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How Environmentalists and Skeptics Can Discover the Same Goals: Making Eco-Friendly More People-Friendly

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How Environmentalists and Skeptics Can Discover the Same Goals:

Making Eco-Friendly More People-Friendly

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May 2012

Environmental Studies

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Abstract

Oftentimes, environmental activists treat and pose issues with a sense of emergency. Unfortunately, to a population who does not feel it has the energy to care, such panic has a negative effect. Worse still is when people do not agree that there is a problem. The difference in risk perception greatly divides environmentalists from regular Americans. On the one hand, it is crucial for environmentalists to continue changing the political and economic paradigms. However, policy-making and the development of solutions become greater hurdles when there is a lack of support from the general public. The very nature of environmental problems bonds us close to them and to each other. A sick environment means sick people. If that is the case, why is there such disconnect and animosity between those who consider themselves activists and those who do not? How do we overcome the politics in perception and prevent the severe political polarity from affecting progress?

What do you think is the strongest reason people choose to not litter? Is it the sign that threatens to fine them \$100 for doing so? Is it that they religiously follow some sort of environmental ethic? Or is it their childhood memory of Uncle Frank giving them a swift tap on the head for tossing a candy wrapper on the ground? America is filled with both entrepreneurs and idiots. But more importantly, it is filled with families and communities that foster relationships that truly mean something. In this article I explore the subtle forms in which environmental awareness already exists in these communities and better ways to tap into those pro-environment sentiments. I hope that a better understanding of this can lead to improved relations between active environmentalists and the greater American public.

Introduction

Today's dedicated environmentalists face myriad problems. First, there is the looming issue of rising global temperatures. Another is the growing world population. Furthermore, there is continued environmental degradation, everything from overfishing, deforestation, and soil erosion to air and water pollution. People who identify themselves as part of the environmental community largely see these problems as imminent and threatening. However, another problem facing so-called environmentalists is the inability to reach out to certain individuals and segments of the population resistant to some of their most basic ideas, such as the belief in human-caused climate change and the need to protect wildlife habitats. Though it may be a different type of problem from the others listed, it is still a significant one. If the modern environmental movement does not gain a better ability to relate to the "everyday American," other movements, including the TEA Party, will continue to determine the dominant American ideologies.

I once had a Starbucks cup that had written on it the following: "The Way I See It #289: 'So-called global warming is just a secret ploy by wacko tree-huggers to make America energy independent, clean our air and water, improve the fuel efficiency of our vehicles, kick-start 21st-century industries, and make our cities safer and more livable. Don't let them get away with it!' – Chip Giller Founder of Grist.org" (Photo credit: Weston Alan; <http://freeimagefinder.com/detail/1775406019.html>). In essence, as that catchy and marketable quote was trying to say: why must environmentalists always be portrayed as this group of idealists, "unrealists"



disconnected from normal Americans? Can we not see that many environmental initiatives are a win-win for the average person? Some left-leaning environmentalists spend their time looking for ways to incite a revolution while their foes look for reasons to defend pollution and consumption. What I would like to demonstrate is the great deal of people that are being lost in the middle; that there is common ground to be found if we are willing to cross the political barbed wire that has surrounded us for so long.

In the political and social spheres of the United States, finding common ground has taken a back seat to absolute conversion, denial, and ignorance. A result of the constant polarity is the lack of solidarity between the average American and today's environmentalists. However, this paper seeks to identify more productive strategies: ways that we as a society can work towards the same goals despite our different reasons. Although it is not a perfect solution for all of today's environmental ills, it is an attempt at discovering win-win situations for solving some major problems. Environmentalists can work to improve such situations as climate change, growing world population, and environmental degradation by identifying with the more universally popular goals of creating employment, decreasing health care costs, alleviating poverty, and reducing US dependence on foreign oil. Patterns of this common-ground strategy, practical collaboration despite personal differences, can be seen emerging across the country. Whether it comes from the White House or the community center, this openness to compromise will do more than the current strategy of all-or-nothing.

Empirical data collected through five interviews will serve as examples of public sentiment toward environmental issues. Though this pool of evidence is not large, I believe it helps inform the statements made in this article. The surveys were collected in March of 2012. Those surveyed were: James T. (Catholic priest), Woody H. (high school math teacher), Monica

C. (first-year law student), and Ines P. (receptionist). These four are meant to demonstrate “regular” Americans. In addition, DJ W., an environmental studies student, was surveyed to serve as a contrast. Again, the pool is small but I believe it demonstrates the diversity of opinions as well as many people’s general belief in the need for a healthy environment. The survey questions were either taken from or inspired by the studies conducted by Willett Kempton, James S. Boster, and Jennifer A. Hartley in their book, *Environmental Values in American Culture* (1995, p. 248). The full surveys are available at the end of this article.

To clarify, references in this paper to “environmentalists” or the “modern environmental movement” are meant to bring an idea of people who are believers in humanity’s impact on the climate, who acknowledge that overpopulation problems are closely tied to environmental problems, and who actively support limiting environmental degradation. By doing this I do not mean to oversimplify the diversity of the environmental community or reference a specific section in the “history of environmentalism.” In addition, when I use expressions such as/similar to “regular Americans,” I am referring to people who do not actively consider themselves environmentalists or do not necessarily fit in the above description. Again, it is not to say that Americans are typically unaware or indifferent to environmental issues. It is important to convey that a main point of this paper is to blur the perceived lines between “environmentalist” and “regular Americans;” to suggest that combating systemic environmental issues will involve getting regular Americans to understand that solutions to environmental problems are not by nature anti-human. I only wish to save time in conveying those main points.

Philosophical Pragmatism

My approach employs philosophical pragmatism. Pragmatism “takes moral pluralism seriously and articulates a middle ground between a single monistic theory and an ‘anything goes’ relativism” (DesJardines, 2006, p. 265). When applied to environmental issues, pragmatism translates to solving problems without necessarily agreeing on why they should be solved. This strategy is often used within the discussion of environmental ethics between the theories of Deep Ecology, ecofeminism, the land ethic, biocentrism, and so on (DesJardines, 2006, p. 261). Now it must stretch farther. Pragmatism needs to be recognized by those who do not feel that they are a part of any environmental movement. Likewise, the largely liberal environmentalist community needs to have faith in the idea that it can come to some of the same conclusions as conservative businessmen and Christian groups.

The most important step in pragmatism is identifying what different ethics, theories, or strategies have in common (DesJardines, 2006, p. 267). This goes against the status quo of our political system in which the differences between political ideologies are emphasized. Nevertheless, both republicans and democrats are constantly saying the same things to their constituents. For example, everyone claims to want to reduce dependence on foreign oil and create employment. Currently, much of the American public is under the impression that our two main political parties spend too much time claiming their way is the only way and not actually accomplishing anything. This frustration makes the public more inclined to join movements like the TEA Party. It was also made visible when Americans chose to vote Republicans back into the House in the 2010 elections. Conversely, if frustration is channeled into pragmatic pluralist movements such as the Coffee Party’s mission to create a “culture of informed people, and public events like Jon Stewart’s Rally to Restore Sanity in D.C., the hope is that political leaders will take on a dialogue of cooperation and ditch the language of confrontation.

DesJardines (2006) writes that pragmatism emphasizes that knowledge is derived from experience and “context-driven practical accounts of both truth and value.” Also known as radical empiricism, pragmatism recognizes that a “world of experience is a world of diversity, change, and pluralism” (p. 265). The simple idea is that experience powers knowledge. However, it needs to be realized that those experiences can be different and changing. Currently, it appears that political and economic leaders have forgotten that the world is not a fixed black and white, but colorful and fluid. This being understood, certain common experiences can also bring us together. When it comes to global issues, there are few “one size fits all” answers.

Areas that I will argue need the application of pragmatism include climate change, over population, and environmental degradation. I believe it is possible to pull together some of the active environmentalists, businesses, local and federal governments, and religious groups of the U.S. to solve these difficult problems. The very first step begins with the recognition of basic identical goals that promote a healthier planet, sustainable economy, and a good quality of life for humanity.

Climate Change

Climate change is the arguably today’s hot button environmental problem. There are many reasons why people choose to believe in human-made climate change but seemingly just as many reasons they do not. The issue has been labeled by some skeptics as merely caused by solar cycles or just bad science entirely. Some even suggest it is the ultimate government maneuver to take over the economy. Gallup polls reveal, “people’s perspectives on global warming are not a function of their scientific background, but a function of their politics” (Gallup, “Politics Affects Americans' Views,” 2012). However, reverting back to Chip Griller’s coffee cup quote, one does

not need to believe in human-made climate change entirely to see that many of the measures taken to address it could be beneficial to people and the environment.

For reference, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as of April 2012, defines climate change as:

Any significant change in measures of climate (such as temperature, precipitation or wind) lasting for an extended period (decades or longer). As through much of its history, the Earth's climate is changing. Right now it is getting warmer. Most of the warming in recent decades is very likely the result of human activities.

They cite the 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report in their reference to the impact of human activities.

Combating Greenhouse Gases

To the environmental movement, decreasing the amount of greenhouse gas emissions is one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century. Many today are saying that preparing for the impacts of climate change is now equally as important, if not more important. Unfortunately, people cannot begin to effectively address these challenges until they have completed step number one: convincing government, businesses, and society that acting now will ultimately be beneficial to humanity, and possibly even the economy.

As the rules of pragmatism go, it is important to first recognize commonalities before attacking differences. Even climate change skeptics have advocated for a “no regrets” approach: taking progressive action to limit emissions so long as it does not negatively affect the economy. In 2003, The Heartland Institute, a conservative nonprofit organization promoting free-market solutions, released a list titled “Eight Reasons Global Warming is a Scam.” Even this list, written by the formidable skeptic Joseph Blast, declares its support for the “no regrets” strategy:

“The alternative to demands for immediate action to ‘stop global warming’ is not to do nothing. The best strategy is to invest in atmospheric research now and in reducing emissions sometime in the future if the science becomes more compelling. In the meantime, investments should be made to reduce emissions only when such investments make economic sense in their own right” (Blast, 2003)

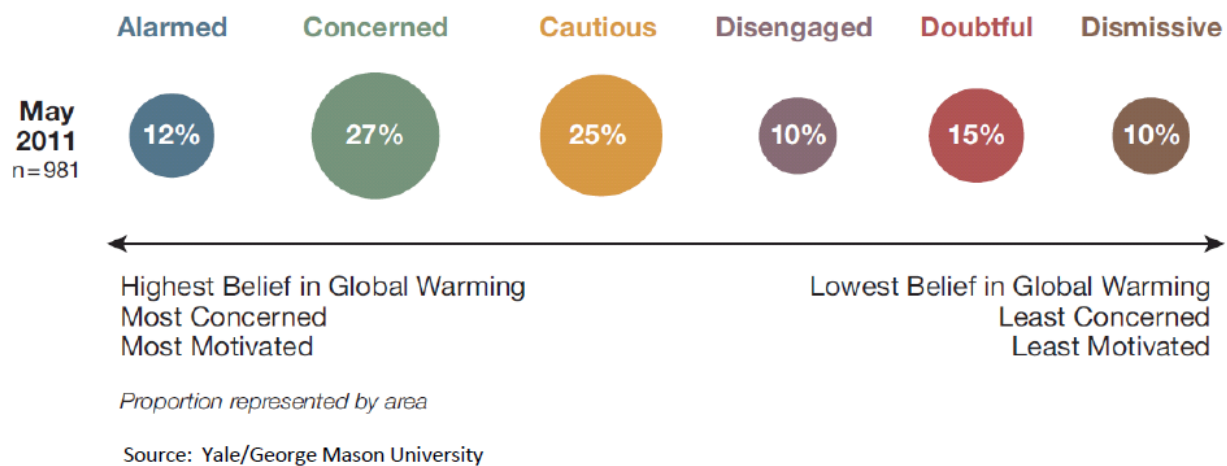
Similarly, John R. Christy, director of the Earth System Science Center, questions the lack of debate in the media regarding global warming. In a 2007 summary to the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, Christy stressed the scientific uncertainty surrounding climate. In doing so, however, he nonetheless cited other reasons to enact action on climate change, such as energy security, economic resilience, and health:

There is no guarantee at all that specific energy politics designed to deal with climate change will actually have the intended effect either in magnitude or sign. However, energy policies which address other important issues mentioned above and which include the emphatically desirable goal of affordable energy, and also reduce emissions, are worth pursuing (as cited in Keilbach, 2009, p. 155).

These two examples address why businesses and governments should be concerned about decreasing greenhouse gases. Still, they are not enough to speak to why the average American should care. Worrying about the environment is one thing, but the best answers will be found in more universally-appealing reasons. Two reasons, complimentary to the growing apprehension of green house gases but not necessarily given, include the popular support for alternative energy and reducing dependence on foreign oil.

The Yale Project on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication partnered in a study called “Global Warming’s Six

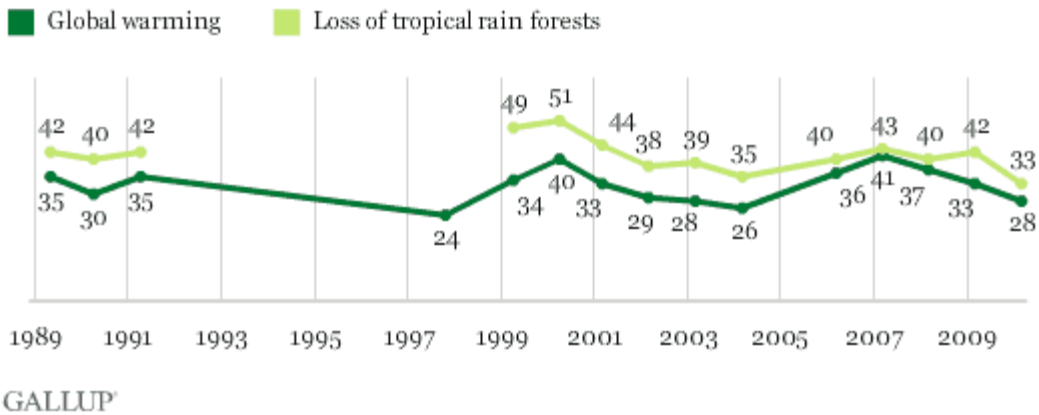
America's." It divides Americans' views on climate change into six categories, depending on their impressions of the urgency of the problem: alarmed, concerned, cautious, disengaged, doubtful, and dismissive. The report concludes, "The Six Americas are not very different demographically, but are dramatically different in their beliefs and actions, as well as their basic values and political orientations" (Six Americas," 2011, p. 5). It is more interesting evidence that environmental values are not based on scientific knowledge or education but on political views.



First, the bad news. An April 2010 Gallup poll showed energy legislation, in comparison to financial and immigration reform, as a low priority for democrats, republicans, and independents (Gallup, "Priorities," 2010). Next, a March 2009 Gallup Poll found that 39% of Americans supported increasing federal funding for oil and gas (Gallup, "Energy" 2009). Worst of all, a March 2010 survey revealed that concern for many environmental issues is at a 20-year low, with climate change down 13% since 2007 (Gallup, "Concern," 2010).

Worry About Environmental Issues

% Who worry "a great deal"



Despite these findings, and many like them, all hope is not lost. The same March 2009 Gallup poll also found that 77% of Americans support increased government spending on alternative energy sources. Likewise, the lack of concern for environmental issues found in the March 2010 survey is deeply rooted in the common idea that environmental conditions in the US are improving and that local, state, and federal governments are taking increased action in solving these problems. Some of the most challenging environmental problems- climate change, overpopulation, and overconsumption of resources- are less visible than a polluted lake, for example, and not as easy to conceptualize. Another explanation lies in the greater anxiety around economic issues, which often trump environmental concerns in times of economic uncertainty. (Gallup, "Concern," 2010). Nonetheless, despite the greater worry over economic issues, specifically unemployment and the growing federal deficit, the environment is consistently seen as a top national problem twenty-five years in the future (Gallup, "Top Problems" 2010).

Survey Question #3: When people try to protect the environment, do you sometimes feel that other things do not get enough attention? For example, when people say environmental protection may make people lose jobs and may raise the cost of living: How would you feel about those kinds of things?

- James T: There is a balance that needs to be struck between protecting the environment and protection of jobs. [There are] methods of for example producing energy that create jobs and protect the environment. Also, there is no need that increased fuel economy in autos should lead to a decline in employment. But there is no need also, that a fuel-efficient car such as a "clean diesel" or hybrid should cost so much more than its conventional counterpart.
- Woody H: Environmental and fiscal issues often conflict. Nuclear energy is a classic example. While economically sound, nuclear power can have a huge influence on the planet's health, but it does lower overall energy costs and, thus the costs to the average citizen, a tough choice to all of us.
- Ines P: Usually there is a give and take in all things. Hopefully there's a way to protect and preserve the environment with minimal casualties to mankind.
- Monica C: Such as what? I believe the protection of the environment is fundamental. I am not sure what other things would be neglected at the detriment to protecting the environment.
- DJ W: I don't think that matters. (Why not?) Because our life should be more important than a new system like economics.

Another reason Americans can unify in support to combat greenhouse gases is the popular initiative to reduce dependence on foreign oil. It is important to not let this reasoning simply be a means of backing the opening of additional oil reserves, onshore or offshore. Reducing dependence on foreign oil should be a battle cry for supporting renewable energy and vice versa. Citizens across the political spectrum, especially in a post-9/11 world, agree it should be on the agenda. Reducing dependence on foreign oil can entail regulations for better vehicle mileage, investments into public transportation, cutting back on waste, better planned cities, and research and development of new technologies. Again, an emphasis on reducing import of fossil fuels is best paired with education on lowering consumption and alternative energy.

Survey Question #9: What do you think is the environmental issue of greatest concern?

- **Woody H: Without a doubt, energy consumption.**

It is undoubtedly evident that the American public's concern for environmental issues is highly impressionable. When gas prices rise, Americans' support for more efficient cars grows. When they fall back down, indifference returns. Before the BP oil spill in April 2010, Americans had recently prioritized energy over the environment for the first time in the survey's 10 year history (Gallup, "Priorities" 2010). After the spill, interest in increasing environmental protection was back on the table (Gallup, "Spill Alters Views" 2010).

Creating a greener society is going to take more than the usual suspects of liberal college students, surfers, and hemp-wearing urbanites. People who do not identify themselves as environmentalists need to find other reasons to care; to share common goals with the environmental movement. Incorporating the challenges of managing one's "household economy," especially energy costs, is one important way to bring discussion of environmental issues to the dinner table. Secondly, making alternative energy a part of the discussion on global and national security- pitching it from a conservative's perspective- can also diversify the conversation and those taking part in it.

I'm going to read you a list of environmental problems. As I read each one, please tell me if you personally worry about this problem a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or not at all. First, how much do you personally worry about global warming?

	Great deal	Fair amount	Only a little	Not at all
	%	%	%	%
All Americans	30	25	22	23
Republicans	16	18	26	40
Independents	31	24	23	21
Democrats	42	32	17	10
Conservatives	19	18	27	36
Moderates	32	34	20	14
Liberals	47	25	16	11
18 to 29	35	24	20	20
30 to 49	32	25	20	23
50 to 64	23	27	27	23
65+	28	22	22	26
Postgraduate	25	27	24	23
College graduate	27	24	25	24
Some college	25	29	21	24
High school or less	36	22	21	21

March 8-11, 2012

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(Graph retrieved from: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/153653/Americans-Worries-Global-Warming-Slightly.aspx>)

Rebuilding the Economy

In his book, *The Green-Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems*, Van Jones identifies the dual crisis of “radical socioeconomic inequality and rampant environmental destruction” (Jones, 2008, p. 24). Radical socioeconomic inequality, long present in the US, was highlighted as energy prices skyrocketed and the country entered a recession. As everyone watched food prices grow higher and job opportunities grow only dimmer, the poorest,

already disenfranchised portions of the population were hit hardest. This includes the urban poor, people of color, and the poor of small towns and rural areas. Tell this population to care about the environment, specifically the less visible problems of climate change and overpopulation, and you're not likely to get an energetically-positive response. However, people gather in support of the TEA Party and vocal leaders, looking for any movement that flirts with having the ability to change the status-quo. What if, instead, the environmental movement had the answers? What if the environmental movement became more about thriftiness that Americans understand and less identified with liberal spending? What if people realized that environmental regulation is not just a job killer, but a job creator?

Got college loans, a pay cut, or diabetes from a cheap diet of chips and soda? Blame it all on the economy (whether it is appropriate to or not). Ask an environmentalist how to fix the economy and you will get a very interesting and diverse set of answers, everything from steady-state economics to anarchy. But how to do you talk to a regular person about the relationship between the economy and the environment without alienating them (or yourself)? Politicians have always known that the magic word is and always has been "jobs." However, if we're going to solve this century's problems, it is going to have to be "green-collar jobs." Green jobs are a very real concept. So much so that the US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) received funding beginning in fiscal year 2010 to study and gather data on them. According to BLS, green jobs are either

- A. jobs in businesses that produce goods or provide services that benefit the environment or conserve natural resources or

- B. jobs in which workers' duties involve making their establishment's production processes more environmentally friendly or use fewer natural resources. ("The BLS Green Jobs Definition," para. 1)

If the technology is supported and realistic enough to create jobs, Americans will begin to take an interest.

Number and percent distribution of establishments in industries where green goods and services are classified, by industry sector, 2009

Industry sector	Number of establishments	Percent distribution
Construction	820,700	38.1
Professional and business services	779,100	36.2
Other services (Repair and maintenance services, Professional organizations)	183,300	8.5
Natural resources and mining	88,700	4.1
Information	77,000	3.6
Manufacturing	77,700	3.6
Trade, transportation, and utilities	49,300	2.3
Public administration	42,100	2.0
Education and health services	26,400	1.2
All other sectors	10,400	0.5
Total	2,154,700	100.0

(Graph retrieved from: <http://www.bls.gov/green/>)

If the economy has hit rock-bottom, why not rebuild it greener? Solar panels and wind turbines need to be made so why not bring these industries to the urban areas lacking manufacturing jobs for unskilled workers? They are also going to need installation and upkeep and therefore people with the training to do so. Green buildings need environmentally-minded construction workers to get built and environmentally-conscious maintenance workers to remain green. Green companies need environmental lawyers and eco-friendly administrations. A new green economy is going to need inventors, engineers, manufacturers, transporters, marketers, sales people, academics, scientists, and so on.

Every politician promises to create and protect jobs for his or her constituents. In order to make a greener economy more tangible, the government should continue to try to create incentives for businesses and individuals. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, passed under President Obama and the 111th Congress, committed to, among many other things, \$4.3 billion in home energy credits for homeowners who make their homes more energy-efficient, \$4.5 billion to modernize the nation's electrical grid and smart grid, \$5 billion for weatherizing modest-income homes, \$500 million for training of green-collar workers, \$300 million for energy efficient appliance rebates, and \$250 million to increase energy efficiency in low-income housing ("Provision of the Act," para. 3). These are some of the investments that bring the concept of a "greener" economy into regular conversation and do not include the billions meant to go to other energy or environmental projects. These examples are ways in which government is seeking to make environmentally-focused initiatives appealing to regular Americans, most especially through cash savings connected with energy-efficiency. Although savings are evident in many sustainable actions, there will be initial costs. I hope to address some of these issues further in this article, finding reasons for "going green" to appeal to people, even when it means paying more (Photo retrieved from: <http://earthfirst.com/5-terrible-bush-environmental-policies-we-hope-obama-fixes/>)

Environmental Degradation

Environmental degradation may have its worst effects on poor and minority groups but it is something that affects everyone. This all-encompassing and global



nature is what makes environmental issues different from many others. Through environmental degradation, we lose entire cultures and alter whole ecosystems. Despite this bad news, much of the harm done to the environment today is, in one sense, caused by the choices we make. If one believes still believes that humans are rational, it is not outrageous to believe that they are capable of making the right choices for the environment when approached in an appealing way. Making environmental consciousness a part of the American psyche, a part of what it means to be a “patriot,” should be a tool to unite and not divide.

Involve All Types of People

The pivotal importance of taking environmentalism from a focus of liberals to something that is identifiable to conservative types, from a “luxury” of the rich to an issue of the working class, is crucial to the survival of this modern environmental movement.

Survey Question #17: [Have you heard of the greenhouse effect?] Do you think something should be done about this? If yes, who should be involved? Individuals, governments, corporations?

- Monica C: Everyone should be involved. However, I think government would be best suited. Congress needs to enact more stringent laws for individuals and corporations to follow in order to better promote clean air and the like.

One fear is that the new green movement will take off without the consideration of the poor and working-class. Van Jones (2008) contemplates, “As the new environmentalists move to the front of the line in public discourse, only two questions remain: Whom will they take with them? And whom will they leave behind (p. 52)?” He warns of the likelihood of an “eco-apartheid,” making clear distinction of class through one’s ability to take part in the luxury of environmentalism.

In that scenario, one side of town there would be ecological ‘haves,’ enjoying access to healthy, morally upstanding green products and services. On the other side of town, ecological ‘have-nots’ would be languishing in the smoke, fumes, toxic chemicals, and illnesses of the old-pollution based economy (p. 53).

Environmental injustice is something that cannot be skimmed over. In working toward a green society, we cannot allow environmental degradation to simply be hid in low-income areas.

As discussed earlier, the Department of Labor is expected to receive a total \$500 million for green-collar job training initiatives from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. One recipient of this money is YouthBuild, a community development program that trains low-income young people basic job skills, increasingly putting them to work building affordable-green housing (“About YouthBuild,” para. 1). In April of 2009, US Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis testified before the US Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions (HELP) Committee on the Department of Labor’s use of ARRA funds and the importance of green job training.

These grants will provide an infusion of workforce training funding that will help ensure there is a qualified American workforce ready to meet the needs of our country's expanding green industries... with the objective of effectively targeting the communities most in need through our "green training" investments. The unemployment data show that particular segments of the population — young people, people with disabilities, African Americans and Hispanics — are facing unemployment rates in the double digits. Green jobs provide an opportunity to rebuild our communities in a more equitable manner (para. 10).

Those hardest hit by the economic recession and, often times, environmental degradation, should be some of the first aided in economic recovery efforts. Acknowledging the disproportionate

amount of injustice faced by low-income and minority groups and then providing more opportunities to participate in the creation of the US's greener society are ways the government can protect against "eco-apartheid."

So-called "eco-apartheid" also affects low-income families, and increasingly middle-class families, in the area of food and, consequently, health. Food prices are a significant part of the household economy, and therefore a political issue. With the potential toll that the US agribusiness industries are taking on the environment and the nation's health, it may confirm that spending extra money on food now can keep hospital bills lower in the future. It has always proven difficult to convince people to act based on long-term benefits. The sad case is that the growing-obesity epidemic is shedding a bright light on how we eat today. The benefits no longer seem so far off when many people know of others, across all income levels, suffering from diabetes and heart disease. Again, few actions were taken until the problems were directly in front of our faces. People need to see that eating in a way that is beneficial to the environment can also be beneficial to their health.

Unfortunately, many people feel that they do not have access to the options of eco-friendly food choices, such as local and organic. Ways in which communities are looking to change this include the expansion of food stamp programs to farmers' markets, such as with NY's wireless EBT program, better known as food stamps. Still, middle-class families may still feel that they are unable to provide their families with healthy and responsible choices. As Lisa Miller (2009) reminds us in her article "Divided We Eat," in no other place are the markers of social status greater. In her article, she asks a low-income diabetic man by the name of Jabir Suluki about eating healthy on \$75 a week: "To get good food, you really got to sacrifice a lot... But I take that sacrifice, because it's worth it." He believes it is the "responsibility of parents to



feed their children good food in moderate portions, and that it's possible to do so on a fixed income" (p. 6). Of course, it cannot be expected of everyone to have the same revelations or determination as Suluki, but it is a testament to Americans' ability to make

sacrifices. Through better accessibility and education, healthy food can become less about making a monetary "sacrifice" and more of a common sense choice. In 2010, a new TV show debuted on ABC titled "Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution." During the show's first season, the charismatic chef made his way to an area of West Virginia with a high obesity-related death rate. He showed parents how to cook better for their families on a budget and educated children on their fruits and vegetables. The fact that the show was available on basic cable made it accessible to large portions of the population. The series had a reality-show thrill while also having a PBS educational feel and the fun of the Food Network. Oliver's visible struggles to change people's minds on the show actually put the discussion of fresh versus processed foods into the dinner conversations of his audience. This is not a "revolution" for the environment but for health. Fortunately, improving one often means improving the other. Even if the environmental impact is secondary in people's reasoning for eating local and organic, it does not negate the impact of such choices. (Photo: ABC Network)

Another looming issue in the modern environmental movement's inability to identify with regular Americans is the political polarity surrounding it. People ideologically on the right largely identify environmental issues as part of the liberal agenda. In a bit of an ironic twist, it seems that conservatives do not care much for conservation. The environmental movement

would be making a mistake in allowing groups like the TEA Party, in which climate change skepticism is a basic, to harness all the energy of America's disenfranchised. As much of what I have discussed so far in this paper deals with heavy government spending and support, it is no wonder why people associate environmental issues with big government. However, there is much more to it than that.

Contrary to my earlier statement, the homepage for Republicans for Environmental Protection (REP) quotes Russell Kirk as



saying “There is nothing more conservative than conservation.” Another page cites Ronald Reagan: “Many laws protecting environmental quality have promoted liberty by securing property against the destructive trespass of pollution.” A blog by the self-proclaimed “Green Republican” simply says “Less is always more.” These examples disprove claims that environmentalism is simply a liberal ideal. The facts are that issues involving pollution, wildlife destruction, and climate change hurt us all, even if they hurt us for different reasons.

Take the National Rifle Associate (NRA), for example. Teaming up with such an organization may very well deeply offend the vegans and gun-control advocates of the environmental movement. However, if we are going to continue to advance an environmental agenda, it is going to take some pretty unconventional ideas. The fact of the matter is that many proud members of the NRA are also proud hunters. These are people who have a stake in protecting the environment from ruin. Protecting a species' natural habitat for its own right has never been enough for many regular Americans. Whether you love the bear for its place in the ecosystem or for its place on your kitchen table, you are still interested in protecting its habitat. If

hunting is wisely regulated, it serves an important lobby for conservation. The NRA's Institute for Legislative Action (2007) states,

Hunters are the foremost conservationists in America. By preserving hunting we are ensuring that hunters will continue to protect wildlife and the environment. Through license fees, hunters pay for 75% of the budget of state wildlife agencies. Without hunters there would be no agencies, and without the agencies wildlife would be unprotected.

While these statements are a bit bold, there is certainly underlying truths. Language like this proves that hunters identify themselves as conservationists. If their numbers, energy, and desire to continue their "sporting heritage" are also used against pollution and the many issues that lead to environmental degradation, does it not seem right that the modern environmental movement make an effort to include them in moving forward?

Many of the open-minded liberal people who have flocked to the environmental movement seem to have bones to pick with the Christian right. Who can blame them when



someone like US Rep. John Shimkus of Illinois (2010) claims that climate change is a myth because God told Noah he would never

again destroy the Earth by flood? Additionally, some Christians believe that Christ's second coming will save believers from the Earth, whatever state it is in, to bring them to a better afterlife. There is also a sense that humanity is cocky to think that it could have such overwhelming effects on the Earth.

But the faith shared by many Americans, conservatives and liberals alike, should not be feared or belittled. On the contrary, it is another example of an area in which the environmental movement could stand to gain some ground. Vocal leaders like Shimkus make it easier for more

progressive Christian movements to be ignored. Care for the preservation of the environment can fit well into the Christian culture's emphasis on care for other humans, for future generations, and the importance of appreciating gifts from God. As Lynn White Jr. discusses in "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," retelling the story of Creation in a way that stresses stewardship rather than domination is one of the simplest things that can be done. Prominent environmentalist Wendell Berry was also a lifelong Baptist. By reexamining Christian culture, it is easy to see the importance of love, community, and simplicity, things that could very well go hand-in-hand with environmental preservation. Some green groups include the faith-specific Evangelical Environmental Network and the more general network of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment who feature the verse 9:12 in Genesis that reads: "God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations.'" In 2008, the Vatican created a new list of 7 deadly sins, including pollution and extreme wealth. The Catholic Climate Covenant takes the teachings of St Francis and turns them into a pledge for people to take, connecting environmental stewardship with caring for the world's poor. Overlooking the potential of progressive Christian groups, alienating them by associating their faith with ignorance, would be a huge mistake to make (Photo retrieved from: <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/>).

Survey
Question #5:
What should
the
relationship
between
humans and
nature be?
Do you have
a religious or
spiritual basis
for that?

"The 'relationship' of nature and humans should be stewardship." Nature is a gift that has been entrusted to the Creator. Nature was present here, before each of us came upon this earth, and it will be here hopefully long after our lives here upon this earth are through.

While I consider myself a religious person, I don't see this as a religious issue, perhaps I should. I see this more as a responsibility issue, that we, as a human race, have a duty to take care of our planet.

In 2007, Nancy Jackson of the Climate and Energy Project came to conservative rural Kansas with the goal of getting local communities involved in reducing fossil fuel use. Her work would be covered in a 2010 article in the NY Times:

Invoking the notion of thrift, she set out to persuade towns to compete with one another to become more energy-efficient. She worked with civic leaders to embrace green jobs as a way of shoring up or rescuing their communities. And she spoke with local ministers about “creation care,” the obligation of Christians to act as stewards of the world that God gave them, even creating a sermon bank with talking points they could download. Today, Seimens is building a wind turbine factory in the area, creating 400 jobs. The Climate and Energy Project worked with the area to reduce energy consumption by an amazing 5%. Most importantly, Ms. Jackson and the Project did it all without trying to convince the local people that climate change was happening or that they should not hate Al Gore.

It is important to note that all religious groups are worth appealing to. Many of the major religious groups actually do have a message on the relationship between nature and humanity, whether it be that of stewardship like in the Judeo-Christian tradition, or an even closer connection, such as the interconnectedness suggested in the teachings of Hinduism. This paper focuses on Christian groups largely because of their powerful political- and often conservative-voices, as well as the author’s familiarity with the Catholic Church.

Creating Less Waste & Using Fewer Resources; A “Less is More” Society

Sometimes we need to have things right in front of our faces to take any notice. We need to see it in our community in the form of jobs and in our households in the form of cheaper bills. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of April 2012, the US unemployment rate is

8.2%. If the effects of the Stimulus Bill fail to show up in our daily lives, especially in the realm of green jobs, environmentalists should not expect any newcomers to their cause.

Every day, people are seeing everything from the marketing of green products to articles on ways to cut energy costs. It is being made clear that energy efficiency saves money. Judging from the headlines, the economic downturn is teaching us that experiences and relationships are more important than material goods. In the Wall Street Journal's "Seven Smart Money Moves for the Holidays," Brett Arends (2010) suggests giving experiences and cashless gifts instead of "things." It seems that Americans are almost growing proud of their incredible ability to be thrifty and cut-out the needless things from their lives. A blog by Sarah Gilbert (2010) points out that large numbers of Americans continue to bag their lunches and embrace a simpler lifestyle overall, despite the supposed slowing of the economic downturn. At the same time, the realization that our thriftiness also helps the environment is still only secondary. However dispiriting, this is an excellent example of accomplishing the same goal for different reasons.

Survey Question
#8: Would you
say you have
"environmental
values?" If yes,
would you
describe them?
Where do you
think you
learned those
values?

- Ines P: Yes. Doing my part to reduce my footprint on the earth: reduce, reuse, recycle. Parents grew up in the depression, so they started me on those values. Growing up in the 60's added to it, and just trying to be conscious of how my actions affect my surroundings.

Right now, many envision environmentalists as left-leaning white middle-to-upper class hippies, responsible for hurting the economy with their pushes for regulation and land preservation. This does not need to be the case. Environmentalism needs a make-over to prove that it is much more than simply stereo-types. Interestingly enough, thanks to this new “green-wave” in products and services, some of the movement’s once great foes are the ones giving it that makeover. Many have probably noticed Wal-Mart’s new commercials, one about shortening truck routes and all others featuring families using reusable tote bags. Scott Paper Company, long criticized for the deforestation of old-growth forests, is marketing toilet paper rolls without the cardboard tube. Pepsi Co. came out with a biodegradable bag for its Sun Chips brand. This is not what many classic environmentalists consider a perfect start to a new green culture. This is especially true when you consider Americans hated the loud sound of the Sun Chip bags so much, that the company simply pulled the plug. Even Wal-Mart’s push to sell more organic products may just make organic industrial.



(Photos retrieved from: <http://brotherpeacemaker.wordpress.com/2011/01/01/quick-notes-201101/>; <http://www.geekscribe.com/2010/04/11/sun-chips-compostable-bag-too-noisy/>; http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/environment/2010-10-27-1Atube27_ST_N.htm)

There are many issues we are dealing with in the push to make eco-friendly more people-friendly. It is true that some people are proud to buy green products but it is even truer that they will hesitate to buy anything more expensive than unsustainable competitors. In creating accessibility, there seems to be a big risk of defeating the purpose. Americans are not actively learning about what it really means to protect wildlife or reduce their footprint. However, one might argue that the bombardment of green products and services is helping them passively learn, bringing the discussion to the surface. The question now is how do we work out the kinks while not cheapening environmentalism? Environmentalists need to make sure this new green wave continues to roll and that this is not just some bubble trend that will burst. We stand now at the beginning of what could potentially be a more environmentally-conscious culture. But how do we accomplish this without selling out the environment? Green products, services, jobs, and policies need to become the norm and not just the exception. It will also require that overpopulation is addressed tactfully and respectfully, to be addressed later in the article.

While pursuing the ultimate goal of placing ecological and cultural values over monetary values, there are many more strategies being suggested. A 2009 poll found that of people who had made their homes more energy-efficient, 71% had done it to save money and only 29% had done it to help the environment. This demonstrates the striking disparity between the reasons Americans take action, though not completely discouraging.

In a blog written for climatecentral.org, David Ropeik (2010) discusses the “importance of risk perception for effective climate change communication.” He nods to the idea that the difficulty in moving forward on climate policy, “is less a matter of figuring out solutions, and more a matter of developing support from a public that either doesn’t believe human-induced climate change is real, or doesn’t feel particularly threatened by it.” He asks how we can make it

less unappealing to do more and to pay more to go green, focusing specifically on adaptation rather than mitigation of climate change. He suggests that in communicating climate information, we use the following guidelines: Make it local, and personal; Make it concrete, not abstract; Make it now, not later; Point out the trade-offs between risks and benefits; Point out the consequences of delay. Most importantly, keep information consistent with scientific evidence and address issues on a case-by-case basis. In other words, be pragmatic. Ropeik writes,

There are a lot of reasons besides adapting to climate change why communities would want to reduce energy use, reduce the impact of flooding, protect local residents from extreme temperatures, and on and on. Unlike mitigation, which requires an acceptance that human behavior is the problem and what needs to change, adaptation only requires that we look at what is happening, and consider reasonable predictions of what is likely to happen, and find ways to protect ourselves... move from battleground topics to areas where you can find common ground. In all of this, trust is vital... It comes from sharing control of decision making, and from listening and understanding as much as talking to try to make yourself be understood.

Survey
Question #2:
Would you
say that
protecting
the
environment
is important?
Why or why
not?

Protecting the environment is important to me. I see so much waste, especially in our consumer products and packaging. For example, at the supermarket to purchase just one item, the clerk will place that item in a plastic bag. Myself, I have ceased using plastic bags, once the person is home, it will just be put in the trash. I would say absolutely yes, but I think people overestimate their role in what can be done to make that happen. We need to preserve natural resources and to keep the earth habitable for future generations. The environment is definitely is. Without a safe, well-kept environment, there is no way to plan ecologically sensible communities. Even those communities tied with industry have to recognize that their economic success is futile without a properly functioning environment. The environment is the cradle of our lives and our future and past and present.

Over Population

The issue of over population is what makes every other environmental issue so dire. If there were only one billion people in this world, it might be easier for everyone to guiltlessly live an American lifestyle. However, in March 2012, the United Nations estimated that the global population has surpassed seven billion people. This number is what makes environmental degradation so prominent, especially considering that it is an increase of one billion since 2000 and more than double the global population in the 1950s. The Center for Environment and Population published a report as part of a series on “US Population, Energy and Climate Change” that concluded:

While the U.S. “population and climate change” connection is complex, it manifests itself in two primary ways: first, population is related to the causes of climate change, mainly through high per capita energy use and greenhouse gas emissions (the “carbon footprint”) and; second, population factors can exacerbate climate change’s effects by placing more pressures on the natural resource base at specific sites, for example, when there is high population density and continued rapid growth in coastal, urban, suburban, or ecologically vulnerable areas of the U.S. (“Introduction” p. 5).

The waste-absorption capacity of the Earth is a tremendous resource. Nonetheless, waste absorption is not infinite. If we abuse the Earth by super-saturating it pollution, not only do we see a build-up of waste, but the capacity for things like the air, soil, and water to take up our pollution can become permanently damaged. It also raises a great deal of questions about how we will live on a planet devastated by climate change. In a world of one billion, it might be simple enough for people who lived on the coast to move inland and away from rising sea-levels. Unfortunately today, populations are still flocking to the coasts, creating millions of potential

victims. As with many other questions of environmental issues, it comes down to how we want to live. Although some prominent environmentalists claim that there is not enough momentum behind the concept of acting on behalf of future generations, there is still reason to believe that people do imagine and hope that their great grandchildren will ideally be happy and have high-standards of living.

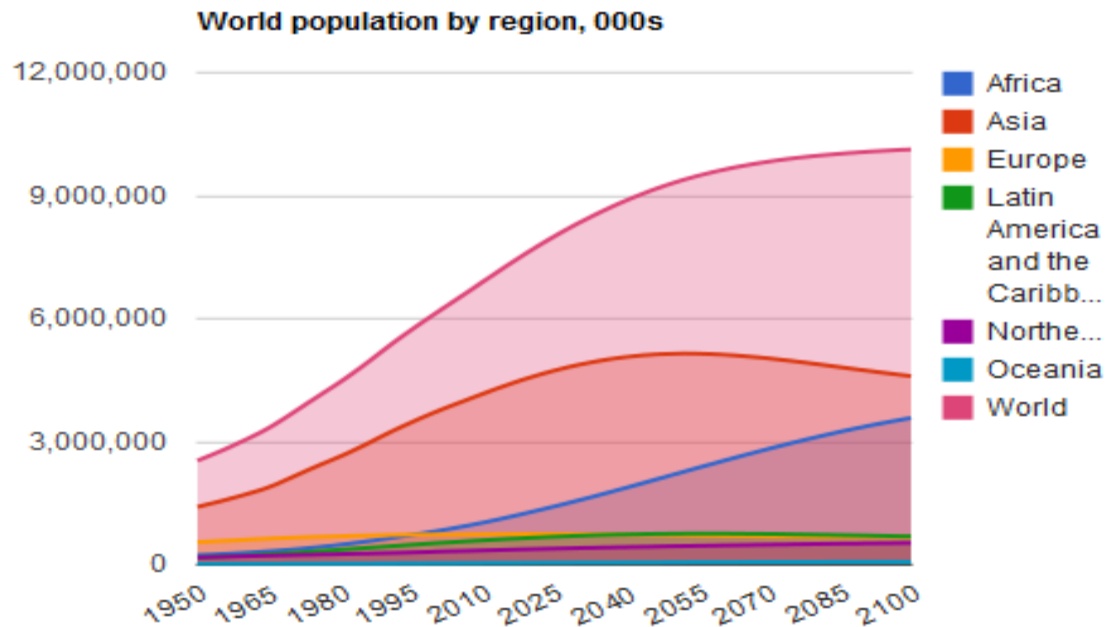
Population is an incredibly large and painful topic for society to swallow, politicians and world leaders being no exception. Asking questions only brings accusations and no answers. How do you tell a human being that he or she should not have any children, let alone *must not* have any? Is there a way to suggest aiming for a smaller world while not raising comparison's to Ebenezer Scrooge's infamous "decrease the surplus population" line? How do we discourage people from having large families while also empowering them? Does America have a role in taming the growing populations of developing countries? Until society speaks up on over population, the questions of sustainability remain up in the air.

Taking part in the discourse

There are several significant observations to make when starting this discussion. Firstly, many often make the mistake of confusing the context within which overpopulation is or is not a problem. While environmentalists and humanitarians may suggest that there are places in the world that qualify as "overpopulated" or heading toward overpopulation, the context is that of available resources, calculating per capita pollution, and quality of life issues. However, critics largely say that the world is in fact "underpopulated" based exclusively on economic issues. They cite countries like Japan and Italy in which there is a shortage of young people. This is a problem when there are no young people to support the aging population, supply labor, pay the government in the form of taxes, and provide new ideas and innovation. In addition, as discussed

by Nicholas Eberstradt (2007), China's one-child policy raised the "4-2-1 problem," the issue being that for every one young person, he or she must support two parents and four grandparents. While these concerns are valid in their own right, they simply do not occur in the same context in which environmentalists make their argument for overpopulation. They may be of the same coin, but undoubtedly different sides.

Secondly, many other critics of the overpopulation argument claim that humanity's simple ability to innovate in times of crisis is enough to prevent problems from arising. However, the fact of the matter is that there are resource shortages constantly occurring all over the world. People do not have access to clean water, adequate health care, shelter, food, education, respectable jobs. The issues of availability and accessibility are sometimes linked to overpopulation and poverty. Poverty and overpopulation are themselves closely linked. For many reasons, wealthier and more educated couples tend to have fewer children. Poverty and population size can even be cyclical. For example, a low income family may need many children to help support the family financially. But having the extra mouths to feed and bodies to clothe and house may or may not even be worth the money brought in by the children. Yes, people are creating solutions, improving access to resources, and rising out of poverty. Nonetheless, finding ways in which to encourage, without coercion, smaller families may very well be innovation in itself. Even those critics that suggest free market capitalism as the cure for overpopulation are still acknowledging smaller families as a goal.



(Graph retrieved from:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/may/06/world-population-country-un>)

Finally, it seems important to acknowledge that the causes for larger or smaller families are not entirely clear-cut. It is true that wealthier nations have had an overall trend of fewer children. This is credited to the idea that the wealthier a family is, the less they have to rely on a child and the more they want to provide for each child, such as with education. But returning to the word “trend,” we must not forget the cultural aspects. While the US Census Bureau calculates that women with upper-middle-class households have an average of 1.8 children, in comparison to women with the lowest incomes who average 2.3 children, it is estimated that the households of *Forbe’s* 400 richest Americans average 2.88 children, as cited in *Slate Magazine*. It has been argued that number of children is becoming a status symbol of the wealthiest families. The ability to provide the best for the most is a sign of privilege. This adds something beyond the political, health, and economic reasons for family size, though not necessarily in a negative way. If it turns out that family size, at least in the United States, is based on cultural and

social inputs, we may even stand a better chance of making small families, for lack of a better word, trendy.

In the 1996 report from the President's Council on Sustainable Development, the topic of population and sustainability was introduced by the following statement:

Population growth, especially when coupled with current consumption patterns, affects sustainability. A sustainable United States is one in where all Americans have access to family planning and reproductive health services, women enjoy increased opportunities for educations and employment, and responsible immigration policies are fairly implemented and enforced. (p. 141)

The United States the third largest population in the world and incredible per capita waste and resource usage. Changing resource usage and population size are not enough alone, but must be combined. The facts remain that 60% of pregnancies in the United States are unintended and 83% of all teenagers giving birth come from families who live below the poverty line (p. 148).

By incorporating more holistic thinking, Americans can set an example of better family planning. Much of the population growth in the US occurs through immigration, making it even more important to set that example and make environmentalism part of the so-called American way of life. By emphasizing the positives of better planned and smaller families- lower costs and more opportunities- environmentalists can appeal to American families while avoiding accusations of environmental racism or totalitarian thinking.

The "Right to Life"

Given that many other methods of reducing unintended pregnancies are generally well known- better sex education, access to contraceptives, reducing peer pressure and preventing sexual abuse, increasing male involvement, and so on- I would like to discuss something less

publicized. In his book, *The Greening of the Church*, Irish Catholic missionary Sean McDonagh (1990) asks what “pro-life” really means (p. 64).

Within the discussion of the carrying capacity of the earth, the pro-life argument needs to be seen within the widest context of the fragility of the living world... Is it pro-life to ignore the increase in population levels to such an extent that the living systems in particular regions are becoming so impoverished that they will never recover? In setting out to defend human life in a narrow anthropocentric context, we might be creating the conditions that will, in fact, endanger all life on earth... The moral obligation to value life... now appears to be translating into a moral obligation to live within the limits of the natural world (p. 65).

McDonagh bases his arguments in his experience as a missionary in the Philippines. Just as in the US, he sees the disproportionate amount of births taking place in the poorest and most environmentally abused areas. As a Catholic, he sees this as a neglect of the sanctity of human beings. The amount of people is growing exponentially while land surface stays the same. Of course, it is more than just the numbers; it is the unequal distribution of wealth and resources and the slow economic development of poor areas. However, he criticizes narrow anthropocentric arguments of Church leaders that refuse to adapt with the times and culture. Interpreting “pro-life” as a respect for all life on Earth is a moral obligation to future human beings and other children of God. If this is the case, we must understand that encouraging family planning, including the use of contraceptives, and encouraging smaller families preserves the sanctity of that life.

Expanding the meaning of “pro-life” has long been used for other tactics, including as a criticism of war. Developing the discussion to include the natural world is one way, at the very

least, to add a new perspective to the population growth debate. At the very best, it is a way to interpret the overpopulation issue in a way that many Christians in the United States could understand and get behind. Until there is a breakthrough made, especially within the American religious community, the arguments will continue to go in circles and abstinence education, social stigma, and high birthrates will still trump better and more open discussions.

Survey
Question #20:
Do you feel
that the
growing human
population has
a potentially
negative or
positive effect
on the Earth?

- James T: The population increases are primary in third world countries where there is tremendous poverty. Unfortunately, there are not sufficient medical resources in these regions, which leads to low mortality rates. Also, there is not enough adequate clean water and food supplies.
- DJ W: Terrible. We're going to eat ourselves out of house and home.

Conclusion

These are the discussions we need to start having outside of the Park Slope, Brooklyn apartments of married environmental lawyers and inside the homes of farmers and pastors. How do we get regular people to feel that they have a stake in the health of the environment, in the future? In some cases, it might involve attaching the idea that caring for the Earth is caring for a gift from God. In other cases, economic and social benefits, from tax breaks to green fashion trends, can help win some people over. We may simply never agree on one universal reason for action. Luckily for us and the Earth, not everyone must agree to do something for the same reason.

There are many hurdles to jump and ground to tread lightly on. Concerned citizens must actively work to prevent “green washing,” or the spread of misleading information, by people or organizations with hidden agendas. However, if we make environmentally-conscious living the norm and not just the exception, entities such as that only stand to make themselves look bad. It is about trust. It is about using diverse and pragmatic tactics to be united. A person is still reducing their fuel consumption, whether they do it to slow climate change or to decrease dependence on foreign oil. In fact, if we are able to list several reasons for taking action, criticisms and faults in individual reasons almost seem to matter less. I return to the quote on the Starbuck’s cup: “So-called global warming is just a secret ploy by wacko tree-huggers to make America energy independent, clean our air and water, improve the fuel efficiency of our vehicles, kick-start 21st-century industries, and make our cities safer and more livable. Don’t let them get away with it!” The same idea is being echoed everywhere, especially from my generation, arguably a very open-minded generation. This is possibly due, not only because of globalization, but the wealth of accessible information that allows us to peek outside of our own social norms and create a more versatile green movement. Accomplishing environmental goals can do much more than protect the natural world, and if it takes the acceptance of anthropocentric reasoning or economic prosperity in some cases, environmentalists must be more pragmatic. If not, we never stand a chance of the broader public hearing us out and we will remain stuck on arguments that many people do not find convincing. While some environmentalists can continue to seek to make dramatic shifts in social and economic systems, there must be boots on the ground seeking to improve the unity that would allow those shifts to happen. By nudging people like conservative Christians, republicans, and hunters to see why they should not be afraid to think like environmentalists, we plant the seeds, no pun intended, for

more holistic discussions. Fostering the human connections that already exist, we can allow these discussions to spread through the close communities that are home to much of the American population that currently feels so disconnected from the supposedly “elitist” or “hippie” environmental movement.

This paper grew out of a frustration of the political and social polarity surrounding environmental issues today and the dissatisfaction at how few people realize how much common ground there really is. It is about harnessing patriotism and molding future Americans who will take environmental concepts with them into practice as they become leaders, business people, and parents. Here in the US, we need to find what makes people tick, on a case by case basis, and apply these findings to environmental initiatives. We do not need to be deceptive to instill a sense of empowerment in environmentalism. We cannot stop trying to get people involved, even if it means constantly rethinking our strategies. We cannot stop pushing until we finally hear the words: “Of course I care about the environment! I’m an American, aren’t I?”

Empirical Data

Survey questions, as seen by those interviewed

Firstly, you should know that your answers can be anonymous in my paper. If you would like to choose another name or initials for yourself, please feel free!

1. When you think about the environment, what do you think of?
2. Would you say protecting the environment is important? Why or why not?
3. When people try to protect the environment, do you sometimes feel that other things do not get enough attention?

For example when, people say environmental protection may make people lose jobs and may raise the cost of living- How would you feel about those kinds of things?

4. How would you describe the relationship between humans and nature?
5. What should the relationship between humans and nature be? Do you have a religious or spiritual basis for that?
6. Do people have responsibilities toward the environment? If yes, is the responsibility to other people or to the environment itself?
7. Should we put in an extra effort to protect the environment for our great grandchildren?
8. Would you say you have “environmental values?” If yes, would you describe them?

Where do you think you learned those values?

9. What do you think is the environmental problem of greatest concern?
10. Have you heard about the greenhouse effect? (If no, have you heard about temperatures getting warmer in the future?)
11. What have you heard?
12. Where did you hear that information?

13. Do you believe this?
14. Do you think this would be a bad thing if this happened?
15. Do you think something should be done about this? If yes, who should be involved?
Individuals, governments, corporations?
16. What should be done?
17. Do you think there are any negative consequences?
18. Do you talk to other people about environmental problems, in your home, office, etc?
19. How do you feel about what is currently being done to deal with the greenhouse effect?
20. In 1800, the human population was under 1 billion. In 1950, it was just under 3 billion. In 2000, it had doubled to more than 6 billion. Do you feel that the growing human population has a potentially negative or positive effect on the Earth? Please explain.
21. What is your occupation?
22. Where did you grow up?
23. What is your date of birth?
24. What is your highest level of education? What did you study?
25. Who did you vote for in the past presidential election? What political party do you affiliate yourself with most?
26. Do you consider yourself an environmentalist?
27. Finally, what are your thoughts upon completing this questionnaire?
28. Would you like to share anything else?

James T Interview

1. When I think about the “environment”, primarily, I think about the ocean.
2. Protecting the environment is important to me. I see so much waste, especially in consumer products and packaging. For example, going to CVS, or the supermarket to purchase just one item, the clerk inevitably will place that item in a plastic bag. Myself, I have ceased using them, but that bag, once the person is home, it will just be put in the trash.
3. There is a balance that needs to be struck between protecting the environment and protection of jobs. While there are methods of for example producing energy that create jobs and protect the environment. Also, there is no need that increased fuel economy in autos should lead to a decline in employment. But there is no need also, that a fuel-efficient car such as a “clean diesel” or hybrid should cost so much more than its conventional counterpart.
4. The relationship between humans and nature, for many humans, their perception of their existence is a false sense of entitlement, especially amongst Americans.
5. The “relationship” of nature and humans should be one of “Stewardship.” Nature is a gift that has been entrusted to us by the Creator. Nature was present here, before each of us was set upon this earth, and it will be here hopefully long after our lives here upon this earth are through.
6. Of course, people have a responsibility towards nature. This is the very nature of a stewardship relationship, seeing our natural environment as a gift.
7. Certainly, we should make every effort to protect the environment for our grandchildren!
8. Yes, I would say that I have “environmental values.” Still, there is room for improvement. I learned them from just observing, spending time at the beach as a child, realizing the vastness of the earth.
9. Our greatest environmental concern, I see is “sustainable energy.” We should have learned that (as a nation) back in the 1970’s with the oil embargo that we should not be dependent upon this one source of energy. Forty years have passed, still nothing has developed; I see this as such a lost opportunity.
10. Yes, I have heard of the “greenhouse” effect, again I see this problem caused by our dependency on fossil fuels, primarily oil.
11. I have heard that the temperatures on the earth are getting warmer. In recent years, this has been the case of our own local winters.
12. I have heard this within the past ten years.
13. Yes, I do believe this. This has been clearly demonstrated this past winter 2011-12, especially March 2012 being the warmest month of March ever recorded here in the Northeastern United States.
14. Personally, no, I don’t think it is a bad thing, because I have a disdain for winter! Although, I am well aware of the detrimental effects that it would have upon our environment, such as rising sea levels.
15. Should something be done about the Greenhouse effect? It is difficult to turn the tide on this; it is similar to attempting to put the “Jeanie back in the bottle.”
16. Perhaps one way of making people more aware of fuel efficiency of cars is to levy an excise tax on high mileage vehicles.
17. Yes, the negative consequence might be, the rising of sea levels along coastal regions.
18. No, people do not speak of environmental concerns in my home or office.
19. There is not enough being done to alleviate the greenhouse effect, this is evident still with the rising fuel prices, the consumer still prefers to drive high mileage cars and trucks.

20. The population increases are primarily in third world countries where there is tremendous poverty. Unfortunately, there are not sufficient medical resources in these regions, which leads to low [author believes he meant to say "high"] mortality rates. Also, there is not enough adequate clean water and food supplies.
21. My occupation is being a Catholic priest.
22. I grew up in Brooklyn, NY and later in Westchester County, NY.
23. My date of birth is: December 1961.
24. The highest level of education that I have achieved is a Master of Divinity and a Master of Education, Administration. Currently, I am PhD. candidate.
25. I am not affiliated with any political party; guess I would say that I am an independent. In the last presidential election, I did vote for Barack Obama. I am not certain whom I will vote for in this coming presidential election.
26. No, I would not consider myself to be an environmentalist in the strict definition. This is a label that to me is subjective that one person would place upon another. I just see too much waste, especially in our consumer driven society.
27. Thanks for inviting me to be a participant in this study!

Author's observations:

James appears to be bothered by the great deal of waste that our society is responsible for. At the same time, he realizes that people living in poverty face the problem of inadequate resources. A Catholic religious leader, he emphasizes a stewardship approach to the environment, along the lines of Wendell Berry's teachings.

Woody H. Interview

1. I guess I think of a safe and healthy atmosphere, one that provides a normal situation for everyone.
2. Absolutely yes, but I think people overestimate their role in what they can do to make that happen.
3. Environmental and fiscal issues often conflict. Nuclear energy is a classic example. While economically sound, nuclear power can have a huge influence on the planet's health, but it does lower overall energy costs and, thus the costs to the average citizen, a tough choice to all of us.
4. A tough question to which I can only respond, completely bonded.
5. While I consider myself as a religious person, I don't link this as a religious issue, perhaps I should. I see this more as a responsibility issue, that we, as a human race, have a responsibility to take care of our planet.
6. Yes we do, but I think the responsibilities are understandably unclear. As far as people and the environment, the two are mutually linked.
7. We should do everything we can to protect our grandchildren, but I personally think that this issue is overblown.
8. I do have environmental values, but not so much with the focus of this survey. My father was a commercial fisherman, and I worked on the docks as a college student. I saw the effects of over consumerism in that industry and can see how it spills over into all industries.
9. Without a doubt, energy consumption.
10. Yes I have.
11. That there is a general trend in the warming of the earth.
12. The press, scientists, and, of course, Al Gore...

13. I believe that the earth is in a warming cycle, I question the cause and further question the planet's inability to adjust to it.
14. Selfish as it may seem, I welcome relatively warm winters.
15. I think steps are being taken. Mass transport is in use and restrictions on individual travel in NYC seems to be having beneficial effects.
16. A commitment to mass transport is imperative.
17. Certainly, a lack of public convenience would be an issue.
18. Yes, I often speak with coworkers on this issue.
19. I am uncertain that this is a huge issue at this point, so I am not completely concerned that this should be a "front burner" concern.
20. Population is an enormous concern. Demands will increase for food and energy. The methods used to meet these needs will have huge impacts on our global environment. Fuel consumption will be severely impacted.
21. Teacher
22. Rhode Island
23. 12-02-1964
24. Master's Degree School Administration
25. Obama, Democrat.
26. Yes, to a point.
27. No problem, though I still have personal doubts that this is a large issue (sorry).
28. I honestly think this is a resilient planet that is going through a warming trend rather than a warming threat. While this winter was a freak of nature, it was not too many years ago that we had nasty coldness, yet, even that timeframe is far too small to draw conclusions from

Author's observations:

Woody's responses demonstrate the disconnect between regular Americans and environmentalists- this feeling that the environmentalists are pushing too hard and panicking too much. However, he still expresses respect and responsibility toward the environment.

Ines P Interview

1. Air and water quality; safely extracting natural resources so as to reduce dependence on foreign oil.
2. Yes, to preserve natural resources and to keep the earth habitable for future generations.
3. Usually there's a give and take in all things. Hopefully there's a way to protect and preserve the environment with minimal casualties to mankind.
4. Humans need nature to survive; ie. Flora, fauna, etc. Man is part of nature and vice versa.
5. Humans respecting and protecting nature. No.
6. Yes. The responsibility to protecting the environment would lead directly to protecting the environment for other people.
7. Absolutely, and beyond.
8. Yes. Doing my part to reduce my footprint on the earth: reduce, reuse, recycle. Parents grew up in the depression, so they started me on those values. Growing up in the 60's added to it, and just trying to be conscious of how my actions affect my surroundings.
9. Air/water pollution
10. I have heard about this.

11. That thermal radiation from a planetary surface is absorbed by atmospheric greenhouse gasses, and is re-radiated in all directions, including back toward the surface and lower atmosphere, resulting in the elevation of the average surface temperature above what it would be in the absence of the gasses.
12. Nature shows on tv, internet, news.
13. I don't know.
14. It would if it got too hot. Anything that is un-natural can't be good. Otherwise, maybe if it could be regulated, it might be helpful in reducing the need for heating fuel.
15. Yes. It should be a global collaboration.
16. It all goes back to preserving the environment. In this case, reducing the amount of atmospheric gasses released into the atmosphere.
17. While the greenhouse effect is an important natural phenomenon, allowing a comfortable average temperature on earth, the recent gradual warming of the earth (global warming) is considered to be the result of human activities increasing the concentrations of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. So, this could have negative consequences if not checked.
18. Yes
19. From what I can tell, people are trying to change their carbon footprint by buying more efficient cars and energy saving devices; ie lightbulbs, etc. Companies are being forced to reduce harmful emissions. New clean energy producers are replacing dirtier ones.
20. The effects of the growing population are varied and many. Growth of any species may be beneficial to some extent, but there may come a time when population exceeds the natural resources available to sustain it. Maybe the problem is not the population growth itself, but the mismanagement of natural resources and waste that might be causing the problems to a large extent.
21. Receptionist in a school district
22. Bronx, NY
23. 9/23/1954
24. High School graduate
25. Obama; democratic
26. No
27. Made me think about this topic more.
28. Please be advised that I did get some of my information from on-line sources.

Author's observations:

Ines points to the connection between values learned from her parents in the Great Depression and the values needed to respond to global environmental crises. She points to the use and waste of natural resources.

Monica C Interview [Questions retained due to slight difference of wording and order from other surveys]

1. When you think about the environment, what do you think of?

It depends on what environment I am thinking of. Generally, I think of outside when I hear the word "environment."

2. Would you say protecting the environment is important? Why or why not?

It definitely is. Without a safe, well-kept environment, there would be no way to plan ecologically sensible communities. Even those solely concerned with industry have to recognize that their economic incentives are futile without a properly functioning environment.

3. *When people try to protect the environment, do you sometimes feel that other things do not get enough attention?*

Such as what? I believe the protection of the environment is fundamental. I am not sure what other things would be neglected at the detriment to protecting the environment.

For example when people say environmental protection shouldn't make people lose jobs and shouldn't raise the cost of living. How would you feel about those kinds of things?

I had not realized that people lose jobs over environmental protection but I can understand the cost of living increase. However, I believe that goes to a deeper issue and that the cost of living increase has a number of problematic contributions that go far beyond environmental incentives. I am sure that if the cities could resolve the excess in highly expensive housing and make affordable housing more accessible, that the distribution of environmental costs could be fair and reasonable.

4. *How would you describe the relationship between humans and nature?*

I believe that we are humans living in nature and it is important to respect our natural environment. I find it infuriating to see garbage, especially cigarette butts, on the ground. If people are going to utilize natural resources for satisfying an addiction, I do not see the difficulty in utilizing man-made garbage bins or ashtrays. Ultimately, I think that humans and nature should be one in the same. That society should respect both as fundamental parts of the environment and thus, take good care of both.

5. *What should the relationship between humans and nature be? Do you have a religious or spiritual basis for that?* I think the answer above is applicable here. I am not religious nor am I spiritual I just believe that we would be nothing without nature and nature would be just fine without humans. We should respect it and maintain it to the best of our abilities.

6. *Do people have responsibilities toward the environment?*

Of course.

7. *Is the responsibility to other people or to the environment itself?*

It should be to both. I am not sure who "other people" are but I wouldn't throw my trash in someone's yard out of respect for their property. Moreover, I wouldn't throw trash generally, out of respect for the environment. I don't think it should make a difference.

8. *Should we put in an extra effort to protect the environment for our great grandchildren?*

Of course. If we don't protect it now, our grandchildren will have nothing left to enjoy.

9. *Would you say you have "environmental values?" If yes, would you describe them?*

Yes. I value clean grounds and fresh air. I dislike pollution and the sight of garbage. I wish that I could pollute less and utilize more environmentally friendly resources.

10. *Where do you think you learned those values?* Not sure. Being educated. Going to an environmentally conscious university, maybe?

11. *What do you think is the environmental problem of greatest concern?* Air pollution and litter are two that I think about the most. However, I am sure there are many issues I am not even aware of.

12. *Have you heard about the greenhouse effect? (If no, have you heard about temperatures getting warmer in the future?)* Yes. I appreciate warm weather but am constantly questioning what the long-term effect will be.

13. *What have you heard?* Basically, that the earth will continue to warm due to the major pollution entering the upper atmosphere (maybe?) ... among other things I don't recall.

14. *Where did you hear that information?* Various sources. Not enough people have spoken about it in the last year or so. It was a hot topic when Al Gore first brought major

attention to it.

15. *Do you believe this?* Definitely.

16. *Do you think this would be a bad thing if this happened?* Yes, detrimental.

17. *Do you think something should be done about this? If yes, who should be involved?*

Individuals, governments, corporations? Everyone should be involved. However, I think government would be best suited. Congress needs to enact more stringent laws for individuals and corporations to follow in order to better promote clean air and the like.

18. *What should be done?* I don't really know what the options are but I know they exist. Whatever can be done?

19. *Do you think there are any negative consequences?* Negative consequences of the greenhouse effect or having government/others do something about it??? There are negatives and positives to everything.

20. *Do you talk to other people about environmental problems, in your home, office, etc?* Not really. Only because of a lack of time and other priorities needing to be discussed.

21. *How do you feel about what is currently being done to deal with the greenhouse effect?* What IS being done??

22. *Do you feel that the growing human population has a potentially negative or positive effect on the Earth?*

Negative. The world is overpopulated and the laws of this country/religious fanatics have not helped to make it any better. For those stuck in historical tradition, they are unable to grasp the more modern concepts. Historically, the world needed more people and I can see where the mentality came from. However, times have changed dramatically and the overpopulation is having a detrimental impact on our fundamental environment.

What is your occupation? Childcare provider and current student (law and graduate school)

Where did you grow up? Carmel, NY

What is your date of birth? August 16, 1988

What is your highest level of education? What did you study? Graduated college May 2012 – Still in school.

Who did you vote for in the past election? Which election? I voted for McCain

Finally, do you consider yourself an environmentalist? I don't know what defines an environmentalist? But I do consider myself someone who cares about the environment. I always recycle and I never litter. I would do more if I knew what to do

Author's observations:

Monica demonstrates the astute thinking of a law student and focuses heavily on words and their specific meanings. She often answers questions with more questions. She portrays the doubts had by many, even those who only somewhat follow environmental issues. Despite her political choices, she says that government should take responsibility for solving environmental crises.

DJ W Interview [Questions retained due to slight difference of wording and order from other surveys. Survey was largely conducted in person.]

1. *When you think about the environment, what do you think of?*

Degradation, life.

2. *Would you say protecting the environment is important? Why or why not?*

Yes. Life. The cradle of our lives and our future and past and present

3. *When people try to protect the environment, do you sometimes feel that other things do not get enough attention? For example when people say environmental protection shouldn't*

make people lose jobs and shouldn't raise the cost of living. How would you feel about those kinds of things?

I don't think that matters. *Why not?* Because our life should be more important than a new system like economics.

5. *How would you describe the relationship between humans and nature?*

Cohesive and destructive. We impact the environment in every step, knowing and unknowingly. Other times we have the ability to fix things.

6. *What should the relationship between humans and nature be? Do you have a religious or spiritual basis for that?*

I don't know. I think we should attempt to have as little impact as possible. I don't know what that means.

7. *Do people have responsibilities toward the environment?*

Yes because we are the environment.

8. *Is the responsibility to other people or to the environment itself? Both*

9. *Should we put in an extra effort to protect the environment for our great grandchildren?*
Yes and for us.

10. *Would you say you have "environmental values?" If yes, would you describe them?*

Developing. Less greedy and individualistic. More useful. Useful to everyone.

11. *Where do you think you learned those values?*

Bob Champan, Pace University.

12. *What do you think is the environmental problem of greatest concern?*

Emissions- air quality. Over taxation of oceans. Pollution of ecosystems.

13. *Have you heard about the greenhouse effect? (If no, have you heard about temperatures getting warmer in the future?)*

Yes

14. *What have you heard?* That it's going to make me sick. The potential to heat the earth and acidify the ocean and the potential to destroy plant life through acid rain. Desertification,

15. *Where did you hear that information?* Bob Champan. Laurel Whitney.

16. *Do you believe this?* Yes. Aspects of it. Global warming- varying science saying changes will range from 2-12 degrees. Hard to know what the worst case and the real case will be. There is no solid evidence. Fuck Al Gore. He's going to tax me into hell. Screw global carbon tax and keep the man down. Create big level of wealth gap. Taxing every human for something they didn't do. It's going to keep everyone poor. I don't think he's a true environmentalist- I think he's a globalist with his own reasons for wanting to tax everyone. I think he has another agenda that has nothing to do with the environment- maybe population control. I think we're focused on taxing everyone- wrong. I think we should be focused on not having taxes. We should focus on not burning fossil fuel instead of taxing it. We're stuck on stupid.

17. *Do you think something should be done about this? If yes, who should be involved?*

Individuals, governments, corporations?

Monetary policy needs to be fixed. That's the biggest perpetrator of our problems. End federal reserves. Money should go back to the people. Economic systems are not sustainable. They're false. Capitalism is driven by continued growth and yet it dies and so does growth. And when we can fix our monetary policies, we can focus on more sustainability and focus less on making a dollar.

19. *What should be done?*

20. *Do you think there are any negative consequences?*

For a while. People aren't going to ... it's got to be a radical change. People are going to realize every dollar they ever made is useless. The creation of useless things- that just can't happen anymore.

21. *Do you talk to other people about environmental problems, in your home, office, etc?*

Not really.

22. *How do you feel about what is currently being done to deal with the greenhouse effect?*

It's almost a joke. Like Kyoto protocol... no one is going to take it seriously. It took 20 years for countries to sign it and yet countries haven't lowered emissions. It's like a funny joke. Every single quarter of our monetary system has increased emissions.

23. *Do you feel that the growing human population.*

Terrible Why? We're going to eat ourselves out of house and home.

What is your occupation?

Student [army veteran]

Where did you grow up?

Napa Valley

What is your date of birth?

April 21 1983

What is your highest level of education? What did you study?

Environmental Studies, College Undergraduate

Who did you vote for in the past election?

Ralph Nader

Finally, do you consider yourself an environmentalist?

No, [Henry] Rolston is an environmentalist. Bob Chapman. Laurel Whitney. The difference is our depth of knowledge and the ability to enforce that knowledge in their lives.

[Follow up email correspondence:]

For the question - What should the relationship between humans and nature be? - You answered "I don't know. I think we should attempt to have as little impact as possible. I don't know what that means." Could you explain why you feel we should have a smaller impact? Do you have a religious or spiritual basis for that? Do you feel religion and spirituality play a role in the relationship between humans and nature? Could you explain? Finally, what are your thoughts after finishing this survey? Do you want to share anything else?

1. Humans are nature and humans should see nature as part of their community and not simply a resource.
2. Humans have become a geological force and we are altering the planet for ourselves, plants, and animals in a negative way (pollution, etc.)
3. No religious basis for these answers.
4. Religion (judaism and christianity... Not sure about hinduism or islam) state that the planet is here for our use at will. Religion has increased the separation of human and nature by referring to nature and wilderness. Essentially, I do not believe in wilderness as anything more than a social construct. It keeps humans and nature separate. This allows for humans to see nature as a commodity and not a communal life force that we belong to and have social responsibility too. Religion creates individualism and I believe that has led to environmental degradation.
5. END THE FED. Final thought. Interesting survey. I hate surveys, mostly. This made me challenge my environmental beliefs.

Author's observations:

DJ obviously sees a very close relationship between man and nature. As an environmental studies student, he would appear to be an environmentalist. However, he has a more acute understanding of the term 'environmentalist,' only crediting people of more solid environmentalist thinking as worthy of the title. He understands humans as a part of nature and environmental problems to be systemic and an inevitable result of the current economic system and capitalist paradigm. He appears to believe in the idea of paradigms. This is a result of what he has learned from professors. He is skeptical of leading environmental figures but not for the assumed reasons. For example, to him, Al Gore is a phony, whose agenda is not the protection of the environment.

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