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How the Environmental Issue Interacted With Other Issues in the 1992 Election

by Robert B. Smith
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Pundits discussing the forthcoming 2008 national election are now emphasizing the personal appeal of the potential candidates and not the range of issues that may be salient this year and their interactions. Except for the issues bearing on the Iraq war and global warming, the issues may be similar to those in recent elections. It is thus germane to review the earlier issues, especially how the environmental and character issues mutually interacted.

Social Attributes, Political Predispositions, and Issues Influence Voting

The 1992 presidential election in the United States ushered in the Bill Clinton era and, presumably, a new political culture focused more on social issues like the environment, health, education, social equality, and morality rather than on class-relevant materialist issues like economic equity, countervailing powers, and poverty. Haynes Johnson referred to these years as the best of times because of their economic prosperity, advances in technology, and the Internet boom; and the worst of times because of television's culture of celebrity, sensationalism, and gossip, and the continuous attacks on the president's character that culminated in the Monica Lewinsky scandal and impeachment proceedings. These scandals, which Johnson in part attributes (2001, pp. 260-265) to ultra right-wing, anti-Clinton activists, may have diverted the public's attention from the unsolved problems of economic inequality and poverty, health care uninsurance, environmental conservation, and the threat of terrorism. Future historians may view the Clinton years as a turning point because his administrations marked the end of the twentieth century and new directions for domestic politics. After the disputed election of George W. Bush in 2000, a new period may have begun in which the war against terrorism, homeland security, and budget deficits are most central.

Contrary to the thesis of the new political culture (Clark and Hoffman-Martinot 1998), in the 1992 presidential campaign all three candidates -- Bill Clinton, Ross Perot, and George H. W. Bush -- emphasized various aspects of the weak economy, a materialist issue. James Carville's pithy slogan -- "It's the economy, stupid!" -- successfully guided the Clinton campaign, but this slogan may have masked the importance of other issues. This study thus asks: Was the materialist economic issue of paramount importance in the 1992 election of Bill Clinton, or were more social issues -- health care reform (Bill

Clinton promised universal access), the environment (vice-presidential candidate Al Gore promised amelioration of problems), and the character of the candidates (pro-life George H. W. Bush promised morality) -- equally, or even more, important? Did these four issues form a Left-Center-Right latent structure? Did these social issues also have a materialist aspect? What were the direct effects on vote of the issues, party identification, political ideology, and social attributes? How did the issues interact?

To answer these questions this study conceptualizes the voting choice as the joint consequences and interactions of political stimuli (the issues) and partisan predispositions (ideology and party identification), and elucidates the effects of social attributes on these predispositions, the issues, and the vote. By linking social attributes to partisan predispositions and issues, and those to vote, it advances numerous studies that primarily focused on how attributes influence vote. By assessing the issues and their latent structure in a recursive model of voting, it advances an earlier path analysis that did not assess the issues (Smith 1999, pp. 32-33). By studying environmental, healthcare, and character issues as well as the economic, it builds on other quantitative studies of this election by Stokes and Dilulio (1993), Alvarez and Nagler (1995), Miller and Shanks (1996, p. 492), and Shanks (2001, pp. 186-194), which taken together provide cumulative empirical findings useful for focusing theorizing and studies of future elections.

This study analyzes a special election night telephone survey of 1,200 voters taken between 4:30 and 10:00 P.M. Eastern Standard Time that asked numerous questions about health care reform (Frederick/Schneiders 1992; Smith 1999, note 2, p. 41). It thus may provide better coverage of that issue than the National Election Studies (NES), whose need for continuity across elections may hamper the asking of novel questions that pertain only to one election (Shanks 2001, p. 212). This survey may also have broader coverage of the issues than exit polls, which must be very brief.

Some Issues and Their Measures

Single items gauge the environmental and character issues. Unitary two-item ordinal indices gauge the economic and health care issues. The items composing these indices have face validity and each index has stronger effects on response variables than their individual items, which have common causes and stronger effects than other potential indicators. The correlations with the political interests, partisan

predispositions, and candidate characteristics clarify the meaning of the issues; see table below.

The Environment

When assessing environmental issues, environmental protection should be untangled from the loss of jobs. When the latter materialist interest is stressed, the effect of environmental concern on vote is reduced. Consequently, for this survey the environmental issue is best gauged by this single item: the environment was a very important factor in determining which candidate to vote for (47%) versus it was not very important (53%) -- rather than by an index of the available items, which serve to clarify its meaning. This indicator of environmental concern has positive associations with agreement that the president should protect the environment even if there is loss of some jobs ($\tau = \tau = .20$), with agreement that a company's environmental record is important in forming an opinion about it ($\tau = .21$), and with the index of these two items ($\tau = .24$).

Unlike the economic and health care issues, environmental concern is associated with indicators of delegitimation -- gridlock, crime and drugs, and their index. (The effect on delegitimation holds when minority group membership is controlled; the odds ratios (θ s) are environmental concern = 2.3, minority = 2.1, and $R^2 = .07$). Environmental concern is associated with Left positions on the political continuum ($\tau = .21$): with interests concerning economic equity, social equality, and public health; with liberalism, Democratic identification, and vote; but not with the character issue. Voters in the Center were equally likely to be environmentally concerned as not.

The Character of the Candidates

About 52 percent said the character of the candidates was a very important factor in determining their choice of candidate; 48 percent said the opposite. Most likely, this question assessed the voters' perceptions of differences between George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton. Because of the negative campaign waged by some Republicans against Clinton (they accused him of 'slickness' and 'waffling', adultery, draft evasion, and marijuana use) and the pro-family and pro-life campaign of the Republicans, those most concerned about the character of the candidates voted for Bush and those less concerned voted for Clinton -- Perot voters were in the middle. Voters who favor universal access to health care (which includes women's health services) are more likely to say that character is not an important determinant of their vote ($\tau = .11$, $p < .0001$);

Table 1: Four Issues and Their Composite Three-Class Left, Center, Right Latent Structure

Correlates of the Issues:	The Economy	Health Care Reform	Concern for Environment	Character Not Very Important	Modal Latent Structure	Higher Probability of Being in the Left Class	Higher Probability of Being in the Right Class	Higher Probability of Being in the Center Class
Political Interests:								
Economic Equity	0.20*	0.16*	0.19*	0.09**	0.23*	0.21*	-0.23*	0.08**
Social Equality	0.07***	0.05 (n.s.)	0.10**	-0.02 (n.s)	0.10**	0.07***	-0.09**	+0.01(n.s.)
The Public's Health	0.22*	0.37*	0.21*	0.13*	0.29*	0.29*	-0.38*	0.01(n.s.)
Pro Environmental Protection	0.11**	0.05 (n.s.)	0.24*	0.10**	0.16*	0.11*	-0.16*	0.01(n.s)
Pro Health Care Reform	0.24*	0.50*	0.16*	0.09**	0.33*	0.33*	-0.43*	0.05***
Left on Political Interests Continuum	.25*	0.28*	0.21*	0.08**	0.30*	0.28*	-0.33*	0.04(n.s)
Partisan Predispositions:								
Liberal Ideology	0.22*	0.26*	0.15*	0.19*	0.28*	0.26*	-0.28*	0.01(n.s.)
Democratic Party Identification	0.24*	0.25*	0.18*	0.17*	0.28*	0.27*	-0.30*	-0.01(n.s.)
Candidate Characteristics:								
Voted For Clinton	0.28*	0.30*	0.21*	0.27*	0.32*	0.33*	-0.35*	-0.01(n.s.)
Universal Healthcare Access	0.17*	0.20*	0.08**	0.11*	0.19*	0.21*	-0.21*	-0.02 (n.s.)
Character Not Important	0.13*	0.14*	-0.01(n.s.)	--	0.19*	0.32*	-0.23*	-0.11*
Delegitimation of Authority: Crime & Drugs and Gridlock VIP	-0.01(n.s.)	.03(n.s)	0.22*	-0.18*	0.03 n.s.)	0.02 (n.s)	-0.08**	0.13*

Notes: * p <= .0001, ** .01 > p > .0001, *** .05 > p > = .01. Kendall's Tau quantifies the associations. Coefficients that are not statistically significant are denoted (n.s.). The cell with -- indicates that the same item is being used to assess both variables.

Jay Magidson and his Latent GOLD computer program provided the estimates of the three class latent structure.

The delegitimacy index is composed of items about Gridlock and Crime and Drugs.

public health interests and the healthcare reform issue when jointly controlled do not explain this relationship (partial $\tau = .09$, $p = .006$). Apparently, the character issue in part reflects a candidate's position on women's choice -- pro-life Republicans attribute character flaws to pro-choice Democrats.

Regarding ideology and party identification, liberals and Democrats were less concerned about presidential character than conservatives and Republicans. Those less concerned about character leaned toward the Left: they tended to support governmental interventions for economic equity, the environment, and healthcare reform (see Table 1). Like the single-item indicator of environmental concern, concern about character has a positive association with delegitimation of governmental authority -- gridlock, crime and drugs, and their index - - but, paradoxically, these two measures of concern are unrelated. Employed women are less concerned about character than homemakers and housewives ($\tau = .13$; $p = .04$); they also are more likely to favor universal access to health care ($\tau = .08$; $p = .04$).

The Economy

About 82 percent of all voters stressed that the economy was a very important factor in determining their vote; this percentage was higher than for any other issue. About 90 percent of the voters for Clinton or Perot stressed the importance of the economy, as did 66 percent of voters for Bush. However, the meaning of this question varied. Clinton voters emphasized the importance of jobs and economic expansion. Perot voters emphasized the importance of controlling the deficit -- 86 percent said this was very important, compared with 78 percent of Clinton voters and with 69 percent of Bush voters -- this issue worked best for Perot (Alvarez and Nagler 1995, p. 739). Bush voters emphasized the importance of a tax cut -- 68 percent said this was very important, compared with 63 percent of Perot voters and with 56 percent of Clinton voters.

Because this direct, single question has ambiguous meanings, and because its marginal proportions are skewed, to assess the economic issue this study draws on two items that assess presidential economic interventions. One question asks: "On the economy, should he concentrate on economic expansion and jobs even if that means a higher deficit (41 percent) or should he concentrate on first getting the deficit under control (59 percent)?" The other question asks: "On regulation, should he concentrate on regulating industry to protect consumers (41 percent) or reducing regulation to make American businesses more competitive (59 percent). In 1992 the first alternative answer to each question was the liberal response; the second, the more conservative

response. The additive index composed of these items thus assesses support for economic expansion and regulations and classifies about 19 percent of the respondents as wanting both presidential economic interventions, 44 percent as wanting one of the interventions, and 37 percent as opposing both interventions -- those in opposition favored bringing the deficit under control and reducing regulation of businesses.

This index of the economic issue has positive associations with support for governmental interventions about economic equity, social equality, and public health, and for the Left. It also has positive associations with core political variables -- liberalism, Democratic identification, and vote for Clinton. Those disposed toward the political center -- centrists and Independents -- varied less across the three categories of this index than those on the Left or Right. As did those on the Right, those in the Center tended to prefer a reduced deficit and less regulation of industry. Approvers of presidential economic activism said that a candidate's character was not an important determinant of their vote and they did not indicate a delegitimation of authority.

Health Care Reform

During the 1992 election campaign politicians discussed numerous health care plans (Smith 1993, pp. 56-65). On the Left were proposals for a national health care system similar to Canada's; this reform would require a maximum of governmental participation and radical change. In the Center at the beginning of the campaign Clinton supported the Pepper Commission's mandated employer-provided insurance with "play or pay," which required some new public insurance. Toward the end of the campaign Clinton endorsed "managed competition," but stipulated that the plan must provide universal access and limits to spending. Both plans built on the existing mixed private and public sector systems but required extensive change. On the Right President George H. W. Bush offered his voucher-based, private-sector plan, which aimed to ameliorate problems of lack of insurance in the small business market.

A typology can classify these plans: one dimension ascertains whether the plan required extensive involvement of the federal government or whether the plan melded private and public systems; the other dimension ascertains the scope of the reform, whether the plan required radical change or only amelioration of the present system. Two dichotomized questions directly gauge these aspects of health care reform and form an appropriate index. One question ascertains whether the respondent trusted federal involvement in health care -- "If the

federal government operated the health care system in this country, do you think we would have a system that is much better, somewhat better (52 percent), somewhat worse, or much worse (48 percent) than the system we currently have.” The other question ascertains whether the respondent believed that radical change was necessary -- “The existing health care system in the United States is so flawed that we should get rid of it and start over with a completely new approach” (45 percent) -- versus amelioration -- “The existing health care system in the United States has many good qualities and we should keep it and try to make it better” (55 percent). The resulting index has three categories: those who trusted federal participation and desired radical change; or, in other words, favored comprehensive reform (+ + = 29 percent); those who supported some reform (+ - or - + = 39 percent); and those who opposed comprehensive reform (- - = 32 percent). The latter preferred minimal governmental intervention in the health care system and amelioration of the problems of the present system but not radical change.

This index strongly predicts the responses to the other items about health care reform ($p < .0001$): voters who desired comprehensive reform believed that the president should completely overhaul the system ($\tau = .49$); they preferred government-provided health care to a mixed private and public system ($\tau = .32$); they said that health care reform was a very important factor in their choice of a candidate ($\tau = .24$), and they wanted all Americans to have universal access to healthcare ($\tau = .20$). When questioned about whether they had enough information concerning changes in the system, about 28 percent of those who desired comprehensive reform responded positively compared with 18 percent of those in opposition ($\tau = .09$). The latter were concerned about choice of physicians -- the difference was about 15 percentage points. As expected, support for comprehensive reform was associated with the Left ($\tau = .28$): pro-reformers were more likely than anti-reformers to support governmental interventions aimed toward economic equity, social equality, and the public's health. Compared with the Right, liberals, Democrats, and voters for Clinton all supported reform ($p < .001$) -- also see Blendon, et al., 1995); Independents and Perot voters held intermediate positions. Compared to the anti-reformers, the pro-reformers were more likely to say that a candidate's character was not very important in determining their vote.

Of the issues, the economy had the strongest direct effect on votes for Clinton but no measured effect on the Perot vote. Character, environmental concern, and health care had significant independent

effects. The issues noticeably improved the explanations of the Clinton vote and of the Perot vote.

Interaction Effects

To further study how the four issues interacted to influence vote, they were cross-tabulated directly with voting choice -- inclusion of other variables in the cross-tabulation would produce many cells with zero cases. The best-fitting log-linear model ($X^2 = 45.3$, $df = 56$, $p = .85$) that related the issues to vote included four interaction terms:

character*environment*reform*economy,
character*environment*vote,
economy*vote, and
reform*vote.

These imply that the four issues directly affected vote but, in addition, there were some significant interactions among the variables. The interacting variables that had the same qualitative relationship with vote (either + + or - -) tended to have mutually intensifying effects. Thus, the character * environment * vote interaction implied that, among those voters who were not very concerned about the environment (-), the effect of being very concerned about character (-) on Republican vote (-) was stronger ($\tau = .37$) than that effect among those voters very concerned about the environment (+) ($\tau = .18$). Alternatively, among those voters very concerned about character (-), the effect of lack of environmental concern (-) on Republican vote (-) was stronger ($\tau = .30$) than that effect among those not very concerned about character (+) ($\tau = .12$). Thus, when the Democratic candidates emphasized their concern about the environment (+), this weakened the impact of the character issue (-) on Republican vote (-). Similarly, when the Democratic candidates emphasized the strengths of their own characters (+), this weakened the effect of lack of environmental concern (-) on Republican vote (-).

The four-issue interaction (character * environment * reform * economy) implied that the association between opposition to health care reform (-) and opposition to economic interventions (-) varied depending upon concern about character and environmental concern. When voters were very concerned about the environment (+) but not very concerned about character (+) (i.e., disposed toward the Democratic position on those issues), then the association between opposition to reform (-) and opposition to interventions in the economy (-) was weaker ($\tau = .15$) than that association ($\tau = .28$) when voters were not very concerned about the environment (-) but were very concerned about character (-) (i.e., disposed toward the Republican position on those issues). Thus, the character and the environmental issues intensified the consistency of

voters' attitudes about governmental interventions in the economy and health care. When Democratic candidates emphasized their concern about the environment and the strengths of their own characters this weakened the consistency of opposition to governmental interventions in the economy and in the health care system. These four issues were synergistic; they certainly did matter.

Discussion

The issues affected the outcome of the 1992 election. Contrary to the thesis of the post-materialist political culture, election pundits thought that the materialist issue of the economy was pivotal, and they were mostly correct. Apropos votes for Clinton (versus Perot plus Bush), the economic issue had the largest effect, followed character, the environment, and health care reform. The latter was clearly a stratification-based materialist issue: in 1992 about 34 million Americans lacked health insurance (now at least 47 million are uninsured) and the lower-income and middle-income groups wanted reform. For poorer people, the environmental issue may have meant protection from unhealthy environments (a materialist aspect) while for affluent people it may have meant protection of the environment from people and industry (a post-materialist aspect). When jobs are at stake, many U.S. citizens put aside their environmental concern.

The issue of Clinton's character had a moral aspect and a strong political aspect. The Right's negative campaign against Clinton was in part motivated to counter his political and economic agendas, and perhaps, his pro-choice position. Voters on the Right said that a candidate's character was a very important determinant of their vote, as did older people and housewives.

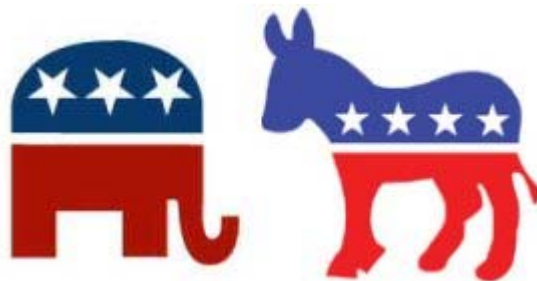
Apropos votes for Perot (versus Bush) the issues that increased his vote were health care reform, lack of concern about character, and the environment; the economy issue as measured here had little effect. Younger people were more likely to vote for Perot than for Bush, as were liberals, centrists, Democrats, and Independents.

A three-class latent structure of the issues classified as Left 20 percent of the respondents, as Center 68 percent, and as Right 12 percent. The Right consistently opposed governmental interventions directed toward economic expansion and regulation, comprehensive health care reform, and environmental protection; their pro-life attitudes led some to be very concerned about the candidates' character. The Left was less ideologically consistent than the Right. Of the Left, 43.7 percent were liberal, 32.6 percent were centrists, and 22.9 percent were conservatives, whereas of the Right, 69.5 percent

were conservatives, 17.2 percent were centrists, and only 11 percent were liberals. Thus, in 1992 there was "one Right," which uniformly opposed governmental interventions directed toward economic equity, social equality, and the public's health, and "two Lefts," both of which exhibited consistency on the economic issue but responded more diffusely on the more social issues of health care reform and the environment (Lipset [1959] 1982, p. 510; Edsall 1984, pp. 158-162). Of the 68 percent classified as Center, 27.3 percent were liberals, 35 percent centrists, and 35.5 percent were conservatives.

The latent structure of the issues improved the explanatory power of the models of voting -- it reduced the BIC statistics and increased the R2s (about 5 percentage change points for Clinton versus Perot plus Bush, and about 6 for Perot versus Bush). The separate issues explained more variation: for the ordinal Clinton-Perot-Bush trichotomy they increased the R2 by about 5.5 percentage change points; for the Clinton model, by 10 percentage change points; and for the Perot model, by about 12.5 percentage change points. The issues interacted so that consistent positions intensified partisan choice: issue positions that had the same qualitative relationships with vote (either + + or - -) produced a higher proportion of partisan votes than inconsistent issue positions (either + - or - +). These issues mattered: they combined with the social attributes and political predispositions to produce a voting choice, which, no doubt, was influenced by interpersonal influence, the media's campaign coverage, and the positions of the candidates on the issues (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954, p. 278; Beck et al., 2002, pp. 64-69). In 1992 Clinton, running as a moderate New Democrat, got a much larger share of the Center's vote than George H. W. Bush, thus making his victory decisive. In 2000 George W. Bush, running as moderate Compassionate Conservative, got much of the Center's vote, thus making the election very close. As President, however, he is implementing much of his agenda of the far Right (Bell 2002; Smith 2003).

(For a list of citations please contact the author)



Environmental Sociologists Help Form Local Environmental Justice Organization

by Phil Brown and Laura Senier

Through the Contested Illnesses Research Group and the Community Outreach Core of the Superfund Basic Research Program at Brown University, environmental sociology faculty and students, along with faculty and students in other departments, have worked over the last three years to help build a local environmental justice group in Rhode Island (details are below). On December 15, 2007, we were pleased to help launch the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island. Environmental justice (EJ) has had a profound intellectual and activist influence on environmental sociology, and because many environmental sociologists have contributed to environmental justice community organizing. EJ has long been a central force for the Contested Illnesses Research Group, through a project linking breast cancer and environmental justice in which we have worked with Communities for a Better Environment and West Harlem Environmental Action, and in a number of other efforts linking students to service learning with organizations such as Boston's Alternatives for Community and Environment. (A detailed description of the Contested Illnesses Research Group can be found in the Fall 2006 issue of Critical Mass Bulletin, the newsletter of the American Sociological Association's Collective Behavior and Social Movements Section, available at <http://www2.asanet.org/sectioncbism/critical-mass-2006fall.pdf>.)

The origins of the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island are unique in that they stem largely from activism around building schools on contaminated sites (brownfields). Residents in the Hartford neighborhood sued the City of Providence for building elementary and middle schools on the old municipal dump. Rhode Island Legal Services (RILS) championed that effort, taking the city and state to court and winning requirements for ongoing monitoring and for setting up a statewide Brownfields Environmental Equity Stakeholders Group through the Department of Environmental Management (The draft EJ policy and related materials are available at <http://www.dem.ri.gov/envequity/index.htm>). In conjunction with this effort, attorney Steve Fischbach of RILS prepared a report for EPA on safe school construction, and worked with the Center for Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ) to release survey findings of school siting policies in all fifty states. These reports show the appalling lack of attention given to school siting decisions at all levels of government; twenty states lack laws or regulations

preventing the construction of a school on a contaminated site, only 26 require an environmental site assessment before construction begins, and only 12 require public notice and comment periods (report available at:

http://www.childproofing.org/school_siting_50_state.htm). CHEJ founder and director Lois Gibbs launched the modern anti-toxics movement by bringing national attention to the hazards and health effects of chemical contamination under a Love Canal school. The collaboration between RILS and CHEJ on school siting in Rhode Island -- a collaboration that helped create the EJ League -- thus grows out of a long tradition by community activists to link concerns about toxic waste exposure and school environmental health and safety. This campaign and the launching of the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island also reflect CHEJ's leadership in responding to environmental justice activism and in redefining its perspective to make environmental justice critical to modern environmental organizing.

In 2005, a judge ordered the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to institute an environmental justice stakeholders panel to develop policies that would govern all brownfields development in the state. Local environmental justice activists have been centrally involved in that work by helping to write the new guidelines, and by educating state and municipal officials, developers, and residents about the need for concerted action to protect overburdened low-income communities and communities of color. The Contested Illnesses Research Group, through its involvement in the Superfund Basic Research Program's Community Outreach Core, has worked to educate state officials about EJ issues and how to incorporate them into the brownfields guidelines.

Our role in helping build the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island was through the Contested Illnesses Research Group, a research team operating since 1999. We founded the Providence Environmental Justice Education Forum (PEJEF, forerunner of the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island) in 2004, as part of our work on an NIH-funded project, the Collaborative Initiative for Research Ethics in Environmental Health (see www.researchethics.org), to provide technical and scientific support to community-based environmental advocacy groups and to build local capacity. We were aware not only of the work being done locally about school siting, but had also been in touch with other groups who were organizing around other related issues, and wanted to create an opportunity for them to learn from one another.

The PEJEF held regular meetings where members discussed and supported one another in

their campaigns and shared knowledge and expertise about strategies and tactics. Members came from communities all over Rhode Island, and represented a wide variety of constituencies impacted by a host of environmental problems. Participating members include groups fighting for tenants rights and safety in Providence public housing, for the cleanup of coal gasification waste in a community in southern Rhode Island, and for cleanup of air and water emissions around a dye manufacturing company and a textile firm. Organizers from regional networks provided technical and organizing support, such as Toxics Action Center, a grassroots support group based in Boston with regional offices in every New England state, and Alternatives for Community and Environment, a long-standing environmental justice group in Boston. The head of the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice, gave a keynote address at a recent meeting, to show how a recently formed environmental justice group developed. We used an environmental justice seminar course at Brown, cross-listed in the Center for Environmental Studies, Department of Community Health, and Department of Sociology, and supported by Brown's Swearer Center for Public Service, to provide service learning projects for some of the key organizations that participated in the PEJEF, and have discussed this pedagogical activity at professional conferences and in an article under review.

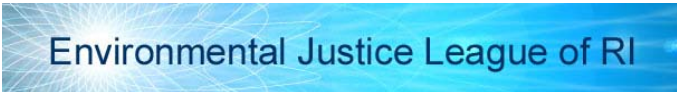
We also ran skill-building workshops for PEJEF members. In the fall of 2004, we invited professional activists and media consultants to discuss strategies for communicating with the media. At another, we provided advice on grant-writing, with presentations by program staff from EPA Region 1. Two of our member groups, were awarded grants from the EPA's Healthy Communities Program after completing this workshop, and we helped them design program components for these activities. One of those grants was to Rhode Island Legal Services, which had led the litigation and organizing around school siting. One of the major goals RILS identified under their grant was to do community education around school siting as an environmental justice issue, and to hold a conference towards for community participants at the end of the period. We were pleased that RILS called its effort the Providence Environmental Justice Forum, showing its roots in our initial organizational work.

In November 2007, on the day of a typical New England snowstorm and with a competing event by the Sierra Club, 70 people attended a conference organized by the PEJEF, so they were a dedicated crew. The closing session was a group discussion of whether to form an ongoing organization, which garnered overwhelming support. The group agreed to meet again six weeks after the conference, and to

reach out to other organizations and local residents, in order to convene a mid-December 2007 organizational meeting. More than two dozen people representing diverse community-based organizations attended this meeting, and launched the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island. Members represent many different constituencies and work on a wide variety of issues in addition to school siting, such as childhood lead poisoning, asthma, public housing health and safety, arsenic regulations, toxics education and reduction, transportation, and toxic waste site remediation and compensation.

The bulk of the credit for forming the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island goes to the members of this new organization, and to the many organizations they have worked with. Beyond that, we believe we have made an important contribution in our role as environmental sociology faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates. We have marshaled many resources for the local activists, including the Community Outreach Core of Brown's Superfund Basic Research Program, an EJ seminar with service learning projects, and support from the University's Swearer Center for Public Service. We hope that other environmental sociologists will use our experience to help connect their academic and organizing interests.

[A happy endnote: Thirty years after Love Canal, the Energy Bill that was signed into law on December 19, 2007, includes a provision that instructs the EPA to develop the nation's first-ever guidelines to give state legislatures direction when it comes to laws protecting where schools may be physically sited in relationship to toxic contamination sites. Prior to the bill, no such federal instruction existed. School siting has been a key issue that has galvanized EJ organizing at the state level in RI, and as the issue gains national prominence, could further the EJ dialogue nationally. We have found it to be a good entry point to a discussion about brownfields cleanup and reuse that involves many stakeholders, including the EJ community. By connecting the issue of school siting to brownfields redevelopment decisions, community groups can connect to other community groups, as well as to developers and regulators charged with brownfields cleanup programs.]

The logo for the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island (EJLRI) features a blue background with a white, glowing, starburst or sunburst pattern on the left side. The text "Environmental Justice League of RI" is written in a white, sans-serif font across the middle of the blue bar.

Can Sociologists Be Neutral On a Moving Train? Professional Society Positions On Economic Growth

The year 2007 witnessed important breakthroughs in the professional fields of the natural sciences. In addition to identifying 700 new species of organisms in Antarctica and the remnants of a large, birdlike dinosaur in Mongolia, natural scientists also discovered a voice of consensus among their colleagues concerning an often-overlooked area of research – the economy. Those who study the natural world most closely have taken a broader view of the threats that face ecological integrity, namely the impact of economic growth. These biologists have drafted position statements that recognize a fundamental conflict between economic growth and the conservation of biodiversity, taking a significant stance on issues of multidisciplinary relevance. Seven organizations have already approved related position statements, including The Wildlife Society and the Society for Conservation Biology (NA Section). The American Fisheries Society, American Society of Mammalogists, Ecological Society of America, Society for Range Management and others are considering similar proposals. These position statements clarify – for the public, the firm, and the policymaker – the trade-offs society faces between increasing production and consumption of goods and services and environmental protection.

Brian Czech, a wildlife biologist and position statement author, explains that the scientific community first needs to confront the fear that by taking positions on economic growth their professional societies will be deemed “advocacy organizations.” In *BioScience* (2007: 7), Czech makes it clear that, “The position taken by a professional society is designed to clarify the scientific evidence about an issue relevant to public policy. It may go so far as identifying alternative policy goals...and even policy tools. Clarifying science and identifying policy alternatives are a far cry from advocacy.” In addition to citing numerous biological and ecological studies to support these positions, interdisciplinary scholars from the social sciences have offered complementary analyses that address issues of equity for the global South, incorporating considerations of race, class, and gender into the statements. For example, the Social Science Working Group of the Society for Conservation Biology qualified the position statement by adding that an opposition to economic growth in wealthy nations does not preclude necessary economic development in other regions due to the potential for redistribution.

The significant effort that fellow scientists and researchers have offered to address the issue of economic growth and sustainability begs an important question of our professional society: *Has the time come for the ASA to consider a position statement on the fundamental conflict between continued economic growth and issues of ecological and social justice?*

The most reasonable audience to address this question is the group of scholars who research the relationships between human organization and the environment in socio-economic context. Therefore, we propose that the Environment and Technology membership consider a discussion of such a position statement for the following reasons:

1. The foundation of Environmental Sociology rests on the works of scholars willing to make clear statements regarding the social drivers of environmental problems in the 1970-80s (e.g., Catton and Dunlap 1978). The seminal works of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, Barry Commoner's *The Closing Circle*, and William Catton's *Overshoot* are based on cumulative research from economics, sociology, and ecology. The clear positions taken in these works addressing the myth of unlimited material prosperity inspired a generation of scholars to pursue lifelong research in our field. As new scientific research emerges informing society of the scale, scope, and pace of global environmental change, environmental sociologists should be prepared to continue the legacy of engaged discussion beyond academic publications and provide summary statements of use and value to the general public and to decision-makers.

2. Theoretical development within Environmental Sociology has resulted in robust conceptual frameworks that relate directly to this position statement across multiple levels of analysis. Advances in Environmental Justice highlight how the wastes from an ever-expanding production process are unequally distributed based on social location of class, race, and gender. Schnaiberg's (1980) *Treadmill of Production* confronts the conflict between economic growth and ecological sustainability at both the level of the firm and the nation-state. Cross-disciplinary research of *Unequal Ecological Exchange* locates the contradiction of growth and conservation within the realm of global trade. The cumulative accomplishments of environmental sociologists leave us well-prepared to locate a position statement on economic growth within a larger theoretical framework.

3. Empirical studies of the connection between economic growth and environmental problems guided by various theoretical positions have appeared in prominent peer-reviewed sociology outlets and other social science journals (e.g., Jorgenson 2003; Shi 2003; York, Rosa, and Dietz 2003). This body of empirical research has strongly suggested that the expansion of the global economy is a key driver of global environmental problems.

4. The theme for ASA's 2007 Annual Meeting asked sociologists to consider: "Is Another World Possible?" This invitation for the larger social science community to focus research around possible future paths of social development demonstrates a significant opportunity to present such a position statement to the larger membership. Instrumentally, the time is right and the issue is ripe.

We ask that the Environment and Technology section dedicate a working group to draft a position statement addressing the conflict between economic growth and ecological and social justice. The statement could then be discussed and voted on by the section's membership.

This proposal is put forth by a collective of Sociology graduate students at the University of Oregon:

Becky Clausen
Eric Edwards
Hannah Holleman
R. Jonna
Stephano Longo
Philip Mancus



Workshops, Conferences and Call for Papers

The departments of Geography and Human Ecology at Rutgers University and the Earth Institute at Columbia University are jointly sponsoring a workshop on 'Land Use Transitions in the Tropics', March 26 to 28, 2008. For more information go to:

http://geography.rutgers.edu/events/magrann_conference/2008/index.html

The Program on the Global Environment at the Center for International Studies is sponsoring a workshop entitled:

'The Social Life of Forests: New Frameworks for Studying Change', May 29-31, 2008.

Call for papers: Ecopolitics Online Journal will accept abstracts (150 words) and completed articles (8,000 words) on themes relevant to our core areas of interest, including green politics, parties, lifestyles and movements. Ecopolitics Online Journal provides an outlet for academics and researchers through its online environmental publishing website. Ecopolitics Online Journal is an international peer-reviewed, bi-annual academic journal which explores themes of environmentalism, sustainability, social movements, ecotopias, conservation, Green Parties and environmental politics and policy.

Regards,
Dr. Liam Leonard, NUIG Ireland,
Dr. John Barry, QUB Northern Ireland,

Senior Editors,
Ecopolitics Online Journal

Current Edition Available:
<http://www.ecopoliticsonline.com/index.cfm?action=journals>



Society, Power and the Environment: Challenges for the 21st Century



XIV SASA Congress, University of Stellenbosch,
Stellenbosch, 7-10 July 2008

Call for Papers

Major socio-environmental catastrophes in different parts of the world in the last few years have reinvigorated debates about the interconnectedness between the social world and the natural environment. Some of these phenomena, like wild fires, floods, hurricanes, and mudslides have in some countries devastated entire communities. In others, human, animal and plant life has been placed at great risk. In almost all the cases, attempts have been made – by scholars, researchers and popular commentators alike - to attribute the environmental challenges to climate change. In both scientific and media circles, apocalyptic images and scenarios of a “burning world” have been projected, perhaps to the dismay of those who endorse “Apocalypse Not” arguments that the earth is not heading for disaster in the way entrenched scientific predictions and environmental activists suggest.

In Africa, environmental challenges are multifarious, with debates and concerns around climate change being just one of them. The persisting problem of deplorable livelihoods amidst an abundance of natural resources continues to foreground the debates about the appropriateness of resource utilization regimes, and in particular the roles of the state, business and local communities in such regimes. Broadly, the following questions remain pertinent: Where and how do the state, business and communities intersect in the “causation” of environmental challenges, and in the search for sustainable solutions to such challenges? Can one speak of an “idea” of *sustainable* environmental processes in the 21st century? What role does power, broadly defined, play in environmental relations and processes, and how does one tackle the problem of power in these matters? What should social researchers, policy makers and activists learn – and do – at this juncture of the global socio-environmental malaise? Where does one locate South Africa, and the African continent as a whole, in the ensuing environmental debate? Most importantly, what contributions can sociology make - and/or is already making - to current environmental debates?

These are some of the issues for which the 2008 Congress of the South African Sociological Association (SASA) serves as a discussion platform. The theme of the Congress is ***Society, Power and the Environment: Challenges for the 21st Century***.

Further to and complementing the main theme, the conference will give special attention to the following **sub-themes**:

- Business, environment and society
- Natural resources and local livelihoods
- Climate, energy and survival

Intending paper presenters are invited to **submit abstracts** of their papers online at <http://www.sasaonline.org.za> not later than Friday 28 March 2008. For enquiries contact Heidi Prozesky at **hep@sun.ac.za** or telephone **+27 21 808 2092** or **+27 83 666 3166**.

Please indicate the following when submitting abstracts: (1) Name(s), title(s) and institutional affiliation(s), and addresses, including e-mail and contact telephone number(s) (2) the theme of the congress, (3) the name of the Working Group in which papers are to be presented (a full list of SASA Working Groups and their Convenors is provided below).

Deadlines:

Abstracts must be received by the SASA Secretary not later than **Friday 28 March 2008**.

Full papers from authors of selected abstracts must be received by **Friday 30 May 2008**.

Call for Papers: Interdisciplinary Aspects of Climate Change

In the history of science there have been only a few issues which have mobilized much the attention of scientists and policy-makers alike as the issue of climate change currently does. The release of the 4th Assessment produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in the summer of 2007 has put the reality of human-induced global warming beyond any doubt. In addition, the high-level event on Climate Change held at the UN Headquarters, New York (24 September 2007), the thirteenth United Nations Climate Change Conference held on the island of Bali (Indonesia) on 3-14 December 2007 and the various strategies and actions plans which are being prepared and implemented all over the world, indicate that the emphasis to this topic will continue to dominate the scientific agenda for decades to come.

Although the subject matter of climate change is regarded as a critical issue and sound scientific knowledge is needed in order to address the problem in a holistic way, there is a paucity of academic publications specifically focusing on the different aspects of climate change. The book "Interdisciplinary Aspects of Climate Change" will address this need. It will report, document and disseminate experiences, projects and practical, inter-disciplinary initiatives related to climate change performed by research centres, non-government bodies, international organisations, practitioners and universities both in the industrialised and developing nations. By means of cases studies and project descriptions, it will offer a picture of the state-of-the art in the field across the world and demonstrate how much can be achieved by means of interdisciplinary efforts focusing on matters related to climate change.

The book "Interdisciplinary Aspects of Climate Change" will be published by Peter Lang Scientific Publishers (Frankfurt, New York, Bern, Vienna), which has published previous volumes of the award-winning series "Environmental Education, Communication and Sustainability" which has produced nearly 30 high-impact books since its creation in 1996.

Submissions to "Interdisciplinary Aspects of Climate Change" will be commissioned by the Editor-in-Chief and, when accepted, will be subjected to peer-review by an international editorial board, which will process the submissions further. A special emphasis will be given to research which has led to tangible results, as opposed to merely theoretical analyses and appraisals of aspects of climate change problems.

Further details on this call for papers and on the submission process are available at:
<http://climatechange.international-projects.eu/>

Call for Papers: Conservation Letters

Are you conducting cutting-edge social science research with significant implications for conservation policy and practice? Interested in communicating with your peers, researchers in other disciplines, and conservation practitioners? Eager to get your research findings into the mainstream scientific literature more quickly? If so, please submit a manuscript to *Conservation Letters*!

Forthcoming in early 2008, *Conservation Letters* is a scientific journal publishing empirical and theoretical research with significant implications for the conservation of biological diversity. The journal welcomes submissions across the biological and social sciences - especially interdisciplinary submissions - that advance pragmatic conservation goals as well as scientific understanding. Manuscripts will be published on a rapid communications schedule and therefore should be current and topical. Research articles should clearly articulate the significance of their findings for conservation policy and practice.

With an Editorial Board of leading scholars from across the social and natural sciences, *Conservation Letters* promises to be a landmark publication. Social science Editors include Bill Adams, Arun Agrawal, Amara Brook, Patrick Christie, Tom Dietz, Sandra Jonker, Rick Krannich, Kendra McSweeney, Gene Myers, Subhrendu Pattanayak, David Pellow, Steve Polasky, Sarah Pralle, Diane Russell, and Paige West.

We seek submissions in the following paper categories:

- * Letters: novel scientific findings with high relevance for conservation practice or policy
- * Mini-Reviews: overviews of emerging subjects that merit urgent coverage or succinct syntheses of important topics that are rarely encountered in the mainstream literature
- * Policy Perspectives: brief essays for a general audience on issues related to conservation and society

To ensure rapid, widespread dissemination of conservation research to scholars and practitioners around the world, *Conservation Letters* will be available for free in 2008. For additional general information, please see our website (www.conservationletters.com). For specific questions or manuscript inquiries, please contact Managing Editor Jennifer Mahar.

(jmahar@bos.blackwellpublishing.com).

Call for Papers: Population and Environment

Lori Hunter (University of Colorado at Boulder) has taken on the role of Editor-in-Chief of the academic journal *Population and Environment* published by Springer. Lori would very much like to see many, many more submissions from her Environmental Sociology colleagues! Clearly spatial work on environmental inequalities has demographic dimensions, but also consider "population" more broadly definedcorrelates of environmental perceptions, indigenous populations and resource use, climate vulnerability/resilience these are all areas of social science inquiry that can contain socio-demographic dimensions.

The journal's mission statement: *Population and Environment* publishes articles, commentary and reviews related to the bi-directional links between population, natural resources, and the natural environment, with the purpose of deepening scientific and policy dialogue in this often complex area. The coverage is multidisciplinary, spanning a range of social, policy, life, and natural sciences. Work at all scales, local to global, is presented as are both theoretical and empirical contributions.

Population and Environment reaches a wide readership of researchers working in academic and policy institutions in the fields of demography, economics, sociology, geography, environmental studies, public health, ecology and associated sub-disciplines.

For further information, please visit the journal's website www.springer.com or Lori Hunter directly: Lori.Hunter@colorado.edu



Job Openings

The Department of Sociology at The College of William and Mary invites applications for two to three one-year Visiting Assistant Professor positions beginning September 1, 2008. Successful candidates will teach three courses each semester, including at least one introductory course. Other courses offered should complement or contribute to existing course offerings. Desired areas of emphasis include but are not limited to: the sociology of organizations, medical sociology, comparative race relations, the sociology of the media, and environmental sociology. Evidence of teaching experience and effectiveness is required. Review of applications will begin February 1, 2008 and will continue until positions are filled. Applicants should submit a curriculum vitae, letter of application, teaching statement, evidence of teaching effectiveness including course evaluations, and names and contact information for three referees. Apply in hard copy only. Faxes and emails will not be accepted. Please send application materials to: Jennifer Bickham Mendez, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Morton Hall, 601 Jamestown Rd, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA 23185. Please visit <http://www.wm.edu/sociology/> for more information about the Department of Sociology at The College of William and Mary. Applicants should register with this on-line recruitment system (<http://jobs.wm.edu>) to post their personal demographic information.

Dickinson College seeks applicants for a tenure-track appointment in our Environmental Studies Department at the Assistant Professor level in Environmental Health, commencing July 1, 2008. A Ph.D. in a discipline related to environmental health is required. The successful candidate will be strongly interdisciplinary, with training in both the natural and social sciences, and will provide expertise in a new field for the Environmental Studies Department. He/she will be expected to initiate an active research agenda which will involve undergraduates, provide opportunities for service-learning, and build on our strong community-based research programs. The candidate will be expected to teach a section of our Introductory Environmental Science course, offer new intermediate-level courses in environmental health (including, for example, health effects of exposure, distribution of environmentally induced disease, risk assessment, and policy), and teach a senior seminar on a topic of his/her choice on a rotating schedule with other faculty. In addition, depending on one's area of

interest, the candidate will have the opportunity to work collaboratively with the College's Certificate Program in Health Studies, the Community Studies Center, the College Organic Farm, the Alliance for Aquatic Resource Monitoring (ALLARM), and with faculty in a number of other departments with strong community-based environmental research interests. Dickinson College is a highly selective liberal arts college in South Central Pennsylvania, with a national reputation for leadership in global education. This new position is part of a major Mellon Foundation-funded initiative to make environmental and sustainability studies a defining characteristic of the college's academic program. Applications should include a statement of interest, a curriculum vita, and contact information for three references. Applications and inquiries should be forwarded to Professor Candie C. Wilderman, Chair of the Environmental Studies Department, P.O. Box 1773, Carlisle, PA 17013, <mailto:wilderma@dickinson.edu>, 717-245-1573. Review of candidates will begin on February 15, 2008. Dickinson College is committed to diversity, and we encourage candidates who will contribute to meeting that goal. Applications and nominations of women and minorities are strongly encouraged.

The Department of Environmental and Occupational Health at the Rollins School of Public Health of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia (www.sph.emory.edu/eoh) announces a major faculty expansion. The department seeks scholars for faculty appointments at all academic ranks and in all areas of environmental health, with particular emphasis on global environmental health (including climate change, public health ecology, indoor air, water and sanitation), risk assessment, environmental biostatistics and modeling (including PBPK modeling), biomarkers, gene-environment interactions, toxicology (including neuro-, nano-, in silico-, and molecular), geographic information systems, environmental medicine, children's environmental health, built environment, and environmental health policy. Candidates for senior positions should have excellent training; a strong record of research and teaching, particularly at the graduate level; a demonstrated capacity to secure external funding; and an established research program. Candidates for junior tenure-track positions must demonstrate the potential to become independent investigators and graduate-level teachers. Non-tenure track research faculty positions are also available.

The Department of Environmental and Occupational Health consists of 10 primary faculty with an additional 10 joint faculty members holding primary appointments in other departments (e.g., Epidemiology, Global Health, Medicine) and 32 adjunct faculty, many affiliated with the neighboring Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Department faculty have active research programs in the areas of environmental epidemiology, toxicology, exposure assessment and risk analysis focusing on pesticides, air pollutants, and other exposures. The Department offers joint degree programs with the Departments of Epidemiology and Global Health and with Emory College's Department of Environmental Studies. Multiple opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration in environmental health exist with other academic departments and with nearby institutions, including the CDC.

Applicants should email a letter of interest accompanied by a curriculum vita to: Kyle Steenland, PhD, Professor and Search Chair, ksteenl@sph.emory.edu with a copy to Robin Thompson, Administrative Assistant, rthom10@sph.emory.edu. Please include the Job Vacancy # in your application: Assistant Professor, # 4229BR; Associate Professor, # 4230BR; or Professor, # 4231BR. Review of applications will begin March 1, and will continue until the positions are filled. Starting dates are negotiable. Applicants may request that their applications be handled confidentially.

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Member News

Ortwin Renn, Professor of Environmental Sociology at the University of Stuttgart, and co-author with Carlo Jaeger, Gene Rosa, and Thomas Webler of Risk, Uncertainty, and Rational Action, London: EARTHSCAN, the book that won the 2000-2002 Outstanding Publication Award of the Section was awarded an honorary doctorate at ETH (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule) in Zurich, the M.I.T., of Switzerland (and where Einstein studied from 1896-1900).

Gene Rosa, Washington State, added four new sculptures to his *Ecolage Series* (Ecologically conscious bricolage) for the 2007 WSU faculty art exhibition this fall. One piece, "Consumer Culture," underscores the absurdity of our consumption practices. The second piece, "Baselitz's Bin" is an illustration of creative re-cycling and message that we need to do more. The third piece, "LA 2030," expresses the growing pollution of our air and the façade we put up to avoid facing that reality. The fourth and final piece, "Rightedness," illustrates the misaligned attention by certain political and philosophical positions with our environmental predicament. Anyone interested in these new sculptures, or any of the others in the series can go to my website <http://cooley.libarts.wsu.edu/rosa/>, click on "artistry" and then on 2007 Faculty Show.