard mentioned above, however.

Of the two groups that do not have trouble with funding, the first has few operating expenses because it rarely sponsors its own programs and is generally a participant at other groups' functions. Because of this, the director is able to pay for most

of the organization's activities using his own money. The second group is unique in that it decided to actively work to be self-sustaining early in its existence because a reliance on foundation and public grants was deemed too risky. The issues for which foundations and the government provided grants were seen to vary over time, and therefore were not considered reliable sources. As a result, this group made a concerted effort to receive funding only from those congregations to whom it provided direct services rather than from individuals who only supported its efforts. Its funding has been stable ever since. This latter group has also been in existence the longest of any in the present study, with the exception of one other organization.

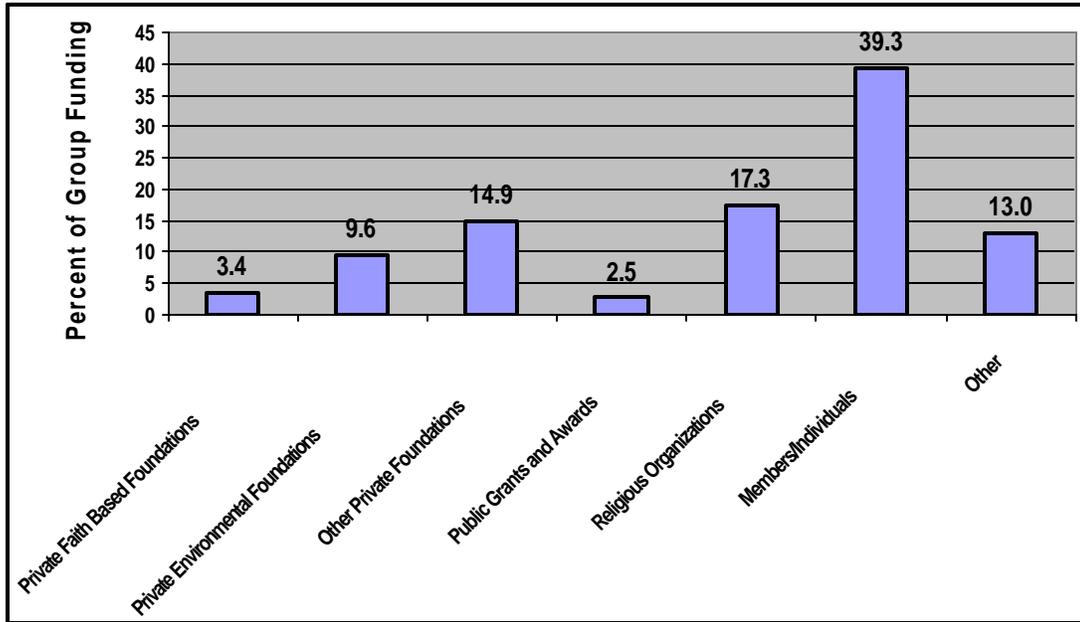
**Figure 12A. Number of groups by funding source.**



*Private Environmental Foundations includes:* secular environmental groups (n = 4)

*Other includes:* selling books and other publications and resources; selling fair-trade coffee; admission fees from events and sales from programs; donations from private businesses; fees for services, speaking, and other contract work; grants from other faith-based environmental groups; donations from Board Members as part of their agreement to act in that capacity; other miscellaneous donations

**Figure 12B. Average percent of group funding provided by each source.** This figure differs from Figure 9A in that it shows the percentage of group funding accounted for by each source as opposed to the raw number of groups who receive funding from each source. It appears that while there are slightly fewer other private foundations in number compared with private environmental foundations who provide funding for groups, the amount of assistance other private foundations provide is greater overall.



*Note:* Only groups that could account for 100% of their funding are included in this graph (n = 29).

Many participants suggested that one reason funding seemed to be inadequate for faith-based environmental groups was simply because the movement or the group itself was young. In other words, it is thought by some that organizations may not have been in existence for a sufficient enough length of time for foundations to be readily aware of their existence, their work, or even the concept of faith-based environmentalism more generally. On the other hand, some believe that even if foundations were more aware of the movement’s efforts, it is still too young to have developed savvy strategies and effective leadership that would enable it to sell itself effectively to funders. That, coupled with the limited capacity with which nearly all of these groups struggle, makes locating funding especially difficult. The fact that one of the two financially self-sustaining groups in the study also has the second longest existence lends support to the idea that one of the basic problems in securing funding is simply the time involved in establishing an organization and developing its capacity and reputation.

Of course, there are other more fundamental reasons why the amount of funding for faith-based environmental groups is seen to be inadequate. First and foremost among these is the impression that faith-based environmental groups are caught in the middle between secular environmental and religious organizations who are both hesitant to fund their work, albeit for differing reasons. More than one interviewee described the situation as “Catch 22;” [director of Jewish group; director of interfaith group] or as “slip(ping) through the crack” [director of Jewish group]. Environmental groups are nervous and

unsure of how to work with the faith-based community, even though they are also eager to do so in order to add a new voice to their constituency. Religious organizations tend to be skeptical of environmentalism and its association with politics and liberalism; they also do not always see it as an issue of faith.

Religious institutions and funders have their own set of concerns with faith-based environmental groups. Most interviewees expressed frustration that the religious community had not yet “made the connection” between faith and the environment. Although they also felt this was a common problem with other types of funders as well, and pointed to that failure as a primary reason for which they are unable to receive funding, this comment was made most often with respect to religious institutions. Groups felt that theologians and other church officials had not done a sufficient job in making the religion-environment connection explicit, and that the environment as an issue was a third-tier priority for religious institutions. While acknowledging that churches and synagogues are doing poorly financially in general, and that many areas of concern for these institutions are currently underfunded, participants largely felt that these institutions give the bulk of their money to traditional social causes such as poverty and hunger. Additionally, in the case of Jewish foundations, funding is provided much more to efforts aimed at building Jewish community and fostering engagement of individuals in Jewish life than it is to environmental work.

It was suggested by one participant that the financial stress of religious institutions is partly the result of decreased governmental spending on social services. Because of this, she proposed that religious institutions have had to shoulder an increased burden of helping to fulfill the immediate needs of people than was previously true, thereby reducing the amount of available money even further. What is particularly frustrating for groups is that, to them, the relationship between these other types of social justice issues and the environment is obvious. The causes of poverty and hunger, for instance, are believed to be inseparable or even resultant from environmental issues and their related economic and social structural problems. Because of this, to address one type of problem without the other makes no sense. According to one participant,

“... you know that story about if you give a person a fish, you feed them for a day, if you teach them how to fish, you feed them for a lifetime, so I consider the giving of fish (to be) charity (for the poor and hungry), the teaching to fish is what we call development, but then I say, “That’s not enough, because even if a person knows how to fish, if they don’t have place by the stream – in other words if the economic and social structures are not in place to let them exercise the gifts they have, then what good did it do? And if the stream is polluted, then what?”  
[director of ecumenical group]

Another interviewee stated,

“...this is something I’ve been working (on) for most of my life... to put (environmentalism) on the radar screen of people who are concerned with social action and social justice, so that it’s put up there with poverty issues and homelessness and any of the typical things that social action groups work on

because I feel like people don't take (environmentalism) as seriously and don't see it as much of a threat... they don't understand the health implications, and now there are so many global implications... there (are) so many environmental problems that are causing poverty and lack of food, so I'm starting to connect the dots for people... that's something I think is happening more as people are hearing more about climate change and global warming, so I hope that it will be easier as they have a better understanding of what it's all about..." [director of transdenominational group]

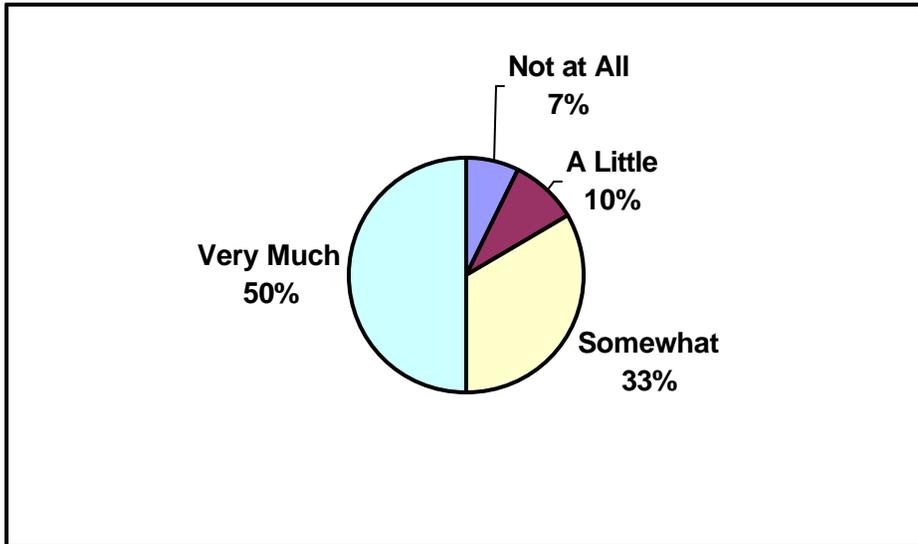
Thus, while there are no groups who believe that their work should be funded at the expense of other social programs, many do not see how these other concerns can be ameliorated without addressing environmental problems as well. In the case of Jewish environmental groups, engaging Jews in environmental issues is very much seen as an important way of building community, by both encouraging involvement in Jewish life and helping to solve environmental problems. The overall consensus, and a theme that runs throughout much of the faith-based environmental movement's discourse, is that all problems are interconnected and require holistic solutions. While many agree that funders of all types are beginning to make the same connections made by the groups, there remain many others to convince.

Those secular environmental groups and foundations who do provide financial support to faith-based environmental organizations generally want only to fund groups who work on specific issue campaigns, who can help to increase the secular group's constituency so as to augment its leverage in addressing issues, and who can return quantifiable results in a fairly short amount of time. Because one of the hallmarks of the faith-based environmental community is its emphasis on grassroots organization and community and relationship building (see section on Philosophies and Goals for a larger discussion of this), it simply does not work at a fast enough pace for many environmental organizations to consider it worthwhile to provide funding. Rather than working on specific campaigns that enable groups to count how many of their constituents signed on to a petition, or to know whether a particular tract of rainforest was preserved as the result of their efforts, for instance, those religious-environmental groups who focus to any extent on changing ethics through education and preaching cannot so easily measure the successfulness of their efforts. This latter type of work is longer-term and produces less immediate results as well. This is not to say that faith-based environmental groups never do campaign-based work but instead that they generally see their focus to be less issues-based than that of the secular groups, and because of this do not receive as much funding from them as they might perhaps like.

The importance of funding for these groups should not be underestimated (see Figure 13). It is clear from the responses of those interviewed that they have not been able to fund their programs to the extent that they would like and that funding has strongly limited their ability to act. In fact, of the fourteen groups who indicated that they were unable to concentrate most of their work on achieving their top three goals, 50% gave a lack of money or the amount of time needed to fundraise as reasons why not. Another 21% stated that they did not have enough time or staff to devote to their goals, largely as a result of insufficient funding. Even among respondents who said they were

able to concentrate on their goals, many noted that they would like to have more staff. They also mentioned that much of their time was spent engaged in fundraising activities, although some of them viewed finding money to be indirectly contributing to the achievement of their objectives.

**Figure 13. Influence of funding availability on group work.**



When participants were asked what they would do if they had more financial resources, their most common responses by far were to increase or improve their programming (including doing more one-on-one work with congregations, holding and attending more conferences and workshops, working on a greater number of projects and giving them more emphasis, increasing advertising, and producing more and better quality resources), and to hire additional staff. Indeed, a little over 30% of the groups have no paid staff whatsoever, and this is not by choice (see Figure 14). More than half have two or fewer paid staff. Of those with paid staff, only 45% of them have people who work full-time. A number of groups expressed frustration with having to rely entirely on volunteers who typically are involved in any number of other jobs or activities. One Jewish group with four funding sources, a little more than the average, relies on only \$35,000.00 per year, a sum which is insufficient to pay a staff member, but which accurately reflects the budgets of many of the groups (see Group Profile 1).<sup>17</sup> Considering that most faith-based environmental groups indicate that they cannot provide even basic salaries for minimum numbers of staff while many secular organizations have multi-million dollar budgets helps serve to highlight the degree of trouble religious groups have in securing adequate financial resources. As one respondent said,

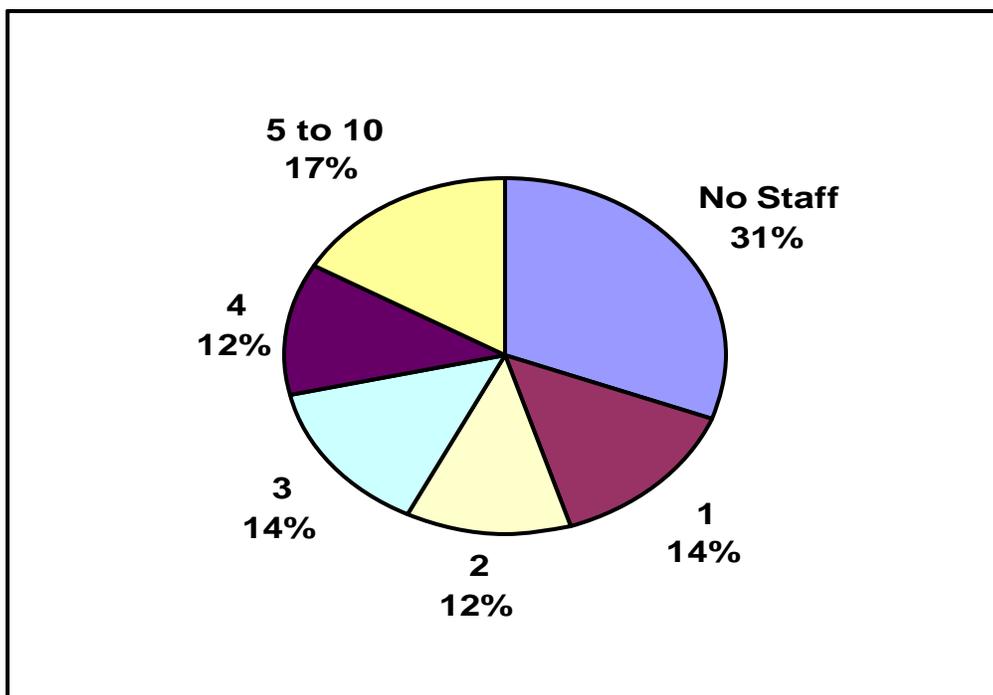
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<sup>17</sup> Interestingly enough, this group does not engage in any issues-based work. In a later section, I discuss how faith-based environmental groups who engage in issues-based work receive more funding from the secular environmental community. One potential reason for this group's limited funding then might be related to its choice to engage solely in ethics-based work.

“... it’s sort of expected that I will be able to do on a \$50,000 grant what maybe the Sierra Club would take \$500,000 to do. The largest grant we’ve ever gotten was \$100,000 and an environmental organization will get millions, and yet we do have more of an audience than anyone; I mean, can you imagine the numbers of people who could be educated if we had clergy from the pulpit every Sunday, or even just once a month?” [director of interfaith group]

To further illustrate this point, the Natural Resources Defense Council has an annual budget of \$60 million (Nature’s Voice, 2006). Only one group in the present study mentioned an annual budget amounting to more than \$500,000.00. The large majority of groups in the present study rely on less than \$100,000 a year (see Figure 15).

**Figure 14. Number of paid staff by percentage of groups.**



*Note:* These percentages include both full-time and part-time paid staff.

Not only does a lack of funding influence the scope of the work and the activities that faith-based environmental groups can undertake, but it makes locating additional sources of funding particularly difficult. Soliciting funds is time-intensive and requires a certain amount of capacity that is essentially impossible to achieve with a more or less all-volunteer organization. As such, a frustrating cycle occurs in which groups cannot hire more staff until they have greater funding, but they cannot locate more money until they have additional staff to do so. Because of this, the inability to secure adequate funding is seen by many to be one of the more limiting factors in whether or not they can grow their organizations and expand their efforts. As the scope of work (local, state, regional, or national) tends to increase somewhat with staff size (although not

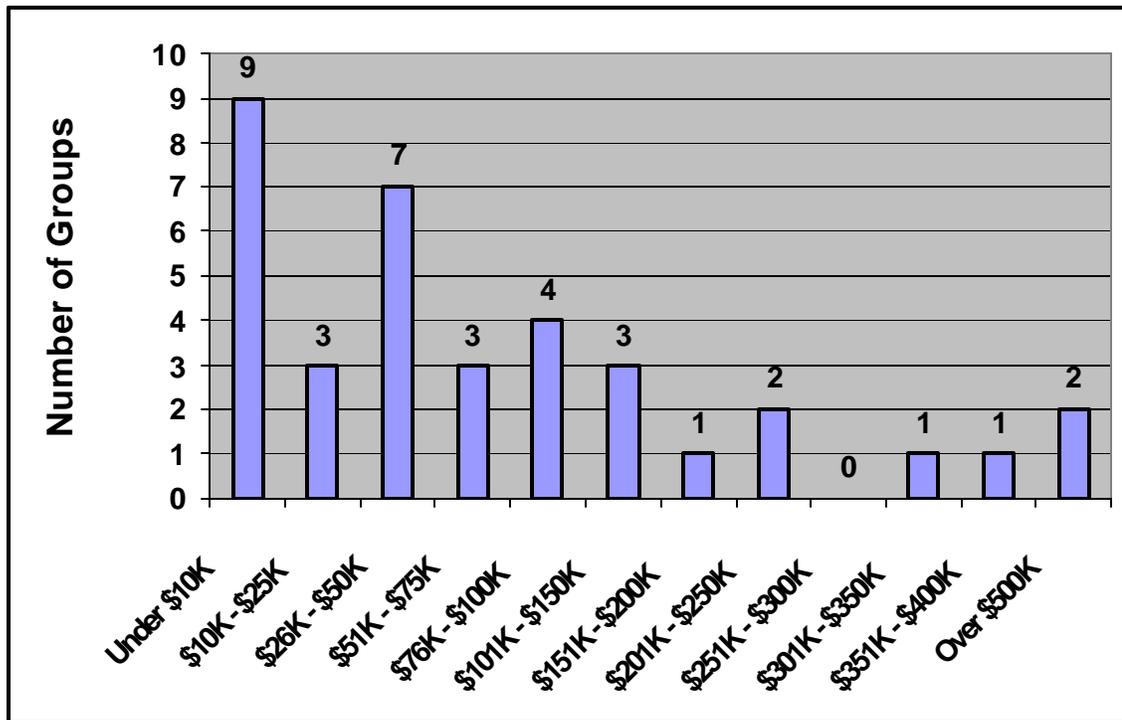
significantly) which is contingent on funding, it is important for those groups who wish to expand their programming to be able to find adequate, stable funding.

<b>PROFILE GROUP ONE</b>	
<i>Type of Group:</i>	Jewish
<i>Date Founded:</i>	2003
<i>Location:</i>	Northeast
<i>Scope of Work:</i>	National
<i>Number of Funding Sources:</i>	3 (Individuals, 62%; Private Faith-Based Foundations, 25%; Religious Organizations, including other religious-environmental groups, 13%)
<i>Annual Budget:</i>	\$35,000.00
<i>Number of Paid Staff:</i>	None
<i>Number of Regular Volunteers:</i>	15
<i>Non-Profit Status:</i>	Applying for Non-Profit Status
<i>Primary Area of Engagement:</i>	Ethics-Based Work

Still, while many of the participants in the present study view funding availability as “*the* determining factor in terms of how much we do and what quality it is,” [director of interfaith group] those active in faith-based environmentalism refuse to allow a lack of funding to dictate the “direction or the tone or the timber” [director of interfaith group] of their efforts. They have found creative and low-budget ways to disseminate their messages, they try to live within their means, and they rarely take up an issue or change a project simply because there is funding available for it that may help their organization to stay viable. One group, for example, has been working on climate change for a number of years despite a lack of funding, but it has only recently been able to devote more time to it because of increased availability of funding for global climate change work. Of course, this is a change for which they are certainly grateful, but they had only altered the scope and never the focus of their efforts when there was a lack of funding for this type of work.

Many religious-environmentalists believe that money will eventually come to them and that they will be rewarded for their efforts and for staying true to their values

**Figure 15. Annual budgets of faith-based environmental groups.**



*Note:* These figures are from 36 of the 42 groups in the present study. In addition, one group has no national operating budget (this group splits its work by region and each region has its own budget; however, budgetary information is only known for one of these regions and so this group’s budget is not included here); one does not have a budget per se, but rather a revolving fund that it uses to fund its projects; one does not know its budget; one refused to share this information; and two groups did not respond to a follow-up inquiry asking for this information. Several groups were unable to provide an annual budget for one year, and rather stated their funding over a several year period (n = 3). Others provided a range of amounts either because they did not know an exact figure, or because their funding changes by year (n = 4). For instance, one group has an annual budget of \$97,000.00 on years when it hosts a national conference and \$44,000.00 on years when it does not. The budgets of these seven groups were derived by taking an average of the amounts mentioned.

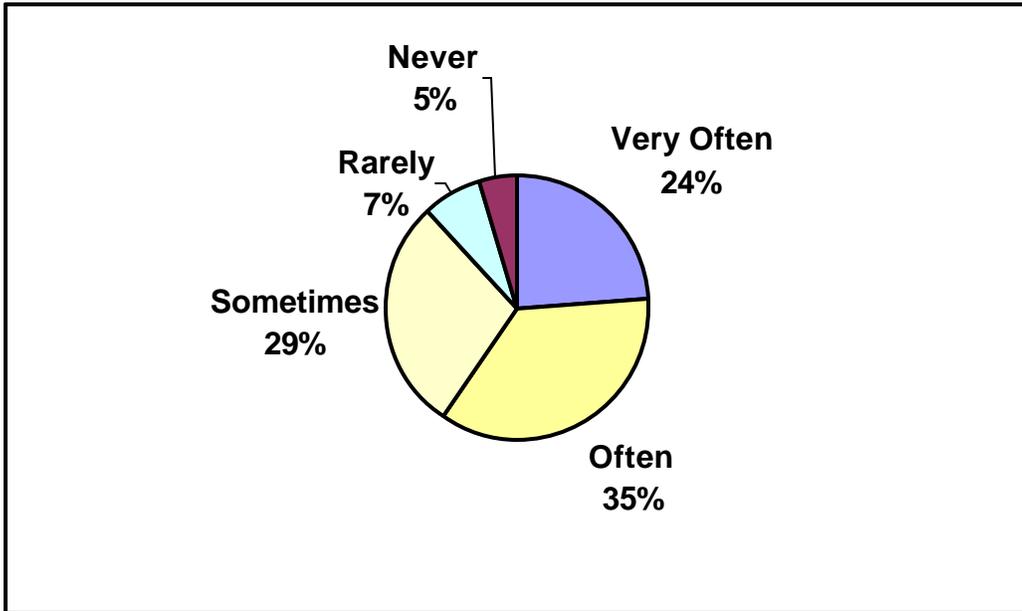
and beliefs. As such, funding influences neither their mission nor their message nor their persistence in bringing about environmental change. It may affect their morale at times as it is exhausting to be working for little to no money and to be unable to fund programs which are felt to be important. In spite of this, there is an admirable optimism in the movement that the importance of its work can override financial limitations. One interviewee summed up this sentiment well in saying that funding does affect his group’s efforts in many of the ways discussed above, but that it also does not affect it because their work “captures people’s imaginations and... has nothing to do with money; it’s happening and it’s irreversible and (it’s beyond money)” [director of interfaith group].

#### Collaboration with Other Faith-Based and Secular Environmental Groups

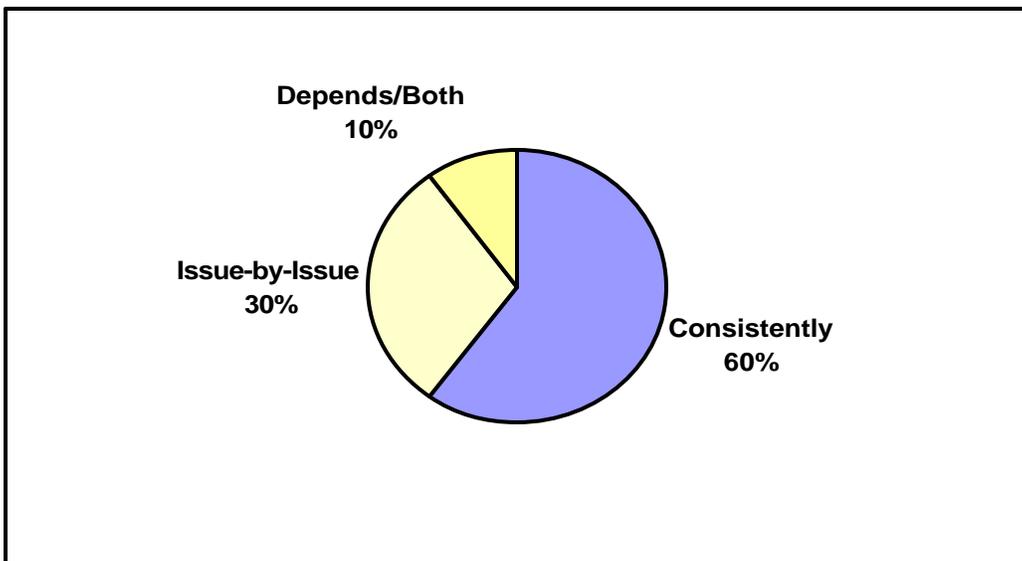
Collaboration among faith-based environmental groups occurs very frequently and with consistency. Of those included in the present study, only 5% stated that they

never worked with other religious-environmental groups; 7% said they did so rarely. In other words, a full 88% of the groups collaborate at least sometimes with other faith-based environmental organizations, the most frequent collaboration taking place often (see Figures 16 and 17).

**Figure 16. Frequency of collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups.**

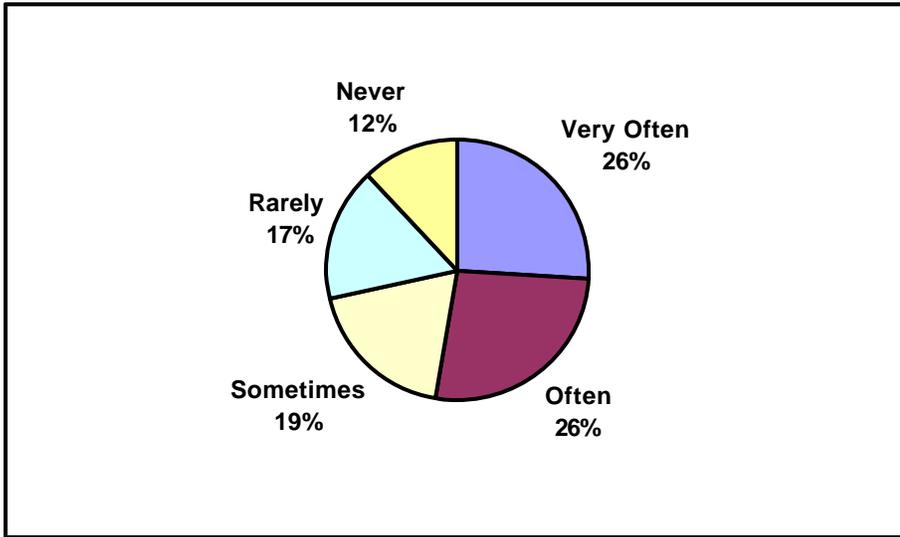


**Figure 17. Type of collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups.**

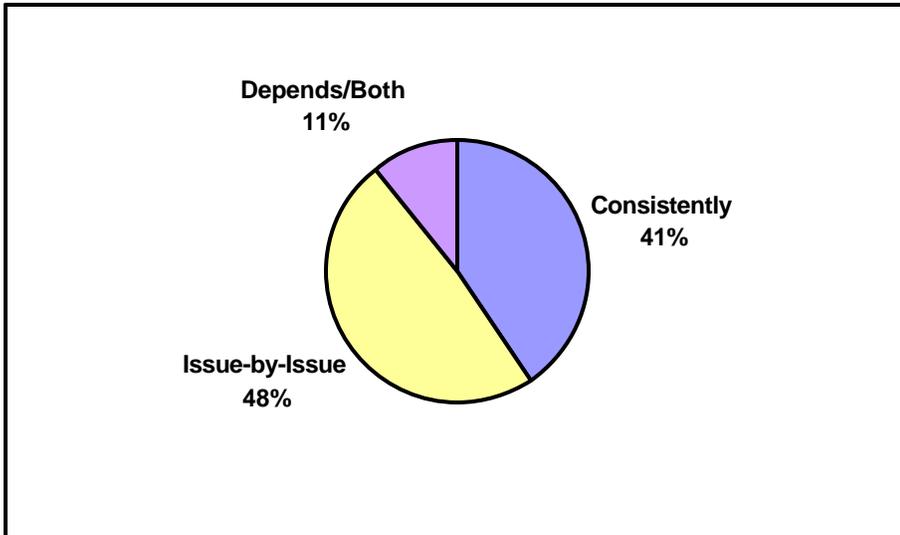


Collaboration with secular organizations occurs less often and less consistently than it does with faith-based environmental groups, but the extent to which it does happen is still important. Seventy-three percent of the groups who participated in the present study report that they collaborate at least sometimes with secular environmental organizations (see Figures 18 and 19). Groups that collaborate with other faith-based organizations also tend to partner with secular groups with similarly levels of frequency ( $r(40) = .27, p < 0.10$ ). One interfaith group in the Midwest that is among the better funded of organizations in the present study reflects this pattern of partnership. It collaborates very often with other faith-based environmental groups, but only often with secular organizations (see Group Profile 2).

**Figure 18. Frequency of collaboration with secular environmental groups.**



**Figure 19. Type of collaboration with secular environmental groups.**



## PROFILE GROUP TWO

<b><i>Type of Group:</i></b>	Interfaith
<b><i>Date Founded:</i></b>	1999
<b><i>Location:</i></b>	Midwest
<b><i>Scope of Work:</i></b>	Local with around 120 congregations participating, but planning on becoming statewide
<b><i>Number of Funding Sources:</i></b>	7 (Private Environmental Foundations, Other Private Foundations besides Faith-Based and Environmental, and Public Grants and Awards, 80%; Individuals, 10%; Religious Organizations, including other faith-based environmental groups, 9%; Workshop Registrations and Speaker Fees/Donations, 1%)
<b><i>Annual Budget:</i></b>	\$250,000.00
<b><i>Number of Paid Staff:</i></b>	4 (one full-time director and three part-time)
<b><i>Number of Regular Volunteers:</i></b>	10
<b><i>Non-Profit Status:</i></b>	Yes
<b><i>Primary Area of Engagement:</i></b>	Ethics-Based Work

### *Groups Who Do Not Collaborate with Faith-Based or Secular Environmental Organizations*

For the 12% of organizations (n = 5) who do not collaborate with other faith-based environmental groups, or who do so only rarely, no patterns were immediately apparent in the explanations given as to why they did not partner with other groups more often. In general, it seems that each organization has its own idiosyncratic reasons for not collaborating, whether it be that it thinks its model is better than others or that it does not have the time to do so. One organization stated that it simply did not have the ability to collaborate more frequently because there were no other groups in its area, the scope of its work being local.

Further investigation of this suggestion found two other organizations who also mentioned a general lack of groups with which to partner. The scope of these other groups is also essentially local. They collaborate slightly less often than the average with other faith-based environmental organizations. Both are located in regions where the present researcher has been unable to identify any other groups, excepting one with whom there was a small degree of collaboration taking place. While the first mentioned

group that never collaborates due to lack of opportunity does have other faith-based environmental organizations located near to it with which it could work, I explored the data to determine whether or not there may, in fact, be a relationship between concentration of groups and likelihood of partnering. I did this in order to better understand potential impediments to collaboration.

Results of cross-tabulation indicate that no such relationship exists (see Table 1). There are organizations located in regions that have high concentrations of groups who collaborate rarely to never, and vice versa. Interestingly enough, there are three other groups who collaborate often or sometimes who expressed that there were only nationally-based religious-environmental groups with whom they could work. While one of these is located in a region where there are not any other groups, the other two are located in areas that have fairly high concentrations of organizations. This again demonstrates that proximity of groups is not an important factor in determining degree of collaboration. Rather, my earlier discussion about the ability of modern technology to increase scope of work may also apply to group capability to collaborate across longer distances. In other words, even if there are not other faith-based environmental groups located geographically nearby, partnership can still occur, and often does.

Of the 12 groups who partner rarely or never with mainstream environmental organizations, only two suggested that one reason they did not collaborate more frequently was because the mainstream organizations did not operate within a religious framework. One of these two also did not collaborate with faith-based groups for a similar reason in that it felt its framework to be better than the others all around, but this is, by far, a minority position. In fact, 75% of the 12 groups who partner rarely or never with secular environmental organizations indicate that they would work with them under the right circumstances. Their reasons for not working together more often have nothing to do with any sort of antagonism on their part. Instead, they either lack the capacity and time to seek out collaborations, they have not yet had the need or opportunity to partner, or they believe that the mainstream organizations find them too small to have much to gain from such a partnership.

The second most prevalent reason (42%) that was given by these 12 groups for not collaborating more often with secular groups is that they have different priorities, foci, or purpose than the faith-based environmental organizations. Some religious groups felt that the outward, political, and advocacy focus of mainstream groups, what I would deem to be issues-based work, provides a different focus from the inward ethics-based work undertaken by these faith-based groups that is directed primarily at “people in the pews” [member of Mainline Protestant group]. Because of these different foci, collaboration is made somewhat more difficult.

#### *Ways of Collaborating with Other Faith-Based and Secular Environmental Groups*

The primary story here, however, does not concern lack of collaboration because the faith-based environmental movement is characterized primarily by partnership. Collaboration among religious-environmental groups takes several common forms and involves work on a wide variety of issues, as well as on the furthering of an environmental ethic. The present research inquired via an open-ended question as to the

**Table 1. Comparison of geographical location of groups with extent of collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups.**

<i>Region</i>		<i>Amount of Collaboration with Faith-Based Environmental Groups (COLLFBE)</i>					<b>Total</b>
		<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>	
<b>Northeast</b>	Count	3	2	3	1	1	10
	% within Region	30.0%	20.0%	30.0%	10.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	% within COLLFBE	30.0%	13.3%	25.0%	33.3%	50.0%	23.8%
	% of Total	7.1%	4.8%	7.1%	2.4%	2.4%	23.8%
<b>Middle Atlantic</b>	Count	3	2	4	0	0	9
	% within Region	33.3%	22.2%	44.4%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within COLLFBE	30.0%	13.3%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	21.4%
	% of Total	7.1%	4.8%	9.5%	.0%	.0%	21.4%
<b>South</b>	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	% within Region	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within COLLFBE	.0%	6.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.4%
	% of Total	.0%	2.4%	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.4%
<b>Midwest</b>	Count	2	4	1	0	1	8
	% within Region	25.0%	50.0%	12.5%	.0%	12.5%	100.0%
	% within COLLFBE	20.0%	26.7%	8.3%	.0%	50.0%	19.0%
	% of Total	4.8%	9.5%	2.4%	.0%	2.4%	19.0%
<b>Southwest</b>	Count	0	0	1	0	0	1
	% within Region	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within COLLFBE	.0%	.0%	8.3%	.0%	.0%	2.4%
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	2.4%	.0%	.0%	2.4%
<b>Pacific</b>	Count	1	5	0	2	0	8
	% within Region	12.5%	62.5%	.0%	25.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within COLLFBE	10.0%	33.3%	.0%	66.7%	.0%	19.0%
	% of Total	2.4%	11.9%	.0%	4.8%	.0%	19.0%
<b>Rocky Mountain</b>	Count	1	0	1	0	0	2
	% within Region	50.0%	.0%	50.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within COLLFBE	10.0%	.0%	8.3%	.0%	.0%	4.8%
	% of Total	2.4%	.0%	2.4%	.0%	.0%	4.8%
<b>Other</b>	Count	0	1	2	0	0	3
	% within Region	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within COLLFBE	.0%	6.7%	16.7%	.0%	.0%	7.1%
	% of Total	.0%	2.4%	4.8%	.0%	.0%	7.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	Count	10	15	12	3	2	42
	% within Region	23.8%	35.7%	28.6%	7.1%	4.8%	100.0%
	% within COLLFBE	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	23.8%	35.7%	28.6%	7.1%	4.8%	100.0%

types of work and issues on which faith-based environmental groups typically collaborate with each other. Again, the majority listed the ways that they could recall most immediately. Thus, we can assume that those named were the ways in which they partner most regularly.

The number and range of issues worked upon in faith-based environmental collaborations varies, with climate change and energy addressed most often in collaborations (see section on Strategies and Issues for a larger discussion on issues). The most frequent collaborations with other religious-environmental groups (53% of the groups who collaborate) involve policy advocacy efforts, including sending constituents action alerts by e-mail from partners, testifying together at public hearings, visiting legislators, signing onto letters, or creating statements about particular issues and general concerns. The second most prevalent form of collaboration (50%) involves attending, planning for, and speaking at each other's events, whether they be panel discussions, seminars, educational workshops, or conferences. (These types of events can involve either ethics-based or issues-based messages.) In addition, groups spend an important amount of time both formally and informally networking with each by sharing resources and ideas (40%), forwarding on the materials and announcements of their partners to their own constituencies (23%), or working together on hands-on projects (23%). There also seems to be a significant degree of cross-fertilization among the leadership of faith-based environmental groups as 20% have individuals from other religious groups sitting on their boards or acting as representatives or advisors on other committees. In addition, a number of organizations house and manage state-based programs directed by other groups active in the movement. Many also work together in coalitions under the aegis of national umbrella-like groups.

Secular and religious-environmental organizations collaborate in many of the same ways as do religious groups when they work together. They also work on largely on the same range and number of issues, but their focus here is much less about making ethical connections between religion and the environment than it is about specific environmental problems. Similar to faith-based environmental collaborations, the most frequent ways in which religious and secular groups work together is through attending each other's conferences, workshops, and events where both are invited to speak or help plan (41%). They also collaborate on policy advocacy work, including signing petitions, lobbying, and testifying at public hearings (38%). Furthermore, there is considerable activity occurring in which ideas and resources are shared (38%), on hands-on projects (22%), and on disseminating secular groups' educational resources and action alerts (11%). In addition, there is extensive networking, both informally through member involvement with local mainstream groups, and through the sitting of secular environmentalists on faith-based environmental committees and vice versa (22%).

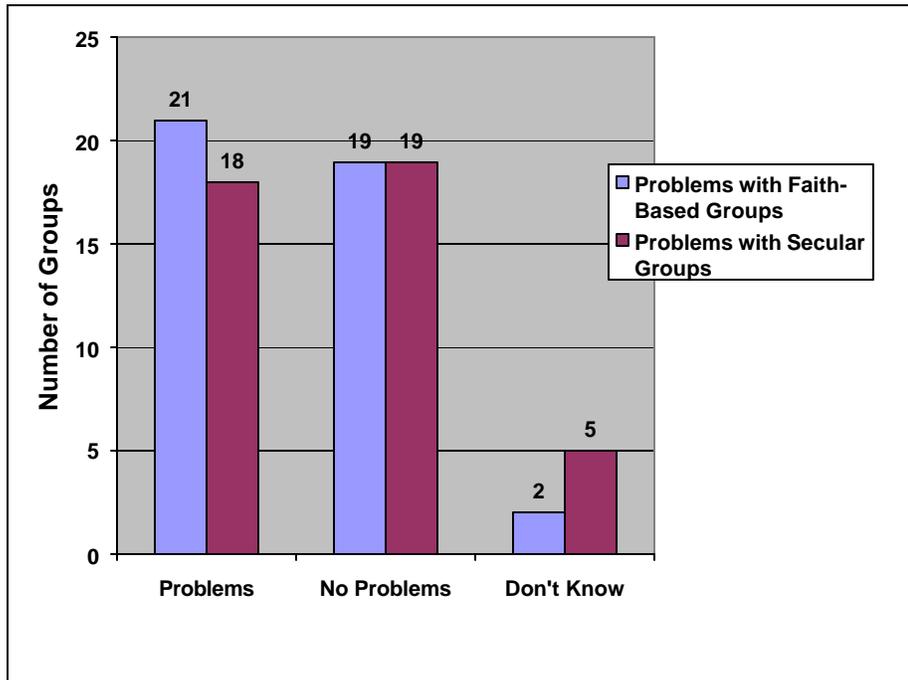
As with their faith-based collaborations, religious groups view the strengths of their efforts and those of the secular groups as being complementary. They understand that they have limited capacity when it comes to scientific, technical, and legislative expertise, and financial and staff resources, and so they are able to draw on the work of mainstream groups who have expertise and resources in such a way as to complement their work. While overall there is less collaboration among faith-based and secular environmental groups than among religious-environmental groups, hypothesis tests

conducted comparing these two types of collaborations reveal that there are no significant differences in the amount of time spent on respective activities at the  $p < 0.05$  significance level. Thus, the differences in partnering lie primarily with frequency and focus on ethics-based versus issues-based work, rather than with type. This indicates that overall faith-based environmental groups collaborate in much the same ways and on the same types of issues with both their religious and secular environmental partners.

*Difficulties in Collaborating with Other Faith-Based and Secular Environmental Groups*

Given the diversity in theology and worldviews represented by the groups who participated in the present study – some are ecumenical or transdenominational, others interfaith, others affiliated primarily with one religious denomination – one might expect the potential for conflict in collaboration with other faith-based and secular environmental groups to be relatively high, especially regarding what many view as controversial, namely issues pertaining to the environment. However, only 50% and 42% of the groups reported having had experienced problems in their collaborations with other faith-based organizations and mainstream environmental groups, respectively (see Figure 20). Few of the problems seemed to be systemic or widespread. Rather, most were unique to one particular partnership, had not occurred with any regularity over time, and were deemed minor or unimportant by many of the groups. Many of the problems were simply attributed to personality clashes or conflicts over territory and funding which most believed to be an inherent part of humans working together. Stated differently, most difficulties are not viewed as being unique to either the faith-based or the secular collaborations in which the groups in the present study participate, but rather typical of any type of partnership.

**Figure 20. Number of groups experiencing problems with other faith-based and secular environmental groups.**



### *Problems with Faith-Based Environmental Collaborations*

The greatest problem with which groups were faced when partnering with other religious-environmental organizations was, not surprisingly, the fact that different groups hold different values and theological viewpoints, or come from different cultural backgrounds. Because of this, sometimes constituents of one group have felt alienated from discussions headed by members of another organization and so on. The large majority of people attribute this situation to a lack of awareness rather than to the other group believing that its model is more correct or authoritative than another organization's. However, there were a couple of people who believe that this latter circumstance does take place sometimes. In general, groups are able to avoid alienating their constituencies and to circumvent such uncomfortable situations by being proactive. Most think carefully about their goals and constituencies before agreeing to collaborate with another group and will not form partnerships or invite certain speakers to their events if they decide that such actions would work against them when building their base. For instance, some conservative groups have decided not to collaborate in any public way with more mainline religious groups because of a justified fear that they will lose credibility with their main target audience.

The language, vocabulary, and theology that groups use reflect these types of distinctions. They can also be a source of problems when collaborating on projects that will reach a diverse constituency represented by the different participating religious-environmental organizations. More conservative groups, although others as well, use the term "creation care" to talk about environmental ethics and issues, recognizing that for many in their audience, the word "environment" means "liberal" and "political" as noted above. Other groups will use "environmental stewardship" or "earth stewardship." For still others "environment" is perfectly acceptable. Such differences in language are likely influenced by geography in similar ways: the more conservative a region, the more one would use "creation care," for instance.<sup>18</sup>

These differences in language indicate a movement that has been unable to agree upon a common vocabulary. Indeed, it appears that there is little rush among some groups to find one as they seem to view language differences as positively representing the diversity of the movement. In addition, the differences are seen to represent the needs of various groups to speak most effectively and credibly to their own particular audiences. One participant views the situation in a very positive way; he believes,

"... this thing is so fresh in religious life that it's inviting everybody into an inquiry where there's a considerable amount of freedom from, but not entirely from, past ideological and denominational differences... the scale and freshness and the flexibility and the sort of ecological correctness of each of these groups being able to *enact their own responses* (emphasis added), that is seen to be not just necessary, but wonderful and interesting, and how are we going to figure this out otherwise?" [director of interfaith group]

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<sup>18</sup> It should be noted, however, that this term can only be employed by Christian and Jewish groups. Interfaith organizations might be less able to use it because of its implicit reference to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.

For him, the newness of the movement has allowed groups to create their own language and ideas, and it is through this process that solutions will be generated. On the other hand, according to another respondent,

“... when we don’t have any shared language with which to talk about what we’re doing, people can’t conceive of the fact that it’s being done... if you can’t say in a way that makes sense, “oh, we’re a green church,” and have people go, “oh, you’re one of those,” churches won’t talk about that as part of their local evangelism because they don’t have a word for it... they can’t rally the congregation around it because nobody knows what it means, so I’m very aware that the long-term gradual piece of what I’ve been doing for five years is in many ways shaping that language and putting it out there to a very diverse group as a way of starting to provide common ground for us... (the different languages are because of differing philosophies)... people speak differently if they’re coming out of a process theology approach or a liberation theology approach or a biblical stewardship approach, on down the list, but it’s also simply a tactical question – if we could agree that “creation stewardship” may not be perfect, but it is something we can rally around, that gives us a shared language that we haven’t found... (different languages fragment the movement)...” [director of ecumenical group]

Of course, it is realistic and reasonable to support the use of different languages when it is believed that diverse constituencies will only be reached in that way. However, the movement as a whole desires to transcend denominational boundaries – this is apparent in its collaborative nature – and to effect change on a broader societal and cultural scale. To some extent, the failure to find a common language must necessarily be impeding that objective.

That being said, the predominant situation in faith-based environmental group collaboration is that of organizations looking beyond theological and vocabulary differences and understanding that they all are working for a common cause and for the establishment of a common ethic. They may have to define boundaries or set clear principles for collaboration, but they do so in order to be able to work on what they see as being more or less the same set of goals. In fact, when asked how they thought problems might be improved, the most frequent response was to “find the common ground,” [director of Evangelical Protestant group; director of Mainline Protestant group] or to “understand that our purposes are really the same – that we care about the planet” [co-director of Mainline Protestant group]. There is very much a sense that different groups have certain areas of expertise and that they can draw on each other’s competencies in order to build a stronger movement. Thus, as long as they remind each other to be more inclusive or aware of what they are saying, respect each other’s faith traditions, make an effort to communicate, and remember that they essentially have the same mission, the problems that remain should be infrequent, minor, and not systemic, and their collaborations prove fruitful.

### *Problems with Religious-Secular Environmental Collaborations*

The main types of problems that faith-based organizations experience when working with secular groups are distinct to that particular type of collaboration. The most frequently reported problem is a feeling by many that secular environmental organizations simply do not understand the religious community and how it functions culturally, politically, and organizationally. As a result, mainstream groups sometimes bring more agenda to the table than faith-based groups are able to handle, and their expectations for whether and how quickly a religious organization can mobilize its constituency are unrealistic. Faith-based environmental groups believe it important to build strong relationships, through one-on-one interaction. However, doing so generally requires more time than mainstream groups seem to want to wait when trying to rally people to work on behalf of a specific issue.

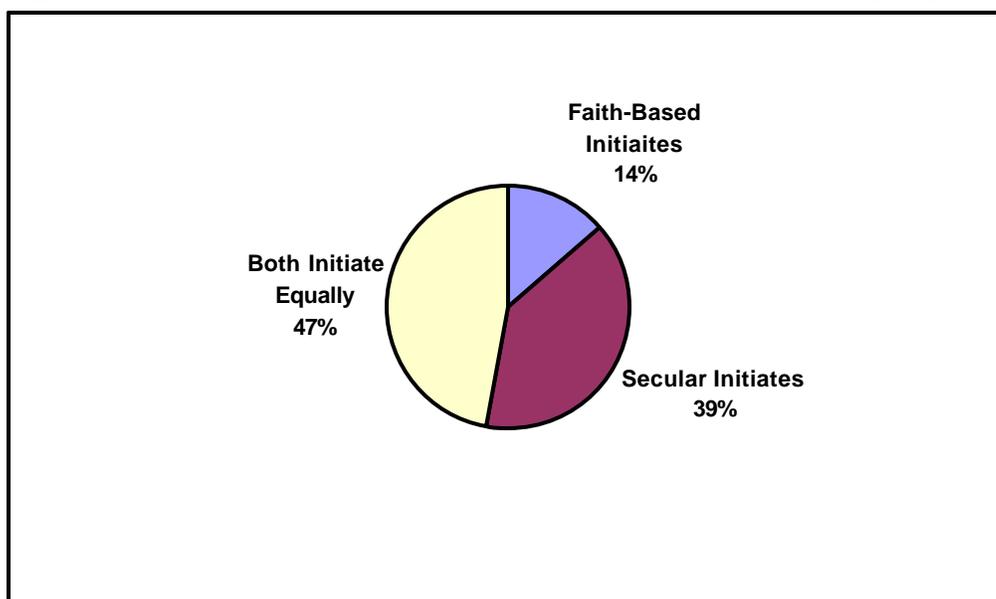
Secular environmental groups, it is felt, want to add as many voices to their cause as possible. Historically, increasing their constituency has been one of the primary reasons why they have interacted with the faith-based community. This has recently changed somewhat as both types of groups usually contact each other equally often now. However, in the past, mainstream groups were usually the first to call religious groups, and they continue to initiate contact to a greater extent than do the faith-based groups (see Figure 21).

The drive of secular groups to increase their audience, coupled with their lack of knowledge about the religious community's need and desire to build long term relationships with those with whom it works, has sometimes meant that faith-based groups come to feel used and misunderstood by the secular environmental movement. Six groups reported that mainstream organizations simply want access to their constituency lists, or for them to find "someone with a collar" [director of interfaith group] to be present at a press conference, instead of establishing constructive working relationships. This is problematic for the obvious reason that faith-based groups believe in the importance of community (see discussion about this below). As such, they wish to have strong relationships with mainstream organizations. However, they also feel it important to protect their constituents and the clergy with whom they have already developed relationships from being approached unexpectedly by secular groups.

To solve these types of problems, it is agreed, requires honest dialogue, open communication, and essentially getting to better know each other. This will enable the secular environmental community to better understand the boundaries and needs of the faith-based environmental groups, and will also help religious groups more easily comprehend the workings of the mainstream movement. As with their collaborations with other faith-based environmental groups, those in the present study are proactive in avoiding problems. They avoid working with secular organizations whose tactics they find to be unacceptable - those that might destroy property, create materials that are not scientifically based, use language that is combative, or wish to promote environmental protection at the expense of human well-being, for instance. They also stay away from partnering with a mainstream group of questionable reputation to their constituency that might undermine their own credibility.

When groups do run into difficulties with the secular organizations with whom they choose to collaborate, they stress the importance of focusing on where they agree,

**Figure 21. Who initiates contact: faith-based, secular, or both equally.**



finding the common ground, and defining a “comprehensive moral vision,” [director of interfaith group] similar to the solutions proposed for working through problems in faith-based collaborations. Many religious environmental groups, however, are very much concerned with maintaining a distinctive voice separate from that of the secular environmental community. In part, this is because they feel that their brand of messaging resonates more strongly with their constituencies than do the “blanket messages” [director of Mainline Protestant group] of the mainstream movement. Consequently, they believe they have a greater chance for success with their audiences if they actively avoid becoming too similar to secular groups. (While some also feel that different faith voices should likewise remain distinct when collaborating, there is much less worry about this than there is with respect to secular environmental groups.)

Also, it is important to note that there is some sense among faith-based environmental groups that Americans view clergy and religious institutions as being more trustworthy and honest than others, and so messages coming particularly from them are seen to hold more weight and therefore have a greater potential to change behavior. One interviewee said,

“... when things come through the church, there’s a level of validity to them... maybe (if someone) just read(s) it in the newspaper, (they might) go, “hmm... global warming? I’m not so sure,” but things that come to church and to church people who are pretty much good hearted, generous people can maybe succeed... that’s the hope.” [co-director of interfaith group]

Thus, while faith-based groups may agree that they and secular organizations are working towards the same goals, with the majority asserting that solving the environmental crisis will involve working together with all types of organizations, the ways in which they approach the problem are different. Religious-environmental groups

view their work as immensely important and complementary to the work of mainstream groups. However, to them the environmental crisis is less about the “environment” as defined by secular groups than it is about morals and ethics, and they feel that the nature of the faith community makes it an important arena where values can and should be discussed. According to one respondent,

“... that’s the power that the faith community has that I don’t think the secular environmental community has just yet – you can be a member of the [Natural Resources Defense Council] or the Sierra Club, but you don’t go to the NRDC local buildings every week, once a week at the same time and take your kids there and have all the most significant life changing experiences for your family in that building and share them with those same people – baptism, birth, death, illness, marriage – it’s all right there, and what we have as a faith community that the secular environmental community doesn’t have is that exactly – we are in relationship with each other, with our God, with this world, and we are committed to it and to each other and to our God, and we’re not just dues paying members, and so that’s where part of that moral power comes from... it just comes from the existence of those relationships.” [director of interfaith group]

Because of their emphasis on community and morals, faith-based groups do largely base their work in ethics, religion, spirituality, and theology. Secular groups are seen to discuss values to a much lesser extent – thus, the criticism of Shellenberger and Nordhaus’ “Death of Environmentalism” paper discussed in detail in Appendix B - even though many of the individuals working for them may ground their efforts in such values.

One director of an interfaith group explains many aspects of collaborations with secular environmental groups in this way:

“We’re very careful not to be perceived as the Sierra Club at Prayer... our basis has to come out of theology, but what we discovered... when we first started is if you stand in front of a group of people and you tell them that the climate is changing and they need to do this, this, this, and this in order to prevent disaster, they’ll say well, how do you know that’s true? So you’ve got to have some scientific background there...” [director of interfaith group]

“We’re very careful because we know that other groups have had trouble. I think it was the National Council of Churches (NCC) (that) was actually called the Sierra Club at Prayer, and it was written up in the Wall Street Journal, and it was devastating, and that was sort of an alert to everybody – hey, let’s be very careful, because the audiences that we’re trying to reach – if we want to talk to people in the red states who are conservative and also consider themselves (to be) very religious, we have to come at this from a religious perspective... (so) you’ve got to be very careful of where you are in this country and who your audience is and not go and collaborate with the Sierra Club if you’re in North Carolina or even in Tennessee or Alabama... (in those places) we would not collaborate in any way, shape, or form with an environmental organization because we’re trying to reach

people who probably think that environmental organizations are part of a liberal conspiracy... (faith-based environmental groups are) only just beginning in some places, and many places haven't even started yet to make this connection between religion and the environment... I think (they haven't formed yet) largely because the secular environmental community is often seen as a liberal conspiracy and those conservative states where people are church-goers and consider themselves religious and are largely conservative, think that "environment" is a dirty word, and when we start in those states, we're not even going to use the word "environment" – it will be "care for creation," "creation care," just like the evangelicals are doing, and it'll be entirely theology – if you sit in the pew and profess a love for God, God created and loves the creation, and it's being destroyed, and we have a responsibility to take care of it, never mind politics – it has to be theology... we aren't the Sierra Club at Prayer, so we want to make sure that we're never considered that; my message – well, I'm a priest so it makes it a little bit easier – is from the pulpit, so I'm going to be talking theology or God-talk from the get-go, and when that thing came out in the Wall Street Journal, it just sort of put us on high alert – let's not fall into that trap... (the article) all came out over the What Would Jesus Drive? Campaign and what the article was saying was that the NCC had kind of been usurped by the environmental community, and the Sierra Club was using the NCC to get their own message out... I do get calls from organizations who say, "What kind of language should we be using to reach the religious community?" and most of us working in this field now are just very leery about giving them that kind of information, because we can give them the language, but if there's no heart behind the language, the language doesn't work..." [director of interfaith group]

In other words, faith-based environmental groups are very aware of their constituencies and the potentially negative perceptions of their audiences with respect to the mainstream environmental movement. Because of this, and because they view their work as being necessarily different than that of secular groups – they often wish to promote certain values above and beyond particular issues – religious-environmental groups are careful to remain conceptually, and sometimes practically, separate from mainstream environmental organizations.

### **B. Ethics-Based Work versus Issues-Based Work - *Do faith-based environmental groups embody an ethics-based environmentalism?***

The present research attempted to determine which factors, internal or external to an organization, might influence whether a group undertakes more ethics-based work or more issues-based work (see detailed discussion of hypotheses below). Several questions in the interview attempted to quantify the amount of ethics-based and issues-based work engaged in by each group. As described in the Research Design and Methodology chapter of my thesis, these questions included: 1) asking respondents to select statements from a list that best described the driving philosophies behind their work, each statement corresponding to what would be considered ethics-based or issues-based work according

to my definition of the two; 2) asking them to then rank two of the statements they chose as being most important; and 3) asking interviewees whether they regarded their group’s primary work as being to promote an environmental ethic, or to work on a particular issue or issues. In addition, the top three goals of each group were coded according to my ethics-based, issues-based definitions and percent of goals that fell into each of these categories recorded.

Comparisons of each of these variables demonstrated consistency in answers with groups indicating that they engage in ethics-based work much more frequently than issues-based work (see Table 2). Only two groups leaned strongly towards issues-based work, and the number of groups engaging in ethics-based work outnumbers those undertaking issues-based work by between two to four times depending on the variable in question. Thus, there is less variation in the results than I expected, with faith-based environmental groups largely engaging in ethics-based work most often (see Figures 25 and 26 below for breakdown of percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed as well as percentage of goals that are ethics and issues-based). When ranking the top two statements selected to best describe driving philosophies in group work about how to bring about lasting environmental change, 46% chose two ethics-based statements, 45% chose one ethics-based and one issues-based, and only 7% chose two issues-based statements (see Figure 22). When asked whether they considered the type of work their group does to be primarily ethics-based or issues-based, 60% said the former and 7% the latter (see Figure 23). Thirty-three percent indicated that it was “something else,” which often meant a combination of both types of work.

**Table 2. Comparison of means across three variables measuring amount of ethics-based and issues-based work.**

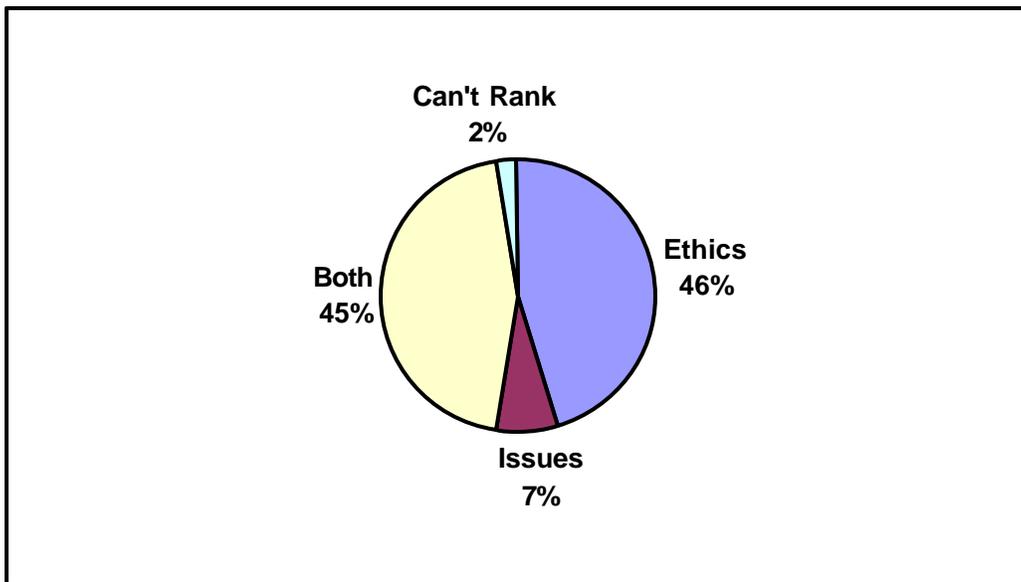
		<i>Rank<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Percent of Ethics Goals</i>	<i>Percent of Issues Goals</i>	<i>Main Work<sup>b</sup></i>
N	Valid	41	42	42	42	42	42
	Missing	1 <sup>a</sup>	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.32	70.60	58.10	56.48	26.83	1.29
Std. Dev.		0.47	26.23	32.40	36.25	34.63	0.55
Min.		1.00	17.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00
Max.		2.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	3.00

<sup>a</sup>*Note:* Includes one group who was unable to rank statements.

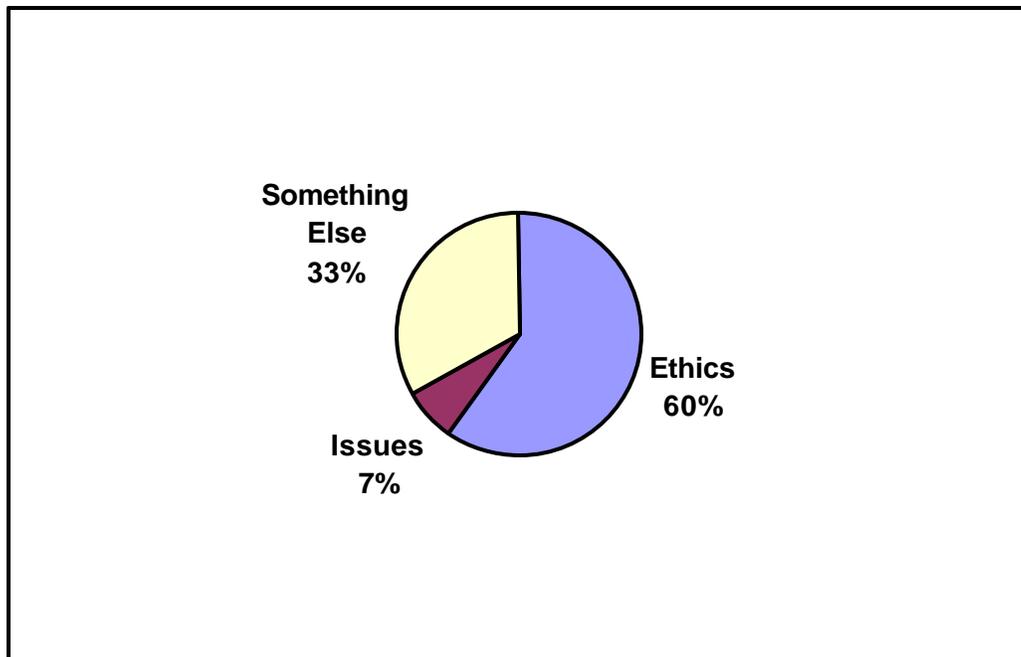
<sup>b</sup>*Note:* Scores closer to 1.00 indicate more ranking of ethics-based statements and more identification of primary work as ethics-based.

While these results provide insight into the actual type of work in which organizations engage, I also wished to gain more in-depth knowledge of religious-environmental groups’ views about ethics-based and issues-based work more specifically. As a result, participants were asked to describe what they believed to be the benefits and

**Figure 22. Percentage of groups' rankings of ethics-based and issues-based statements as the top two statements representing their driving philosophies for how to best bring about lasting environmental change.**



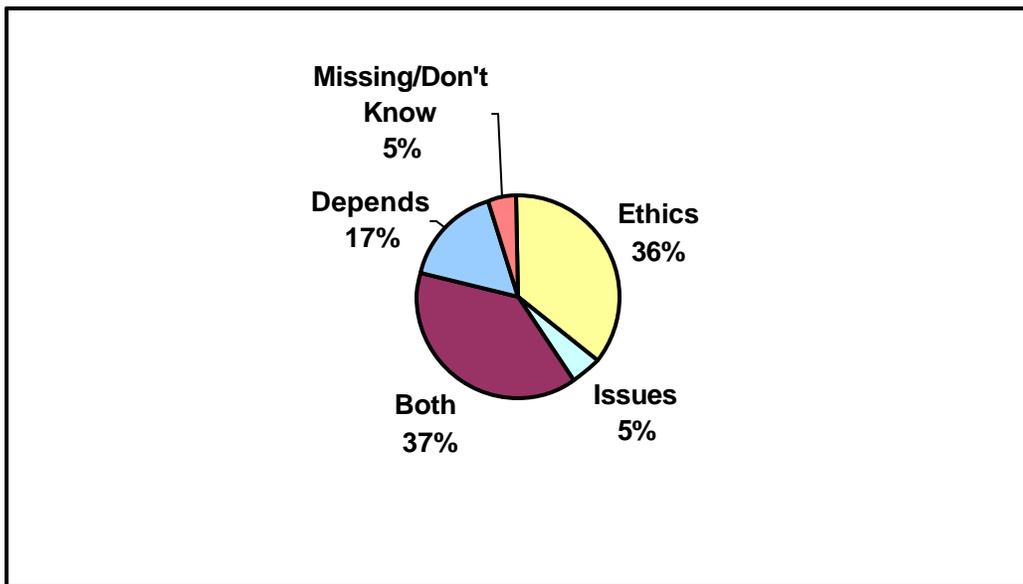
**Figure 23. Percentage of groups by their classification of their main work.**



drawbacks to doing each of these two types of work, regardless of whether or not they indicated the majority of their work to be one or the other in practice. Earlier inquiries about ethics and issues in my interview sought only to determine whether a group engaged in primarily ethics-based or issues-based work (see paragraph directly above). This latter question aimed to understand which of the two types of work organizations felt to be most feasible and most important in achieving change. The two different kinds of questions were predicated on the supposition that the actual work in which groups are engaged might result from factors other than their beliefs so that, for instance, a group may believe more strongly in issues-based work, but may be unable to pursue it to a great extent because of limited capacity and so forth. Thus, while the one type of question measured actual engagement with ethics-based or issues-based efforts, the other attempted to determine whether or not there was any discord between actual work and belief. In addition, this question was asked in order to verify that the dichotomy I created of ethics-based versus issues-based did in fact correspond to how organizations thought about their different types of work. Evidence that my model is meaningful was presented when none of the interviewees asked for clarification of the meaning of “ethics” versus “issues” beyond what was given in the question, and when all were able to readily respond to it. In fact, only one respondent expressed serious doubt that the dichotomy was useful. In addition, some felt that ethics-based and issues-based work were much more integrated than my model implied, but they nonetheless understood the intent of the question. At times groups used different language than mine when answering the question, but their meaning seemed to essentially be the same. Interestingly enough, and in support of my hypothesis that greater engagement in policy advocacy is related to more work on issues, many groups automatically equated issues-based work with policy advocacy. Thus, in talking about the benefits and drawbacks of working on issues, several interviewees spoke primarily about the pros and cons of working in the public policy realm.

Analysis comparing beliefs about whether or not ethics-based or issues-based work is the most effective way to bring about change, with what kind of work a group actually does, demonstrate that there is strong consistency between belief and action. Respondents were asked whether they believed that ethics-based work should precede issues-based work in bringing about change, issues-based precede ethics-based, both occur simultaneously, or that it depends on the situation (see Figure 24). Adding the response of “depends on the situation,” an option that was not available in the question concerning what type of work a group actually does, changes the pattern a small amount so that fewer people indicate that ethics-based work, or both ethics- and issues-based work together, are most important (36% and 37%, respectively). Despite this, hypothesis tests indicate that these changes do not represent statistically significant differences. The number of faith-based organizations who consider issues-based work to be most important is virtually the same across questions. Taken together, these results indicate that by and large religious-environmental groups are able to translate their beliefs about ethics-based and issues-based work into their practical efforts.

**Figure 24. Percentage of groups by which type of work they believe should occur first in order to best bring about lasting environmental change.**



*Note:* Missing includes respondent unable to be reached for follow-up.

#### *Issues-Based Groups*

Because there are only two groups in the present study which tend to be heavily and consistently weighted towards issues-based work, it is worthwhile to consider what might make them different from the vast majority who consider ethics-based work to be so important and/or reflective of the primary type of work in which they are engaged. Both of these “issues-based” groups ranked issues statements as their top two and endorsed a significantly greater percentage of issues-based than ethics-based statements (80% vs. 33% and 80% vs. 17%) when compared to other groups. These two groups further indicated that their primary work was either focused on a particular issue, or was “something else,” but that issues took precedence in their work over ethics. They also answered the question about their beliefs in similar ways, one saying that issues should come first and the other that both ethics-based and issues-based work needed to occur simultaneously.<sup>19</sup>

Comparing the “issues-based” groups’ responses on all other quantitative variables with those of other organizations did not yield any obvious differences except that these two work essentially solely on the issues of global climate change and energy whereas most other groups work on a broader range of topics. Still, three other groups

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<sup>19</sup> It should be noted here that one other group also ranked issues statements as its top two and endorsed significantly more issues-based than ethics-based statements (100% vs. 33%). However, this organization then answered that ethics took precedence over issues both in its actual work and in its belief about how best to bring about lasting environmental change. As a result of these mixed answers, this group seems to believe that both types of work are important and so it is not being considered as an exception to the general pattern found.

who are more ethics-based work solely on one or both these issues as well. The difference for the two groups, therefore, seems to lie primarily in the strategies that they use when undertaking their work. The first organization is the only one which engages in civil disobedience and protest; it also focuses strongly on policy advocacy work. The second group concentrates solely on policy advocacy work and on getting legislation passed that would address global warming and energy issues. This latter group, in fact, indicated that it spends the most time of any group, save one, engaged in policy advocacy work. (The other group who spends a large amount of time participating in advocacy work also directs its efforts to congregations as well.) Because people generally do not engage in protest or policy advocacy work to change ethics *per se*, but rather to address a particular issue, it makes sense that those groups who engage primarily in these types of activities would be classified as issues-based.

### **C. Philosophical Bases for Work – *How does ethics-based environmentalism look?***

#### Reasons for Founding

The faith-based environmental groups in the present study identify many different proximate reasons for their founding. A fair number of them (12 of 42) grew out of mostly informal conversations at various meetings and conferences, usually held around the subject of religion and the environment. Some organizations were created in response to a particular event, such as the 1980s farm crisis, an oil spill, the Iranian revolution in 1980 that caused a spike in oil prices, or the election of George W. Bush in 2000. A few were formed when their founder felt a “personal call” [director of ecumenical group] or “sense of vocation” [director of ecumenical group] to engage in environmental ministry. Still others were unable to continue doing similar work in other positions due to a lack of funding or organizational changes, and so decided to begin their own groups instead. By and large, however, the majority of groups came into existence because their founders did not view the faith community’s response to the environmental crisis, whether generally or within a specific denomination, to be nearly adequate, and they wished to change this situation.

For the people who created these groups, the connection between faith and the environment was obvious and had three dimensions. First, the faith-environment connection was clearly present in many of the doctrinal beliefs to which they and their denominations subscribed, and so their intent was not to introduce anything particularly new to the faith community. Instead, they wished to point out that human responsibility to protect the environment is evident throughout religious teachings in the same way as is the obligation to work towards peace and justice. As one respondent stated in discussing human’s duty to care for the earth,

“... the environment... is a basic thing in the Bible... there are two versions of creation; one of them said that man – humankind – should have dominion over creation, and we read it as *stewardship* (emphasis added) over creation which means that we take care of creation, we don’t rape it, we don’t use it for our own ends; we take care of it and see that it is maintained and used in a way that

provides for future generations... God created it, and it's holy, and it's a sacramental thing... it needs to be taken care of." [director of interfaith group]

The task then of the religious-environmental groups as they saw it was to increase awareness about the connections between faith and the environment within the religious community and "to (educate) about our mandate to be better stewards of the environment with the church" [director of Mainline Protestant group]. In doing so, it was hoped that religious institutions and their members would become more environmentally conscious and responsible, and that environmental stewardship would become an important priority within the faith community.

Second, many saw the environmental crisis as having strong moral dimensions and consequences. According to one interviewee, "... these issues are not scientific or political, but rather ethical and spiritual... (and) we aren't going to make sufficient progress *without* (emphasis added) the involvement of the religious community" [director of interfaith group]. Groups believe that religious institutions still have a moral voice that can be influential. Therefore, increasing awareness among people of faith about environmental problems, encouraging them to take leadership on the issue, and better organizing them to take pro-environmental actions was also seen as an important way to help bring about ethical change within the broader society.

Third, many of those who founded these groups felt alone in talking about their faith and its relationship to the ecological crisis. The religious community was inadequately addressing the environmental crisis, and this meant that few people in religious institutions were discussing it. Furthermore, a number of people who were working with secular environmental groups desired to engage in more spiritual conversations about the nature of their work, but did not find a place to do so within the mainstream community. Thus, many of the groups were also formed with the purpose of providing an arena for people to come together that would "support them emotionally, with energy, with resources, with the sharing of power, so there's not aloneness in that work... (to empower them)... so that more are called to the work" [director of interfaith group]. People wanted to connect with others who also wanted to do this work, not only because they were not "finding what they needed" [co-director of Mainline Protestant group] in their secular and religious affiliations, but also because there was strength in numbers. They believed that by helping to organize the faith community, they could enable it to more easily mobilize around environmental issues.

### Primary Philosophies

There is considerable overlap between the reasons given for founding a group and an organization's philosophies and goals. This is to be expected since people begin groups in order to accomplish certain objectives, and those goals are grounded in the particular philosophy of an organization. Thus, in discussing the primary philosophies motivating their work (please note that these responses were drawn both from interviews and from group mission and vision statements found on their websites), many groups again mentioned the responsibility of humans to care for the earth. They also discussed their belief that doing so is "integral to a life of faith" [director of interfaith group] as well as their desire to help the faith community become more

environmentally aware and responsible. However, they also elaborated on their beliefs and spoke of specific ways to elicit needed changes.

Philosophically, faith-based environmental groups tie God directly to creation and, in doing so, make it sacred. (This is different from saying that nature is sacred in and of itself. While some groups certainly believe this, others do not and view it as a sort of blasphemy.) For some groups, creation is a manifestation of God. For others it “reflects the integrity, grace, and beneficence of its Creator” [member of ecumenical group]. Nearly all of the groups believe that God loves the earth and demonstrates His love by “providing for all creatures” [member of ecumenical group]. As a result, caring for and protecting the environment is not only a fulfillment of duty, but it is an act of love and of honoring the Creator. The fact that humankind is responsible for degradation then results from the opposite of love. In fact, a few groups stated that it occurs because of arrogance, sin, and greed, and that people must seek repentance for what has happened and work towards change. Part of doing that is, again, to become aware of the connections between faith and the environment, but also to pray and be in “right relation to God” [director of interfaith group]. One director of an interfaith religious-environmental group describes her organizations’ primary goal as to,

“... help (people) understand that as a responsibility of their faith – the same way that love, peace, and justice is a main concern and mandate in every single mainstream religion – it’s also care for creation... it just has never been emphasized, and our goal is to make sure that people who call themselves people of faith understand that every one of their behaviors counts and every one of their behaviors effects another person... therefore, whatever we can do to help protect creation... we must do because we have a moral obligation (as religious people) to fulfill the call of one’s religion which is (again) love, peace, justice, and care for creation; we can’t sit by and watch creation be destroyed and be a person of faith – those two things don’t go together.” [director of interfaith group]

This quote highlights another common theme running throughout groups’ discussions of their philosophies: the need for action “based on good and justice and right behavior” [director of Mainline Protestant group]. While the degree to which faith-based environmental organizations are oriented to practical, hands-on action as opposed to education and consciousness-raising varies widely, none engage solely in these latter types of activities without at least connecting them to ideas for action.

Nearly all of the groups in the present research not only hope to increase awareness about the religion-environment connection and to educate about particular issues, but they also want to provide people with opportunities to translate that new knowledge into action, whether that be through lifestyle changes, political or other types advocacy and activism, or work on specific issues. A number of respondents feel that changing people’s attitudes is pointless unless you provide them with ways of acting, and they therefore seek to do this by offering ideas and resources, or by acting as role models themselves. In addition, three groups have the objective of making not only themselves, but also the faith community to which they belong, a positive role

model for the broader community. This latter goal was most frequently found among Jewish-environmental groups. As the founder and former director of one Jewish group said,

“I’m very proud of my heritage and I really feel like, in a sense, the Jews have been moral leaders of the world in a lot of ways, and I’m disappointed that we’re not ecological leaders now... I’m disappointed that Sweden is the “light unto the nations” and not the Jews, and so I feel like that’s one of the things I would like to change – that we are perceived as the innovators and the creators of the next economy that’s not petroleum based (and not) so destructive...”

The idea of community is also common among group philosophies and goals. Again, many hope to build communities of like-minded faith-based environmental activists so as to provide support for each other and increase their collective influence. However, they also believe that the very notion of “community” and “neighbor” must be expanded to include community with God, with all peoples, and with other species on earth. The interconnectedness of all life and of all people is very apparent to these groups. It is instrumental in their thinking about how to approach environmental problems. If all are connected, it is reasoned that what one person does influences another’s life, even if they never meet. Since being a person of faith means that “caring for the least of these” [director of ecumenical group] is essential (and “least of these” usually includes those without voices, such as the poor, marginalized, and other species), caring for creation also becomes a matter of justice.

Indeed, justice, whether economic, intergenerational, or otherwise, is a significant theme of the faith-based environmental movement, and it is reflected strongly in its philosophies and goals. (Nearly half of the groups in the current study selected 8, 9, or 10 on a 10-point Likert scale inquiring into the degree to which they emphasize the connection between social justice and environmental problems.) In reflecting the thinking of many organizations, one respondent describes her group as,

“... trying to encourage people to have more inclusive language about what they care about, so that when they say, “we care,” that the healthy planet is part of that... that’s the big challenge - to expand their basic thinking to think... “I’m working to feed the homeless, and if I work to feed the homeless, part of my basic thinking should be and I care about the quality of the food that they get, and if I care about the quality of the food, I care about the quality of the soils and the water,” and we want people to expand the paradigm...” [co-director of Mainline Protestant group]

and

“... all of life on earth (is interconnected)... if we’re working for peace and justice, we must also work for a healthy planet... you can’t have peace without a planet, you can’t have justice for people without healthy air, clean water, healthy forests... we can’t live without trees, so really the purpose is to broaden

the environment... to be the planet, and we're concerned about all of the health of the planet and the safety of humans as well; it ties together social justice concerns... we have a leaflet called, "Peace on Earth, Peace with Earth," and I think that kind of says it well." [co-director of Mainline Protestant group]

In other words, environmental degradation goes hand in hand with social justice problems. It is useless to try and solve the one without the other since they are seen to be intimately connected. For instance, all agree that efforts should continue to be directed toward eliminating hunger and poverty. However, in the end, such work might be futile because if environmental problems remain unsolved, there may not be enough food to feed everyone on earth anyway. As one respondent said,

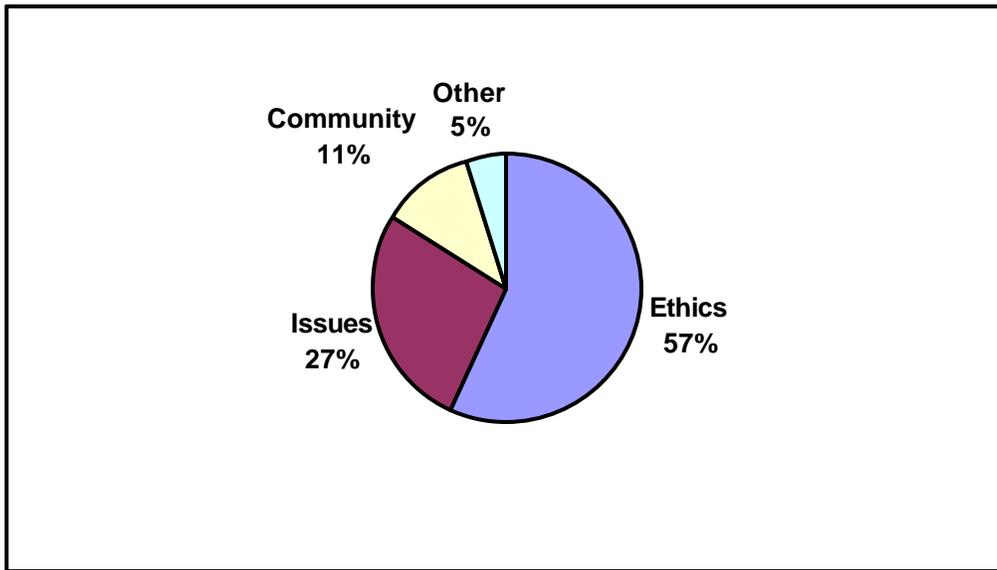
"I think (the environment) is the biggest social justice issue facing us... we just have to get the message out that there aren't going to be any souls (read people) to save... unless we save the human race which is what climate change is destroying..." [director of interfaith group]

### Primary Goals

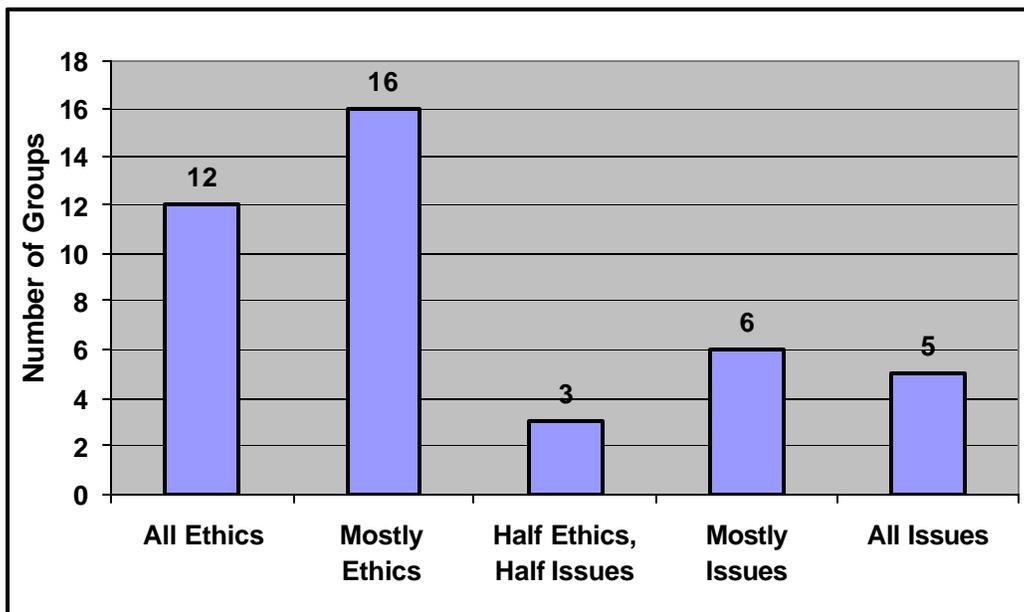
Most of the primary goals that groups have set for themselves concern bringing about broad and long-term changes in worldview and behavior or, in other words, ethics. Fewer of them have to do with achieving success with respect to specific environmental issues, such as energy or water, although a fair number do talk more generally about accomplishing goals related to issues-based work, such as changing environmental policy. On average, 57% of the goals being pursued by the religious-environmental groups in the present study are ethics-based, 27% are issues-based, and 11% deal with community building (see Figure 25). (These percentages were calculated by coding answers to an open-ended question in which each group was asked to name its top three goals or the top three changes it hoped to bring about through its activities. Using the criteria for ethics-based and issues-based work outlined in the Research Design and Methodology section of my thesis, I coded the goals accordingly. Community building was a consistent theme in addition to ethics and issues-based work and thus was added to the coding system.)

It is helpful to look more closely at the breakdown of ethics-based and issues-based goals as the percentages presented in Figure 25 only demonstrate generally that groups tend to focus their goals more on ethic-based work. Figure 26 also indicates that the number of organizations whose goals are solely ethics-based is nearly two and one half times greater than groups whose goals are completely issues-based, and none of the groups focus their objectives only on community building. This pattern holds true across the percentages of goals mentioned and clearly shows the importance given by faith-based environmental groups to bringing about change in values and behavior.

**Figure 25. Percentage of goals by ethics-based, issues-based, community building, and other categories.**



**Figure 26. Number of groups by ethics-based and issues-based goals.**



*Note:* In addition to stating goals that were clearly ethics-based and/or issues-based, eight groups also mentioned goals having to do with community building (n = 6), or something else not related to ethics, issues, or community building goals (n = 3). (One of these eight groups mentioned goals that were both community building and other.) None of these groups focus their objectives solely on building community, however.

## Activities and Issues

### *Activities - Trends*

In order to learn about the various activities that faith-based environmental groups engage in while doing ethics-based and issues-based work, participants were asked to describe the primary strategies they use, or have used in the past, to accomplish each of their top three goals. While the structure of this question does not necessarily elicit all of the different activities engaged in by the organizations, 76% of interviewees indicated that they were able to concentrate most or at least half of their efforts towards achieving these objectives (62% said they concentrated mostly on those goals; 14% stated they did so at least half of the time). Thus, we can assume that for many of the groups, the activities that they described are those in which they primarily engage.<sup>20</sup>

All groups participate in multiple activities when working to accomplish their objectives. According to one interviewee who reflects the views of nearly all of the groups,

“... (there) isn’t any one single strategy that will work in all cases and so lots of strategies and coming at it from different directions is what we need, and different congregations respond differently just like different individuals do, and so you keep trying until you get something that works and then you gradually over time start to see changes...” [director of Liberal Nontraditional group]

Many of the activities that groups utilize in their work mirror those that they make use of when collaborating with other faith-based and secular environmental groups. For instance, a full 66% of the groups host conferences, retreats, workshops, events, meetings, and trainings in order to provide educational and networking opportunities to others. Thirty-six percent engage in policy advocacy work, such as lobbying, talking more generally with legislators, testifying at public hearings, participating in letter writing campaigns, and sending political action alerts via e-mail to their constituents. Seventeen percent disseminate materials and resources of other organizations.

The activities of religious-environmental groups reflect the philosophies in which they ground their work as well. Again, the emphasis on helping people to make the connection between their faith and the environment is apparent in the number of groups who create educational and/or theological resources (55%) aimed at highlighting this relationship and its practical consequences. Some groups try to demonstrate this connection through “education by example,” [director of Evangelical Protestant group] in which they act as role models by holding events that serve fair-

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<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that a few interviewees made reference to taking part in activities that do fall under the categories of activities discussed below at other times during the interview. Such references were not included in the analysis because they were not made specifically in response to the question described above, making it impossible to determine how often they made use of the activity and for what reason. In addition, they were not included in order to maintain consistency of results.

trade coffee, locally grown foods, or utilize biodegradable silverware, for instance (10%). Many groups (50%) also seek out opportunities or are asked to speak to various audiences, often in congregations, about religion and the environment. This provides an additional venue for them to discuss these connections and their everyday ethical implications for behavioral choices. Press conferences, media engagement, and the publishing of articles in magazines and newspapers further work to spread this message (24%). Newsletters and general e-mail communications (26%) enable organizations to delve in depth into morally relevant questions of faith and environment, and to discuss particular environmental issues of importance, and websites also serve a similar purpose (100%).

One ecumenical group operating locally along the Pacific Coast represents well the diversity of activities of faith-based environmental groups, taking part in nearly all of those mentioned above and below (see Group Profile 3). For instance, this group “preaches and teaches” [staff member of ecumenical group] at local congregations and conferences, creates worship services as well as publications highlighting transportation, food and homecare choices, posts information on-line, publishes a newsletter, hosts meetings to support people working in congregations, sponsors field trips to natural places, and provides opportunities for individuals to engage in hands-on activities, such as river restoration projects.<sup>21</sup>

<b>PROFILE GROUP THREE</b>	
<b><i>Type of Group:</i></b>	Ecumenical
<b><i>Date Founded:</i></b>	1992
<b><i>Location:</i></b>	Pacific
<b><i>Scope of Work:</i></b>	Local with around 100 congregations participating
<b><i>Number of Funding Sources:</i></b>	4 (Members, 75%; Private Environmental Foundations, 15%; Religious Organizations, 5%; Program Sales, 5%)
<b><i>Annual Budget:</i></b>	\$231,000.00
<b><i>Number of Paid Staff:</i></b>	3 (two full-time, including the director, and one part-time)
<b><i>Number of Regular Volunteers:</i></b>	4
<b><i>Non-Profit Status:</i></b>	Yes
<b><i>Primary Area of Engagement:</i></b>	Ethics-Based Work

<sup>21</sup> Of course, one reason why this particular group may be able to promote so many different activities might have to do with the fact that its annual budget is considerably higher than those of most of the other organizations in the present study.

In all of the activities of faith-based environmental groups nearly equal attention is paid to providing both theological and practical resources for religious institutions and individuals to use, again echoing the movement's belief in the importance of both action and education, and of issues and ethics. The more spiritual aspects of groups' goals are achieved through the development and dissemination of worship services, prayers, liturgies, and study guides. People are also given ideas for how to engage in practical action such as "greening" their congregations and homes through daily activities such as energy and water conservation, recycling, food and transportation choices, and gardening, for example. In addition, many groups provide information about environmentally important policies at all levels of government, or opportunities to directly participate in policy advocacy efforts.

Activities aimed at building community are also important in the faith-based environmental movement for reasons already discussed. Some groups attempt to provide a safe space for individuals to come together and simply share ideas. Others view their events as not only improving education, but also building community by assembling different people together, many of whom might not otherwise meet. A number of organizations maintain links on their websites to other groups, connect people to others informally through e-mail or by telephone, or attempt to establish contact themselves with congregants, clergy, or others whom they would like to support or recruit for this work, frequently at the local level.

In addition to the above, religious-environmental organizations often provide hands-on projects in which groups of people, usually within a congregation or community, can participate in environmentally friendly activities (40%). The strategy here is to engage people in activities that might introduce them to new ways of thinking which may then translate to broader changes throughout their lives. Activities include conducting international learning tours to show people first-hand how social justice and environmental concerns are related, bike rides to raise funds for other organizations, and conservation and restoration work. Generally, however, the majority of projects seem to fall into three categories: 1) "greening" religious institutions (n = 4); 2) energy (n = 3); and 3) food issues (n = 6).

The former of these types of projects are usually named something similar to the "Green Sanctuary Program" or "Greening Synagogues Program," but other names exist as well. These programs are typically very holistic in nature, often attempting to address several aspects of congregational life including worship, grounds and building maintenance, education, and to a lesser extent, engagement in policy advocacy. Groups often provide resources applicable to each of these different areas, so that religious-environmental education becomes incorporated into regular adult education programs, for example. In addition, there are frequently energy audits conducted of religious institution buildings and suggestions made for conservation, the purchase of renewable energy, or the installation of solar panels, for instance.

A number of these programs attempt to cover nearly every aspect of congregational life, the idea being that congregations have a significant environmental footprint that is able to be reduced, that they can serve as models for other institutions, and that their individual members can learn from the changes and implement them in their own homes. (It should be noted that many groups who do not have hands-on

projects also endeavor to integrate environmental changes, and the religious values and ethics that correspond to them, throughout all areas of religious life.) Those projects which are built around issues of energy undertake similar work as the “green” programs, but confine their efforts primarily to energy reduction and to changing the sources of energy used in congregations.

The religious-environmental organizations who manage projects related to food vary in the way in which they do this. For most of them, this is a new issue that has only recently been taken up. However, since one respondent noted, “... food choices according to the Union of Concerned Scientists have the second largest detrimental effects on the environment when you look at things you do daily...” [director of interfaith group] work in this area will likely increase. This is especially the case because many groups also see moral and social justice dimensions to food choices that relate to how food is raised, who has raised it, and what the implications are for certain communities if current food production and distribution systems remain in place. As a result, a number of groups have begun, for example, to connect congregations with local farmers through Community Supported Agricultural initiatives, to hold farmers’ markets in congregations, to house organic food distribution centers, or to encourage people to purchase local foods from small farmers. A number of these types of activities are also done in conjunction with discussion or resources that discuss the importance of such projects from a religious and ethical perspective.

#### *Activities - Dissimilarities*

While it is certainly important to examine trends in strategies, it also proves interesting at times to consider some of the strategies that are the least used by a movement. Results of the present research were surprising in that they showed only four groups advocating for more environmental involvement within a formal denominational organization. Given the widespread agreement within the faith-based environmental community that religious institutions do not yet understand the relationship between faith and the environment, and the consensus that this lack of comprehension impedes groups from receiving adequate funding, it is interesting that so few groups direct their efforts to advocacy work within the official organizational structures of denominations. A number of groups did discuss grassroots campaigning as important, so this finding may indicate a penchant for bottom-up as opposed to top-down organizing within the movement. Of course, much of the work of the groups is directed towards recruiting clergy, but in general it seems that the leaders of religious institutions targeted by faith-based environmental groups are those who connect most directly with congregants rather than those who operate higher up in the denominational hierarchy.

Another interesting finding is that only one group out of forty-two uses tactics of civil disobedience, public witness, and demonstrating. This is not surprising in that some interviewees have suggested that religious institutions, no matter what their ideology, generally tend to be conservative in behavior, risk-averse, and slow to change. There is also a history of ambivalence among people of faith about participating in politics, and it seems as if civil disobedience and demonstrating are used most often to protest governmental actions, thus associating the two in the minds

of many (Fowler, 1995: 173). As a result, there may be few within the religious community who feel at ease engaging in these types of activities. This may be true as well for faith-based environmentalists who, even if perhaps more progressive in certain ways than others in their religious communities, may also be reticent to engage in such tactics. They may either feel uncomfortable doing so, or they may be concerned about possibly alienating their constituencies.

On the other hand, it is widely agreed upon that the larger economic and political structures in society must change if the environmental crisis is to be solved. Thus, it is interesting that a movement which seeks to alter broad societal structures works primarily within those very structures in order to do so, rather than engaging in more confrontational tactics that would perhaps underscore their point more overtly. This may be because there is ambivalence about engaging in politics. There is also little protest within the larger environmental movement in which faith-based environmentalists are a part (Fowler, 1995: 173). Still, the faith community has a strong history of engaging in civil disobedience and public witness - the Quakers during World War II, and Black Protestants and others during the Civil Rights era, for instance - and so there is certainly precedent for such engagement (Fowler, 1995:173; Harris, 1999). Exploration of why there is so little civil disobedience and protest is an interesting area for further research.

### *Issues*

While the faith-based environmental movement is typified primarily by its emphasis on and engagement in ethics-based work, it nonetheless recognizes the importance of issues-based work and does engage in it, although to a much lesser extent (see discussion below regarding the tradeoffs involved in engaging in ethics-based versus issues-based work). When religious-environmental groups do undertake work aimed at addressing specific problems, they address a wide variety of issues that are local, national, and global in scope. They tackle urban, suburban, and rural environmental problems, and the issues on which they work correspond to their perceived urgency about the need to solve any particular problem. In general, religious-environmental groups are both proactive and reactive when it comes to deciding on which issues they ought to focus.

The issues on which the religious-environmental groups most commonly work were ascertained by open-ended questions inquiring into the types of work on which they collaborated with other faith-based and secular environmental groups, what their top three goals were, and what strategies they used to accomplish these objectives. No specific question was asked of respondents about the primary issues to which they direct their efforts, but since collaboration is so frequent and instrumental to success given the limited capacities of many groups, it is likely that they partner with other organizations on the issues that are of most importance to them. In addition, issues that were mentioned when listing their top three goals are clearly of priority to these groups. Nonetheless, it should be noted that these results may not comprehensively reflect all of the issues and the extent to which they are targeted by the faith-based environmental groups in the present study.

By and large, global climate change and energy use are the most frequently worked upon issues in the faith-based environmental movement. These two issues, for instance, account for half of those worked upon by one interfaith group located in the Northeast, accurately reflecting the movement's prioritizing of them (see Group Profile 4).<sup>22</sup> That the movement focuses so strongly on global climate change results from the widespread agreement that it is the most urgent environmental problem of our time given its implications for the planet as well as for humankind. Energy use is almost inseparable from the climate crisis in the United States as our use of energy is largely responsible for the problem. In talking about climate change, a director of one interfaith group stated,

“...we just decided we had spent too much time talking about the problems facing creation and we weren't doing anything about it; it was time to find one particular issue, if you will, and work on it, so that's when we got this idea that global warming and climate change were the worst threat to humankind and creation that existed and that... it was time to do something about it” [director interfaith group]

Another interviewee claimed,

“... it was apparent to us that climate change was the crux issue in the environment... Larry Rasmusson [a Catholic theologian] lives out here now and two years ago he gave the keynote at the... banquet and he said, “Climate change is the most profound moral issue we face,” and that's pretty heavy...” [former director interfaith group]

With respect to problems having to do specifically with energy use, another respondent made a particularly poignant statement,

“I think we will discover some day that our dependency on fossil fuel is as immoral as our dependency on slave labor was... Historically, we look back and say, “Well, that was just immoral, to capture people and make them work for us,” and I think we're going to look back and say it was immoral of us to be so entirely dependent on fossil fuel for energy when there are other resources, and there is alternative energy, and we don't have to be destroying the planet.”

Climate change and energy use are therefore seen not only as the most important practical problems of the modern day, but also as having deep ethical implications as well.

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<sup>22</sup> Although this group is somewhat different from the others in the study in that it also works frequently on issues related to environmental justice. Environmental justice was one of the less frequently mentioned issues of concern in the present study.

#### GROUP PROFILE FOUR

<i>Type of Group:</i>	Interfaith
<i>Date Founded:</i>	1997
<i>Location:</i>	Northeast
<i>Scope of Work:</i>	Statewide
<i>Number of Funding Sources</i>	4 (Other Private Foundations, besides faith-based and environmental, 70%; Other Faith-Based Environmental Groups, 13%; Religious Organizations, 8.5%; Individuals, 8.5%)
<i>Annual Budget:</i>	\$85,000.00
<i>Number of Paid Staff:</i>	1 (one part-time director)
<i>Number of Regular Volunteers:</i>	6
<i>Non-Profit Status:</i>	Yes
<i>Issues of Concern:</i>	1) Energy 2) Global Climate Change 3) Clean Water 4) Environmental Justice
<i>Primary Area of Engagement:</i>	Ethics-Based Work

Human consumption is also an important topic of interest and falls halfway between climate change and energy, and endangered species, land use, and pollution, in the number of groups who work on this issue. The other nine areas most often mentioned include sustainable agriculture, drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, deforestation, biodiversity, environmental justice, water issues, toxics reduction, river restoration, transportation, and international trade (see Figure 27). There are three additional issues which were only mentioned once and which do not fall readily into one of the above categories, but which reflect the diversity of topics in which the movement is actively interested in and engaged. They are listed as “Other” in Figure 27.

The findings of the present research are both similar to and different from those of Feldman and Moseley (2003) in their study on faith-based environmental initiatives in Appalachia (see Figure 28 for comparison of their results). Like them, the present research found most and nearly equal activity surrounding the issues of global climate change and energy use. Interestingly enough, however, there was much more activity on issues of environmental justice and overpopulation in Feldman and Moseley’s

(2003) study than there was in the current research. In fact, environmental justice was only explicitly mentioned once and overpopulation was never brought up in my interviews. The categories of “land use” and “water” were likewise not common to both studies. It should be noted here, however, that Feldman and Moseley (2003) do not cite what issues were included in each of their categories, so I may be considering some issues as separate categories that they did not. Nonetheless, although the following direct comparisons should be interpreted with caution, there are theoretical and practical explanations for these disparities which seem logical despite any potential differences in categorical scheme.<sup>23</sup>

### *Faith-Based Environmental Groups, Politics, and Issues*

Of the thirty-three groups who were in existence prior to the 2000 presidential election, 24% indicated that the focus of and the strategies used in their work differed depending on which political party was in office, primarily at the national level. The explanations, however, of how their work differed point more to a problem with the current administration than with the Republican party per se. One interviewee reflected the sentiment of a number of groups in saying,

“...with the Bush administration, we learned that the positions of both White Houses never reflected their inner attitudes... with the Clinton administration, the door was always open to religion, but the Bush administration, which mouths a superficial concern for religion in fact has closed the door.”

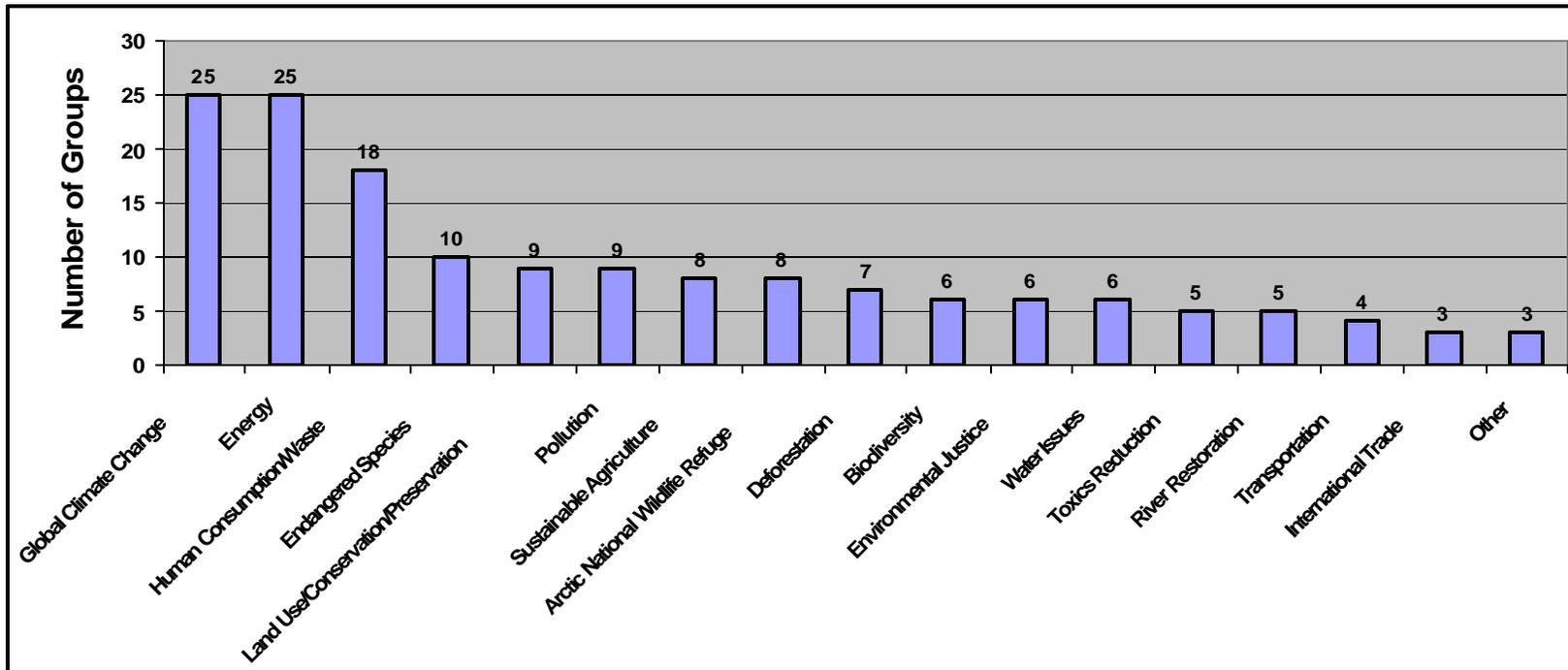
To be sure, there were a couple of respondents who felt that Democrats were more environmentally friendly in general than were their Republican counterparts. Most believe, though, that the examples of pro-environment Republicans provide evidence

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<sup>23</sup> First, Feldman and Moseley’s (2003) study was limited to Appalachia which has a history of poverty, exploitation, and environmental degradation unique from other regions. As such, it makes sense that faith-based environmental initiatives entirely in that region would more heavily focus on environmental justice issues than might those elsewhere.

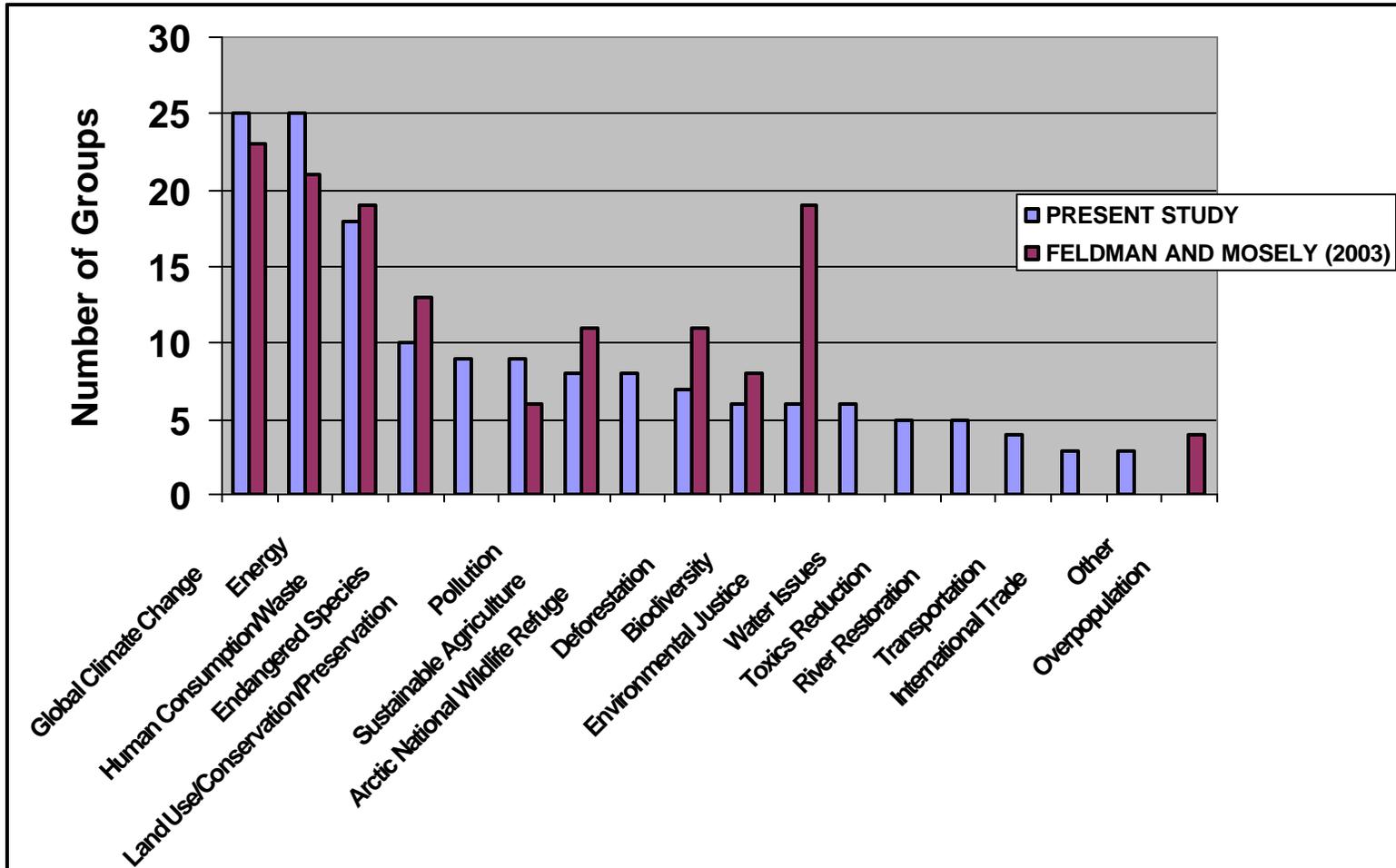
Secondly, the difference in the focus of groups between studies might represent changes in national policy. At the time of their study, drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was not under as great a threat from the federal government, for instance. There has also been much more concern recently raised about the leasing of federal lands to exploitive industries, and water quality and the potential privatization of water, for instance. Thus, the fact that groups in the present study are mobilizing around these issues more than similar groups were in Feldman and Moseley’s (2003) might simply represent the reactivity of the movement to problems as they occur. (Although one would think by this rationale that there should have been more mention of deforestation as an issue in the present study given that that the roadless rule has been severely threatened and many attempts made to sell forest tracts to lumber companies within the past few years. Likewise, the Endangered Species Act has been in danger of dismantling in recent months. Statistically speaking, however, there is no significant difference between the number of groups working on these issues in Feldman and Moseley’s (2003) study and the present research. There are, however, statistically significant differences in the categories of environmental justice, ANWR, land use, and water issues at the  $p < 0.05$  significance level.)

**Figure 27. Number of groups by issue engagement.**



*Note:* **Global Climate Change** includes power plant/greenhouse gas emissions (2); **Energy Use** includes sustainable, renewable, and alternative energy, and energy conservation; **Human Consumption/Waste** includes green buildings (8); paper use (2); smart growth (2); water use and conservation (2); growth management (1); recycling (1); computer recycling (1); waste reduction (1); **Endangered Species** includes general endangered species and Endangered Species Act (8) and endangered salmon in Northwest U.S. (2); **Land Conservation and Land Use** includes wilderness (5); public lands (3); land conservation (2); land protection and preservation (1); mountaintop removal (1); **Pollution** includes water (4); general (2); air (2); idling (1); **Sustainable Agriculture** includes GMOs (3); Community Supported Agriculture programs (2); local farms (1); antibiotic resistance of farm animals (1); CAFOs (1); multinational agribusiness accountability (1); urban agriculture/community gardens (1); **Deforestation** includes roadless rule (2); public forests (1); **Environmental Justice** includes food security (3); pesticide exposure and farm workers (1); brownfields (1); asthma (1); health and justice (1); **Water Issues** includes supply and privatization (1); **Toxics Reduction** includes toxic flame retardants (2); toxics in cosmetics (1); pesticide reduction (1); **Transportation** includes clean cars (1); **International Trade** includes fair-trade products (2); **Other** includes socially responsible investing (1); oil transportation (1); food safety and public health (1)

Figure 28. Comparison of number of groups in present study with number of groups in Feldman and Moseley's (2003) study by issue engagement.



*Note:* Number of groups in Feldman and Moseley's (2003) study were adjusted in order to equate sample sizes with the present study. Feldman and Moseley's (2003) original category "Air Quality" was included under the category "Pollution" in the present study.

that any change in the focus of their work has occurred because of the person in office rather than the political party with whom he or she is affiliated.

Some of the ways in which the foci of groups' work have altered since the 2000 presidential election include: 1) they now concentrate more of their work at the local and state levels where work has begun in lieu of federal action on issues such as global warming; 2) their members are more frustrated and angry, and they have an increased sense of urgency, so that they have become more politically active than before, and this has influenced the work and success of the groups; 3) they must respond to the administration's skillful use of values-based language by pointing out that there are other moral and ethical values to consider than those the White House tends to promote; and 4) they must work to distance themselves from the administration because it is so strongly associated with faith-based efforts that it undermines the ethics that they are trying to promote.

These findings are important because they provide some of the broader context in which religious-environmental groups find themselves making decisions about the issues towards which to direct their energies. Most relevant to the current discussion is the finding that many of these groups state that they have been on the defensive since the George W. Bush administration took office. Although several believe that they must always be proactive and “(watch) out pretty hard” [director of interfaith group] no matter who is in office, many see the present administration as attempting to roll back a number of key environmental statutes that have been the cornerstone of the American environmental movement for many years. As such, they have had to turn their focus somewhat from other issues that may have more long-term consequence for change, such as overpopulation, in an attempt to “keep things from going backwards” [director of interfaith group] and to safeguard old laws such as the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act, or to protect the ANWR or roadless areas in national forests. According to one interviewee, the problem is that,

“there’s just a disproportionate emphasis on defense... this is not what we should be doing; it’s not just defense, but a constriction of imagination... it’s like living in crisis, and it makes people bitter and undernourished and sort of burnt out...” [director of interfaith group]

One group formed in 2001, after the first election of George W. Bush, works primarily on these very types of issues: the ANWR, the Endangered Species Act, forest protection, and global climate change (see Group Profile 5). That this particular organization is directing its issues-based efforts to protect legislation threatened by the Bush administration is especially interesting given that its constituents, the Evangelical Christian community, make up a sizeable portion of the Republican voting base.

### GROUP PROFILE FIVE

<i>Type of Group:</i>	Primarily targets the Evangelical Christian community
<i>Date Founded:</i>	2001
<i>Location:</i>	Pacific
<i>Scope of Work:</i>	National
<i>Number of Funding</i>	3 (Other Private Foundations besides Faith-Based and Environmental, 70%; Individuals, 20%; Merchandise and Speaking Fees, 10%)
<i>Annual Budget:</i>	historically \$25,000.00/year; most recent year: \$50,000.00
<i>Number of Paid Staff:</i>	3 (one full-time director and two part-time)
<i>Number of Regular Volunteers:</i>	15
<i>Non-Profit Status:</i>	Yes
<i>Primary Area of Engagement:</i>	Ethics-Based Work

#### **D. Tradeoffs between Ethics-Based and Issues-Based Work – *What are the challenges to pursuing an ethics-based environmentalism?***

The benefits and drawbacks to doing ethics-based work and issues-based work seem very clear to faith-based environmental groups. Ethics-based work is an essential part of what nearly all of these groups do, in part because they see changing values as an important realm of the faith-based community of which they are a part, but also because they do not believe that lasting, broad, and deep change is possible otherwise. One interviewee, in discussing her group's work, stated,

“... we emphasize values and behavior because it has longer lasting implications and when people are motivated to think about things through the lens of religion or ethics, they'll change their own behaviors in a much longer lasting way and it really won't be up for... it can withstand pressure in the long run when people are like, “Oh wait, if I'm really to love my neighbors as myself,” then that impacts their (entire) lifestyle and their politics and what they talk about with their friends and family and co-workers, so we think (ethics) has further ramifications.” [staff member of interfaith group]

Many interviewees invoked the word “heart” when discussing ethics and believe that true transformation is only possible with a “change of heart.” [two directors of ecumenical groups;

director of interfaith group]. The hope is that changing hearts will “lead to change in minds” [director of interfaith group] which will result in deep-seeded behavioral changes that can be sustained over time and that will be “harder to uproot” [director of interfaith group] in the future. The “payoff,” [member of Mainline Protestant group] so to speak, is greater with changing ethics than it is with focusing on specific issues. In addition, if groups succeed in altering values, there will be less of a need to address every individual issue as it arises since the ethic for how to engage with environmental problems will already be in place. According to one respondent,

“(with ethics you have a framework that gives you a sense for how to deal with issues as they come up)... if you always know (that) you’re going to act in a particular way in relation to an environmental problem, then when a problem comes up... as a society we know how to deal with it, whereas if you are always relating to it like, “now we have to deal with global warming, now we have to deal with endangered species, now we...” then the next environmental problem becomes its own next big fight.” [director of Jewish group]

In fact, if there was true and widespread establishment of a real environmental ethic that was simply integrated into how people live and think, then environmental problems as they are currently construed might even cease to exist. Another interviewee said,

“... so if this (work) were really successful, the word (“environmental”) would disappear, the word “creation care” would disappear because it would just be how you did it...” [director of interfaith group]

In other words, an environmental ethic could be so transformative and permanent in changing how humans deal with the natural world and with each other that there might no longer be a need for the environmental movement at all.

Of course, the obstacles for creating such an ethic are numerous and significant. Perhaps most difficult among the various existing challenges is that working to develop an environmental ethic is “countercultural... and goes against... the norm” [member of Christian group] that currently exists both in religious institutions and in society as a whole. With respect to the faith community, a few people mentioned the notion of “blessing” as it relates to the accumulation of material goods, and the idea of the Rapture, as barriers to the promotion of ethics. One interviewee, in talking about these beliefs, said that some people think,

“I want to get as rich as I can, and I justify it by saying it’s God’s blessings to me, and it doesn’t really matter if the earth suffers, because it’s going to burn up,’ so they’re not destroying the earth to bring God back, but since God’s coming back soon, and the earth will be destroyed (anyway) – that’s that whole Left Behind Rapture – it becomes an escape clause...” [director of Evangelical Protestant group]

To be clear, the large majority of faith-based environmental groups did not mention this problem, and most who did have never directly encountered anyone who had actually held these beliefs. Nonetheless, as Fowler (1995) has pointed out, there is a strong minority of individuals in the United States who espouse similar beliefs, and they do pose problems by endorsing an

alternative ethic within the faith community that is contrary to that promoted by the religious-environmental movement.

Besides different ethics in the religious community, there are other more widely held ethics within the larger society that are clearly at odds with the ethical stance of the faith-based environmental movement. Several participants in the present study discussed greed and arrogance as defining characteristics of the culture. The values that accompany traits such as greed and arrogance include consumerism, individualism, and competitiveness, and they are viewed as being more deeply ingrained than are environmental ethics which are seen to have more morally correct attributes. For instance, one participant expressed his beliefs as follows:

“I think that basically our violent society is greedy and highly, highly competitive, and nobody ever talks about it. I do a lot of marriage counseling with folks... it’s basically competition. People are always trying to do better, trying to get more – it’s never enough. What I tie it all to is... a new world religion (that) I call “spiritual consumerism.” Everything, absolutely everything is oriented towards (people finding temporary and transient satisfaction in going to the mall). If indeed we have another religion that’s worldwide, (this is it), and that’s what we’re struggling against.” [former director of interfaith group]

In other words, it is felt that society as a whole does not support the ethics-based work of faith-based environmental groups. Indeed, its values work against their efforts and serve to make this type of work particularly difficult. Because of this, ethics-based work takes much longer to accomplish than does issues-based work which tends to focus on short-term problems. Likewise, the impact of the work may not be seen for many decades and is more difficult to measure than issues-based work. While it is easy to see obvious “wins” with issues-based work that result when a forest is protected, legislation signed, or a species saved, for example, it is more difficult to measure how many hearts have been changed via ethics-based work. As one interviewee noted, “You can spend all day talking about ethics and not really be sure what you’ve accomplished” [director of Evangelical Protestant group] because there are “no benchmarks of success” [director of interfaith group].

In addition, because working on ethics requires a great deal of time, it necessarily requires more labor overall than does issues-based work. The longer time frame, greater amount of overall energy required, and paucity of tangible outcomes can make ethics-based work seem overwhelming and exhausting at times. Some groups also believe that too great a focus on ethics-based work, which can be vague and less concrete than issues-based work, can lead to too much talk and not enough action, particularly when there are environmental problems that are urgent enough to require immediate attention.

This then is the primary reason why faith-based environmental groups believe that it is important to engage in issues-based work: through it one can have a more immediate direct impact on environmental problems that might be too serious to wait until the ethics of individuals and society change. One respondent compared the situation to the Civil Rights movement,

“... if we’d waited until there was no prejudice in anybody’s hearts, we wouldn’t have any civil rights laws... we have to do something... the band aid versus the permanent

solution, so we have to put the tourniquet on and then deal with the deeper issues...” [co-director of Mainline Protestant group]

Besides this, efforts around issues are much more “concrete, identifiable and (can make it) easier for people to understand,... care about,” [director of interfaith group] and become involved in environmental activities. Issues-based work also tends to be more galvanizing, energizing people to act, perhaps because it appears to be so strongly associated with politics. Politics might incite people to action maybe more so than mere education which seems to be the primary mode of ethics-based work. Issues-based work also encourages collaboration and contact with other groups and people who may not have otherwise met and reduces the tension in religious-secular partnerships that tends to arise when faith-based groups want to focus more heavily on ethics (see section on Problems with Religious-Secular Environmental Collaborations above for a more detailed discussion of this). In addition, work on issues is more easily funded, especially by secular environmental groups and foundations, as noted below. This is because the results of issues-based work are more easily quantified than are those of ethics-based work, and because “foundations aren’t comfortable with (ethics-based work)” [director of interfaith group].

Interestingly enough, religious-environmental groups who do tend towards more campaign type work often do so in partnership with secular organizations, and they are financially supported by the environmental community more often than groups who do less issues-based work. Of the seventeen groups who receive funding from private environmental foundations or secular environmental groups, 65% of them participate in some kind of environmental campaign or issues-based activity. Of the twenty other groups who also collaborate with secular environmental groups at least rarely, but who receive no funding from these types of organizations, only two of them engage in issues-based work. The others collaborate in less campaign-oriented ways with secular groups, such as sharing resources or attending each other’s events, but they do not organize in the same way around a particular environmental issue as do most of those who receive funding from the mainstream environmental movement. This finding gives credence to the impression that environmental groups are less interested in funding ethics-based work than they are in funding issues-based work.

Despite issues-based work being more easily funded, there are some important drawbacks to engaging in this type of work. Because it concerns itself primarily with specific environmental problems, issues-based work is more “piecemeal” [member of ecumenical group; director of interfaith group] and less “whole cloth” [director of interfaith group] in that it fails to address the “root causes” [member of ecumenical group; co-director of Mainline Protestant group] of the environmental crisis. It also fails to speak to the beliefs that people hold about their relationship to the natural world to the same extent that ethics-based work does. One participant described issues-based work by drawing on an analogy used by the author and philosopher, Daniel Quinn,

“the issue work is putting sticks in the mud of a stream that may slow it down or shift it side to side a little bit, but it’s never going to change the direction the river is flowing.” [director of ecumenical group]

Stated differently, if systemic problems in individual behavior and societal structures are not addressed, then the environmental movement can never move beyond issue-by-issue work.

In addition, the changes that do result from issues-based work are more short-term and less permanent than are the ones that arise out of ethics-based work. One interviewee discussed the fact that the Endangered Species Act has been threatened by every new Congress since its passing, so that the environmental community has had to mobilize to save it every several years. If the ethics of the culture were different, she argues, then the Act would be secure. There would be no need to organize repeatedly around that particular issue because everyone would know that protecting endangered species is the ethically correct thing to do. As it stands now, however, the status of certain issues requires constant monitoring since they are often subject to change. This fact, as well as having to continually work on new and complex issues, can cause fatigue in people just as the long-term nature of ethics-based work can lead to exhaustion. The difference, according to some respondents, is that changed ethics can help to sustain an individual engaged in issues-based work, but the converse is less true.

Finally, while issues-based work may bring together people to work on a specific campaign, those individuals probably hold similar values, and they are likely organizing on one particular side of an issue. However, not all other stakeholders concerned with an issue are likeminded, and so issues-based work can actually be divisive and result in great controversy. This is less the case with ethics-based work because the core principles espoused in that approach – community, love, justice, and peace – are generally agreed upon and therefore “harder for people to debate” [director of Evangelical Protestant group]. What *is* controversial about these principles is how they relate to people’s relationships to the environment, and how that relationship should be translated through their behavior. While ethics-based work is also potentially divisive within the faith community, there is more commonality around these core values than there is around whether or not a dam ought to be built on a particular river, for instance.

It is fairly evident that ethics-based and issues-based work each have their strengths and their weaknesses and that they do, in fact, seem to complement each other. This is probably why the majority of respondents indicate they believe that both ethics-based and issues-based work are essential to bringing about lasting environmental change. In talking about the complementary nature of the two kinds of work, one respondent said,

“(Why do ethics?)... because religion is concerned with values and the translation of those values into practice involves ethics... (but) you have to have issues because that’s how you ground your work... you can’t do one divorced from the other.” [director of interfaith group]

Another stated,

“When people preach and teach, a lot of words are exchanged but things don’t get done; when people focus on the physical doing to address the issues, sometimes the meaning and the heart and the significance get lost, and so they really ought to be integrated.” [director of ecumenical group]

In other words, while it is important to address immediate issues since there is no current widespread ethic for dealing with them, such work has to take place against the backdrop of building a more permanent ethic that can ultimately transcend individual problems.

For 71% of the groups in the present study, ethics-based work is most important, whether it comes before issues-based work or in conjunction with it. Those who believe that ethics-based work must necessarily precede issues-based work do so because they think that issues-based work is more effective when it is grounded in ethics that give people perspective about an issue and enable them to “know where (they’re) going before (they) engage (it)” [director of interfaith group]. In other words, it is thought that peoples’ “feelings about issues come out of (their) ethical and moral foundations,” [staff member of transdenominational group]. Thus, unless the connection between faith and the environment has been well-established first, the issues-based work may make less sense, have less meaning, and have different ethical purposes than those desired by the movement. As one interviewee stated,

“... energy (work in a building)... has to have an ethical basis... otherwise you’re just trying to save money for money’s sake, and yes, you do want to save money, but the reason you want to save money is very important...” [co-director of interfaith group]

That being said, there are rare instances when one can talk about ethics in a way that is purely divorced from the mention of issues since issues often provide tangible examples for why certain ethics are important to hold,

“... outside of a purely preaching or teaching environment, leading with a principle of belief isn’t possible without connecting it to some real world initiative...” [director of interfaith group]

This may explain why thirty-eight of forty-two groups endorsed both ethics and issues statements in the interview, albeit to varying degrees.

Another common response about the best way to structure ethics-based and issues-based work in bringing about change was that it depends on the situation (17%). Especially because of limited capacity, but also because of philosophy, some groups direct more of their efforts towards one kind of work than another. Again, however, most feel that there need to be groups engaging in both kinds of work in order to achieve success; some might do more ethics-based work and some might do more issues-based work, but both are needed in the movement. In addition, there is a sense that different people become engaged in environmentalism through different avenues. For some individuals, talking about values, and about the connection between faith and the environment, resonates most strongly. Others are anxious to participate in hands-on projects. Thus, several groups believe that it is best to “start where people are” [former director of transdenominational group] and go from there. “Some people act their way into an ethic... (by) start(ing) to do things;” [director of interfaith group] others come to issues through ethics.

“... most people are effective doing something they feel passionate about, so if someone likes to work more at the ethics and the thinking and theology level... (they will) be effective at that, and if someone is more policy and advocacy and get out the vote and

organizing... if that's where their skills and passion are, then they should do that... (it depends) on the person and their call in life..." [staff member of ecumenical group]

Thus, for several groups, there is no hard and fast rule about whether ethics or issues are most important. Instead, each situation and individual is different and approaches should be appropriately tailored to reflect those differences.

### **E. Hypotheses – *What are the internal and external factors that influence the extent to which a group engages in ethics-based or issues-based work?***

The hypotheses that were tested in the present research attempted to determine what factors, internal or external to an organization, might influence whether a group undertakes more ethics-based or more issues-based work. Because of the limited variability in the outcome variable, it was necessary to choose a dependent variable with enough power to potentially allow the identification of characteristics unique to groups who tended towards issues-based work so as to better understand what makes them different from the majority. Since the descriptive statistics of all of the potential dependent variables described above (e.g., number of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed, ranking of top two statements, and whether or not the group believed its primary work to be ethics or issues-based) lie in the same direction, and because analysis would be better facilitated with the use of only one of these, the total percentage of issues-based statements endorsed as was used as the primary dependent variable. This was done for two reasons.

First, it is a continuous variable, thus providing the necessary power to identify significant findings and allowing the examination of how groups differ on a more detailed statement-by-statement basis. Second, because there is so little variability in the population with respect to questions of ethics-based work, no significant results were attained when testing hypotheses using the total percentage of ethics statements endorsed variable. Because the hypotheses were concerned with only one independent and one dependent variable, zero-order correlations or one-way ANOVAs were calculated to establish whether any significant relationships were present. Correlations were also run using the total percentage of ethics statements endorsed in order to determine whether non-significant results were in the expected direction.

Statistically significant relationships were found with only three of the hypothesized variables: 1) collaboration with secular environmental groups, 2) amount of time spent engaging in policy advocacy work, and 3) the importance of doing so achieving a group's goals.

#### Internal and Organizational Group Factors

The first set of hypotheses that were tested attempted to ascertain whether there were certain internal and organizational group factors that might influence whether or not, and to what degree, a group engages in issues-based work. Specifically, the relationships examined were between issues-based work and:

- 1) staff size
- 2) degree to which a group's philosophy emphasizes the relationship between social justice concerns and environmental problems
- 3) scope of operations (local, state, regional, or national and international)

- 4) age of staff and volunteers, and
- 5) gender of staff and volunteers

*Hypothesis 1: Staff Size*

It was expected that organizations with smaller staff sizes would engage in issues-based work more often than those with larger staff sizes. The present study speculated that ethics-based work might involve more interpersonal interaction and therefore may be more time and labor-intensive than issues-based work. In addition, even a small group of people can link up fairly easily with a larger issues-based campaign. Many interviewees in the present research did discuss the great amount of energy and the extended lengths of time involved in changing values, affirming the thinking behind this hypothesis.

Nonetheless, results show that the number of total paid staff is not significantly related to whether or not a group engages in issues-based work. In addition, the correlations between total paid staff and total percentage of issues- and ethics-based statement adherence are in the opposite direction of what was expected such that the greater the staff size, the more issues-based work in which the group engages. However, there is virtually no relationship between ethics-based work and number of staff as well, so it does not appear that the converse of this hypothesis is likely true either (see Table 3). Instead, there is simply no relationship between these variables.

**Table 3. Correlation between total paid staff (full-time and part-time) and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

		<i>Total Paid Staff</i>	<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>
<i>Total Paid Staff</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.015	.214
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.927	.174
	N	42	42	42
<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.015	1	.400
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.927		.009
	N	42	42	42
<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.214	.400	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.174	.009	
	N	42	42	42

*Hypothesis 2: Philosophy*

It was expected that the more a group’s philosophy ties social justice concerns and environmental problems together, the more likely the group would engage in issues-based work. This is because our society seems to have already developed an ethic for how to address problems of traditional social concern, such as poverty, hunger, and other issues that primarily affect the health and well-being of humans. Because of this, there may be less need to focus on changing values related to those problems and more of a need to practically address them through specific issues-based action. Respondents in the present research widely agree that religious institutions are focused on these social justice types of issues much more so than they are on environmental issues, giving support to the idea that such an ethic already exists.

However, results indicate that the correlation between emphasis on social justice work and total percentage of issues-based statements endorsed is not significant. In addition, the results are in the opposite direction than hypothesized. The correlations between percentage of ethics-based statements and social justice, and issues-based statements and social justice are nearly the same which provides evidence that groups undertaking both kinds of work are fairly equal in their emphasis on the connection between social justice and environmental problems (see Table 4).

**Table 4. Correlation between amount of group emphasis on the connection between social justice and environmental concerns, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

		<i>Emphasis on Social Justice</i>	<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>
<i>Emphasis on Social Justice</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.126	.135
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.432	.402
	N	41	41	41
<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.126	1	.400
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.432		.009
	N	41	42	42
<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.135	.400	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.402	.009	
	N	41	42	42

### *Hypothesis 3: Scope of Operations*

It was expected that the smaller the scope of a group's work, the more it would engage in ethics-based work because, as mentioned above, it seems to require the one-on-one interactions that more locally acting groups might be better poised to undertake. Issues-based work, on the other hand, while certainly involving this type of interaction, might just as easily occur through e-mail, newsletters, and other less personal contacts.

Results demonstrate, however, that there is no significant main effect for scope (see Table 5A and 5B). There does, though, appear to be a pattern wherein groups who work at the local level do engage in more ethics-based work, those who work at the state level more issues-based, and regional groups spend less time and national groups most time on both categories of work. Correlations between scope and total percentage of issues and ethics statements endorsed are in the hypothesized direction such that the smaller the scope of a group, the less they work on issues-based activities (see Table 5C).

**Table 5A. Means of scope of group work by percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

					95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Std Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
<b><i>Ethics Statements Endorsed</i></b>								
Local	10	71.60	32.44	10.26	48.40	94.80	17	100
Statewide	9	61.11	27.62	9.21	39.88	82.34	17	100
Regional	6	61.17	17.30	7.06	43.01	79.32	33	83
<sup>a</sup> National	17	78.35	23.41	5.68	66.32	90.39	33	100
Total	42	70.60	26.23	4.05	62.42	78.77	17	100
<b><i>Issues Statements Endorsed</i></b>								
Local	10	48.00	35.53	11.23	22.59	73.42	.00	100
Statewide	9	62.22	29.06	9.69	39.89	84.56	.00	100
Regional	6	40.00	17.89	7.30	21.23	58.77	20	60
<sup>a</sup> National	17	68.24	33.95	8.24	50.78	85.69	.00	100
Total	42	58.10	32.40	5.00	48.00	68.19	.00	100

<sup>a</sup>Note: National includes International as well.

**Table 5B. One-way ANOVA results showing relationship between scope of group work, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b><i>Ethics Statements Endorsed</i></b>					
Between Groups	2376.11	3	792.04	1.165	.336
Within Groups	25834.01	38	679.84		
Total	28210.12	41			
<b><i>Issues Statements Endorsed</i></b>					
Between Groups	4885.01	3	1628.34	1.621	.200
Within Groups	38162.61	38	1004.28		
Total	43047.62	41			

**Table 5C. Correlation between scope of group work, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

		<i>Scope of Work</i>	<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>
<i>Scope of Work (National, Regional, State, Local)</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.205	.148
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.192	.348
	N	42	42	42
<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.205	1	.400
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.192		.009
	N	42	42	42
<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.146	.400	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.348	.009	
	N	42	42	42

*Hypothesis 4: Age of Staff and Volunteers*

It was expected that staff and volunteers who are young would engage in more issues-based work because it was hypothesized that they might be less invested in the prevailing social and institutional structures given their stage in life. While both ethics-based and issues-based work can be anti-establishment in nature, seeking to change the structures of society, issues-based work seems to encourage more direct activism of the type that young people in recent decades have successfully undertaken. For instance, they have been instrumental in establishing boycotts of goods produced through sweatshop labor, and in convincing their universities to no longer purchase grapes when it was found that grape farmers were physically abusive to migrant workers and that working conditions were poor (Ferguson, 1997; Nash 1997; United Students Against Sweatshops, 2006).

Unfortunately, it is impossible to answer the hypothesis as written because while ages of staff and volunteers were collected, the specific job tasks of each individual were not. As a result, no valid statement can be made about whether or not younger staff engage in more issues-based work than do older staff. In addition, it was not possible to use an average age of staff in conducting these analyses because the range of ages was too great for a mean to accurately represent age. Furthermore, the number of interviewees who were unable to provide ages of their staff was very high, making this data difficult to use (e.g., the mean age of a group with one staff person who is 20 years old and one who is 60 years old is 40 years old which does not provide useful information for this particular hypothesis). Furthermore, as noted earlier, the distribution of ages of paid staff and of volunteers are different. And, since only three groups have no volunteer help, meaning they typically have a mix of both younger staff and older volunteers, it is even more challenging to determine effects of age on type of work.

Because of these limitations, it was decided to use the age of group directors as a proxy for staff and volunteer age. It was hypothesized that directors likely determine the overall direction of organizational work and its distribution among group members more so than do other staff or volunteers. Thus, tests were conducted to see if younger directors belong to groups who engage in more issues-based work. Data analysis shows that there are no significant correlations between age of director and percentage of issues-based statements endorsed. In fact, the correlations between age and total percentage of issues and ethics-based statement adherence

are in the wrong direction, meaning that the older the director, the greater the number of issues-based statements selected (see Table 6).

It could be then, that rather than younger people having less to risk than older people as suggested by this hypothesis, it is actually the converse. Younger people may tend to be more conservative in their work because they have larger debts, young children, and are working to establish a career. Older individuals, on the other hand, may have children who have left the home, have saved some money, and may be at the point in their life where job security is less important than job satisfaction, so that they become less conservative in their work. (Please note that this does not intend to imply that ethics-based work is not progressive, but only that the typical strategies used in changing values within this movement tend to be more educational and less oppositional than fighting against drilling in the ANWR, for instance.) Finally, a number of directors during the interview stated that it was “time for action,” [former director of interfaith group] that they were “tired of just talking,” [director of ecumenical group] and that the environmental crisis was too urgent to spend another “twenty years again educating people,” [former director of interfaith group] so sentiments such as these might also be reflected in the results of this correlation.

**Table 6. Correlation between age of group director, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

		<i>Age of Director</i>	<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>
<i>Age of Director</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.072	.226
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.674	.179
	N	37	37	37
<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.072	1	.400
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.674		.009
	N	37	42	42
<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.226	.400	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.179	.009	
	N	37	42	42

*Hypothesis 5: Gender of Staff and Volunteers*

Given results of earlier studies which indicated that gender has no significant relationship to environmental attitudes and concern (Kanagy & Willits, 1993; Van Liere & Dunlap, 1980; Wolkomir, Futreal, Woodrum, and Hoban, 1997), it was not expected that the gender of staff and volunteers would influence the type of work in which they engaged. The percentage of women staff and volunteers were calculated and tested to see if they were related to issues-based work. Gender of the director was also correlated with issues-based work in case there were significant effects of a female director setting certain direction for an organization.

Results demonstrate that there are virtually no correlations whatsoever between either of the dependent variables and either of the independent variables, thus confirming this hypothesis (see Table 7).

**Table 7. Correlation between gender of director, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

		<i>Female Director</i>	<i>Percent of Female Staff</i>	<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>
<i>Female Director</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.009	.007	-.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.965	.965	.845
	N	39	26	39	39
<i>Percent of Female Staff</i>	Pearson Correlation	.009	1	.071	-.012
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.965	.726	.726	.954
	N	26	27	27	27
<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.007	.071	1	.400
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.965	.726	.009	.009
	N	39	27	42	42
<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	-.032	-.012	.400	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.845	.954	.009	.009
	N	39	27	42	42

### ***External Factors***

The second set of hypotheses that were tested attempted to ascertain whether there were certain external factors that might influence whether or not, and to what degree, a group engages in issues-based work. Specifically, the relationships examined were between issues-based work and:

- 6) geographical location
- 7) ability to secure adequate funding
- 8) collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups
- 9) collaboration with secular environmental groups, and
- 10) amount of time engaged in policy advocacy work and importance of such engagement to a group's achievement of its goals

### ***Hypothesis 6: Geographical Location***

It was hypothesized that groups that were located in ideologically liberal geographical regions would engage in more issues-based work than would groups located otherwise. This was supposed to be the case because environmental work has historically been primarily a part of liberal ideological agendas, and because progressives seem to have engaged in less conservative types of activism in recent decades.

My hypothesis dealt with geographical region rather than individual ideology for two reasons: 1) it was not possible to speak with every member of the groups interviewed so as to ask about their ideological leanings, and 2) third-person reporting on a subjective topic such as this was deemed to be unreliable, and therefore it was not possible to ask directors about the political viewpoints of their staff and volunteers. Instead, the results of the 2004 presidential election were used as a proxy for regional ideology. Groups were situated in either “red states” or “blue states”

depending on the location of their headquarters (three groups stated that they work everywhere in the United States and so were not included in this analysis).

Zero-order correlations were computed to determine if any relationship existed between ideology of geographical location and issues-based work. Results show means that are nearly identical across categories for both dependent variables tested (total percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed) and that the relationship is not significant (see Tables 8A and 8B). Zero-order correlations confirm this finding in that the correlations between the independent variable with each of the dependent variables are nearly exactly the same (see Table 8C).

**Table 8A. Means of geographical location by the percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

					95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Std Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
<b><i>Ethics Statements Endorsed</i></b>								
Red State	5	70.00	35.98	16.09	25.33	114.67	17	100
Blue State	34	69.56	25.80	4.42	60.56	78.56	17	100
Across U.S.	3	83.33	16.50	9.53	42.34	124.33	67	100
Total	42	70.60	26.23	4.05	62.42	78.77	17	100
<b><i>Issues Statements Endorsed</i></b>								
Red State	5	56.00	32.86	14.70	15.19	96.81	20	100
Blue State	34	57.06	33.08	5.67	45.52	68.60	.00	100
Across U.S.	3	73.33	30.55	17.64	-2.56	149.23	40	60
Total	42	58.10	32.40	5.00	48.00	68.19	.00	100

**Table 8B. One-way ANOVA results showing relationship between geographical location, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b><i>Ethics Statements Endorsed</i></b>					
Between Groups	525.07	2	262.54	.370	.693
Within Groups	27685.05	39	709.87		
Total	28210.12	41			
<b><i>Issues Statements Endorsed</i></b>					
Between Groups	755.07	2	377.54	.348	.708
Within Groups	42292.55	39	1084.42		
Total	43047.62	41			

**Table 8C. Correlation between geographical location, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

		<i>Red State</i>	<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>
<i>Red State</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.131	.131
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.408	.409
	N	42	42	42
<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.131	1	.400
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.408		.009
	N	42	42	42
<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.131	.400	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.409	.009	
	N	42	42	42

*Hypothesis 7: Funding*

It was expected that organizations that have greater difficulty securing adequate funding would do more ethics-based work because it seems as if issues-based work would be more expensive due to the advocacy and outreach work it likely entails. It was hypothesized that ethics-based work could be more easily accomplished through the simple spreading of messages in sermons or by other means of inexpensive education whereas issues-based work would involve traveling to visit legislators, mobilizing people to take action on a particular campaign, and so forth.

Results, while not significant, are nonetheless in the hypothesized direction so that the harder it is for a group to locate funding, the smaller the percentage of issues-based statements they endorse (see Table 9). This is interesting given results of the qualitative data which indicate that ethics-based work is more labor and time intensive, implying that it might therefore be more costly to undertake. The quantitative results point to the opposite conclusion, however, but since they are not significant, no valid interpretations can readily be drawn.

**Table 9. Correlation between ease of locating funding, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

		<i>Ease of Locating Funding</i>	<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>
<i>Ease of Locating Funding</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.062	-.139
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.699	.384
	N	41	41	41
<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.062	1	.400
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.699		.009
	N	41	42	42
<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	-.139	.400	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.384	.009	
	N	41	42	42

*Hypothesis 8: Faith-Based Collaboration*

It was hypothesized that groups who collaborated more frequently with other faith-based environmental organizations would engage more often in issues-based work than those who work together less often. It was considered that the potential differences in theologies and philosophies among groups might make it difficult to collaborate on ethics-based work which tends to generally be grounded in theology and values. Thus, it was thought that issues-based work might prove easier since working on a specific issue need not necessarily make use of theology and values language to the same extent as ethics-based work might.

Analyses demonstrate that there is, however, no significant relationship between the amount of faith-based environmental collaboration and the percentage of issues-based statements endorsed. Results, nonetheless, are in the expected direction, so that the more groups collaborate with other religious-environmental organizations, the greater the percentage of issues-based statements they endorse (see Table 10). Given the results of qualitative analysis which indicate that faith-based organizations who work together actively try to find common ground in their collaborations, these results might indicate that they are generally successful in this endeavor, since collaboration is not significant with either percentage of ethics statements or percentage of issues statements endorsed.

**Table 10. Correlation between degree of collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups, and percentage of ethics -based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

		<i>Collaboration with Faith-Based Environmental Groups</i>	<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>
<i>Collaboration with Other Faith-Based Environmental Groups</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.055	-.107
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.729	.498
	N	42	42	42
<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.055	1	.400
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.729		.009
	N	42	42	42
<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	-.107	.400	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.498	.009	
	N	42	42	42

*Hypothesis 9: Secular Collaboration*

It was expected that religious-environmental groups who collaborate often with mainstream environmental organizations would engage in more issues-based work. Recent literature has suggested that the secular movement does not often discuss values or the need to change them, at least in its public work, and that it primarily works via scientific, technical, and policy avenues to bring about environmental change (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2004). Since these latter methods generally make less use of ethics-based language than others, it was supposed that faith-based groups who partnered frequently with secular groups might work in ways that bore a stronger resemblance to mainstream environmental efforts when compared to

religious-environmental groups who did not. In addition, it was hypothesized that such collaborations might also tend towards less controversial, more issues-based work because of possible difficulties in locating common values around which to organize.

Results demonstrate that indeed, the amount of collaboration with mainstream environmental groups is significantly correlated with the percentage of issues-based statements endorsed, and in the expected direction ( $r(40) = 0.43, p < .01$ ) (see Table 11). Thus, the more faith-based environmental groups work together with secular organizations, the more issues-based statements they select.

**Table 11. Correlation between degree of collaboration with secular environmental groups, and percentage of ethics -based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

		<i>Collaboration with Secular Environmental Groups</i>	<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>
<i>Collaboration with Secular Environmental Groups</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.067	-.426
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.675	.005
	N	42	42	42
<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.067	1	.400
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.675		.009
	N	42	42	42
<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation	.426	.400	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.009	
	N	42	42	42

*Hypothesis 10: Policy Advocacy*

It was expected that religious-environmental groups who spend more time engaged in policy advocacy activities, such as lobbying and talking with legislative officials, testifying in front of governmental bodies, writing or signing onto letters to public servants, or sending action alerts to their members, would engage in more issues-based work. It was hypothesized that while it seems certain that the large majority of faith-based environmental groups invoke particular values when calling for certain legislative changes, they might do so only in grounding their views about what action is needed with respect to a particular issue, rather than trying to change ethics *per se*. Instead, it was figured that this type of work addresses specific issues more so than it does values.

Two independent variables were tested in examining this hypothesis. The first inquired into the amount of time a group spends engaged in policy advocacy work. Results indicate that there is a trend-level significance wherein organizations that are more active in advocacy work tend to endorse a greater percentage of issues-based statements ( $r(39) = .31, p < .045$ ) (see Table 12).

**Table 12. Correlation between group time spent engaged in policy advocacy work, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

		<i>Time Spent Engaged in Policy Advocacy Work</i>	<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>
<i>Time Spent Engaged in Policy Advocacy Work</i>	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1  41	-.181 .258 41	.314 .045 41
<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.181 .258 41	1  42	.400 .009 42
<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.314 .045 41	.400 .009 42	1  42

The second independent variable that was tested concerned how important engaging in policy advocacy work was in achieving a group's goals. The correlation between the importance of participating in advocacy work and the percentage of issues-based statements endorsed is significant and high ( $r(36) = .55, p < .01$ ) (see Table 13).

It was further speculated that while groups may believe engagement in policy advocacy work to be important, they may be unable to participate in it because of other factors such as limited funding or time. Thus, the relationship between both independent variables was examined in order to capture further nuances in the link between policy advocacy and issues based work. Results indicate that both of these variables are highly and significantly correlated with each other ( $r(39) = .63, p < .01$ ) (see Table 14). This indicates that groups tend to be able to translate their beliefs about the importance of engaging in policy advocacy work into practical action, just as they are able to do with their ethics-based efforts.

**Table 13. Correlation between group belief in importance of engaging in policy advocacy work, and percentage of ethics-based and issues-based statements endorsed.**

		<i>Importance of Engagement in Policy Advocacy Work</i>	<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>
<i>Importance of Engagement in Policy Advocacy Work</i>	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1  38	-.093 .578 38	.546 .000 38
<i>Total Ethics Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.093 .578 38	1  42	.400 .009 42
<i>Total Issues Statements Endorsed</i>	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.546 .000 38	.400 .009 42	1  42

**Table 14. Correlation between time spent engaged in policy advocacy work, and group belief in importance of engaging in policy advocacy work and.**

		<i>Time Spent Engaged in Policy Advocacy Work</i>	<i>Importance of Engagement in Policy Advocacy Work</i>
<i>Time Spent Engaged in Policy Advocacy Work</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.629
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	41	38
<i>Importance of Engagement in Policy Advocacy Work</i>	Pearson Correlation	.629	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	38	38

## Chapter 5: CONCLUSIONS

The present study asked the questions: 1) What are the general characteristics of the faith-based environmental movement in the United States? and 2) What factors influence the degree to which faith-based environmental groups engage in ethics-based versus issues-based work?

To answer these questions, an examination was made of the relationship between certain internal and external factors that were hypothetically related to the amount of ethics-based and issues-based work engaged in by forty-two religious-environmental groups in the United States. These factors included:

- 1) total number of paid staff
- 2) degree to which a group's philosophy ties social justice concerns and environmental problems together
- 3) scope of work (local, state, regional, or national and international)
- 4) age of staff and volunteers
- 5) gender of staff and volunteers
- 6) political ideology
- 7) ability to secure adequate funding
- 8) collaboration with other faith-based environmental groups
- 9) collaboration with secular environmental groups, and
- 10) amount of time spent engaged in, and importance of participating in policy advocacy work

Statistically significant relationships were found with only three of these variables: collaboration with secular environmental groups, and amount of time spent engaged in, and importance of participating in policy advocacy work; thus, only these findings will be discussed in this chapter. The present research also identified several important trends among faith-based environmental groups. This section presents the conclusions of my research.

### A. Conclusions

#### Hypotheses

**The more a group collaborates with secular environmental organizations, the greater its involvement in issues-based work.** The present research found that faith-based environmental groups collaborate frequently with mainstream organizations on a wide variety of issues and in numerous ways. They tend to view the efforts of secular groups as complementary to their work in that the latter generally have greater financial, scientific, technical, and legislative resources from which faith-based environmental groups can draw. The different types of expertise of secular groups have a tendency to relate to the scientific, technical, and policy aspects of particular issues rather than to broader ethical questions, although these may certainly come into play at times.

Many within both the religious-environmental, and the mainstream environmental communities, view secular groups as focusing too heavily on issues and not enough on values and vision. A number of interviewees made reference to the "Death of Environmentalism" (see Appendix B for a more detailed discussion of this paper) precisely because its authors effectively argue that this kind of focus has caused the mainstream environmental movement to be ineffective in bringing about long-term change. The finding above gives support to their claim, especially since no similar relationship was found to exist with faith-based environmental

collaborations. Further evidence comes from the finding that those religious-environmental groups who receive assistance from the mainstream community tend to engage in more issues-based work than those who do not.

**The greater the amount of time spent and the more important a group considers engaging in policy advocacy to be in achieving its goals, the greater its involvement in issues-based work.** Groups which spend more time working in the realm of public policy, and who believe such work to be important in accomplishing their objectives, have higher levels of engagement in issues-based work than those who do not. While it is true that all groups ground their advocacy work in certain ethics, and that they point to these values when speaking with public officials about their rationale for working on particular issues, very little, if any, advocacy work involves the direct promotion of an environmental ethic in and of itself. The nature of policy advocacy work is rather to influence tangible outcomes of a governmental course of action which may consider ethics, but probably does not intend to change them *per se*. In addition, a conceptual relationship exists between issues-based and policy advocacy work, so that the two are one in the same, or at least strongly related, for many faith-based environmental groups. This linkage became apparent when a number of respondents automatically equated the two when discussing the benefits and drawbacks of engaging in issues-based work.

It is interesting to note that statistically, time spent engaged in policy advocacy work is not as statistically significant as importance of engagement in this type of work. In fact, the former variable shows only trend-level significance whereas the latter is statistically significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level. The differences in findings between time spent engaged in policy advocacy work and how important groups consider such involvement to be in accomplishing their goals might indicate that there are some faith-based environmental organizations who wish to engage more often in policy advocacy work than they are able. The reasons why they participate less might have to do with limited capacity or fears of alienating constituencies as discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis.

### Trends

The faith-based environmental movement is fairly new to history, having an important presence for only the past fifteen years. It has managed to grow significantly since the majority of groups were established in the early and mid 1990s, and while it continues to grow, it remains very small relative to the mainstream environmental movement. In addition, the environment as a topic of concern in religious communities, while also increasing in importance, continues to be a third-tier priority when compared to other issues such as poverty and hunger. The large majority of those who are actively involved in the movement, however, are hopeful that people will and can make the connection between faith and the environment that they view as integral to solving the environmental crisis.

This sense of hope is an important distinguishing characteristic of the religious-environmental movement: because of its faith in a higher power, there is hope that miracles can happen that will save the planet, so to speak. One respondent said,

“...there’s hope that God can do things we can’t understand in ways we couldn’t have imagined, and if I were in the Sierra Club or Friends of the Earth or whatever, I’d want to bury my head in the sand, because it’s just too painful to think about the possibilities, but

as a person of faith, that's our currency, that's what gives us a feeling that something may yet come of this without a catastrophe having to do it..." [director of ecumenical group]

This faith and its corresponding sense of hope enable religious-environmental groups to remain firm in their convictions that an important part of their work is to help change people's values, or make them aware that the correct ethics for how to deal with the environment already exist. It also allows them to remain optimistic that their work, in being right and true, will gain more currency as time goes on. These beliefs give them the moral strength to continue in the direction of their work when they know that they could more easily receive funding and increase their capacity if they were to engage in more issues-based work. Since religious-environmental groups by and large are severely limited in what they can accomplish given their limited funding and capacity, that they are able to "stay the course" is a testimony to their dedication to their work.

The religious-environmental movement is also typified by a large degree of collaboration with both faith-based and secular environmental organizations, although partnering with the latter type of group occurs with slightly less frequency than with the former. These collaborations usually involve people of many different traditions, theologies, and philosophies which ought to make working together more difficult than it seems to be for this movement. The fact that collaboration occurs with such frequency again points to a movement that is so invested in its work that it is able to set aside certain differences and focus on commonalities in order to increase its collective influence in trying to bring about change. The high degree of collaboration reflects the emphasis of faith-based environmental groups on the importance of community, and also its potential to draw together diverse groups of people from different backgrounds and with varying political and theological beliefs in support of a common cause. One respondent stated,

"...a lot of this really goes to our commonality and our community and realizing that distinctions, especially religious distinctions, are not nearly as powerful as the things we share in common, and we share this world in common at root..." [director of interfaith group]

Another said,

"...we can pull together farmers who want to do something about climate change and farmers who are totally opposed to climate change because of (the) increased costs associated with their inputs, and we can get them to sit down, share a meal, worship together, and then maybe begin to find some common ground to move forward..." [director of interfaith group]

Thus, faith-based groups who organize around the environment - an area that has historically been very divisive and controversial - are able to bring people together, whether from faith or secular communities, in ways that are unique and important. This ability could help to enable the broader environmental movement to unite with other constituencies in ways that it has been unable to in the past.

Of course, every social movement has its weaknesses, and this is true for the faith-based environmental movement as well. The inability to agree on a common language is one area of difficulty for religious-environmental groups, and efforts should be made to address this problem because by using similar terminology, they can gain more expediency in the broader society that

they are seeking to change. In addition, a lack of funding and staff capacity impose significant limitations on the amount and type of work that groups can pursue, and so it is important for them to examine new ways of conveying the importance of their work to funding agencies and to religious institutions who, on the whole, do not seem to have yet bought into their efforts. This may necessitate the development of best practices for the movement - something which has not yet been done - in which strategies, activities, and approaches that have been shown through research and evaluation to be effective and efficient in achieving a group's goals are implemented. It also likely requires that groups become savvier in their grant writing and messaging, so that they learn how better to communicate the importance of their work and the potential success that they are capable of producing. Of course, it is difficult to develop these skills with limited staffing, but staff sizes will not increase unless the question of funding is fully addressed.

In spite of their limited capacity and difficulty in finding a common language, however, the faith-based environmental groups in the present study bring something novel and important to the table of the broader environmental movement. Their skill in joining together diverse groups of people, their sense of hope and optimism that change is possible, the strength of their convictions, and their work on changing values complement and improve upon the work of mainstream environmental organizations. On the whole, because of characteristics such as these, the religious-environmental movement has great potential to bring about lasting environmental change in a large number of people and institutions. It has just to convince others of that potential to realize what it is capable of accomplishing.

## **B. Future Directions**

As was noted by many religious-environmental groups in the present study, the results of the ethics-based work in which most of them engage are not so easily quantifiable. Not only does this mean that groups have difficulty locating financial resources because funders generally prefer to see measurable results, but it also makes it difficult for groups to know whether or not their work has been successful. Aside from people's personal testimonies in which they directly report a transformation to a group with whom they have interacted, there are few ways of objectively receiving feedback about ethics-based efforts. As a result, it is difficult to ascertain if a group's work has been ineffective, thus necessitating a change in course. Future research should seek to measure the effectiveness of faith-based environmental groups in changing people's values, or in making individuals more aware of how their ethics already provide them a template for dealing with the environment. Such work would prove helpful to the religious-environmental community as well as the academic community by providing an indication of the true impact of this movement.

It would also be useful to compare secular and faith-based environmental groups with each other. While the present research attempted to do so to some extent, it relied solely on literature and the impressions of religious-environmental activists about mainstream environmental groups in drawing conclusions, rather than interviewing secular environmentalists directly. While the sense is that the two types of movements complement each other, it would be helpful to know how, and in what ways they could improve upon the collaborations which both seem to view as important. Research that examined both of these components of the movement could help to provide insight into where different groups might best direct their efforts, and how to most effectively structure partnerships to achieve the greatest results. It would also be

interesting to study philosophical similarities and differences of faith-based and secular environmental groups so as to better understand the various ways in which the two types of organizations ground their work.

Finally, study of the faith-based environmental movement should be expanded to include small, less formally organized groups than those that participated in the present research. While the groups that were studied for the present research are perhaps the most substantial and visible in the movement, they certainly do not comprise the entire religious-environmental movement. There are likely many other groups who have organized locally and who do not have websites, non-profit status, or formal boards of directors, for instance. Nonetheless, they might constitute an important grassroots element of the movement. Researching these other types of groups would help to paint a more holistic picture of the faith-based environmental movement than is possible with the current study.

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## Appendix A: Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic

It is interesting to consider the roots of the stewardship and eco-justice ethics that are espoused by the faith-based environmental movement. While these ethics can certainly be tied directly to various religious values and scriptural teachings, they also clearly have their roots in modern day secular environmentalism as well. The next section discusses Aldo Leopold's land ethic since it has been argued by many to be the foundation of all modern environmental ethics. As such, it certainly forms at least part of the basis for the ethics promoted by the faith-based environmental movement.

Some scholars have asserted that Leopold's land ethic is the most completely articulated environmental ethic thus far developed, and that it has reached the status of "new paradigm" in that its persistence might actually lead to long-term scientific change (Callicot, 1989: 15; Leopold, 2004; Nelson, 2004; Scoville, 2000). To be certain, the land ethic has become the ethical reference point for many of those working within the environmental movement. Within the scientific community it has provided an alternative way of viewing order in the natural world (Leopold, 2004; Nelson, 2004). It has likewise spawned numerous variations on the subject of environmental ethics. For instance, Rachel Carson's assertion in *Silent Spring* that humans must be cognizant of their relationships with non-humans as well as with each other (Carson, 1962), and Naess' writings on "deep ecology," in which he rejected anthropocentric perceptions of nature in favor of a more biocentric point of view are both thought to have their roots in Leopold's ethic (Leopold, 2004). That "The Land Ethic," published in 1949, has arguably become the fundamental environmental ethic of our day makes it a logical place to begin discussing modern environmental ethics development in the United States.

The function of an environmental ethic is to direct human and nonhuman relationships (Callicott, 1989: 63). Although the land ethic might reasonably be considered the foundational environmental ethic of the modern age, the linking of morality with human responses to the natural world has its historical roots in Ancient Asia (Nash, 1982: 192). In the eighth century B.C., for instance, cultures in India practicing Jainism found the natural world deserving of both respect and religious veneration so much so that it was deemed wrong for humans to harm, let alone kill, any living creature (Nash, 1982: 192). Buddhists and Hindus of the ancient world established an ethical code of conduct for living beings, and those residing in China and Tibet instituted complicated diets aimed at implementing this code. Later in time, following the establishment and spread of Christianity, Greeks conceived of a divinely created "great chain of being" wherein each member of the chain was equal in worthiness since all were needed to hold the chain intact. This stood in stark contrast to the intellectual logic of early Judeo-Christianity which argued that when God gave dominion over the environment to humankind (Genesis 1), He granted humans primacy over other creatures. It was thought by most early Jews and Christians that God intended the earth to be used for their benefit, whatever the effects that land use might entail (Schweitzer, 1936, as cited by Nash, 1982: 193).

For Aldo Leopold, a scientist, a scholar, and an ardent supporter of wilderness conservation who had spent years working for the National Forest Service out of doors, the notion that humankind was somehow separate from and superior to the rest of nature was illogical. He believed that one of the greatest cultural advances in recent times was the elucidation of Darwin's theory of evolution, because it served to place all beings on an even playing field, humans included (Leopold, 1991a). The conceptual roots of Leopold's land ethic

can, in fact, be traced to Darwin's discussion of the development of ethics in general which he laid out in *The Descent of Man* (Callicott, 1989: 65). In this book, Darwin suggested that ethical systems necessarily arise according to natural selection. This was particularly the case among the more social of species, because the benefits gained from membership in a community outweigh the costs incurred from restraining individual behavior in accordance with certain moral limitations inherent in an ethical code. For Leopold, the presence of ethical constraints working to limit individual freedom of action with respect to land use was the only route available to ensure both the preservation of human society and the larger biotic community of which humans are also members (Leopold, 1966).

In addition to drawing heavily from Darwin's theory of ethics development, the land ethic can be seen in large part as a reflection of the science of ecology, newly emergent during Leopold's time, and enormously influential to his thinking. The land ethic, like ecology, is holistic in nature in that it is concerned with relationships between and among things. Prior to the development of ecology, different elements of the land were thought of as separate and, if connected, only very loosely. Later, scientists found that the most unlikely of entities could be shown to be intimately related.

Scientific discussions concerning the concepts of "separate" and "related," some argue, are analogous to philosophical conversations about the nature of historical ethics development. Callicott (1989: 22), for instance, suggests that early attempts to understand morality were built upon the assumption that individuals were working to pursue their own interests because they were separately functioning entities. As such, he argues, modern ethics were derived primarily to instruct individuals in how to deal with other individuals or later, a collection of individuals, as opposed to how to deal with a more holistic community wherein all are linked together through complex relationships. Leopold agrees that early ethics were formed in this way. He further asserts that these older ethics continue to persist. Although ecology has demonstrated that all are related on this earth, the ethical code has not yet evolved to deal with "man's relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it" (Leopold, 1966: 238).

Aldo Leopold firmly believed in the need for such an environmental ethic and his articulation of the land ethic was founded not only in Darwinian and ecological theory, but was influenced by the writings of the nineteenth and early twentieth century American naturalists as well. Writers such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and George Perkins Marsh eloquently expressed their awe at the balance of nature and their frustration at human over-exploitation of it. They believed that the natural world held value beyond that which was simply useful to humankind and that this world was sacred and holy (Nash, 1982: 194).

However, while it is clear that these Romantics and Transcendentalists certainly influenced his thinking, Nash argues that Leopold owed his "most direct intellectual debt" to Liberty Hyde Bailey and Albert Schweitzer who first introduced questions of morality into the equation (Nash, 1982: 194). In 1915, Bailey published a book entitled, *The Holy Earth*, which, as its name implies, asserted that the natural world was sacred and that its abuse was not only immoral, but that it made little economic sense as well (Nash, 1982: 194). Around the same time, Albert Schweitzer made the case that all ethical codes needed to be grounded in veneration for all life, applicable as much to human-nonhuman as to human-human relationships, on which he felt ethics had been historically focused. He argued that an ethical person was one to whom all life was sacred (Nash, 1982: 195). Aldo Leopold, while clearly agreeing with these views, went beyond this idea of a moral imperative in which we view ourselves as part of nature and of equal

importance with all natural entities. He suggested that we ought to work to promote the health of the land because we might actually be ethically responsible *for* maintaining its well-being, and herein lies his greatest contribution (Leopold, 2004; Nash, 1982).

Leopold actually began to formulate his own, unique concept of an environmental ethic long before the publishing of his essay, "The Land Ethic" (Leopold, 1966). As a co-founder of a New Mexico newspaper in 1915, he wrote, "the aim and purpose of this little paper is to promote the protection and enjoyment of all wild things... may it scatter the seeds of wisdom and understanding among men, *to the end that every citizen may learn to hold the lives of harmless wild creatures as a public trust for human good, against the abuse of which he stands personally responsible*" (emphasis added, Nash, 1982: 183). In 1933 he published an article entitled, "The Conservation Ethic," in which he defined conservation to be that of "harmony between men and land," noting that to conserve the land meant to foster "mutual and interdependent cooperation" between humans and the greater biotic community (i.e., the natural world) of which they are a part (Leopold, 1991c). "Harmony" in this instance implied less domination and more protection of the land. Leopold recognized that because humans have a unique role to play in nature given their capacity to realize mistakes and change behaviors accordingly, they are conferred a greater responsibility in caring for the non-human. Stated otherwise, humans have the ability to use nature for their own ends, but they are also able to recognize when they are doing so to excess and can subsequently alter their actions to be more harmonious with the natural world (Wenz, 2003).

The ideas put forth in Leopold's early writings culminated in the writing of his most famous essay, "The Land Ethic," and his concept calling for a change in how we value and treat with the land finally became well-known. His thesis was simple and argued that the development of a land ethic, wherein the role of humans would change from that of conqueror of the land to steward of it, was unique at the time (the late 1940s) in that it was not based on understanding nature only in terms of its utility. While this view harkened back to the early naturalists' conceptions of the natural world as holding intrinsic as well as utilitarian value, it further sought to foster "a more humble awareness that the biota is an integral whole in which humanity participates as 'plain member and citizen'" (Leopold, 1966: 240; Mallory, 2001). It asserted that humans are simply members of an interdependent community consisting both of individuals other than the self, and of all natural entities making up the greater biotic community of which they are a part.

This interdependent biotic community formed the basis of Leopold's concept of ethics. Like all ethical systems, it addressed the concept of moral community in which those entities which exist in the moral community merit direct moral consideration and have intrinsic value while those who are not members are valued solely for their utilitarian functions (Nelson, 2004; Scoville, 2000). Nelson (2004) argues that, historically, the keys to inclusion in a moral community stemmed from traits that humans were thought to hold distinct from the non-human world. Thus, throughout history moral standing has been essentially anthropocentric in nature.

If this is true, the land ethic, then, is not merely an extension of the ethics humans have thus far developed (those that deal primarily with our relations with other individuals, and individuals and society's proper relationships to each other), but it is an alteration in the rationale for deciding who or what belongs in any particular moral community. Until Leopold, members of a moral community were humans who possessed some specific trait which indicated their ethical worthiness for inclusion. Leopold dramatically changed this concept by claiming that

membership in the biotic community, rather than any particular characteristic, was sufficient reason to be included. According to Leopold, “the land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land” (Leopold, 1949). In doing so, the idea of community is extended from the individual and society, to the individual and the land. It is only through this extension, which Leopold believes is the logical next step in the cultural evolutionary sequence of ethics development, that environmental destruction of the landscape might end (Leopold, 1966: 239).

There is in any discussion of ethics inherent notions of right and wrong and the ethical obligations which result from belonging to a community built upon ethical considerations. Leopold is clear about what he believes to be morally good as expressed in the primary principle of the land ethic: “A thing is right only when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Leopold, 1966: 262). Therefore, while Leopold believed that humans ought to use the land for economic purposes, he thought that they should only do so in ways that were non-dysfunctional and protective of the biotic community (Callicot, 1992). In other words, the preservation of land did not necessarily require that humans be removed from it altogether, but rather that they act as responsible caretakers of the community.

Leopold asserted that in order for the ethical obligations accepted by humans to be meaningful and effective, people must believe them to be right rather than related solely to their own self interests (Leopold, 1966: 246). If individuals do not attribute such meaning to these obligations, it can be reasonably argued that the success of pro-environmental legislation and mainstream environmental group campaigns can only be limited. This is because individuals who do not subscribe to such ethical obligations act primarily to avoid legal punishment rather than because they believe their actions to have moral consequences. In keeping with this idea, Leopold suggested that a change in ethics would not be possible without a change in attitudes and beliefs. In 1949, he provided his proof that environmentalism had failed to bring about any such behavioral alterations by citing the fact that philosophy and religion had not yet taken up the issue.

In mentioning the failure of religion to address environmental ethics, Leopold implied that religion might be one avenue in which such an ethic might be taught. Still, he never actually addressed the ways in which religion might help to realize his land ethic. Instead, he clearly believed that educating people as to the value and importance of maintaining ecological balance was the primary and most expedient way to go about perpetuating his ethic throughout the general population. His discussion centered squarely on ecological rather than moral education. He assumed that if people came to understand the intricacies of nature and to experience themselves as *dependent* on a complex and interrelated natural whole, they would come to value and respect the land. Coupled with “discipline, sacrifice, retrenchment, and massive economic reform, tantamount to a virtual revolution in prevailing attitudes and lifestyles” (Callicott, 1989: 38), Leopold believed that his ethic could be realized. The actualization of the land ethic Leopold believed to be imperative for the survival of the human species. He wrote, “There is no other way for land to survive the impact of mechanized man...” (Leopold, 1966).

Aldo Leopold made only passing mention of religion as a potential avenue toward better environmental stewardship; this may be in large part because he was neither a Christian nor conventionally religious (Fowler, 1996: 66). Ecotheologists have likewise only discussed Leopold’s land ethic cursorily, and primarily with criticism (Scoville, 2000). Many

ecothologists claim the land ethic to be ecocentric in nature and therefore incompatible with theocentric notions of the world, at least as represented in the Hebrew and Christian traditions. This is because it is seen to merge humanity into nature, thereby negating humans as rational and moral beings and undermining the belief in a transcendent God (Young, 1994, as cited by Scoville, 2000). Additionally, certain theologians have pointed out that the moral value accorded the biotic community of Leopold is counter to Hebrew and Christian values wherein ethical consideration of anything is determined by human moral and social order rather than through the possession of any ethical value in and of itself (Northcott, 1996, as cited by Scoville, 2000).

To be sure, it is fair to say that Leopold's is an ecocentric ethic. It clearly has a "firm biological foundation and (is) rooted in an evolutionary and ecological understanding of nature and human psychology and nature" (Callicott, 1989: 11). It certainly places humans on a much more even level with the rest of the natural world than do traditional Judeo-Christian interpretations of man's place in the universe. Nevertheless, Leopold did accept the existence of moral links between the biotic and human communities. Evidence for this is provided by his understanding that economic factors necessarily have to be considered when deciding how to use the land (Scoville, 2000). In addition, he spent considerable time discussing human landscapes and was concerned about the future of the human species. Had he been completely ecocentric in the way defined by many ecologists, he would likely have viewed the extinction of humankind more as an inevitable part of evolution than as something to be avoided with the help of an environmental ethic. That being said, he firmly believed that utilizing the land *only* for economic ends without any regard to its additional, non-utilitarian value was to live without a true ethical relationship to the land. Without this relationship, as noted above, he was certain that the well-being of human society would be jeopardized.

## Appendix B: Ethics and the Modern-day Mainstream Environmental Movement

For many involved in the mainstream environmental movement, Aldo Leopold's writings, particularly those in "The Sand County Almanac," have become something of a sacred text (Dubois, 1972: 156). Rene Dubois, as cited by Fowler (1996: 65) attributes this to their "powerful evocation of the glories of nature and their ebb and flow." However, ethics development has come to be only one among many strategies employed by environmental groups, and rarely a primary one at that.

There are some who argue that other methods, in particular political lobbying, have essentially replaced the consciousness-raising that would be inherent in the perpetuating of an environmental ethic. This point has been made most recently by the authors of a controversial paper entitled, "The Death of Environmentalism." Disseminated over the internet in the fall of 2004, and written by Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, two activist communications consultants, the paper has sparked a lively debate within the environmental community concerning the future of environmentalism. The data used in writing the paper was gathered from interviews conducted with twenty-five mainstream environmental group leaders. While written using global climate change as the primary metaphor for environmental issues, their arguments can be easily extended to almost any environmental problem which has been dealt with over the past fifteen years.

The main tenets of the paper are that: a) the environmental movement was enormously successful in the 1970s and 1980s; b) it has continued to use the strategies it developed during this time in its fight to save the environment; c) these strategies, "using science to define a problem as 'environmental,' crafting technical policy proposals as solutions, and selling the technical proposal to legislators through a variety of tactics, such as lobbying, third-party allies, research reports, advertising and public relations" have not worked for the past fifteen years because the United States is vastly more conservative than in was in the 1970s; d) as a result, the environmental movement has very little to show for its efforts since the early 1990s; and e) the movement now needs to appeal to core values and articulate a positive vision for the future if it has any hope of succeeding (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2004). The authors assert that success can no longer be accomplished by the environmental movement as it currently exists. Rather, they believe that present-day mainstream environmentalism needs to "die" in order that something better be born. They suggest ways in which environmentalism might recast itself in order to achieve these new goals.

While their discussion envisioning a new future for environmentalism is interesting and important, what is most relevant to the present research is their claim concerning the mainstream movement's failure to alter American worldviews, or values. (Although different from the language of Leopold's "ethics," and invoking different rationales for the use of such an ethic, the goals – to alter people's values – are essentially the same. Thus, the terms "values," "worldviews," and "ethics" will henceforth be used interchangeably.) Shellenberger and Nordhaus argue that rather than working to change values, mainstream environmentalists have devoted the vast majority of their time to crafting narrowly defined, technocratic solutions to environmental problems. Thus, ending global climate change, for example, has been more of a fight over raising fuel efficiency standards than about demonstrating that an economy built on renewable energy is better for people's health, jobs, families, and the environment.

Some environmental justice activists and scholars, in responding to Shellenberger and Nordhaus via a paper entitled, “The Soul of Environmentalism,” have further underscored this point. Drawing important parallels between the decline of the Civil Rights movement and the growing ineffectiveness of environmentalism, they suggest that any movement which directs its efforts primarily to “legal action and technical advocacy” rather than to “winning on the streets” only “speeds its own demise” (Gelobter, Dorsey, Fields, Goldtooth, Mendiratta, Moore, et al., 2005). Shellenberger and Nordhaus maintain that Americans are perfectly willing to sacrifice for the “right cause.” Therefore, to focus on short-term technological policy fixes, or on winning in court, rather than on promoting shared values misses an opportunity to bring about more lasting change. Ignoring values is a particularly poor strategy at a time when the conservative right has become increasingly adept at setting up a meta-narrative in terms of its values and moving that narrative into the everyday language and thoughts of the American people (Motavalli, 2005).

Shellenberger and Nordhaus, in addition to critiquing the movement for its failure to change values, further assert that environmentalism has become just another special interest, to be added alongside other progressive special interest topics such as poverty, AIDS, and gay rights. Environmentalists narrowly and arbitrarily define what constitutes an environmental problem, and as a result maintain a distinction between environmental and other progressive problems which Shellenberger and Nordhaus claim might actually overlap. In addition, it has been argued that the inability of the secular environmental movement to racially integrate its staff also stems from its penchant to ignore the relationship between social justice and environmental problems (Gelobter, Dorsey, Fields, Goldtooth, Mendiratta, Moore, et al., 2005). Narrow definitions therefore have reduced the potential for collaboration among diverse groups of people who have similar interests. They have also led to rather shallow solutions that are usually more technical than holistic in nature.

Shellenberger and Nordhaus concede that the types of solutions of secular environmentalists worked well at the beginning of the environmental movement. The establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of pro-environmental legislation such as the Clean Water Act and the National Environment Policy Act in the late 1960s and early 1970s attest to the strength and success of early environmentalism. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, support for environmental efforts waxed strong. Americans consistently approved of environmental legislation, therefore aiding the efforts of the environmentalists and helping to ensure that the movement progressed.

Since that time, however, American values have changed and become more conservative (Motavalli, 2005). It is a commonly heard argument, especially in progressive circles, that conservative think tanks have been masterful in framing the debate around American values. Their ability to swing Americans toward a more conservative worldview has resulted in, among other things, there being less support for environmental measures overall.<sup>24</sup> Thus, while the large majority of Americans do continue to support environmental protection, they now tend to do so

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<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the results of a recent survey undertaken by Shellenberger and Nordhaus’ do indicate a country that is becoming more conservative. The “Strategic Values Project,” ongoing since 1992, periodically asks 2,500 people in Canada and the United States 600 questions aimed at identifying peoples’ “core values and beliefs that inform how individuals develop a range of opinions” on a wide variety of issues. Strikingly, across 105 different values measuring “everything from ‘concern for appearance’ and ‘joy of consumption’ to ‘acceptance of violence’ and ‘xenophobia,’” the findings indicate a United States which is becoming more conservative over time (McKibben, 2005). With respect to environmental values, for instance, a decade ago only 17% of Americans believed that pollution was necessary to keep jobs; this number has since increased to 29%.

only weakly, their primary concerns lying elsewhere (Motavalli, 2005; Werbach, 2005). Because of these changes, mainstream environmentalists find themselves acting within a different cultural milieu than they were in the 1970s and 1980s. As Shellenberger and Nordhaus (2004) write, “Environmentalists are in a culture war whether we like it or not. It’s a war over our core values as Americans and over our vision for the future, and it won’t be won by appealing to the rational consideration of our collective self-interest.” In other words, the mainstream environmental status quo of narrowly defining a problem as environmental and proposing only technical policy solutions will no longer work in a society which is drastically different from the one in which that model was first conceived.

Shellenberger and Nordhaus’ primary solution to this problem is to call on mainstream environmentalists to, among other things, expand the notion of “environment” to include humans, urban areas, and other social issues beyond the pristine wilderness, and to recognize that environmental problems are, in essence, human problems “having to do with how we organize our society” (Brown, 2005; Schellenberger & Nordhaus, 2005; Werbach, 2005). Environmentalists, in other words, need to acknowledge that environmental problems have as much to do with the economy, workers’ rights, and health care as they do with protecting the spotted owl. They contend that concern for all of these things should be considered environmental values. They further assert that the formulation and development of all such values, as well as a vision for the future, need to become the primary strategies of the environmental movement rather than working to solve one issue at a time.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, it is fair to say that, in light of the current political climate, “any given political proposal turns more on its vision for the future and the values it carries within it than on its technical policy specifications” (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2004). A vision must be transformative and positive, Shellenberger and Nordhaus (2004) write, so as to inspire hope, love, and power while creating a cognitive space to enable assumptions to be contested and new ideas to develop. That this type of vision is different from the one many non-environmentalist Americans perceive in the mainstream movement is clear. For many Americans, environmentalists are negative doomsayers who tell them what they cannot have and what they cannot do (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2005). In an “up-from-the-bootstraps culture” such as ours, Shellenberger argues, current environmental directives go against American aspirationalism when what they ought to do is inspire people to action (Motavalli, 2005; Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2005).

It should be said here that there is much disagreement among environmentalists about whether or not “The Death of Environmentalism” critique of the movement is valid. Besides the expected claims that Shellenberger and Nordhaus were simply trying to receive grant money by arguing that their project was better than anything else other environmentalists were doing, there have been a number of valid points raised about their paper.<sup>26</sup> For instance, environmental justice activists have rightly pointed out that they have called on the mainstream groups to include several of the ideas suggested by Shellenberger and Nordhaus for over two decades now (Blain,

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<sup>25</sup> It should be pointed out here that Schellenberger and Nordhaus focus on a different aspect of environmental ethics than does Leopold. The former tend to emphasize the connection between social justice and environmental problems whereas the latter generally focuses on human responsibility to safeguard the earth. Still, both argue that it is ultimately the perpetuation of an environmental ethic that is needed to solve the environmental crisis rather than anything else, even if that ethic be expressed in different ways.

<sup>26</sup> Shellenberger and Nordhaus initially released their paper at the October 2004 meeting of the Environmental Grantmakers Association. This organization is highly influential in determining how large sums of money are disbursed to various environmental projects.

2005; Gelobter, Dorsey, Fields, Goldtooth, Mendiratta, Moore, et al., 2005; Principles of Environmental Justice, 1991). The Death of Environmentalism has been fairly criticized for failing to take into account the hundreds of small, grassroots level environmental groups, such as ForestEthics or the Dogwood Alliance, who use values-based language among other tactics to successfully bring about environmental change (Brune, 2005; Kretzmann & Sellers, 2005). In addition, it has been pointed out that the mainstream environmental movement also exists beyond the borders of the United States, and that other countries have moved forward environmentally by embracing values embodied in the precautionary principle, for example (Kretzmann & Sellers, 2005). Blain (2005), in considering these critiques, concludes that any paper failing to take into account the contributions of the grassroots, environmental justice, and international environmental movements is incomplete.

While the above criticisms have come from those not always considered to be part of the mainstream movement, there have been responses from the Big 10 environmental groups as well. Carl Pope, the Executive Director of the Sierra Club, for example, has strongly criticized “The Death of Environmentalism” for a number of things.<sup>27</sup> He questions conclusions drawn by Shellenberger and Nordhaus about the movement’s alleged failure to articulate its core values when they neglected to interview influential environmentalist philosophers such as Wendell Berry, Terry Tempest Williams, or Paul Shepherd who do discuss ethics and vision (Pope, 2004). Shellenberger and Nordhaus justify their decision to interview those whom they did, rather than individuals like Berry and Williams or other grassroots organizers, on the basis that those included in their study were among those who decide how the environmental movement will fashion its campaigns and how it will spend tens of millions of dollars each year (Little, 2005a).

Pope (2004) also finds fault with the idea that the mainstream movement only uses short-term technical policy solutions to achieve its ends by claiming that, in addition to environmental thinkers writing on the subject of values, environmentalism draws on “place-based, values-driven, and rights-rooted... models,” and that technical policy solutions are only one among many strategies traditionally employed by the movement.<sup>28</sup> Finally, Pope suggests that the recent problems experienced by environmentalism reflect more the general lack of success seen in all progressive social movements focused on justice over the last decade. He therefore concludes that there is a broader problem ailing all such social movements which is not unique to environmentalism (Little, 2005b).

Different proposals have been made about what this “broader problem” might be. Martin S. Kaplan (2005), an attorney and advisor to environmental funding agencies, has said that attacking environmentalism without attacking the entrenched corporate, economic, and industrial interests whose work destroys the environment is to attribute too much responsibility for environmentalism’s failures to the movement itself. It is, of course, true that environmentalists often find themselves making uphill battle against entities which are vastly more powerful and wealthy than themselves, and it is no question that money talks in modern-day America. However, Shellenberger and Nordhaus have addressed this problem implicitly in their discussion

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<sup>27</sup> Although in lectures given after the completion of this thesis, such as one given at Brown University in April of 2006, Pope spoke strongly of the need for environmental ethics, so that some feel that over time, he has taken less issue with Shellenberger and Nordhaus than he did when their paper was first released.

<sup>28</sup> The author would argue that while Pope is right that the movement has a long history of trying to alter people’s consciousnesses about the environment, it seems clear that this strategy has not been of primary importance. In lectures given after the completion of this thesis, such as one given at Brown University in April 2006, Pope spoke strongly of the need for environmental ethics

of the need to structurally reorganize society. Furthermore, it is easy to argue that the imbalance of power between environmentalists and entrenched economic interests would eventually be forced away if Americans really did come to embrace the environmental and social values set forth by environmentalists and their progressive allies. Golebter et al. (2005) maintain, for instance, that if progressives “reach people in their souls” and “enter the cycle that constrains the debate over values in the marketplace and break it,” they might be able to win.

Despite the critiques of the paper, there are some areas in which the mainstream environmentalists and Shellenberger and Nordhaus (2004) agree. For instance, there is a general recognition in the movement that although there have been alliances between environmental and other groups in the past, new and greater collaboration with labor, religious, corporate, community, and other progressive groups will help to build a stronger movement, one in which both traditional and non-traditional environmental values can be developed (Blain, 2005; Little, 2005; Pope, 2005b; Schakowsky, 2005; Werbach, 2005). Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, is the widespread agreement among environmentalists that the movement does need to focus less on technical policy solutions. They believe that a greater emphasis on developing values and articulating a vision can more successfully create a cultural environment that will allow for lasting environmental change to take place (Kretzmann & Sellers, 2005; Little, 2005a; Little, 2005b (interviewing Carl Pope and Frances Beinecke of the Natural Resources Defense Council); Werbach, 2005); Pope, 2004.)

## Appendix C: Insights from the Social Movements Literature

How exactly can the environmental movement change values and articulate a new ethics-based vision? Social movements scholars in sociology have explored mechanisms by which social movement groups and advocacy organizations work to construct meaning for and bring about value changes in the publics they seek to influence and mobilize. The following section lays out the contribution of the social movements literature to the question of ethical change.

### Personal and Private Non-Committed Action as Movement Support

“Most social movement analysts would probably agree that values are critical to the existence of a group,” but scholarly research examining the methods by which such values are spread to others has been lacking (Zisk, 1992: 66). Still, it is clear that people’s values provide incentives for them to join a movement and that they can help to hold a group together when faced with opposition or setbacks. In addition, most social movements research presumes that social movements are based on shared values, which are then somehow translated into action. Despite this, little attention has been given to values questions. The focus has centered instead on how groups mobilize their audiences to participate in campaigns using methods other than ethics development per se (see detailed discussion regarding these strategies below). As such, most of these writings focus on detailing how movements encourage individuals to take action external to themselves. Mention is therefore made of signing petitions or engaging in protest, for example, but not of altering values as an end in and of itself, or of considering such alterations to be one form of social movement support (Snow et al., 1986; Tarrow, 1992).

One recent paper about environmentalism, however, expands the body of social movement literature to stress that a central goal of a movement can be to change the public’s attitudes and everyday behaviors, regardless of whether it results in committed-activism or not (Stern, Dietz, Abel, Guagnano, & Kalof, 1999).<sup>29</sup> The authors of this paper see changes in the personal and private sphere to be as instrumental in supporting a social movement’s goals as more action-oriented involvement, while underscoring the fact that altering attitudes and ethics is often a necessary precursor to both types of movement support. They identify three manifestations of non committed-activism: 1) individual sacrifice resulting from public policies endorsed by social movements, 2) individual purchasing choices and lifestyle changes that send important signals to public and private entities, and 3) individual engagement in less public and risky ways, such as writing letters to officials, contributing money, or reading movement materials (Stern et al., 1999). Those individuals who support the environmental movement through their personal actions can be essential to movement success. However, since most research has focused on how values are translated into more externally-oriented action, little is understood about how some people come to protest at demonstrations while others prefer to engage with issues through their lifestyle choices, for example (Stern et al., 1999).

The development of personal norms and altruistic values, or ethics, is important in supporting social movement organizations since individuals involved in such groups are generally organized for reasons other than pure self-interest (Stern et al., 1999). Because of this, proponents are frequently called upon to make personal sacrifices for the good of the movement.

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<sup>29</sup> While this paper seems to concern itself primarily with the secular environmental movement, its findings also appear to be generally applicable to the faith-based environmental movement as well.

A focus on altering personal norms as opposed to social norms is important because many groups seek to change current social structures and therefore, they are unable to draw from the existing social norms to which they are often opposed. Convincing individuals to make sacrifices, or alter their behavior in other ways, requires that movements impart a sense of obligation to their audience. They do so by basing personal norms on relevant values referred to by the social movement. People who believe strongly in these values come to feel obligated to support movement objectives that work to protect them. For example, some faith-based environmental groups invoke a biblical mandate of environmental stewardship as an imperative for engaging in earth-friendly behaviors. In doing so, they activate feelings of personal responsibility to support the movement's goals (Stern et al., 1999). In addition, the type of support gained from invoking feelings of obligation and establishing norms of behavior is more general than the committed activism discussed below, and therefore applicable to a greater variety of situations (Snow et al., 1986; Snow & Benford, 1992; Benford & Snow, 2000).

Stern et al. (1999) propose that individual actions based on norms result from four factors: 1) acceptance of particular personal values, 2) belief that things important to those values are threatened, 3) belief that actions undertaken by the individual can help to lessen the threat and restore the values, and 4) belief about personal responsibility for causing threats to values, or ability to alleviate threats caused by others. The threatened values most typically invoked in the environmental movement, for example, are those that are altruistic in nature. Because of this, the collective good is generally stressed as opposed to private benefit. The authors suggest that the environmental movement, basing its work largely on certain basic human values, is grounded in an ideology that "contains specific beliefs about consequences and responsibilities that, in conjunction with its chosen values, activate personal norms that obligate individuals to support the movement's goals" (Stern et al., 1999). Seen in this light, the environmental movement is therefore able to elicit environmentally friendly actions in those individuals who believe that environmental degradation is threatening to other people and species, and that their behavior can help to reduce these threats. Individuals who hold religious or spiritual beliefs may be particularly open to support pro-environmental measures, since for them altruistic values are frequently grounded in religious beliefs that provide an absolute standard more important than other types of movement appeals.

In keeping with Stern et al.'s (1999) idea that the changing of individual norms and the promotion of altruistic values is an important form of movement support, the present research examines another social movement – faith-based environmentalism – that actively works to promote certain ethics among its constituency. In doing so, it builds off of Stern et al.'s (1999) suggestion that people with religious or spiritual beliefs might be more inclined to adopt environmentally friendly values, and examines whether their findings with respect to secular environmentalism might also apply to another component of the environmental movement. Finally, the current study seeks to understand whether or not there are any particular conditions under which such norms and values are more easily perpetuated than others, as well as the challenges that are present in engaging in this type of work.

### Frame Construction Processes

Until the 1980s, social movement scholars largely ignored those aspects of social movements which involved the active creation and articulation of values and meaning for supporters, opponents, and observers (Benford & Snow, 2000: F.106; Snow & Benford, 1992:

136).<sup>30</sup> In the early 1980s, however, there was an increasing awareness that social and psychological factors were as important as structural and organizational aspects in explaining social movement participation (Snow et al., 1986). In keeping with this new recognition, the concept of “framing,” or the creation of shared understanding, was introduced (Snow et al., 1986). “Framing” is now seen as a core activity of a social movement group and as such has become the subject of a number of scholarly articles attempting to elucidate the process of meaning construction by social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986; Tarrow, 1992: 186).

Various definitions and varieties of frames have been described in the literature. A discussion of all of these is beyond the scope of the present research, and so I will focus solely on what are called “collective action frames.” These frames are the result of the ongoing, sometimes contentious process of social movements’ “active engagement in the production of [new] meaning for participants, antagonists and observers” (Snow and Benford, 1988, as cited by Tarrow, 1992). In other words, they are sets of beliefs that inspire and give credence to the activities of a social movement organization, attracting potential movement supporters, mobilizing those who are already supportive, and demobilizing opponents (Snow & Benford, 2000). As such, these types of frames are most relevant to the current study which seeks to better understand how faith-based environmental groups develop and promote certain environmental and religious values (Snow and Benford, 1988, as cited by Tarrow, 1992).<sup>31</sup>

The constructing of a collective action frame by social movement activists is a dynamic process that involves negotiating which values to use to appeal to and mobilize supporters and others to engage in certain types of committed activism. It includes identifying and negotiating a shared understanding of a problem or situation in need of change, deciding who or what is to blame for the problem, articulating an alternative vision, and mobilizing people to take action to bring about the identified needed changes by providing a rationale for their participation (Benford & Snow, 2000). There are various processes by which social movements create frames, or conversely, fail to do so. “*Discursive processes*” involve the speech acts and written communications of social movement activists that take place relative to movement activities and are the result of interaction and discourse, often resulting in frame changes over time (Benford & Snow, 2000). “*Contested processes*” exist because the mere construction of new collective action frames is contentious. Social movement groups, in creating new frames or modifying existing ones, often face challenges from movement opponents, bystanders, and the media, from members of the group itself, and from the dialectic between their constructed frames and events (Benford & Snow, 2000). These challenges frequently influence which frames come to be expressed and how.

Most relevant to the present research, however, are those processes in which social movement groups deliberately construct collective action frames with certain goals in mind; for example, to encourage existing proponents to take action like engaging in demonstrations (Benford & Snow, 2000). The processes which lead to the development of these types of frames

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<sup>30</sup> This is different from the above section which focuses on the changing of norms and values of *individuals*. This section rather discusses how social movements express the values of the movement itself to supporters and others.

<sup>31</sup> Collective action frames are similar in nature to the earlier concept of frames introduced by Goffman in 1974 (as cited by Benford and Snow, 2000) in which frames serve to enable people “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” events in their lives, imbuing those events with meaning, so as to organize experience and guide action, both individual and collective (Tarrow, 1992).

are referred to as “*strategic processes*.” Aimed at connecting a social movement’s message to its proponents, strategic processes include frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation (Snow et al., 1986). These differ in the degree to which they rest on existing values or construe alternative meanings that challenge existing beliefs (Tarrow, 1992).

The least ambitious strategic process is *frame bridging*. It attempts to link two or more “ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem” (Snow et al., 1986). As such, this strategy is merely structural and does not seek to alter people’s values as their beliefs are already aligned with the social movement. Rather, individuals with common ethics, but who lack an organizational base through which they can mobilize, are brought together in order to more easily act on behalf of a cause. Frame bridging occurs primarily through outreach and educational efforts via interpersonal or inter-group networks, the mass media, the telephone, and direct mail.<sup>32</sup> An example of frame bridging would be different individuals in a faith community concerned with environmental problems forming a group and undertaking certain actions together.

*Frame amplification* stresses the greater saliency of some issues, events, or beliefs to represent the larger movement with which a frame is associated so as to clarify the frame and to increase action and support for a social movement (Benford & Snow, 2000). “Because the meaning of events and their connection to one’s immediate life situation are often shrouded by indifference, deception or fabrication by others, and by ambiguity and uncertainty, support for and participation in movement activities is frequently contingent on the clarification and reinvigoration of an interpretive frame” (Snow et al., 1986). Snow et al. (1986) identify two kinds of frame amplification: value and belief. Although both of these are discussed below, the former is most relevant to the present research.

According to Snow et al., (1986), values are “modes of conduct or states of existence that are thought to be worthy of protection and promotion.” Value amplification is the “identification, idealization, and elevation of one or more values presumed basic to prospective constituents but which have not inspired collective action for any number of reasons” (Snow et al., 1986). In order to mobilize individuals to act on issues important to a social movement, activists must focus and reinvigorate the relevant values of individuals so as to better encourage their practical expression. Faith-based environmentalists, for example, who wish to activate others in the religious community might point out that the biblical command to which they already subscribe - to “love thy neighbor as thyself” - ought to apply not only to human neighbors, but to other species with whom humans share the earth as well. Once social movement activists have made the connections between a person’s existing values and the ones they hope to promote, they are much better placed to rally individuals to participate in more concrete movement actions, such as signing petitions, taking part in protests, and so forth.

Beliefs concern presumed relationships “between two things or between some thing and a characteristic of it” (Bem, 1970, as cited by Snow et al., 1986). They are ideational elements that “cognitively impede action in pursuit of desired values,” which can be thought of as the goals that social movements work to achieve. In reviewing the literature, Snow et al. (1986) identify five beliefs important to the mobilization strategies of social movements. These are: 1) beliefs about the seriousness of the problem, 2) beliefs about who or what is to blame for the problem, 3) stereotypic beliefs about opponents or targets of influence, 4) beliefs about probability of change or the effectiveness of taking action, and 5) beliefs about the necessity and

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<sup>32</sup> E-mail should also probably be added to this list.

appropriateness of speaking out (Snow et al., 1986). As with value amplification, focusing on various belief structures can serve to strengthen a movement and bring about increased action on the part of individuals. For instance, amplifying beliefs about whom or what is to blame for a problem can often serve as a rallying point for groups, bringing together and focusing the energies of diverse individuals. In addition, bolstering beliefs that an organization can bring about change effectively through its efforts, or that standing up for rights is not only necessary, but morally expedient, can serve to increase individual activism on behalf of the movement.

*Frame extension* involves the expansion of boundaries of a frame's primary composition to include "interests and points of view that are incidental to its primary objectives but are of considerable salience to potential adherents" (Snow et al., 1986). In extending frames, a social movement organization avoids compromising its own ethics, while portraying its activities and goals as being congruent with the values and interests of individuals not previously targeted by the group. The mainstream environmental movement, while still overwhelmingly concerned with traditional "environmental" matters, has recently undertaken such frame extension work. It has done so by expanding its focus to include environmental problems associated with the labor movement, for instance, in an attempt, at least in part, to increase its adherent base and the number of individuals engaging in pro-environmental actions.

Sometimes, as Snow et al. (1986) point out, the values that social movement groups promote may be antithetical to conventional lifestyles and existing frames. At the very least, they may not resonate with many people. Unless such movements are able to perpetuate new values in place of existing ones through the process of *frame transformation*, they cannot succeed in mobilizing sufficient numbers of individuals to engage in their work. They must, in essence, "redefine activities, events, and biographies that are already meaningful from the standpoint of the primary framework, in terms of another framework, such that they are now 'seen by the participants to be something quite else'" (Goffman, 1974, as cited by Snow et al., 1986). In the case of environmental justice, for example, situations which were previously defined as unfortunate and tolerable come to be reframed as unjust, inexcusable, or immoral, and the chance of recruiting individuals to take action therefore increases (Snow & Benford, 1992: 137). This shift in frame must be accompanied by a corresponding change in thinking about who or what is to blame for a certain situation, and whether personal or structural transformation is the most appropriate avenue for change (Snow & Benford, 1992: 138-9). Some social movements call for both individual and societal changes as solutions to the problems on which they work.

### The Use of Framing Processes

In discussing the four frame alignment processes outlined by Snow et al. (1986), Tarrow (1992: 190) suggests that those processes - bridging, amplification, and expansion - which utilize a mix of established and novel frames are likely utilized by social movement organizations more often than the process of transformation which employs an entirely new framework of interpretation. Because the frames created from a combination of new and existing values cannot readily be distinguished as being "outside the system" from those that are "within the system," opponents have more difficulty attacking them than they do if a frame is completely novel. As a result, social movements might tend to engage in the least contentious forms of frame alignment processes in order to ensure the least resistance to their work.

Tarrow (1992) cautions, however, that there are three important costs associated with adapting too much to existing frames. First, working within existing frames can leave the door

open to the challenges of other groups who may have similar goals, but who are less inclined to adopt the status quo. For example, the frames constructed by the Civil Rights movement related largely to traditional American cultural understandings. As a result, Civil Rights groups came to be challenged by more radical black nationalist groups who “rejected the symbols of white liberalism” (Tarrow, 1992: 190).

Second, relying too heavily on existing frames can also serve to perpetuate the very inaction that social movements attempt to destroy. It is existing mentalities and values which lead to the inaction in the first place. Because of this, at least some elements of a movement’s frame must be opposed to those existing beliefs if a movement is to generate action on behalf of its cause.

Third, too great of use of existing frames by a social movement allows them to be more easily appropriated by other groups beginning work on similar issues, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the frame for the original organization. Thus, social movements must always keep in mind that their frames will inevitably interact with the political culture of a society and therefore become available to other groups. Since social movements have only a limited degree of control over what happens to a frame once it has been spread throughout the culture, carefully considering which frames to use and how to use them is imperative to a movement’s potential success.

Because it is important that a social movement choose the correct frame to use to accomplish its goals, understanding the frame alignment processes utilized by organizations sheds light on the mechanisms by which a movement promotes its values as well as its potential success in doing so. The present research, in examining the general characteristics of the faith-based environmental movement, seeks to understand which frame processes are most utilized by the groups being studied. The religious-environmental movement is both new and small. It is also very much convinced that current social, economic, and political structures must change in order to solve the environmental crisis. However, it must still build up its support base significantly if it is to increase in influence. Understanding the different frame alignment processes used by religious-environmental groups - some being less controversial than others - can highlight the challenges and tradeoffs involved in constructing frames for potential supporters.

### Contextual Influences on Frame Alignment Processes

Each of the framing processes discussed above are influenced by the socio-cultural context in which they are exercised (Benford & Snow, 2000; Stern, 1999). The number of social and cultural factors present in the world which might affect the construction and diffusion of collective action frames is large. However, as with all things, some are more likely to be influential than others. Social movement scholars have identified three such factors that can limit or expand the spread of collective action frames. These are *political opportunity structure*, *cultural opportunities and constraints*, and *the targeted audiences* (Benford & Snow, 2000). Changes in any one of these can lead to the reconceptualizing of a collective action frame, either constraining or aiding a movement in achieving its goals.

Many social movement groups target the political system in an effort to bring about change. For instance, some in the religious-environmental movement argue for greater federal regulation of natural resources. They view the selling of leasing rights to various industries, such as timber and oil, as problematic and counter to their cause. Changes in the political opportunity

structure that decrease federal regulation of resources would likely lead groups to rethink the frame in which they had based their previous work. Changes in the institutional structure and/or informal relations of a political system must necessarily alter the frame of a social movement if that frame was just created with the political structure in mind.

Culture also molds the collective action processes undertaken by social movements. Groups both draw on existing cultural meanings and create their own, new ones (Benford & Snow, 2000). Social movements, in other words, do not exist in a cultural vacuum. Instead, they are a product of and are embedded in culture. Culture and collective action frames reciprocally influence each other, both changing over time, with frames generally representative of broader “cultural continuities and changes” (Benford & Snow, 2000). The creation of collective action frames, therefore, hinges in part on the culture in which they are located. Their frameworks can therefore become a part of, or a challenge to, the wider culture as well (Tarrow, 1992: 189). Social movement groups, such those belonging to the religious-environmental movement, who sometimes attempt to promote values at odds with those of the larger culture must negotiate ways of amplifying, extending, or transforming relevant frames so as to increase their influence and success.

The interactions of a social movement group with its targeted audience and with the wider public can also bring about changes in its collective action frame. In part, this is because of the discursive processes inherent in the development of a frame, discussed above, in which groups and audiences interact, sharing ideas, and refining frames. To the extent that the audience is one of likely movement supporters, this process may progress fairly smoothly. However, social movement activists often seek to expand their support base to bystanders or observers, and even among supporters, their target audiences are likely to be diverse. Because of this, they must often define and articulate meanings that resonate with multiple audiences who have varied levels of interest and who differ in their beliefs, values, ideas, and roles they can potentially play within the movement (Benford & Snow, 2000).

### Collective Action Frames and the Present Research

Clearly the construction and dissemination of collective action frames is integral to the success, or failure, of social movement organizations. The present research inquires into how faith-based environmental groups produce “new meaning for participants, antagonists, and observers” through ethics-based and issues-based environmental work. Examining the different frames used in the religious-environmental community are important since some research has indicated that the effective use of frames might be more instrumental than certain organizational, tactical, and political aspects in helping a group to achieve its goals (Benford & Snow, 2000). These latter aspects, however, remain important and also help to determine whether or not an organization meets its objectives. Because of this, the current study also examines how certain organizational, tactical, and political aspects of religious-environmental groups - such as staff size, staff demographics, scope of operations, and collaboration with other groups - influence which frames come to be expressed most often, and how. In addition, the present research examines certain contextual influences that might also work to shape the use of certain frames. In particular, the influence of engagement in policy advocacy work, the type of which will vary according to political opportunity structure, is studied. Certain cultural constraints and opportunities, such as geographical location and availability of funding (which can be impacted by the cultural context in which funders are located), are also examined.

Appendix D: Christian-related Eco-theological Ethics among Organizational Proponents in the U.S. (Kearns, 1996)

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Christian Stewardship Ethic</i>	<i>Eco-Justice Ethic</i>	<i>Creation Spirituality Ethic</i>
<b>Starting Point</b>	biblical mandate	social justice	cosmological physics
<b>Theological Appeal</b>	evangelical	mainline Christian social justice	liberal/unchurched ecumenical
<b>Images of God</b>	transcendent authoritative	transcendent God of liberation	immanent panentheistic
<b>Images of Nature</b>	Old Testament Land; fecundity; God's creation	human environment natural resources	eco-system; creation as cosmos; universe
<b>Human-Nature Relationship</b>	gardener/caretaker aesthetic	sustainable use of natural resources for human betterment	proper human place in bio-system
<b>Roots of Environmental Crisis</b>	human sinfulness & disobedience to God	injustice/inequality; economic systems	dualism; anthropocentrism; human alienation from nature
<b>Environmental Issues</b>	resource depletion; degradation of land and culture; agriculture	toxic/hazardous wastes; health; agriculture	wilderness preservation; species extinction
<b>Social Change Orientation</b>	homocentric = change individuals	sociocentric = change society	homocentric = change individuals

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Christian Stewardship Ethic</i>	<i>Eco-Justice Ethic</i>	<i>Creation Spirituality Ethic</i>
<b>Prescribed Response</b>	correct doctrine; restore Christianity as guide; Balance Bible and biology	correct praxis; government regulation; grassroots organizing	correct being/spirituality new worldview
<b>Intellectual R = Religion S = Science</b>	R = Bible S = biology	R = liberation theology S = social sciences	R = medieval mysticism S = evolution; physics
<b>Worldview</b>	anthropocentric; pre-modern = religion as Sacred canopy	anthropocentric; modern= most at home focus on rights and justice	biocentric post-modern monism