

In the end, the environmental crisis is not an issue of technology, economics or politics. It is a spiritual crisis, which requires a spiritual solution that cannot be confined to a single tradition. We need the wisdom of all the great civilizations of the world to help bring us out of the crisis.

- Rabbi Lawrence Troster

Faith-Based Environmental Groups and Their Strategies for Change



Angela M. Smith

Center for Environmental Studies

Brown University

April 18, 2006

Outline of Presentation

- Why study faith-based environmentalism?
- Contributions of the present research
- Research questions and methodology
- Results
- Conclusions

Why Study Faith-Based Environmentalism?

- Need for an Environmental Ethic
 - *The Land Ethic* (Aldo Leopold, 1949)
 - *Death of Environmentalism* (Shellenberger and Nordhaus, 2004)
 - Social Movement Literature
- History of religious involvement in changing values

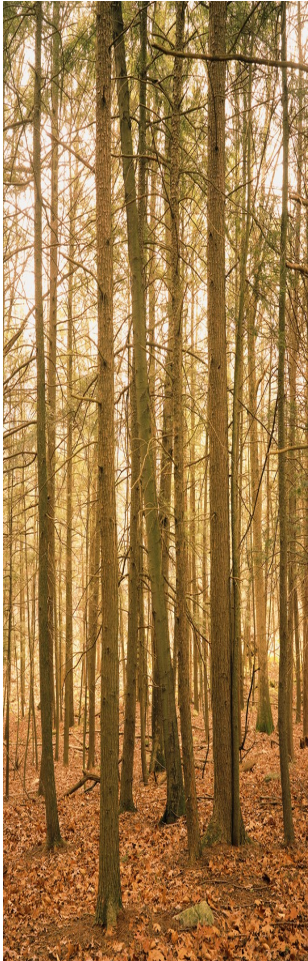


Rosa Parks

Benefits of this Work

- ❑ Contributions to the literature
 - ❑ Expands knowledge of faith-based environmentalism
 - ❑ Develops model to measure amount of ethics-based and issues-based work engaged in by a group
- ❑ Contributions to the broader environmental movement
 - ❑ Increases understanding of conditions that best support ethics-based and issues-based work
 - ❑ Groups can examine and structure their activities accordingly

Research Questions



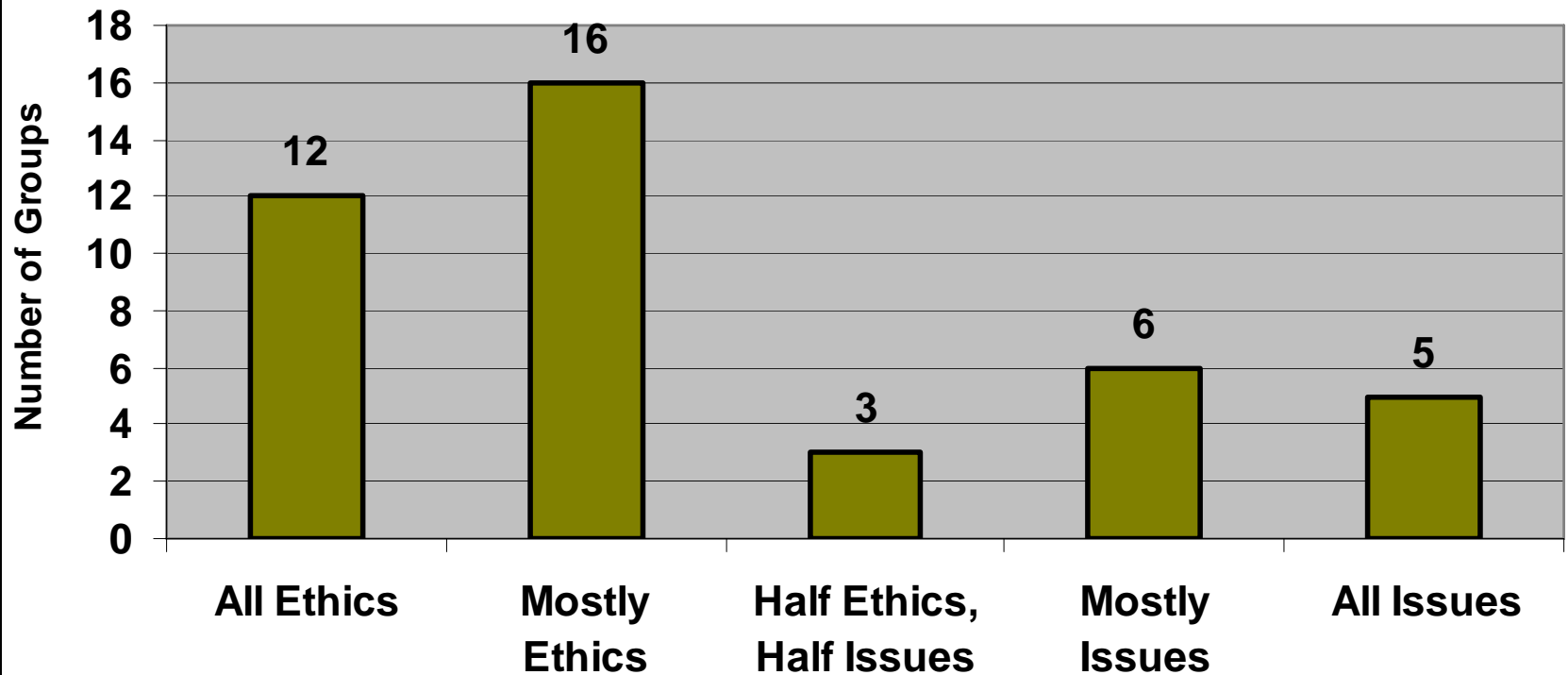
- 1) What are the general characteristics of the faith-based environmental movement?
- 2) What factors influence the degree to which faith-based environmental groups engage in *ethic-based* versus *issues-based* work?

Operationalization of Ethics and Issues-Based Work

- Top three goals coded as ethics-based or issues-based
- Groups asked to select ethics-based and issues-based statements
 - Groups asked to rank their top two statements
- Groups asked if primary work is ethics-based or issues-based

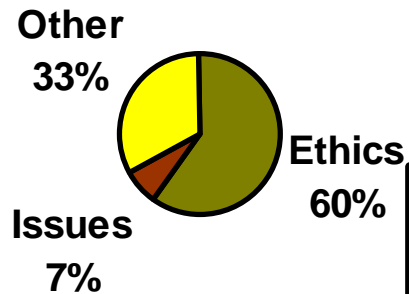
Ethics-Based versus Issues-Based Work

Goals Categorized by Ethics and Issues

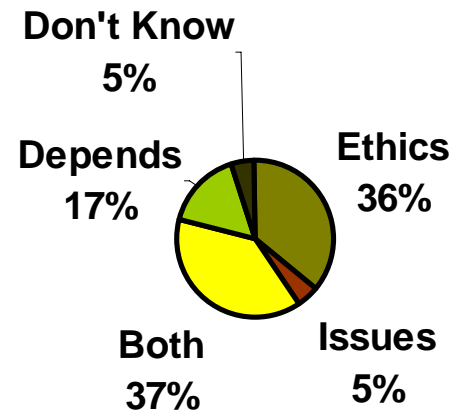


Ethics-Based versus Issues-Based Work

Main Work



Belief about Ethics and Issues



Hypotheses

Internal factors:

- Staff size
- Scope of operations
- Age and gender of staff and volunteers
- Philosophy regarding social justice

External factors:

- Geographical location
- Availability of funding
- Faith-based environmental collaboration
- Secular environmental collaboration
- Policy advocacy engagement

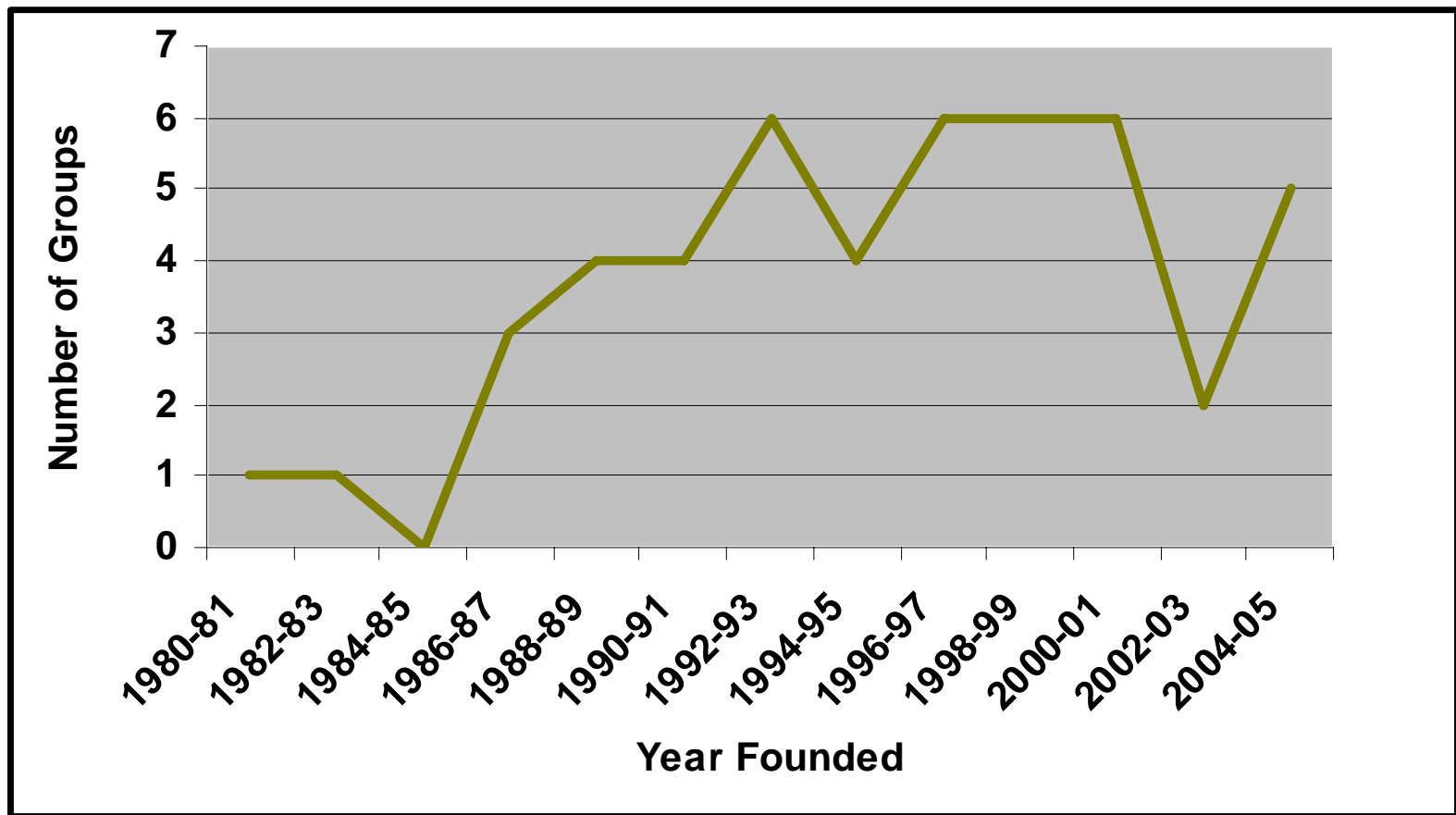
Research Methodology

- Sample: 42 primarily Judeo-Christian groups
- Data collected: from websites and telephone interviews asking both survey and open-ended questions
- Quantitative data coded and entered into EXCEL and SPSS 14.0: Zero-order correlations conducted to test hypotheses
- Qualitative data transcribed verbatim, coded, and analyzed to identify trends

Who are Faith-Based Environmental Groups?

Year Founded

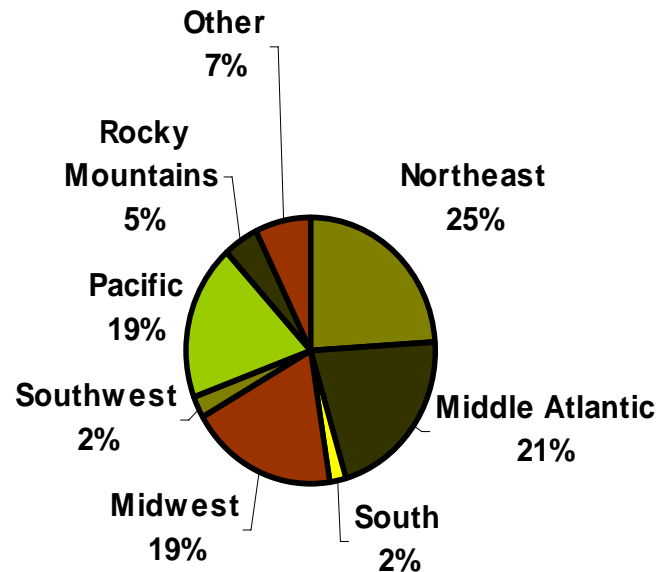
- Most groups formed after 1992



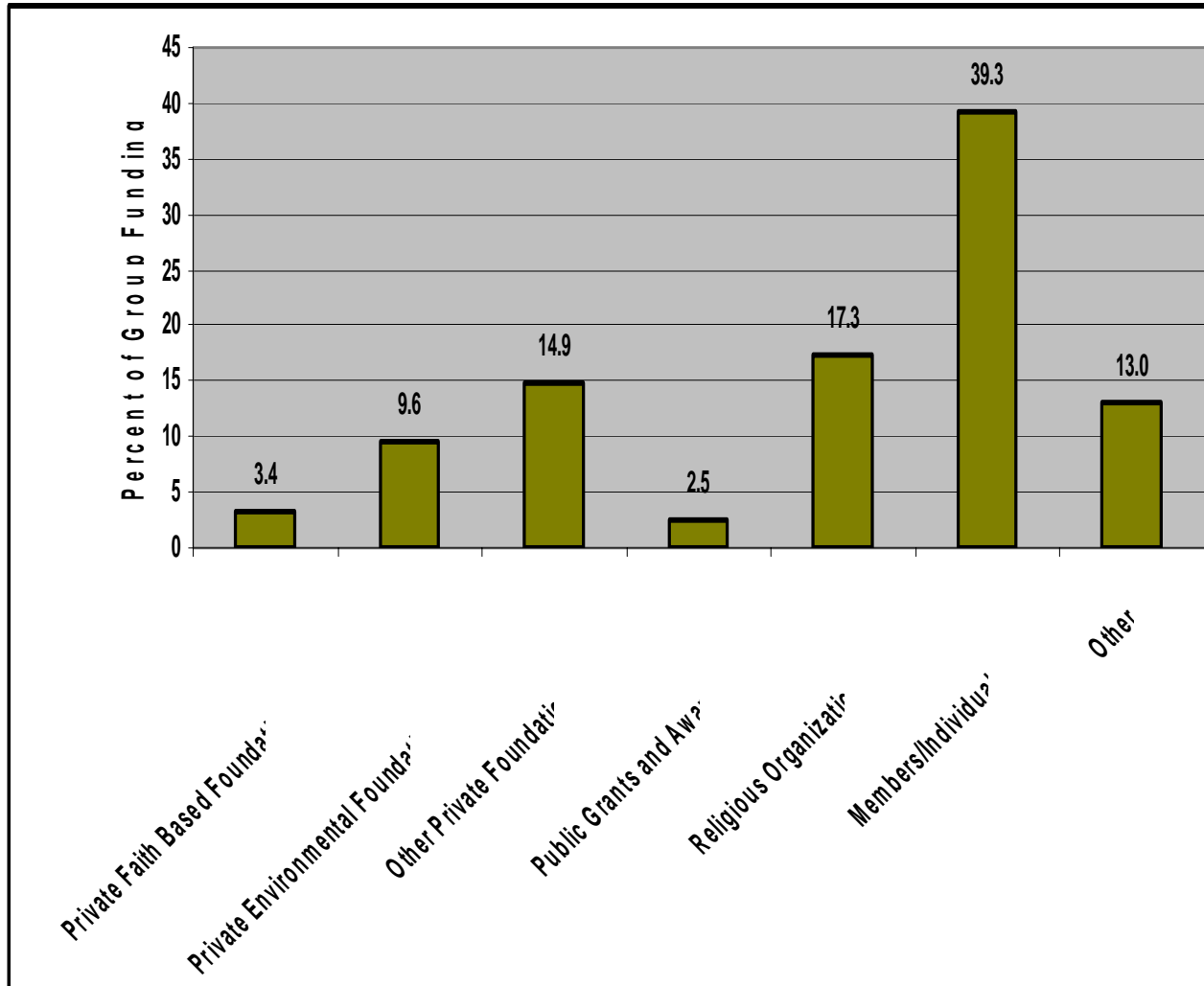
Scope and Geographic Location

- 41% are national
- 14% regional
- 21% state
- 24% locally

- Groups clustered in certain regions



Funding

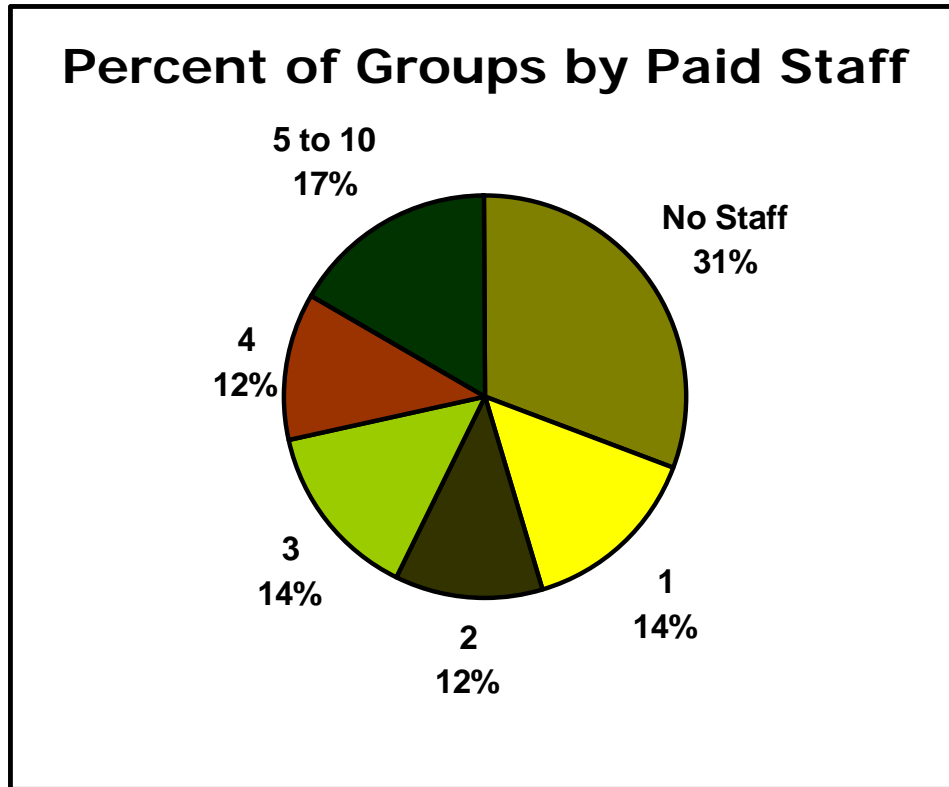


□ Average number of funding sources is **3.34**.

□ Only **5%** of groups report having an easy time finding money.

□ Only **7%** believe funding for faith-based environmental groups is adequate.

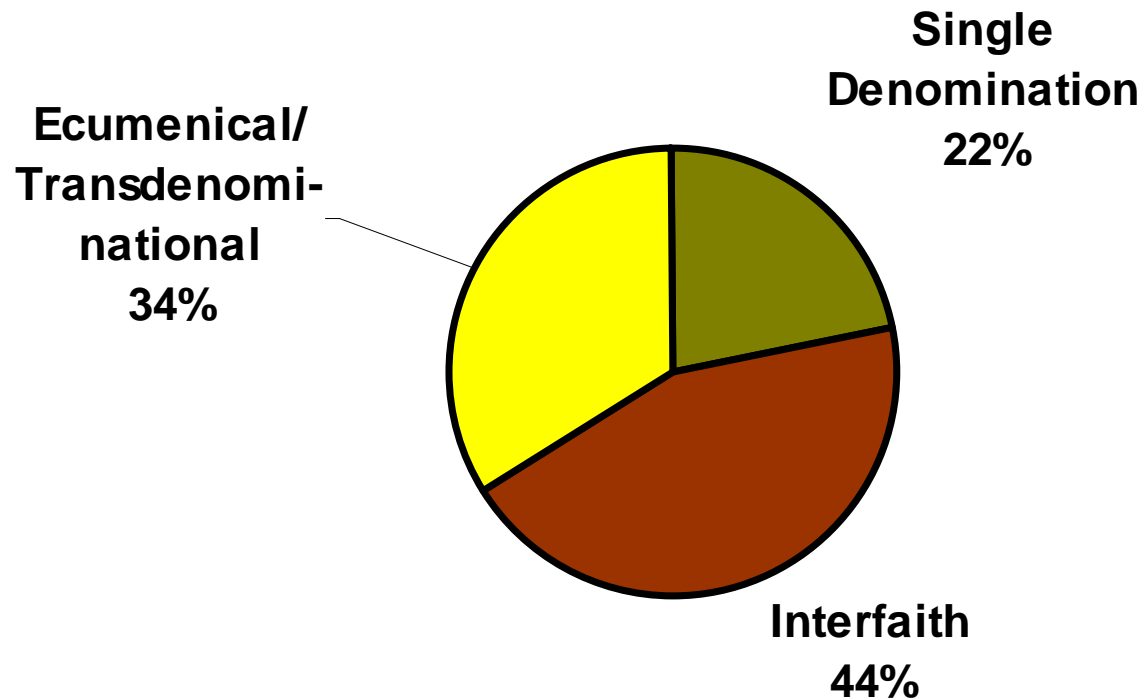
Staff Size



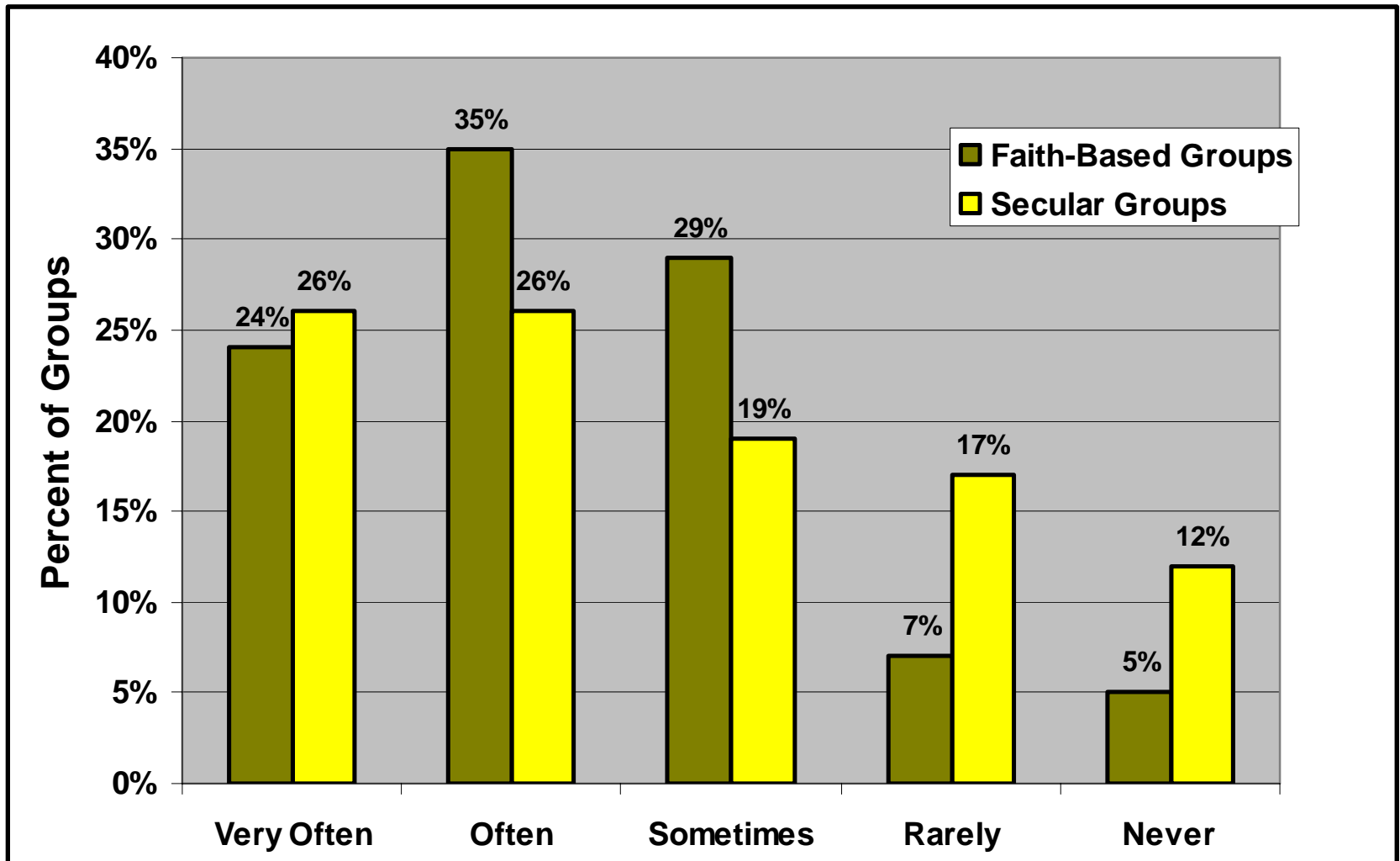
83% of groups have four or fewer paid staff.

(This work) captures people's imaginations and... has nothing to do with money; it's happening and it's irreversible and (it's beyond money)" [Interview 039].

Denominational Collaborations



Collaboration with Other Groups



National Religious Partnership for the Environment

Evangelical Environmental Network

Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life

National Council of Churches Ecojustice Working Group

Interfaith Climate and Energy Campaign

(has programs in ten states)

State programs housed within other eligible groups.

Iowa
(National Catholic Rural Life Conference)

Maine
(Maine Council of Churches Environmental Justice Program)

New Mexico
(New Mexico Conference of Churches Sustainable Energy Campaign)

Oregon
(Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns)

Pennsylvania
(Center for the Celebration of Creation)

State programs not housed within other eligible groups.

Michigan
(Voices for Earth – has no website)

Texas
(Texas Impact- not enough environmental focus)

Washington

West Virginia

Wisconsin

What does Ethics-Based Environmentalism Look Like?

Primary Philosophies

- ❑ Connection between faith and environment
 - Humans responsible to care for the earth
 - Environmental crisis has moral dimensions
 - Earth is sacred
- ❑ Action is important
- ❑ Building community is necessary
- ❑ Interconnectedness of all on earth
- ❑ Justice for people and other species



*Logo from Faith-Based
Environmental Group*

Main Activities to Achieve Goals

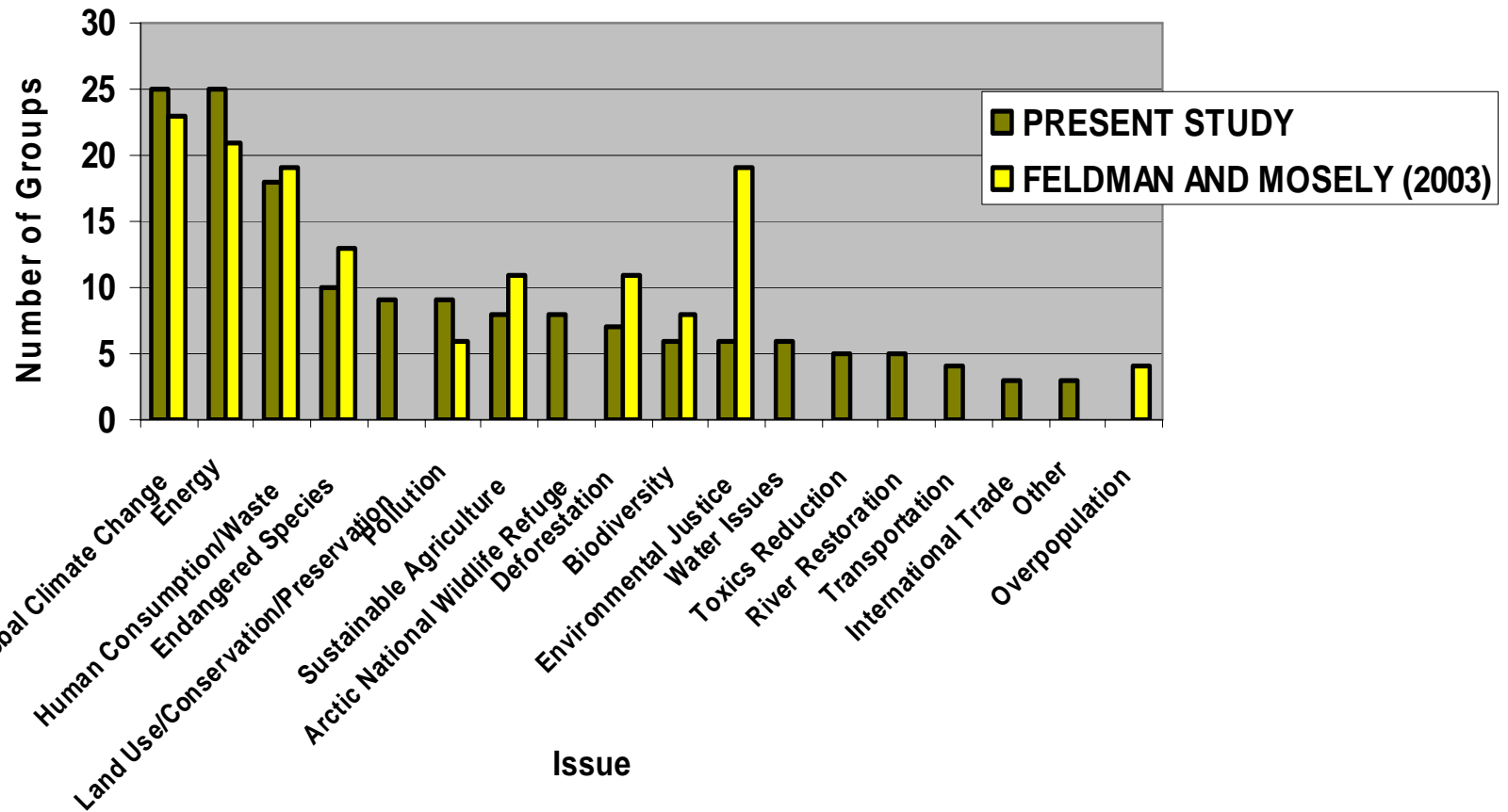
- Stress faith-environment connection
 - Creating theological/educational resources
 - Role modeling
 - Speaking and collaborating at workshops, etc.
 - Participating in press conferences
 - Publishing articles
 - Putting out newsletters and e-mail communications

- Build community

- Hands-on projects (*"greening," energy audits, food issues*)

Primary Issues

Number of Issues by Group



What are the Challenges of Engaging in an Ethics-Based Approach?

Benefits – Ethics versus Issues

ETHICS

- 1) Behavioral changes in everything humans do
- 2) Permanent changes
- 3) Less need to address individual issues
- 4) Will negate need for environmentalism

ISSUES

- 1) More immediate and direct impact
- 2) Concrete and identifiable
- 3) More galvanizing
- 4) Encourages collaboration
- 5) More easily funded

Drawbacks – Ethics versus Issues

ETHICS

- 1) Countercultural
 - 1) Faith community
 - 2) Broader society
- 2) Takes long time
- 3) Less easily quantifiable
- 4) Labor intensive
- 5) Too much talk and not enough action

ISSUES

- 1) More “piecemeal;” fails to address “root causes”
- 2) Does not speak to people’s relationships with the earth
- 3) Less permanent results
- 4) Causes fatigue among activists
- 5) Potentially divisive

**What are the Factors which
Influence a Group's
Engagement in
Ethics- or Issues-Based
Work?**

Results - Hypotheses

- No significant relationships EXCEPT for:
 - Collaboration with secular environmental groups correlates directly with an issues focus
 $(r(40) = 0.43, p < .01)$
 - Amount of time spent engaged in policy advocacy work correlates directly with an issues focus
 $(r(39) = .31, p < .045)$
 - Importance of engagement in policy advocacy work correlates directly with an issues focus
 $(r(36) = .55, p < .01)$

Conclusions

- ❑ New movement that remains small
- ❑ Environment third-tier religious priority
- ❑ Important sense of hope and optimism
- ❑ Limited funding and capacity significant impediment to work
- ❑ Large degree of collaboration
- ❑ Potential to draw diverse groups together
- ❑ Potential to reach large numbers of people



Questions?

Merci beaucoup...

Simone Pulver

Phil Brown

Rev. Paul Bortz

My statistical consultant and genius, Lorraine McKelvey.

All the research participants who graciously shared their time and thoughts with me – over and over again...

Patti Caton and Betsy Barlow for all their help.

The faculty and students of the Center for Environmental Studies.

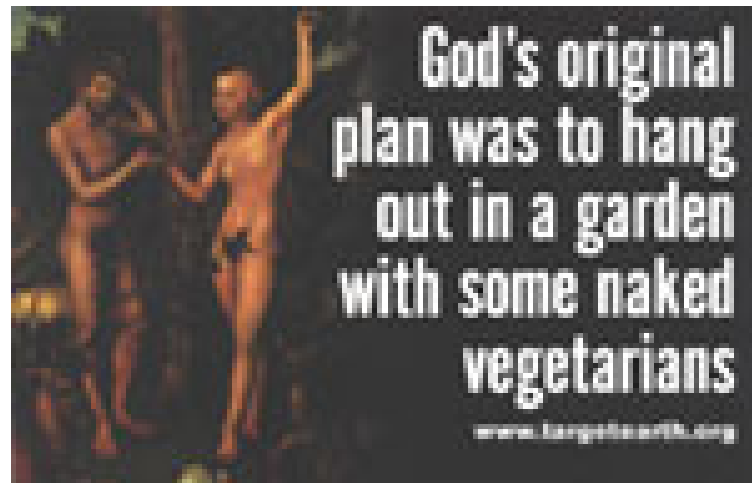
Angela Hackel for sharing her couch and kitchen.

My proofreader and back rubber extraordinaire, Erik Tryggestad.

My family and friends, especially my Mom and Dad, Maya, and Jeanette for their constant phone calls and packages of cookies!



... and Floyd



Cartoon from Evangelical Christian group!