

MENDING THE GAP: LATINO INVOLVEMENT WITH MAINSTREAM AND
LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
A PILOT STUDY IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

By

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ABSTRACT

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The modern environmental movement in the United States is at a crossroads; following its current path, represented by mainstream national environmental organizations that struggle to gain the support of racial and ethnic minorities, it may lose the momentum and influence it has gained in the past decades. A second path is one that relies on the collaborative efforts of national and local organizations, as well as individual community members. These organizations must gain the support and involvement of racial and ethnic minorities to address the issues of built and natural environmental and social well-being that affect every member of the diverse U.S. population. As a first step towards this realization, the current research sought, through personal interviews, to construct a more thorough understanding of Latino relationships with “environment,” as well as with mainstream and local environmental organizations in the Los Angeles area. Through thematic analysis of these interviews, as well as non-participant observation, the research developed a theory of Latino environmental consciousness and action. This theory aided in the creation of a final report that includes suggestions regarding appropriate ways to explore and initiate conversations with local Latino groups or individuals, or locally

operating mainstream organizations, in order to pursue mutually beneficial cooperation. The report was given to all organizations with which interview participants were involved, with the goal that meaningful collaboration between organizations could begin to take shape immediately. This project also serves as a catalyst for further research that is needed to shift the environmental movement in a more representative, diverse, and successfully influential direction.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
PREFACE: PERSONAL STATEMENT.....	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
Face of the Modern Environmental Movement in the U.S.....	4
Limitations.....	6
Diversity and Environmental Organizations.....	7
Latino demographics.....	10
Latino Environmental Concern.....	11
Urban Latino “environmentalism”.....	16
Environmental racism and the rise of the environmental justice movement.....	20
Latino environmental groups.....	21
Synergies between Traditional and Environmental Justice Movements.....	24
Conflicts, Barriers to Collaboration, and Current Literature.....	28
Literature-based and individual insights.....	30
Insights from interviews.....	36
RESEARCH DESIGN.....	42
Reasoned Action in the Current Research.....	43
Attitudes.....	44

Norms.....	44
Perceived control.....	45
Methods.....	46
Interview guide.....	47
Participants.....	49
Data collection.....	51
Analysis.....	50
Final report.....	53
ANALYSIS/RESULTS.....	54
Beliefs about “Environment”.....	54
Attitudes.....	57
Norms.....	63
Perceived Control.....	64
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	71
Suggestions.....	80
Limitations and Future Research.....	84
Conclusion.....	86
REFERENCES.....	87
APPENDIX A.....	99
APPENDIX B.....	103
APPENDIX C.....	105

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Questions targeting each component of the Reasoned Action model regarding participation in efforts to address environmental concern (+ indicates that the two questions in combination address ‘perceived control about participation’)	48
Table 2: Environmentally-focused organizations with offices, chapters, or campaigns in Los Angeles from which participants were selected.....	50

PREFACE: PERSONAL STATEMENT

Motivation to pursue the current research resulted from the combination of a few factors. I grew up in a very outdoor-oriented family and an appreciation for the health of non-built environments was instilled in me at a very young age. As I grew older and learned more about the complex environmental problems that face our world and the severity of their implications for all life, my concern for the well-being of the planet escalated, as did my interest in understanding how people could willingly partake in practices that threatened their and future generations' existence. Somewhere during the four years of my undergraduate study in psychology I came to realize that I wanted to dedicate my life and work to trying to ameliorate these man-made environmental plagues.

As I began to investigate current efforts to address environmental issues in the United States I, like many others, noticed the seeming absence of a non-white presence in the public environmental movement. Considering that many environmental problems (global climate change for instance) affect all people, not just Caucasian members of society, I began to feel like the ostensible lack of diversity in the movement was a significant barrier to its potential effectiveness. The question of why ethnic and racial minorities, while constituting a large portion of the U.S. population, did not seem to be equally represented in the modern environmental movement became of great interest to me.

The focus of the current research on the Latino demographic is also in part due to my personal history. I spent the first eighteen years of my life in New Mexico, a

majority-minority state, in a culture that I have come to recognize as distinctly New Mexican. Unlike many other states with large minority populations where ethnic or racial identity often correlates with lower socioeconomic status, Latino/Hispanic ethnic identity in New Mexico is not an accurate indicator of economic or class standing. Moreover, Latinos have a considerable presence in state and local politics and government, and are actively involved in decision-making processes at all levels in New Mexico. In recognizing that a) the Latino/Hispanic population is the fastest growing demographic in the U.S. and b) such minority representation in politics and decision-making processes in New Mexico is not present in other largely Latino-minority areas, I began to see Latino, and other minority participation in environmental problem-solving as a social issue of equity.

My view of minority under-representation in environmental decision-making as a social concern was further strengthened as I learned about the issues of environmental racism and the environmental justice movement. Considering all my interests and concerns, increased minority participation in the struggle to mitigate environmental problems has become for me an issue of both social and environmental health. The current research is a product of my passion and concern for both environmental and social justice, and was undertaken with the hope that it will serve as a step towards understanding how to attain a more socially and environmentally healthy world.

Throughout this research and exchanges with participants, I attempted to fully disclose my bias for an expanded environmental movement through collaboration while accurately representing the perspectives shared by interviewees. Ultimately, while my

own beliefs were always present, the current research experience has served to further develop my understanding and perceptions of environment and environmental issues.

INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to pinpoint a specific birth date of the environmental movement in the United States, but regardless of its official date of inception, environmentalism has evolved into a successful and tenacious movement in the U.S., and in fact, all over the world (Brulle, 2009). Rachel Carson is often credited for the propulsion of the modern environmental movement through the publication of her catalytic book *Silent Spring* in 1962 (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 127). Other sources note the first Earth Day celebration in 1970 as the official start of American environmentalism (p. 152). Although both are significant identifiers of the environmental movement in the U.S., its actual roots can be traced back to the philosophical thought of the Transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson in the 1830s and '40s who preached reverence and respect for nature through conservation (Anderson, 2008, p. 152). Environmentalism surfaced on a governmental level in the U.S. in the 1860s and '70s during what is known as the “era of pragmatism” with the first designations of natural parks (Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant); federal support for national parks was accompanied by the creation of two of America’s most prominent environmental organizations, the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club (Brulle).

Following the World Wars, environmentalism shifted in its orientation from the preservation of wilderness and began to concomitantly emphasize the dangers to human health associated with environmental degradation (Dunlap & Mertig 1992; Gottlieb, 2005). It was during the following decades that Rachel Carson illuminated the harmful effects of pesticides, most notably DDT, on human and environmental health (Dunlap &

Mertig; Gottlieb); public concern escalated surrounding the increased prevalence of oil spills like the Santa Barbara spill of 1969 and the Exxon Valdez spill of 1989; the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created; a series of environmentally related regulations (such as the Clean Air Act, Water Pollution Control Act, and Endangered Species Act) were passed; and Earth Day was founded (Gottlieb, p. 139). The modern environmental movement is now defined by a conglomerate of emphases on a wide range of environmental issues championed by grassroots, nongovernmental, and federal organizations, most recently including concern about global climate change (Brulle, 2009; Dunlap & Mertig).

The current research examines the relationship between the conservation/preservation movement and the environmental justice (environmental justice) movement, specifically in regards to Latino¹ participation. Through interviews with supporters of both local and national environmentally oriented organizations in Los Angeles County, this research seeks to better understand Latino relationships with the different sects of the environmental movement. The ultimate goal of the current research is to illuminate areas for collaboration and mutually beneficial expansion between each sub-movement in order to create a more effective and holistically representative U.S.

¹For the purpose of the current study, the word “Latino” was chosen for its inclusiveness of diverse populations that have similar ethnic, but not necessarily national identities. The term “Latino” means to refer to any person of Latin-American origin. The word “Hispanic” was not used because it refers more specifically to only persons of Spanish or Spanish-speaking decent, while “Latino” generally refers to anyone of Latin-American decent. Self-identification as Hispanic, Chicano, Mexican-America, Puerto-Rican, Cuban/Cuban-American, Peruvian/Peruvian-American, etc. is subsumed under the classification of “Latino.”

environmental movement.

The following chapters include a discussion of the literatures and non-academic insights around which the current research is based and the gap it seeks to fill is identified. This discussion includes the topics of the face of the modern environmental movement, diversity within environmental organizations, Latino environmental concern, environmental justice, synergies between the traditional and environmental justice movements, and suggested barriers to collaboration. Subsequent chapters discuss the methods, analysis, results, and conclusions of the current research, including opportunities for future work and research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Face of the Modern Environmental Movement in the U.S.

Despite the existence of multiple sub-movements and emphases within the modern environmental movement, the current face of the movement is still predominantly recognized as what Andrew Rowell calls the Group of Ten, the ten largest and most influential non-government environmental organizations¹, as well as others that similarly focus on “ecological protection” (Botkin, 2001, p.7). The focus of each organization is most succinctly described in the mission statement of that organization, but may also be determined through considerable observation of the organization’s advocacy activities.

Although some national organizations, like the Environmental Defense Fund (Our Mission and History, n.d.), the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC; About NRDC: Mission Statement, n.d.), the Nature Conservancy (Vision & Mission, 2011), and the Sierra Club (Sierra Club Policies, n.d.) directly include preservation of human health and well-being in their mission statements, a substantial number of national environmental organizations’ mission statements focus predominantly on non-human nature, alluding to human dangers abstractly through mention of climate change, if at all.

The National Wildlife Federation describes three facets to its mission: working

¹Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Defense Fund, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Friends of the Earth, Izaak Walton League, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society and the World Wide Fund for Nature

towards solutions for global climate change, protecting “wildlife and wild places”, and reestablishing American’s connection with nature through getting children outside (Our Mission, n.d.). Even in this recognition of climate change as a priority area of concern, it is qualified as a concern because it is “the single biggest threat to wildlife and wild places,” not necessarily to human life as well. Additionally, although the National Wildlife Federation’s mission statement promotes “outdoor play” as a means of improving children’s physical, emotional, and mental health, it emphasizes that experiences outdoors will foster “a sense of conservation stewardship” in youth, again working to preserve “wild” spaces and life.

The National Audubon Society’s mission is to conserve natural ecosystems, wildlife, and their habits (About Us, n.d.a). Although its mission statement also includes the clause “for the benefit of humanity”, in addition to the benefit for the planet’s biodiversity, there is no further discussion or explanation as how these conservation efforts benefit the human population. Like the National Wildlife Federation’s, the National Audubon Society’s mission statement emphasizes the pursuit of connecting people with nature as an agent of empowering them to “protect” it. The Conservation Fund, with its major initiative in preserving “America’s favorite places,” champions a similar effort to connect children with nature to ensure its future protection (Children & Nature, 2011). The same is seen in The Wilderness Society’s mission to “protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places” (About Us, n.d.c). Even the National Geographic Society’s tagline involves “inspiring people to care about the planet” (About Us, n.d.b).

Although self-described as a “movement” not an organization, Earth First! is a well-known activist entity in the environmental movement (About Earth First!, n.d.). Earth First! is distinguished by its belief in “biocentrism”, the equal worth of all living things on earth regardless of human utility (About Earth First!; Bari, 1997).

As illustrated above, a large number of well know national environmental organizations focus their efforts on the preservation of “wilderness” and non-human animals (Adams, 1992). To the extent that their mission and goals do mention the human element of the environment, it is overwhelmingly in regards to fostering an ethic of protection for the aforementioned “wildlife.” Although there is much support for the wilderness conservation aspect of the environmental movement, there is limited diversity among such supporters, and inhibited potential for success of conservation-focused organizations.

Limitations

Although national environmental organizations have been and continue to be relatively successful in achieving consistent modest victories, as evidenced by their sustained presence in the U.S. (Dunlap & Mertig, 1992), there is a clear trend of older membership and supporters that does not accurately reflect the U.S. population as a whole (Bischoff, 2004). There is a sense among many leaders in environmental organizations that they are “preaching to the choir” and must reach the “mainstream,” (i.e. become relevant to a wider population) if they wish to see the organization’s success continue and grow into the future (Bischoff). Furthermore, although local or regional successes have been attained through the efforts of national environmental organizations,

minimal progress has been made in achieving their overarching goals of meaningfully addressing climate change or preserving major ecosystems (Powell, 2007; Speth, 2005). Some explanations for these apparent shortcomings include the loss of “citizen-based activism” and an evolution of environmental organization into staff run “businesses” that depend on paid lobbyists, and a lack of collaboration and cooperation among organizations to work together on shared issues of concern (Gamman, 1994; Powell; Speth, 2008). Additionally, it is argued that environmental organizations lack a strong force in electoral politics and that environmental politics are not nearly as inclusive as they must be to “build the movement”; to be successful, organizations need to make stronger alliances (Speth, 2008). Both explanations may be associated with, and ultimately stem from a lack of diversity in the modern environmental movement in the U.S. Such issues of diversity, specifically in terms of Latino involvement, are discussed in the following chapter.

Diversity and Environmental Organizations

The modern environmental movement is buttressed by the existence of national and local grassroots organizations dedicated solely to current environmental issues (Dunlap & Mertig, 1992). Despite their agency and significance in environmental discourse, national environmental organizations do not accurately reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of the U.S. (<http://www.environmentaldiversity.org/>; Jordan & Snow, 1992; Learn, 2008; Navarro, 2009; Stanton, 2002; Taylor, 2005).

The United States Census Bureau (2012, May 17) estimates since the 2010 Census indicate that in 2011 over half of the American population under the age of one year was a minority (that is, not single-race white and not Hispanic). Throughout the U.S., the population of minorities, in every minority group, is consistently growing. Between 2010 and 2011 the U.S. minority population was estimated to have increased from 36.1% to 36.6% of the totally U.S. population. Despite the increasing diversity of the United States, minorities made up only about 14.6% of mainstream environmental organizations' employees between 2004 and 2006 (Taylor, 2007). The same study revealed that 35% of the surveyed organizations had no non-white minorities on their staff. A 2002-04 study commissioned by the Natural Resources Council of America reflected similar representative inconsistencies among staff and board members of natural resource organizations and the national population with minorities occupying about 14% of both positions at the time of the study's completion (Stanton, 2005).

The disparities between minority participation in national environmental organizations and the U.S. minority population are not unrecognized by the leaders of these organizations. There is growing recognition that if mainstream organizations do not begin to diversify both their staff and support bases, they will quickly lose relevancy in the environmental movement and subsequently, influence in the political sphere. A 2009 *New York Times* article quoted Natural Resources Defense Council president Frances Beinecke as saying "our groups are not as diverse as we'd like, but... diversity [is] a top priority," as is "making the environmental movement representative of what the country is" (Navarro). The same article quotes Sierra Club's former executive director Carl Pope

recognizing that meetings of “mostly white, largely over 40, almost all college-educated” people “whose style is to argue with each other” is likely not “a welcoming environment” for minority individuals. Barry Yeoman’s article in *Audubon Magazine* (2011) similarly notes Beinecke claiming that if the environmental movement does not become more inclusive it will “erode in numbers and erode in political weight.”

In 2006, Gillian Flaccus described the increasing efforts of mainstream environmental groups to engage Latinos. Her article discusses how mainstream groups have begun to cater to Latinos by hiring Spanish speaking outreach coordinators, creating Spanish websites, and running TV and radio ads in Spanish. Moreover, she draws attention to the fact that some organizations like the Sierra Club and Earth Day Network even helped sponsor the National Latino Congreso, while NRDC created a specific position for Latino advocacy and outreach to reach out to local activists.

Similarly, in 2008 as part of the “La Onda Verde” campaign, the Natural Resources Defense Council sponsored a free concert with Latin Grammy winners in an effort to engage Nevada Latinos in a letter writing campaign to the Governor in protest of three proposed coal power plants in the state. The NRDC campaign was conceived with the goal of increasing the pro-environmental Latino vote and the hope that it would serve as a first step to inviting Latinos into the “environmental” conversation (Pratt, 2008).

A 2009 *Scientific American* article similarly recognized the lack of diversity among mainstream environmental organizations in the U.S., and acknowledged some efforts by such groups to reach out to and engage minority populations (Gentile, 2009). The efforts discussed in the article include: The Audubon Society's creation of nature

education centers in inner cities throughout the country; the creation of The Sierra Club's environmental justice unit; The Nature Conservancy's efforts to recruit minority paid summer interns; and The Nature Conservancy's efforts to expand its Urban Youth Program, which pays youth to work on natural preserves.

Despite the overwhelming acceptance of a need to diversify by national environmental organizations, only minimal progress has been achieved since the initial 1990 diversity campaign spurred by the Southwest Organizing Project's "Letter to the Group of Ten."²

Latino demographics

Specifically, despite the fact that Latinos/Hispanics are the largest and fastest growing minority population in the U.S. (Bernstein, 2008), they are still largely uninvolved with these national organizations. Even in the Southwestern states where Latinos often represent a majority of the population, they are still underrepresented in local branches of national environmental organizations (Pyramid Communications, 2005). In California Latinos and non-Latino whites each represent about 39% of the population, and the number for Latinos is expected to grow to 48% by 2060 (Flores, 2013).

Two dominant theories have been offered to explain the lack of minority

² In 1990 the SouthWest Organizing Project sent a letter to the "Group of Ten" most influential national environmental organizations accusing them of inadequately addressing the environmental issues that plague communities of color and calling for them to cease operations and fundraising in communities of color until they had sufficient minority representation in their staff and board members. This "Letter" is discussed further in the *Conflicts, Barriers to Collaboration, and Current Literature* section of this chapter.

involvement in the environmental movement: 1) minorities lack concern for environmental issues and are therefore not involved; and 2) when concern does exist, societal constraints keeps minority individuals from participating (Jordan & Snow, 1992). But both of these theories are incomplete in that they fail to recognize that minorities, especially Latinos, are in fact significantly concerned with environmental issues (Fahey, 2012; Sahagun, 2010) and actively involved with many urban environmental issues (Flaccus, 2006; Rogers, 2002). The fact that the real gap between meaningful collaboration between urban Latino and traditional mainstream environmentalism is not as simplistically defined as by either of these theories suggests that a revised and more thorough understanding of Latino relationships with the environment and environmental organizations is necessary. The following chapter explores current insights into these relationships in more depth.

Latino Environmental Concern

In the last decade, a number of polls conducted in the U.S. have contradicted the traditional belief that Latinos, and other minorities, are unconcerned with environmental issues. These polls, including solely environmentally focused surveys, Field Polls, and exit polls, reveal consistently high concern for environmental issues among Latinos, and in some cases, indicate even greater concern than is observed among non-Latinos.

A study by Whittaker, Segura, and Bowler (2005) examined Field Polls in California from 21 years, focusing on responses to six questions regarding environmental protection of Latino, African-American, and non-Hispanic white respondents. The poll

questions regarded concern for air and water pollution, protection of the state's environment, toxic waste, state spending on environmental regulations, self-identification as an "environmentalist", and opposition or support of offshore drilling along California's coast. Results of the study suggest that Latinos and African-Americans are equally concerned and environmentally aware as non-Hispanics in general, but have increased concern with pollution and toxic chemicals, and greater sensitivity to environmental issues that affect quality of life than non-Hispanic whites. Comparisons also revealed that of all groups, Latinos are most supportive of environmental spending. Moreover, although analysis showed an overall decline in the number of individuals in all groups who identify as an "environmentalist", the researchers argue that there is substantial empirical evidence that environmental concern is growing among Latinos, a trend that is not equally supported for African-Americans or non-Hispanic whites.

A collaborative study by Yale University and George Mason University in 2008 similarly found that minorities, and specifically Latinos, supported climate change and energy policies as much, and often more, than non-Hispanic whites (Yale Project, 2011). Two thirds of Latinos polled considered climate change of "high" or "very high" priority, while fewer than half of non-Hispanic whites ranked it as such. Latinos were just as likely as non-Hispanic whites to "strongly support" or "somewhat support" increased funding for research on renewable energy sources, requiring electric utilities to produce at least 20% of their electricity from renewable sources (even if it increased the average yearly household cost), and providing incentives and requirements for fuel-efficient vehicle use. Conversely, Latinos were more likely than non-Hispanic whites to support a

\$5 average monthly household tax increase to fund government subsidies to replace old water heaters, air conditioners, light bulbs, and insulation, the establishment of a fund to improve buildings' energy efficiency and educate Americans on ways to reduce their energy consumption, regulation of carbon dioxide as a pollutant, creation of a cap and trade system for greenhouse gases, and the signing of an international treaty requiring the U.S. to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 90% by 2050.

A series of polls commissioned by the National Latino Coalition on Climate Change (NLCCC; Magaña, Weigel, & Delgado, 2010) reflected similar attitudes towards climate change and energy policies among Latinos in Florida, Nevada, and Colorado. An overwhelming majority of Latinos supported such policies and believed that climate change mitigation and job expansion could happen concomitantly. The NLCCC (2010) polls revealed strong majorities of Latinos (averaging approximately 90% for all states) in support of policies to establish renewable energy requirements, higher energy efficiency standards, and capping of carbon pollution. Additionally, over 85% of Latinos in each state expressed a willingness to pay higher energy prices in order to increase the amount of energy needs met by renewable sources. Perhaps one of the most notable findings from the NLCCC (2010) study is the dominant belief among Latinos polled that humans have a “moral obligation” to find solutions for global climate change and they would be willing to make sacrifices and changes to effectively do so.

Also in 2010, the *Los Angeles Times* and the University of Southern California jointly conducted a poll investigating racial and ethnic minority concern for environmental issues (Sahagun, 2010). Their poll results suggested that Latino and Asian

voters are in fact significantly more concerned about issues like global warming, air pollution, and soil and water contamination than are white voters, further refuting the claim that Latinos are unconcerned with environmental issues.

A statewide survey conducted by the Latino Sustainability Institute (2011) revealed that Latino voters in New Mexico are concerned with a wide range of conservation issues. Results of the survey showed that Latino voters have considerable concern about drought and water scarcity, forest fires, pollution of air and water, and the loss of natural wildlife habitats with about 80-90% indicating they are “very” or “somewhat concerned.” Additionally, about three quarters of all voters polled supported continuing federal funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund by way of fees to oil and gas companies that engage in offshore drilling. Moreover, the survey revealed consistent support for the designation of additional public lands as national monuments in New Mexico, limiting how much cattle grazing can be done on public lands, and the elimination of federal tax breaks for oil and gas companies. Although some issues discussed in the survey were more immediately relevant to New Mexicans, survey responses indicated significant concern among Latinos for both regional and national environmental issues.

Most recently, Colorado College conducted the “State of the Rockies Conservation in the West” poll in 2012 that surveyed Latinos from the Rocky Mountain region states (Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming). Like those polled in the NLCCC (2010) study, the majority of Latinos in the Rocky Mountain states (and more than the general public) believed that a strong economy is possible

simultaneously with land and water protection. A consistent majority of Latinos also believed that: “national parks, forests, monuments, and wildlife areas are an essential part of their state's economy”; environmental laws are “important safeguards” not “burdensome regulations,” have a positive impact on jobs in their state, and do not need to be cut back to create jobs; America should reduce its need for more coal, oil and gas by increasing the use of U.S. generated renewable energy; an increase in renewable energy use would create jobs in their state; and solar and wind power should be encouraged over other energy sources while coal should be discouraged. Additionally, the majority of Latinos surveyed attributed positive benefits for public health and safety, their state's natural beauty, their quality of life, and opportunities for outdoor recreation to environmental regulations. Nearly 90% of Latinos considered funding cuts to “state parks, protection of natural areas, and water quality” as a “serious problem” and believed that despite state budget problems, money should still be found to “protect and maintain [their state's] land, water and wildlife”. When compared to the views of “white/Anglo” individuals from the same states, Latinos evinced “stronger pro-conservation” stances across a multitude of issues.

Additionally, exit polls have revealed the significant roll Latinos have played in the fates of two of California's most significant environmentally related propositions of the past decade (Rogers, 2012). In 2006, 84% of Latinos voted in favor of Proposition 84, a 6 billion dollar water and park bond- the largest in U.S. history. Despite losing the “white vote”, the proposition passed due to the overwhelming support of California's Latino voters. More recently, Latinos in California helped defeat the 2010 Proposition 23

(nicknamed “The Dirty Energy Proposition”) which would have suspended air pollution regulations until the unemployment rate fell to below 5.5%. The Latino Coalition for a Healthy California spear-headed the mobilization of Latino voters to oppose Prop 23, yielding an opposition of more than 3 to 1 in East Los Angeles where 97% of the population is Latino.

Urban Latino “environmentalism”

As numerous recent polls illuminate, contradicting many traditionally held beliefs, Latinos in the U.S. are in fact significantly environmentally concerned. Insights from both academic and journalistic sources suggest that the specific area of concern for many urban Latinos though, is different from that of many mainstream national environmental organizations; while mainstream environmental organizations often focus most heavily on global climate change or the preservation of “wild” life in areas traditionally removed from modern human civilization, it is suggested that the environmental issues that resonate with Latinos are much more immediate, in proximity, time, and personal relevance (Flaccus, 2006; Whittaker, Segura, & Bowler, 2005). Specifically, these articles contend that the dominant environmental concerns of Latinos who live in urban areas manifest as issues surrounding personal health and safety, namely, access to clean air, clean water, and safe places for children to play (Deutsch Lynch, 1993; Flaccus, 2006; Radelat, 2011; Rogers, 2002).

Deutsch Lynch's (1993) commentary was one of the earliest academic articles to discuss a possible difference between Latino and traditional mainstream environmental concepts. Her article discusses Latino environmental discourses in the U.S. by contending

that “environment” is a social construct and is therefore different for Latinos, and presumably other minorities, than for the mainstream movement. Deutsch Lynch supports this by presenting themes that are unique to Latino environmental discourses and make it distinct from the mainstream discourse. First, she claims that for many Latinos the ideal natural landscape is “peopled and productive” (p. 111), contrary to mainstream notions of untouched wilderness. Second, Deutsch Lynch maintains that migrant definitions of ethnicity are deeply rooted in “the imagined landscapes of the past” (pp. 113-144) and that ethnic identity is linked to traditional land and water rights; such ethnicity serves as a major factor in the evolution of Latino environmental thought. Finally, it is argued that a connection exists between environmental degradation and the “legacy of conquest” or “North American domination” (i.e. the urging of Latinos to “taste progress”) (p.115). Deutsch Lynch's article also discusses the main points of alleged divergence between U.S. Latino and mainstream environmental perspectives: these being that 1) mainstream efforts rely heavily on technological fixes & ignore the social dynamics that surround environmental protection; 2) the mainstream perspective dichotomizes man and nature (i.e. wilderness) whereas Latinos see nature as a garden (tended, used, and respected by people); 3) Latino environmental protection is related to livelihood and the preservation of Latino culture and political institutions. Deutsch Lynch concludes by discussing how divergence between environmental discourses usually results in Latino discourses being overshadowed and Latino environmental goals, priorities, and issues left off the agenda.

A number of journalism pieces, informed by interviews with Latino community members, also support a divergence between Latino and traditional mainstream

environmental foci. A 2002 *Mercury News* article asserted that the face of “environmentalism” is changing from the traditional white backpackers to inner city Latinos who are fighting for access to clean water, reduced air pollution and smog, and safe outdoor places for their children to play (Rogers, 2002). Such efforts, the article supports, signify that California's environmental movement is transitioning away from its roots as an 'elitist' movement. As evidence, Rogers references the Los Angeles Times/USC poll (Sahagun, 2010) discussed above. The article further implicates the substantial role Latino voters and Latino legislative leaders have played in the passage and support of many open space, clean air, and clean water measures; some of the most crucial Latino support has come on legislation that shares funding between traditional open wild spaces and urban open spaces like parks, such as Proposition 40³. In closing, the article also suggests that many Latinos have stayed out of the mainstream environmental movement previously because they feel “cut-off” from it or have unfavorable memories about mainstream environmental organizations' (i.e. The Sierra Club) anti-immigration stances.

Following the 2006 meeting of the National Latino Congreso in Los Angeles, the grassroots news website People's World published an article entitled “Latino Environmental Activists Shaping Urban Agenda” (Flaccus, 2006). Flaccus's article

³California Proposition 40, the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002, was a bond measure that passed 57% to 43% and provided \$2.6 billion for development, restoration, and acquisition of state and local parks, recreation areas and historical resources, and for land, air, and water conservation programs.

discusses the development by Latinos of a “unique green movement” that “distances itself” from mainstream environmental organizations and focuses instead on the air and water pollution concerns that effect many Latino communities, suggesting that to many urban Latinos, fighting toxicity in communities, increasing access to parks, and reducing transportation pollution- not just “tree-hugging”- can be “environmentalism”.

The fight against toxics, pollution, and for access to open space introduced by Flaccus (2006) is just the struggle described as the *environmental justice movement* in LATINO Magazine’s Brown vs. Green article (Radelat, 2011). The article describes the Latino environmental justice movement through the personal stories of Mariana Chew, who led efforts to shut down the ASARCO smelter in El Paso, Texas by mobilizing the surrounding community, Elizabeth Yeampierre, a civil rights attorney in New York, and Arturo Uribe of New Mexico, who sued a local chemical plant because of the community's respiratory problems. The article illuminates their concerns that a “cultural barrier” between mainstream environmental organizations and low-income minority communities still exists. This cultural barrier is described by the article's interviewees to be a product of multiple issues: 1) mainstream groups do not fully understand the economic dependency many low-income individuals have on “dirty jobs”; 2) mainstream groups often embrace a paternalistic approach to addressing environmental problems in low-income communities without understanding the complexities of those communities' problems; 3) mainstream environmental supporters desire trees because they simply enjoy them while environmentally subjugated communities appreciate trees because they clean the air; 4) mainstream groups advocate “green collar jobs” which will deter Latinos

from pursuing college or professional level jobs; and 5) many mainstream groups support a cap-and-trade policy that inadvertently allows facilities in low-income areas to maintain their current polluting levels through permit purchasing. The lack of Latinos in leadership positions of mainstream groups, membership fees, and historical anti-immigration stances are also hypothesized to be barriers to Latino involvement with mainstream groups. The article also describes Latino environmental groups as being much smaller, community based, and often off-shoots of existing groups that focus on civil or social issues. Brown vs. Green closes with the claim that Latinos are concerned with environmental problems but simply not a part of the decision making process- a phenomenon that some groups, like Roger Rivera's Latino youth focused organization, the National Hispanic Environmental Council, are trying to change.

Many of the areas of Latino environmental concern suggested in the articles and polls describes above are embodied in the struggle against environmental racism, and the accompanying environmental justice movement.

Environmental racism and the rise of the environmental justice movement

Although anthropogenic environmental hazards such as climate change, air and water pollution, and pesticide exposure threaten the health of all humans, low-income ethnic and racial minority populations in the U.S. are disproportionately affected (Brulle & Pellow, 2006; Metzger, Delgado, & Herrell, 1995; Mott, 1995). A greater percentage of minority populations than whites live in areas with high concentrations of air pollutants (Pastor et al., 2007; Pizarro, 2011; Wernette & Nieves, 1991), and minority children- in the majority of cases lead by non-black Hispanics- exhibit higher rates of

asthma (ALA, 1993; Guarnaccia, 1994; Wernette & Nieves) and lead and mercury poisoning (Carter-Pokras et al. 1990; Carter-Pokras et al. 2007; Wernette & Nieves). Similarly, there are higher instances of hazardous waste sites being located in communities of color than in non-minority communities (Pastor et al.; Bullard et al., 2007), and research reveals that Latino children in specific receive disproportionate exposure to industrial toxic wastes (Carter-Pokras et al. 2007).

It was in response to these consistent issues of environmental racism that the environmental justice movement originally emerged (Cole & Foster, 2001). The environmental justice movement today has evolved into one that defines the “environment” as “where we live, work, and play” (Novotny, 2000), and focuses on issues of air and water quality, safe places for recreation, the quality of built environments, and issues of economic justice. In contrast to its original roots that focused predominantly on toxic exposures, the modern environmental justice movement emphasizes the “linkage between human, economic, and environmental rights” (Redefining Progress, n.d., p. 21).

Latino environmental groups

As a result of such deep environmental concerns regarding pollution and personal health, and their continual victimization of environmental discrimination, many Latino-based groups have emerged out of concern for just these issues (Springer 2007a; <http://hydra.usc.edu/scehsc/web/Welcome/Welcome.html>).

The National Hispanic Environmental Council, as introduced previously, works to provide Latinos with a voice in environmental decision making in multiple arenas and is

guided by the motto, “because it’s our environment too” (<http://nheec1.org/>). Similarly, The Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice was established in 1990 with the mission to assist people of color, including indigenous populations, in achieving regional and national influence in policy making regarding environmental and economic justice. The Network describes environmental justice simply, as “healthy children, healthy communities, and a healthy Mother Earth” (<http://www.sneenvironmentaljustice.org/index.htm>). Currently, the Network is pushing a state initiative to redefine “environment” in New Mexico to emphasize issues of environmental racism and discrimination. t.e.j.a.s. (Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services) is an organization based in Houston with a similar goal of empowering Latino community members to create healthy communities through education about the health implications of environmental pollution (<http://www.tenvironmentaljusticeasbarrios.org/>).

Mujeres de la Tierra is a Los Angeles based non-profit founded by Irma Muñoz with the objective of engaging women and families in Southern California in environmental decision making regarding issues of relevance to their neighborhoods and communities (<http://www.mujeresdelatierra.org/>). Mujeres de la Tierra focuses on “environmental changes people can see in their daily lives”, specifically, the creation of safe parks and realization of clean air and water (Bennett, 2009; Springer, 2007b).

The Latino Coalition for a Healthy California is a statewide organization that focuses specifically on Latino health (<http://www.lchc.org/>). The Latino Coalition for a Healthy California, with its distinct concern for the health implications of air pollution in

California, was a leading voice of opposition to California Proposition 23 in 2010, dubbed the “Dirty Energy Proposition” (Silva, 2011), that would have suspended the implementation of the Air Pollution Control Law (AB 32) passed in 2006. Similarly, the Communities United Coalition was launched by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights for the sole effort of defeating Proposition 23, but after its huge success in eliciting support from minority communities across the state of California, the Coalition has remained intact and continues its work to engage low-income and communities of color in shaping the “future of health, jobs, and the environment” in California. (<http://ellabakercenter.org/green-collar-jobs/communities-united>).

Such Latino-based organizations are not strictly a feature of the Western United States either. Chicago's Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) works for environmental, economic, and social justice through the building of democracy throughout Chicago and specifically the predominantly Latino community of Little Village ([http://lvenvironmental justiceo.org/](http://lvenvironmentaljustice.org/)). LVEJO operates on the principle of working “with, not against our Mother Earth and Nature” to restore air, water, and earth to the states necessary for human health.

The Miami, Florida based group Common Ground for Conservation was founded in 2005 as an effort to reduce the cultural and language barriers that exist for many Latinos to become “full participating members” in society and efforts to protect human health and the environment (<http://www.cgconservation.org/>). Common Ground for Conservation's main objective is to engage Latinos in the process of attaining a better “quality of life” through “leadership, education, experience, and volunteering.”

Additionally, the National Latino Coalition on Climate Change that commissioned the 2010 poll series discussed previously was formed through the collaboration of the National Puerto Rican Coalition, the Labor Council for Latino American Advancement, and the Hispanic Federation with the mission of ensuring that Latinos are part of the national dialogue on climate change (<http://latinocoalitiononclimatechange.org/>). The NLCCC was founded on the principal of environmental discrimination and the recognition that low-income and minority communities are uniquely vulnerable to and threatened by climate change.

As the challenges of the traditional environmental movement become more pronounced, as discussed in the first section of this chapter, and the number of minority-based environmental justice inspired groups across the country increases, the environmental justice movement has begun to challenge the traditional ecological movement's position as the dominant environmental social movement. However, a number of synergies and avenues for collaboration exist between the two movements which, if pursued, could potentially serve to create a broader, more representative, and more effective U.S. environmental movement. The next section examines some of these synergies and areas of convergence of the two movements.

Synergies between Traditional and Environmental Justice Movements

There are a number of synergies and areas of overlap between the structures and foundations of the traditional environmental and environmental justice movements that suggest avenues for initiating discussions about collaboration.

The public policy institute Redefining Progress (n.d.), in response to Shellenberger and Nordhaus's essay "The Death of Environmentalism," argues that environmentalism cannot die because it has a deeper "soul" than recognized by the authors: one that is tied to "human rights and social justice" (p. 6). Specifically, the authors of Redefining Progress's rebuttal essay "The Soul of Environmentalism" illustrate how both the environmental movement and the Civil Rights Movement emerged as social uprisings to resist the status quo (p. 9, 12). Moreover, the authors contend that the two movements share early structural roots in that they both arose as "community- and systems-oriented" efforts. In the face of declining popular support, both movements eventually narrowed their focus to legal interventions and specific political, regulatory, and legal battles (p. 12). Like the Civil Rights Movement, the modern environmental movement is now struggling to maintain momentum because of an abandonment of its communitarian roots. Finally, the authors make a case that environmental and social justice movements' most significant commonality is their shared characteristic of "empathy" (p. 27): a characteristic that could serve as the seed for coalition-building that makes effective action possible.

The mainstream environmental movement and the environmental justice movements are also joined by the challenges they face. Gottlieb (2005) argues that the changing political dynamics of the U.S. in the last decade have constructed similar obstacles for the success of each movement. Specifically, Gottlieb illustrates that since the early 2000s, limits to political discourse, decreases in space for public protest, omnipresent issues surrounding the "War on Terror," and most recently the economic

recession and the jobs versus environment argument, leave little room for environmental discourse in politics *and* provide a “cover” for attacks on social policies, including environmental justice policies (pp. 26-28). Additionally, Pezzullo and Sandler (2007) describe overlapping challenges between the environmental and environmental justice movements beyond the political sphere. They assert that the movements are united in that *all* environments, urban and wilderness alike, are “being stressed, polluted, and commodified, while corporations and governmental agencies increasingly are challenging the general public and local communities for control over them” (p. 1). Although the overall goals of each movement are different, they are unified by their shared foundation of empathy and the challenges they face in achieving widespread social and political change.

Expanding on environmental justice and community health literature, Wilson (2009) provides an example of how community health and environmental justice issues parallel issues of traditional environmental (i.e. ecosystem) health. By discussing the interdependence of community functions Wilson advances a holistic framework of taking an ecological systems approach to community health. His framework emphasizes the modification of the health and quality of structures and living conditions throughout communities in order to transform the health outcomes, well-being, and quality of life in those communities; that is, viewing communities as ecosystems where the overall health depends on the health of many encompassing factors. Wilson also suggests that an ecologic approach to community health can also serve to increase resiliency in vulnerable communities to the effects of climate change. Wilson’s ecologic framework offers a clear

articulation of how the goals of the traditional environmental and environmental justice movements in fact share a fundamental structure of interdependence.

Along a similar strain, Tomblin (2009) illustrates the “political, philosophical, and environmental commonalities” between the environmental justice and environmental restoration movements, and argues that the concept and practice of environmental restoration can bridge the mainstream and environmental justice movements. Tomblin discusses the three main restoration cultures in the U.S., Holistic Restoration, Indigenous People’s Restoration, and Environmental Justice Restoration, and describes the commonalities between them that suggest the connective quality of ecological restoration that can potentially link diverse environmental efforts. Moreover, the similarities that he depicts (locally produced knowledge that increases political leverage, embracing the democratic ideal of citizen participation, working with nature as a part of the cultural “ethos,” subversiveness, dependence on collaborations with other institutions, and the utilization of ecological restoration in both working and living environments) may all be applied by the mainstream environmental movement. Ultimately, Tomblin’s analysis offers evidence that the mainstream environmental movement’s “nature” (i.e. non-human nature) is in fact integral to the environmental justice goal of achieving community and societal health.

Finally, on a broader level, the GIS (geographic information systems) research of Wilson, Richard, Joseph, and Williams (2010) evidences preliminary support for linking traditionally more localized environmental justice efforts in the U.S. and global climate change. The authors used GIS to assess climate change vulnerability in areas across the

U.S. with high concentrations of disadvantaged populations of color, social, or environmental hazards. The study's results revealed that counties with disadvantaged minority, low-income, and medically underserved populations, as well as populations in dense urban areas and/or with high air pollution and toxic chemical burdens, are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change because of these compounding factors. Recognizing that these populations overwhelmingly make up environmental justice communities, this research suggests an opportunity and necessity for the U.S. environmental justice movement to incorporate climate change discourse, a topic that has predominantly been the domain of the mainstream movement. A shared emphasis on the crisis of global climate change may be an ideal point of intersection to perpetuate effective and meaningful collaboration between the mainstream and environmental justice movements.

Despite the areas in which the mainstream environmental and environmental justice movements overlap, as illustrated by the works discussed above, there are a number of potential barriers to collaboration that may explain why more cooperation between the two movements has not been realized. The subsequent chapter investigates these potential barriers and relevant current literature in more detail.

Conflicts, Barriers to Collaboration, and Current Literature

Despite the fact that the mainstream environmental (ecological) movement and the environmental justice movement both identify with the use of the word “environment,” there have traditionally been and continue to be a number of conflicts

between the two movements that may limit collaboration. The environmental justice movement's biggest criticism of the mainstream environmental movement and its representative organizations is their "racism, classism, and limited activist agenda" (Pezzullo & Sandler, 2007, p. 2). In 1990 a number of environmental justice advocates wrote the "Letter to the Group of Ten" accusing them, and the mainstream movement in general, of "ignorance, ambivalence, and complicity with the environmental exploitation of communities of color" as well as the marginalization of such communities in environmental decision making (p. 4). Specifically, the environmental justice community reacted to the dismissal of environmental justice issues by mainstream organizations as not "environmental" and called for the mainstream movement to expand its understanding of "environmentalism" as part of a "framework of social, racial, and economic justice." Simply, the environmental justice community sought to broaden the mainstream movement's agenda beyond ecological conservation or preservation to include humans and their needs (pp.7-9).

Where the mainstream environmental community has exhibited interest in collaborating with environmental justice groups, partnerships have often been paternalistic and have failed to focus on justice, be equitable, mutually respectful, and based on mutual interests (Pezzullo & Sandler, 2007, p.7). Because of these historical and pervasive issues and experiences, environmental justice activists are often skeptical that mainstream efforts to collaborate stem from a genuine interest in environmental justice issues as opposed to alternative motives to further mainstream organizations' own agendas (p.11).

Literature-based and individual insights

The issue of barriers to effective minority engagement with mainstream environmental agendas has been addressed by a number of minority individuals channeling personal insight, as well as through literature-based analysis of individual scholars. In their essay “Diversifying the American Environmental Movement,” Marcelo Bonta and Charles Jordan (2007) highlight the need for the U.S. environmental movement to diversify and identify some possible reasons for a lack of minority involvement. The main barriers proposed by the authors include minorities feeling unwelcome because of the homogeneous culture of environmental organizations and the movement, as well as existing tensions between environmental organizations and environmental justice groups. The authors echo the sentiments discussed above that a lack of diversity makes the environmental movement less effective than it could be and further posit that a diverse, inclusive, equitable movement is a moral obligation; that a growing minority population will mean that minorities will have more influence over policy and planning; and that more diversity will benefit the movement by way of more creativity, stronger problem-solving, and a broader base of experiences. The authors conclude by suggesting that the environmental movement and traditional organizations need to weave diversity into their programs, projects, initiatives, mission and policy statements, recruitment practices, staff retention efforts, partnerships and collaborations, outreach, and work experiences for young people. Bonta and Jordan also emphasize the need to work equitably with minority communities and understand their environmental values, *not* just try to recruitment supporters. They furthermore affirm the importance of

shared resources, power, and decision-making, as well as leadership buy-in and dedicated resources (i.e. engaging not *only* when something is needed from the community) in order to engage minorities and sustain the environmental movement.

Los Angeles raised Orson Aguilar's personal testament may also serve to reveal an alternative barrier to urban minority-identification with the mainstream environmental movement. In his article, Aguilar (2005), born to Central American immigrants, discusses why he is not an “environmentalist” and why he thinks other urban Latinos do not embrace the label or mainstream environmental movement. He claims that for minorities in poor communities, although pollution and environmental hazards are concerns, they are not as big of priorities as economic and social stability and/or development. He further claims that “environmentalism” and mainstream organizations have tended to focus on preserving places that poor minority community members will never see, and although they voice concern for economic and social issues, they do not see them as appropriate to incorporate into their “environmental” agendas because they are not specifically “environmental.” Aguilar describes his own organization's experience in trying to pass legislation to revitalize “brownfields” and “take pressure off expanding construction to California's rapidly dwindling green spaces” but receiving what he saw as unwarranted opposition from the Sierra Club. Aguilar ultimately criticizes “environmentalists” as having too narrow a focus in defining problems and suggests that more minorities will be interested in getting involved in the environmental movement if it expands to include the economic development and better quality of life in low-income minority communities.

Additionally, suggestions based on observations and existing literature have been offered regarding the expansion of minority participation in water recreation, environmental education, and land conservation.

Drawing from literature on race, ethnicity, and outdoor recreation, Floyd (2001) describes how best practices for boating, fishing, and stewardship education might be defined in regards to encouraging minority participation. Specifically, his article emphasizes five factors that may play significant roles in the outdoor recreational behaviors of minorities: marginality (limited access to socioeconomic resources, due to historical discrimination); subcultural (differences in values, norms, and socialization); assimilation (more time spent in the dominant culture results in minorities beginning to reflect preferences and practices of the majority); interpersonal discrimination (discrimination between individuals and small groups); and industrial discrimination (agencies and organizations discriminate intentionally or unintentionally). Considering these potential factors, Floyd suggests that some best practices would include reducing fees, supporting family participation, providing bilingual services and information, increasing staff diversity, and monitoring agency behavior or employing advisory panels. Floyd further supports the need to examine the *interplay* between many social factors regarding environmental behaviors in order to create effective educational and outreach strategies that are inclusive and meaningful to minority populations.

Similarly, in regards to environmental education, Lewis and James (1995) argue that a number of misconceptions inhibit the participation of minorities in the field. The first misconception the authors highlight, and perhaps the most pervasive, is that people

of color are not interested or concerned with environmental issues. The authors refute this assumption by charging that it is based off a bias that strictly defines “environmental” issues as those that relate to “wilderness” or endangered species, but not toxic waste, industrial pollution, or pesticide exposure. The authors also contend that the theory claiming a historical lack of minority involvement with environmental issues and therefore “a dearth of people of color” as role models in environmental education is a misconception resulting from the omission of minority roles in environmental historical teachings. Relating to the first misconception addressed by the authors, they also note that environmental education may not address issues of “universal appeal” like is assumed (e.g. wilderness preservation over daily issues faced by urban dwellers). They furthermore suggest that the “dichotomy between quality of life and quality of the environment” implied in environmental education is inappropriate for many people who experience the interdependency of both on a daily basis. Lewis and James also identify the misconceptions that minorities are not interested in environmental education careers, that those currently setting environmental education agendas adequately address the needs of minorities, and that the presentation of environmental education programs is universally appealing. In all cases, the authors indicate a need to include people of color in “all levels of planning and implementation” to ensure inclusiveness and relevance of the content of environmental education programs. The final misconception the authors address is that discussion about the environmental education agenda with individuals of color must be “initiated” and “facilitated”, ignoring the fact that minorities have in fact been involved with environmental education for many years. In conclusion, the authors

argue that environmental education must recognize the interrelation of social, economic, political, and environmental issues and that input on these issues must be collected from multiple and diverse sources.

Elva Yañez's (2008) chapter in *Broadening the Base through Open Space: Addressing Demographic Trends by Saving Land and Serving People* discusses engagement of specifically Latinos in land conservation in Northeast Los Angeles. The chapter uses the example of the Elephant Hill campaign that opposed the development of 24 luxury homes in one of Northeast LA's last remaining open spaces as evidence of meaningful and effective Latino participation in traditional environmental conflicts. The case study of Elephant Hill suggests that to meaningfully engage Latinos in urban conservation efforts, conservation organizations need to engage Latino community members in decision-making processes, build community capacity, incorporate differing values, and recognize the socioeconomic, racial, environmental justice, and health issues that impact the Latino approach to environmental issues. The chapter also emphasizes that conservation work must be culturally relevant, language accessible, and equity-focused to gain significance with Latino or any minority communities. Yañez's chapter furthermore supports the sharing of power and resources through partnerships as an effective way to both engage Latinos and other minorities *and* actualize effective conservation initiatives.

In a statewide effort to address minority barriers to involvement with the mainstream environmental community, Maryland state Senator Lisa Gladden spearheaded Senate Bill 350 in 2006 that established the Maryland Task Force on

Minority Participation in the Environmental Community (2007). The Task Force was created to evaluate minority participation and propose recommendations for improved minority participation across the state in environmental issues. Workgroups comprised of political, educational, and community leaders were formed by the Task Force to carry out its mission. Although in the Task Force's final report, "minorities" refer to predominantly black individuals, insight was also solicited from organizations that focus on other ethnic minority groups such as Latino, Native, and Asian Americans. Workgroup suggestions covered a range of topics, including an emphasis on the need to ensure minority workforce opportunities, information, and services in minority communities.

Additionally, workgroups asserted that minority concern is highest for environmental issues that affect their daily lives and recommended the mainstream environmental community speak about the environment in terms that all members could understand and relate to. The Task Force also recommended the state of Maryland make a long-term commitment to understanding the needs, desires, histories, and perceptions of the natural environment of its minorities. Task Force workgroups also emphasized the importance of a diversified workforce as a high priority in environmentally oriented departments and furthermore suggested that public and private sectors should use history and culture to raise awareness of key environmental issues in minority communities. Overall, the results of the Task Force's efforts endorse a need to understand, respect, and incorporate minority needs, perceptions, and input in environmental arenas to encourage participation.

The insights described above highlight an array of obstacles to cooperation between the mainstream environmental and environmental justice movements. These obstacles range from the need to include minorities in decision-making processes, to incorporate economic and social development into the environmental agenda, subsidize minority involvement with environmental organizations and programs, augment minority staff representation in environmental arenas, understand the needs and values of minority communities, and make environmental work and education culturally relevant. Although these insights are revealing and offer substantial starting points for contemplating diversity in the modern environmental movement, they are still personal insights from a select few individuals; it would be inappropriate to assume they represent the full spectrum of minority perceptions of the modern environmental movement. Furthermore, they do not contribute any suggestions regarding the motivations for involvement of minorities who *are* involved with the mainstream movement.

Insights from interviews

A small number of both non-peer reviewed and peer reviewed investigations have utilized interviews and other qualitative methods of data collection to garner insight on barriers to minority involvement with National Parks, local environmental organizations, and some national environmental groups.

In his *High Country News* article, James Mills (2011) discusses possible explanations for the lack of diversity in visitors to national parks that he formulated through conversations with minority individuals he met while visiting parks across the country. Based on his informal interviews, Mills suggests two possibilities: a lack of

knowledge of and about parks and programs among minority individuals, and a misconception by minorities about what national parks and wilderness opportunities offer to visitors. Mills also speculates that a change in the demographics of park visitors will only come with a shift in mainstream organizations' operational tactics. Namely, organizations' will have to embrace tactics that serve to overcome the apprehensions that minorities feel about national parks. Mill's concludes that in order to expand environmental participation among minorities, the “apprehensions” and perceptions of minority community members must be meaningfully addressed.

An undergraduate academic investigation was also conducted by Royer (2010) with the purpose of examining Hispanic/Latino involvement with national parks through interviews with Great Smokey Mountains National Park and Appalachian National Scenic Trail users in East Tennessee. Royer's findings suggest five dominant barriers to participation in national parks by Latino minorities: socioeconomic status, time, language barriers, lack of knowledge of parks and trails, and cultural barriers. Specifically, his results emphasize an overarching cultural barrier in that Latinos often have a different relationship with the “environment” than the National Parks Service presents; that is, humans are an inextricable part of, and cannot be separated from the “environment.” Although a small qualitative study, its preliminary insights suggest the existence of social barriers to minority participation in mainstream environmental activities.

Jeffries and Amsden's (2009) article describes the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission's initiative in Michigan to increase “diversity” and “inclusion” in conservation efforts. Interviews were conducted with a diverse group of community

leaders and addressed differences in awareness, understanding, and perception about environmental issues. The results of the interview analysis highlight a general interest in environmental issues among minority community leaders, but a difference in priority environmental issues, with people of color focusing on environmental challenges in their neighborhoods. Moreover, the initiative's research reveals that minority perceptions of local environmental organizations involved in the study range from being “uncommunicative” and “uninvolved in environmental issues affecting people of color” to “elitist” and “exclusionary.” Interview analysis also supports a lack of opportunities and guidance for minority youth about environmental careers as a barrier to involvement. The case study of the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission suggests a need to understand and meaningfully incorporate minority concerns and definitions of environment in order to advance environmental efforts and minority participation.

Investigations have also focused on minority involvement and diversity in individual national environmental groups. Duke University student, Yumiko Lea Chattulani's master's thesis project (2008) examined diversity within The Nature Conservancy throughout the U.S. Through interviews, Chattulani sought to gain insight in five main areas regarding diversity in the organization: the causes of minority underrepresentation in the environmental field; factors influencing the attractiveness or unattractiveness of The Nature Conservancy to people of color; current relationships between minority and non-minority employees at The Nature Conservancy; means of increasing engagement by people of color in The Nature Conservancy; and ways of increasing minority employee retention. Chattilani's research results suggest that the

present lack of diversity in The Nature Conservancy is a significant obstacle for attracting more diverse employees and supporters. Interview analysis also highlights the need within The Nature Conservancy to recognize the benefits of diversity. These benefits were described by interviewees as an increased variety of perspectives, talents, and experiences that contribute to greater creativity and ingenuity. Interviewees also suggested increasing outreach by The Nature Conservancy through partnering with more diverse environmental educational organizations, funding projects in specifically diverse areas, and inviting the public to participate in The Nature Conservancy activities.

Agyeman, Newhall-Smith, and Ringelheim (2005) co-authored a Massachusetts Audubon Society (Mass Audubon) report discussing approaches to diversifying environmental organizations, and specifically Mass Audubon. Their report discusses the two dominant approaches to environmental education: “nature's needs and people” (i.e. the conservation & land management approach) and “people's needs and nature” (i.e. meeting people's needs through nature). Through staff interviews, user focus groups and surveys, and non-user surveys, the authors propose six general suggestions for conservation organizations to better diversify and “include” changing demographics: 1) institutionalize cultural competency; 2) develop better organizational clarity and communication; 3) diversify staffing; 4) develop systematic and systemic community outreach; 5) develop a “community relevant” curriculum; and 6) formalize diversity in writing. Overall, the report supports a need to include minority community members' needs and perceptions into environmental programs in order to encourage participation and increase diversity.

Like some of the discussed individual and literature-based insights, the interview-based investigations above indicate socioeconomic issues, a lack of education about environmental opportunities, a current lack of diversity, and inadequate attention to minority environmental concerns as potential barriers to minority involvement. They also introduce the hypothesis that a significant cultural difference regarding minority/Latino relationships with “environment” may exist. Again, these studies offer valuable preliminary analysis but are small and do not inquire into the environmental movement as a whole, but rather focus on specific organizations.

The preceding chapter has outlined the modern environmental movement’s identity in mainstream national environmental organizations, the recognition by organization leaders that their organizations and the movement must diversify along with the U.S. population, the refutation that minorities, especially Latinos, are unconcerned with environmental issues, and the environmental justice inclination of their environmental concerns. In addition, this chapter illustrated some areas of synergy between the mainstream movement and the environmental justice movement with which Latino concerns often appear to align. Taking into consideration the arguments presented in the preceding sections collectively, the current chapter discussed both peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed literature suggesting potential reasons minorities are discouraged from participating in the mainstream environmental movement despite evident concern and areas of overlap between the mainstream ecological and environmental justice movements.

Despite the preliminary value of this literature, the fact remains that it has little breadth and only serves to investigate small segments of the modern environmental movement. A gap remains in understanding the motivations of Latinos who *are* involved with the mainstream movement, as well as those who are involved in local environmental efforts but may not be on a national level. Moreover, little investigation has been done into tangible opportunities for collaborative work between local and mainstream environmental communities and organizations. It is my intent that the current research contributes to addressing these gaps and lays the foundations for pursuing an integrated, holistically-representative, more inclusively defined, and ultimately more effective environmental movement in the United States. The following section of this thesis outlines the methodological approach and governing analytical framework utilized in the research to explore these themes in the context of Latinos in Los Angeles County, California.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The current research seeks to construct a more thorough understanding of urban Latino relationships with mainstream and local environmental organizations, and more broadly, the dominant environmental movement. Building off Deutsch Lynch's theory that environment is socially constructed (discussed above in the section *Urban Latino "Environmentalism"*), recognizing that many urban Latinos are involved in environmental justice organizations over traditional environmental groups, and considering some of the current barriers to and opportunities for collaboration between the two movements discussed in above, the current research was undertaken using Fishbein and Ajzen's (2010) Theory of Reasoned Action as an analytical lens. The theoretical framework of Reasoned Action guides the research in its assumption that adopted behaviors depend on the interplay of three tenants: one's attitude towards a behavior, the perceived norms regarding a behavior, and the perceived control over a behavior. Utilizing this theoretical framework, the current research investigates the motivations for involvement with mainstream organizations of Latinos who are current members or supporters, as well as the reasons for lack of mainstream involvement by Latinos who are involved with local environmental efforts or community environmental groups. Moreover, this research investigates the contributing factors that lead Latinos to participate with local environmental groups, whether they are involved with mainstream organizations or not. The goal of this research is to illuminate the areas in which the environmental concerns and identity of mainstream environmental organizations differ

from those of the urban Latino population and ultimately, to encourage the adjustment of mainstream organizations' missions, practices, and operational structures to better represent the needs of all members of society.

The current research is appropriately described as a pilot study because it is both exploratory and preliminarily descriptive in nature. Due to the limited geographic and ethnic demographic reach of this research, it would be inappropriate to generalize the findings of the study to the entire U.S. Latino-identified population. Rather, it explores specifically the relationship of Latino Americans to mainstream and local environmental organizations in the Los Angeles area. Concurrently, although the findings of the research are confined to the context of Latinos in Los Angeles County, they may provide preliminary descriptive insight that will be useful in framing understandings of Latino relationships to environmental organizations in other parts of the country.

The following chapter discusses the theoretical framework of Reasoned Action and explains the use of interviews and non-participant observation methods of data collection. The final section of this chapter describes the process of participant selection, data collection, analysis, and results dissemination.

Reasoned Action in the Current Research

The Theory of Reasoned Action was constructed by Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) as a framework for understanding and predicting human social behavior. The foundational structure of the Reasoned Action theory posits that individuals' "intentions" are the most accurate predictor of specific behaviors. Reasoned Action theory itself suggests that

intentions are determined by the interplay of an individual's attitude towards a given behavior, his or her perceived norms regarding the behavior, and his or her perceived control in regards to the behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, pp.17-18).

Attitudes

In the current research, the behavior of interest is generally defined as an individual's participation in efforts to address environmental issues. "Efforts" are specifically left vague to allow for research participants to help define their own involvement with environmental challenges mitigation. The first facet of Reasoned Action in this context then is that of an individual's attitude towards different modes of participation. Defining attitude as a "latent disposition or tendency to respond with some degree of favorableness or unfavorableness" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, p.76), the current research seeks to understand urban Latinos' attitudes towards the environmental movement, environmental activism, and participation with both national and local environmentally focused organizations in Los Angeles County.

Fishbein and Ajzen (2010, p. 96) defend that *beliefs* about a behavior directly influence the associated attitude towards that behavior. The current research subsequently attempts to develop an understanding of the different beliefs held by Los Angeles Latinos surrounding the definition of "environment", environmental issues of greatest concern, and "environmentalism"; the understanding of such beliefs will then provide the lens through which attitudes in turn will be understood.

Norms

Reasoned Action theory's domain of perceived social norms encompasses two types of norms, *injunctive* and *descriptive* norms. Injunctive norms relate to an individual's perceptions of what others think should be done in regards to the behavior in question (Fishbein & Azjen, 2010, p. 131). Specifically, Reasoned Action suggests that injunctive norms influence intentions, and therefore behavior, because individuals are to some extent motivated to comply with what they perceive as "important individuals' or groups'" beliefs about a behavior (Fishbein & Azjen, p. 143). In the current research, injunctive norms are participants' perceptions of what the people close to them (family, friends, community members, respected figures) consider appropriate involvement with environmental issues. Conversely, descriptive norms relate to an individual's perceptions of what other people are actually doing in relation to the behavior in question (Fishbein & Azjen, p. 143). In context of this study, descriptive norms are what participants perceive to be the actions others are or are not taking to address environmental issues.

Perceived control

Fishbein and Azjen (2010) describe perceived behavioral control as "the extent to which people believe that they are capable of performing a given behavior, that they have control over its performance" (p. 154). Reasoned Action theory proposes that perceived control influences an individual's behavior in that 1) a strong sense of behavioral control strengthens the intention to perform a behavior, and 2) a perception of little control over performance of a behavior substantially weakens an individual's intention to perform that behavior (p. 155). The current research examines participants' perceptions regarding the most effective ways they can take action against environmental issues, as well as the

extent to which they feel they are able to participate in these actions through involvement with local or mainstream environmental organizations.

Methods

The means of data collection employed in the current research were qualitative, including both interviews and non-participant observation during organizations' community and campaign meetings. Interviews were chosen as the best way to communicate the participants' own reasons for their involvement or lack of involvement with mainstream and local environmental organizations, as well as their perspectives on "environment". Surveys like those mentioned above serve to present evidence that Latinos are significantly concerned with environmental issues but do not offer further insight into how their relationships with environment and environmental organizations are developed. Interviews were most appropriate for the current research because they elicit what Johnson describes as "deep" knowledge: that which concerns personal values, decisions, and perspectives (Johnson, 2001, p. 104). More specifically, in-depth interviews are the best approach to knowledge creation when "different individuals or groups involved in the same line of activity have complicated, multiple perspectives on some phenomenon" (p. 105). Because the current research sought to understand the different perspectives of Latinos involved with mainstream versus local environmental organizations, it was anticipated that personal and complex decision-making processes would be described by participants. It was important that through interviews, the values and interpretations that informed these processes were insightfully discussed.

In addition to in-depth questions, interviews also contained short semi-structured questions to establish the demographical characteristics of interviewed participants and their communities. Demographic information allowed for the potential development of patterns among interview responses based on similarities between participants' gender, age, education, work status and presumed income level, family structure, and/or residential history in Los Angeles.

Non-participant observation was also utilized in the current research when appropriate opportunities arose. Observation of environmental organizations' regular community meetings and meetings regarding specific campaigns contributed to insight from interviews in the construction of understandings regarding participants' interpretations of high priority environmental issues, effective means of addressing such issues, and injunctive norms. Observation was a useful supplement to the interview methods of the current study because it offered "a relatively unfiltered view of human behavior" (Adler & Clark, 2008, p. 311).

Interview guide

Interview questions were developed in close consideration of the Reasoned Action model and the key research questions targeted by the current project. Questions were formulated to target each of the three facets of behavior motivation that comprise the Reasoned Action model: individuals' attitudes toward participation in efforts to address environmental concern, individuals' perceived norms (both injunctive and descriptive) regarding participation, and their perceptions of control regarding participation. Introductory questions were also crafted to elicit insight regarding

individuals' underlying beliefs about "environment" that inform the specific attitudes and perceptions about which the remaining questions inquire. Specifically, interview questions sought to understand the attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived control of each of the following: 1) individuals involved with local environmental groups on their involvement with those groups, 2) individuals involved with local groups on their involvement with mainstream national environmental groups, 3) individuals involved with mainstream groups on their involvement with such groups, and 4) individuals involved with mainstream groups on their involvement with local groups. The breakdown of which interview questions target which domain of the Reasoned Action framework for each pairing is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Questions targeting each component of the Reasoned Action model regarding participation in efforts to address environmental concern. (+ indicates that the two questions in combination address 'perceived control about participation'.)

	Attitudes toward participation	Injunctive Norms	Descriptive Norms	Perceived control about participation
Local on Local	Questions: 1c, 4, 4c, 4d, 4e, 5, 5a, 5b, 5e	Questions: 1b, 2b, 4c, 5e	Questions: 4c, 5e, 8, 8a	Questions: 1c+4a, 2a+4a, 4c, 5c, 5e
Local on Mainstream	Questions: (5, 5b, 5e), 7a, 7c, 10	Questions: (5e), 7b, 10b	Questions: (5e), 8, 8a	Questions: (5e), 7a, 10a
Mainstream on Mainstream	Questions: 1c, 4, 4c, 4d, 4e, 5, 5a, 5b, 5e	Questions: 1b, 2b, 4c, 5e	Questions: 4c, 5e, 8, 8a	Questions: 1c+4a, 4c, 2a+4a, 5c, 5e
Mainstream on Local	Questions: (5, 5b, 5e), 6a, 10	Questions: (5e), 6b, 10b	Questions: (5e), 8, 8a	Questions: (5e), 6a, 10a

Interview questions were broken into four thematic sections that included *Beliefs about Environment, Involvement with Environmental Organizations/Efforts, Collaboration with Other Organizations, and Personal and Community*. The first three sections revolved around the current project's key research questions, while the fourth section provided demographic information that was used to construct initial patterns among interview responses. The majority of interview questions were open-ended to allow for rich and personal interviewee responses, with the exception of most questions under the *Personal and Community* heading that required only short explanations or answers. The full interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

Participants

Participants were 22 self-identified Latino individuals (11 men and 11 women) who were currently involved with either one of the seven local or four mainstream environmentally-focused organizations identified as appropriate for the current research. Twelve mainstream organizations were chosen from a list of known influential national organizations that have offices or campaigns locally in the Los Angeles area and were invited to participate in the current research. Of those, four accepted. Eleven local organizations were initially invited to participate and chosen based on the criteria of focusing predominantly on Los Angeles or communities within the greater Los Angeles area, including mention of the environment or environmental issues in their mission or name, and an indicated link to Latino individuals or neighborhoods on their website. Additional local groups were invited to participate in the research upon suggestion of

interviewees. In total, seven local organizations agreed to participate. Table 2 shows the list of mainstream and local organizations that participated in the current research.

Table 2. Environmentally-focused organizations with offices, chapters, or campaigns in Los Angeles from which participants were selected.

Mainstream Organizations	Local Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Audubon Society <i>-Audubon Center at Debs Park</i> • National Resource Defense Council • Sierra Club Angeles Chapter • The Wilderness Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities for a Better Environment • Coalition for a Safe Environment • Enrich LA • LA Neighborhood Land Trust • San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps • Sustainable Works • Urban Latino Forum

Individual participants were identified through a process of self-identification after researcher invitation. Initial requests for voluntary participation from self-identified Latinos were sent by email or ground mail to the mainstream and local environmentally-focused organizations identified above. The initial invitation to participate explained the nature of the current research and the preference for volunteering individuals who identify themselves as Latino, in whole or in part, are over eighteen years of age, and currently reside in the Los Angeles area. [See Appendix B for full text.]

Data collection

The majority of interviews were conducted with Latino individuals who were staff, committee members, or held a leadership position at each local or mainstream

organization. A few additional interviews were conducted with Latino individuals who did not hold official positions within any of the organizations, but were current or past supporters of an organization (defined through official membership, participation in campaign activities, or attendance to community or outing events or meetings).

Interviews took place wherever was most convenient for participants; locations included the office of each individual organization, coffee shops, and parks. Interviews were conducted one-on-one and voice recorded using a digital voice recording device. To maintain confidentiality, no interviewee names were included in audio recordings or interview notes, and recordings were deleted after analysis.

All interviews were conducted in English, although the option to conduct them in Spanish was always available. On only one occasion was spoken Spanish utilized during the interview process to provide clarification of some interview questions.

Analysis

Interviews were analyzed through the framework of Reasoned Action to look for recurring themes among participants' responses to each area of inquiry. Because the goal of the current research was to develop a new understanding of Latino relationships with environmental organizations, that is, "a general explanation [or theory] of process, action or interaction" (Creswell, 2003, p. 14; Creswell, 2007, p. 63), the research encouraged a grounded theory methodology. The appropriateness of grounded theory as a methodology also resulted from its compatibility with the Reasoned Action approach that serves as the guiding theoretical framework for the current research. While Reasoned Action posits that behaviors and intentions are determined by the interplay of an individual's attitude,

perceived norms, and perceptions of control regarding a behavior, the process of grounded theory serves to “assemble a story that describes the interrelationship of categories” around a core phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, pp.64-65), in the current research, Latino participation in efforts to address environmental concerns. Finally, grounded theory benefited the current research because of its iterative approach to data analysis. A *constant comparison* method of data analysis was used in the current study; this allowed for the insight from initial analyses of interviews to refine thematic categories throughout the analysis process in order to more effectively “dimensionalize” the “properties or subcategories” of the emerging theory (see Creswell, 2007, p. 67).

All coding of interviews was done by way of listening to voice recorded interviews or reading of interview notes. Recorded interviews were not transcribed, with the exception of individual quotes. Initial coding of interviews involved listening to each interview individually so that themes within each interviewee’s responses could be extracted. Each list of themes was then compared to the lists of other interviews to establish any overarching themes shared among all interview responses.

A second round of coding involved the comparison of themes between interview responses in each Reasoned Action domain: questions that target attitudes, injunctive and descriptive norms, and perceived control of individuals regarding participation in efforts to address environmental issues. This was followed by a third round of coding that searched for themes among demographic qualities. These three categories of coding were then layered to analyze patterns from the interplay between them.

Although coding and thematic analysis took place across all interviews, each interview was still identified as from a “mainstream” or “local” supporter. The final stage of analysis involved the comparison of themes and patterns between interviews of individuals involved with mainstream versus local environmental groups.

Final report

The results of in-depth analysis of interview themes and patterns informed the creation of a final report given to all environmental organizations associated with the research. The bulk of the report serves as a proposal of suggestions regarding appropriate ways to explore and initiate conversations with local Latino groups or individuals, or locally operating mainstream organizations, in order to pursue mutually beneficial cooperation. The purpose of this report was to provide interviewee organizations with an accessible document summarizing the main insights garnered from the research through the compilation of multiple perspectives. Specifically, the report should offer organizations new approaches to advancing their environmental missions and exploring collaborative work. The full text of the final report can be found in Appendix C.

This chapter described the methodological approaches taken by the current research, beginning with a discussion about the governing theoretical framework of the Reasoned Action Approach. The chapter also briefly described the qualitative nature of the current research, including rationale for the use of interviews as the dominant means of data collection. Non-participant observation methods, the creation of interview questions, the process of data collection, data analysis, and the crafting of a final report for participating environmental organizations were also discussed in this chapter.

ANALYSIS/RESULTS

Analysis of interviews revealed a number of themes among interviewee responses to individual questions and within thematic sections. The current chapter discusses those themes and unique outliers as they align with the domains of the Reasoned Action model (i.e. *beliefs* about a behavior, *attitudes* toward a behavior, perceived *norms* surrounding a behavior, and *perceived control* over a behavior).

Beliefs about “Environment”

The large majority of interviewees defined environment as “surroundings” and not explicitly “nature” or the natural world. The few that did define environment as nature were either currently involved with a mainstream organization or had a history of employed involvement with mainstream organizations. In the case of the younger (18-25 years) of these interviewees, their first involvement with environmental efforts was reported to be with their current mainstream organization; most of the older of these interviewees were involved in environmental efforts through mainstream organizations. The older of these interviewees also tended to define environment as the “natural world” needed for life, not strictly “nature”. This theme may be explained in part by the fact that environment-as-nature is the definition that mainstream or traditional environmental organizations historically, and some still currently, promote.

All but three interviewees identified either singularly or a combination of pollution, air, water, and land use/misuse, and managing natural resources/over-consumption as the most important environmental issue(s). These problems are all

environmental issues that affect *both* human and non-human life, along with climate change, which one interviewee claimed is the most important environmental issue because it “affects all other issues” and aggravates issues such as pollution and over-consumption. A few interviewees listed pollution or climate change as being a main issue *along with* habitat loss, the cutting of forests, or the destruction of nature (the latter three of which are primarily considered areas of concern for “nature” for nature's sake, not because of their effects on humans). These interviewees were all primarily involved with a mainstream organization that’s emphasis was on “conservation.” Two interviewees, both from mainstream organizations, explicitly mentioned lack of open spaces near cities and equal access to nature and natural resources as major issues (both traditionally concerns considered to fall under the topic of environmental justice). Two different interviewees from mainstream organizations claimed that the most important environmental problem lies in humans and their lack of understanding that all environmental issues, and human behaviors, are connected.

The majority of interviewees saw “environmentalism” as activism or action, often described as “protecting,” “helping” or “saving.” Specifically, interviewees either indicated that environmentalism pertained to pro-action toward or for “the environment” (nature oriented), the health of “living organisms” (including both humans and non-human life), or “everything around us” (in line with their definition of environment as “surroundings”). A couple interviewees also thought that environmentalism involved teaching others or spreading awareness about environmental issues, in one case described in a negative light as “preachy.” About a third of interviewees also stated that

“awareness” and “mindfulness” about the environment were considered environmentalism.

A handful of interviewees also explicitly noted that the word “environmentalism” carries negative connotations of “radical,” “white” individuals who “value nature over humans.” The majority of interviewees who expressed this were in fact involved with mainstream organizations, the cohort of organizations often accused of embodying a culture defined by these characteristics. One even noted that when speaking in Spanish, she uses the word “ecologista” (one who cares about the ecologies) over “ambientalista” (a more direct translation of the English “environmentalist”) because of the latter’s connotations. Another interviewee created his own definition of environmentalism that fit with his environmental justice work because he did not feel the common definition was accurate and appropriate.

Interviewees were split in regards to whether or not they felt the term “environmentalism” described their relationship with “environment.” Those that claimed they did not identify with or use the word were mostly involved with traditional environmental organizations that have been prone to using the word in the context of nature. While they did not feel comfortable using the word to describe themselves, they did acknowledge that their actions would likely align with “environmentalism.” In contrast, most interviewees who identified with the word had a milder definition of an “environmentalist” as one who cares and takes some part in helping the environment. While those who opted against use of the word did so because of the connotations and

implications it might hold for others, interviewees who identified with the word did so because they referenced their personal definitions of environmentalism.

Attitudes

Interviewees' motivations for involvement with their respective organizations differed moderately. About a third of interviewees became involved with their representative organization because they wanted an opportunity to organize or engage locally in their own community generally. All but one of these interviewees was predominantly involved with a local organization and the one exception became involved with his specific organization for reasons other than environmental concerns. Two interviewees were in fact responsible for the creation of their organization as a means of engaging locally.

About a quarter of interviewees cited a desire specifically 'to engage positively with "nature" in an urban environment' as their motivation for becoming involved with their associated organization. All of these interviewees were currently or previously involved with a mainstream organization. Those that were currently involved with a mainstream organization all noted that part of their motivation stemmed from a lasting childhood love of nature.

Almost a third of interviewees became involved with their current organization because of a suggestion or connection through a friend, professor, or third party. In all of these cases interviewees stated that although they did not seek out the organizations personally, they developed an appreciation and genuine attachment to their respective

organization quickly. Five interviewees, all highly involved in their organizations (three to mainstream organizations and two to local), described their involvement as “part of a culture of activism” that served to “push the bounds of ‘environment.’” They all advocated the need to include environmental justice and other social issues in the “environmental” agenda. Their involvement with their current organization was not associated with the specific identity of that organization but rather an opportunity to continue their role in the broadly defined world of activism.

Four interviewees explicitly stated that they first became involved with their current organization for reasons other than environmental concerns. Two of these interviewees were involved with mainstream organizations and two with local. All of which though, noted that once they became involved they developed greater appreciation for environmental issues and their organization's role in addressing them.

Perceived reasons for organizations' successes varied among interviewees as well. Half of interviewees identified their organization's local or personal focus as a main reason for its success. Notably, three of these interviewees were involved with a mainstream national organization. One of them elaborated by explaining that while the overall organization was nationally reaching and more traditional in its structure- gaining its success from its reputation, large reach, and access to resources- the local center with which she was involved directly takes a non-traditional approach to conservation outreach because of the nuances of its physical and demographic orientation.

Just over half of interviewees involved with a mainstream organization attributed the success of their organization to its reputation, large reach, and access to resources. In

total, about a third of interviewees (mostly from local organizations, but including two from one mainstream organization) indicated that either or both the organization's efforts in community organizing or collaboration were an integral part of its success.

Other reasons for success shared by some interviewees were their organization's ability to address barriers and effectively get others involved or interested in their efforts, as well as their organization's use of a diverse set of approaches to achieving its goals. These insights were mostly provided by individuals involved in local organizations with the exception of one interviewee who was predominantly involved with a mainstream organization. A third of interviewees also contended that their representative organization was successful because of its “passionate” and “dedicated” employees and volunteers. Interviewees who expressed this were involved with both mainstream and local organizations.

About a third of interviewees (all involved with local organizations) indicated that their organization's biggest challenges to success are limited resources, funding, and/or number of people involved. About a quarter of interviewees claimed that a major challenge for their organization is getting people involved who have not previously been involved with environmental organizations or work. They noted that their organization drew people in more deeply who were already interested in environmental work but struggled to reach those with no previous engagement. Four out of five of these interviewees were predominantly involved with a mainstream organization *and* identified the challenge specifically as getting under-represented groups (ethnic and racial minorities, low-income, youth, etc.) involved.

Three interviewees, all involved with different mainstream organizations, identified one of the main challenges to their organization's success as a difficulty breaking through the organization's traditional ideology and accepting new directions. Specifically, they related this to a need to include more environmental justice and social issues in “environmental” work, collaborate with non-traditional or non-”environmental” groups, or focus on diversifying their organization's membership. These interviewees were all in their mid-thirties, both men and women, and described growing up in a modest or lower-income family and/or community (both in the U.S. and abroad) that would potentially fall under the category of an “environmental justice community.”

Four interviewees (two from mainstream and two from local organizations) also indicated that a feeling of lacking time or having more immediate concerns/a lack of urgency was a major barrier to getting more people involved with their organizations’ work. Two interviewees involved with mainstream organizations and one interviewee involved with a slightly larger local organization (with three offices in California) also noted that a challenge was internal debate within their organization over projects, partnerships, and approaches. A few interviewees also implicated the effects of physical and social constraints and characteristics of the urban environment as challenges to broader public participation with their organization's work.

Interviewees' involvement with other organizations ranged widely. About half of interviewees reported that they were mostly or only involved with their current organization. A third of these interviewees said that while they were not involved with other organizations that they felt dealt with environmental issues they tried to educate

themselves and make environmentally relevant changes in their own lives. About half of these interviewees, all predominantly involved with a mainstream organization, also claimed that while currently not involved beyond their own organization's work, they would like to get involved with others.

A little more than a quarter of interviewees said they currently, have previously, or might in the future support or become involved with national ("mainstream") organizations. One interviewee, while supporting other mainstream organizations, voiced a preference for her current organization (mainstream) because of its less "environmentalist" approach. Another interviewee, predominantly involved with a local organization claimed that while she supported mainstream organizations, she preferred and identified more with the work of local groups.

One interviewee had previously been employed with two mainstream organizations and noted her reasons for becoming uninvolved with both was because of resistance within the organizations to adapt or change their traditional model to better fit the demographic characteristics of the area, echoing the sentiments noted above about inflexible ideology as a challenge to mainstream organizations.

An equal number of interviewees also reported that they were currently or previously involved with local environmental groups or coalitions. Two thirds of these respondents were predominantly involved with mainstream organizations but *did not* claim to be involved with any other mainstream or national organizations beyond their own. A few interviewees who were employed by the organization with which they were

predominantly involved also generally claimed that their involvement with other environmental organizations was through collaboration done through their work.

All but two interviewees claimed that collaboration with other groups was beneficial to the organization with which they were predominantly involved. The two interviewees who did not express this sentiment felt they did not know enough about their organization's collaborations to give input on them, although they were fairly certain their organization did collaborate with others.

A third of interviewees that identified collaboration as beneficial indicated that the main benefit was the pooling of different organizations' resources. These respondents were predominantly involved with both mainstream and local organizations. A third of interviewees believed that collaboration was beneficial because it resulted in people with diverse knowledge and experiences working together. All but one of these interviewees was predominantly involved with mainstream organizations; the other was involved with a slightly larger local organization that focused on environmental justice issues.

A quarter of interviewees indicated that collaboration was beneficial because it attracted people to an organization's work who wouldn't normally become involved with that organization. A few interviewees who responded with this reason elaborated by noting that collaborations helped as a networking tool or added credibility to the organization and acted as a gateway to working with other diverse groups.

In terms of what made collaborations successful or difficult, about a quarter of interviewees, involved with both mainstream and local organizations, explained that finding a common cause and working through differences in opinions and values was a

challenge in collaborations with other organizations. Specifically, some noted that it was this element that made collaboration difficult on a large scale. Three interviewees (from two mainstream and one larger local group) stated that collaborations within their organizations were successful because they focused on collaborating on specific issues, not making permanent partnerships. Three different interviewees, all predominantly involved with local organizations, attributed their organizations' success during collaborations to the talents or personalities of those directly involved with the collaborative process.

Norms

A large majority of interviewees, despite their own views, believed that most North Americans consider "environment" to be "nature" and/or something separate from themselves, although some claimed that some family and friends also viewed environment as "surroundings". A few interviewees thought North Americans considered environment to be both nature and general surroundings, while others said that everyone probably has his/her own definition of the word environment. One interviewee actually said the word "environment" itself has been "hijacked," "polarized," and "politicized."

About three quarters of interviewees claimed to be more "aware" or "concerned" about environmental issues than their family, friends, and neighbors, as well as more involved in efforts to address those issues (not including their professional or academic peers who shared their level of concern and action). Interviewees almost always indicated

that they were more involved/took more action than family and friends even when they shared similar environmental concerns.

Notably, a third of interviewees claimed that their family and friends have become or are becoming more aware and involved with environmental issues because of the interviewee's influence. In these instances, interviewees expressed that they shared information, answered questions, or modeled pro-environmental behavior changes to encourage family and friends' awareness and involvement, but avoided preaching to, instructing, or “pressuring” them. One interviewee explicitly stated that she tries to “passively” influence others so her friends don't “[treat her] like an environmentalist” and dismiss her “crazy talk.”

Interviewees generally believed that other people involved in the organization in which they participated would have similar views on collaboration with organizations of the opposite characterization (i.e. local with mainstream and vice versa). In a few cases, interviewees thought others within their represented organization would be split between supporting and opposing collaboration, but this was always in reference to a mainstream organization seeking collaboration with local organizations. In these instances, interviewees always thought that a portion of their peers would resist collaboration with local groups because they did not see the need, were uncomfortable adopting a new model, or felt it would undermine their organization's goals.

Perceived Control

In regards to the best ways that an individual could help the environment or help address some major environmental concerns, many themes emerged from interviewee responses. In general, interviewees either listed means of helping that were internal or involved another party or parties in order to achieve environmental betterment. Half the interviewees noted becoming aware, informed, or educated about environmental issues as the best way for individuals to help the environment and environmental problems. Eight out of eleven of these interviewees were predominantly involved with a mainstream organization. Only a couple interviewees explicitly included the additional step of informing or educating *others* in their responses.

Three interviewees, all from local organizations, said that people need to make environmental issues personal and create consciousness around them. About a quarter of interviewees claimed that respecting nature and not causing it more harm, or adopting less polluting and more energy efficient practices or items was one of the best ways to help the environment.

Just over a third of interviewees indicated that the ways to best help the environment started with the individual. Half of these interviewees simply noted making individual changes (like recycling) as the best way to help, while the other half identified the need to *start* with individual changes and then build to more involvement. A couple interviewees also described acting through influence of concentric circles out (individual to family to friends to community) as one of the best ways to help with environmental issues.

In addition to personal and internal means, interviewees indicated that getting actively involved was among the best ways to help the environment. Half of interviewees claimed that finding opportunities to get involved with personally relevant issues or joining an organization that focuses on issues of interest is the best way to help. About a quarter of interviewees responded that the best way to help the environment is to start by working on local or community issues. These interviewees were equally split between predominant involvement with mainstream and local organizations. A few interviewees also identified voting or getting involved politically as one of the best ways to help with environmental efforts. Interviewees who touted political activity were also a mix of mainstream and local organization supporters.

Interviewees described their roles or types of involvement with their predominant organizations in four main ways. About a third of interviewees described their involvement as educating or introducing people to nature so that they may later engage with it on their own; half of these interviewees explicitly described their role as introducing *children* to nature- a couple of these specifically with a focus on pollution. About a third of interviewees also identified their involvement as working through politics to achieve legislative change. All but one of these interviewees was predominantly involved with mainstream organizations, and all but one mainstream organization's representative interviewees identified this as their role.

Just under a fourth of interviewees reported that their role was to conduct outreach to diverse, under-represented populations on environmental initiatives. Four out of five of these respondents were predominantly involved with mainstream organizations

and *also* described their involvement as working for legislative change; the other was involved with a local organization in a majority-minority area and also focused on community empowerment. In total, four interviewees, all predominantly involved with local organizations, identified their roles as empowering people to make a difference in their own community. Other interviewees described their involvement with their representative organization as overseeing specific program areas, making maps and doing analysis, and serving as a consultant or non-employee supporter.

Many interviewees who believed that becoming aware, informed, or educated about environmental issues was one of the best ways to help also described their involvement with their predominant organization as educating or introducing people to nature, indicating an ability to actively partake in what they considered one of the best ways to help the environment. About half of interviewees who described their involvement role as working through politics to achieve legislative change also considered joining or becoming involved through an organization as one of the best ways to help with environmental issues. None of the interviewees who noted voting or getting involved politically as among the best ways to help described their actual involvement with their predominant organization as working through politics.

Interviewees who claimed their organizational role was empowering people to make a difference in their own community also considered making issues personal and creating consciousness or becoming involved with personally relevant or local community issues as the best ways to help the environment. Overall, most interviewees' involvement appeared to align with or entail what they claimed were the best ways to

help the environment or with environmental issues, suggesting a sense of control with regards to their participation with their representative organization.

While a few interviewees conceded to considering leaving or becoming uninvolved with their predominant organization, all emphasized that it was not because of the organization itself but because of other personal reasons. A few added that if they left their current organization they would still be doing the same kind of work someplace else. Some acknowledged that circumstances would eventually force them to become uninvolved but that they wished they would be able to continue their involvement.

When interviewees predominantly involved with a mainstream organization were asked how they thought collaborating with local organizations would or did affect their representative mainstream organization, half said that collaborating with local groups would be or currently is helpful because it allows their organization to reach more people to get involved with their work. About a third of interviewees believed collaborating with local groups would be or currently is helpful because it is necessary to have local insight on environmental issues from the affected communities. Two interviewees claimed that collaborating with local groups is currently helpful for their organization because local work is more accessible and more effective at getting people involved. One interviewee held that collaborating with local groups should be on a case-by-case basis because collaborating with very dissimilar groups could be counterproductive.

Two interviewees predominantly involved with the same mainstream organization also noted that the future success of their representative organization depends on successful collaboration with local groups. One interviewee claimed that the organization

with which he was predominantly involved did not collaborate on a local level. A couple interviewees also noted that it was sometimes difficult to get their peers within their representative organization to support collaboration with local groups, especially in a genuinely mutually beneficial way.

When interviewees predominantly involved with a local organization were asked how they thought collaborating with national organizations would or did affect their representative local organization, about half said that collaborating with mainstream groups would be or currently is helpful because of mainstream organizations' resources and existing capacity; although, one interviewee did note that collaboration might hurt the local organization's reputation because of a community's perception of the mainstream organization. A couple of these respondents also thought that collaborating with mainstream organizations would help their representative organization become more well-known *and* help to increase environmental consciousness within their local organization.

Two interviewees explained that because all environmental organizations, mainstream and local, are working for the common goal of environmental health they should all be working together. One interviewee noted that other people involved with the same local organization disagreed about whether or when collaboration with mainstream organizations is or would be beneficial.

A third of interviewees claimed they were not sure if collaboration with mainstream organizations would be a good fit for their respective local organizations and one interviewee indicated that it would in fact be or is at present mostly harmful. These

interviewees elaborated by including that: it would be helpful to have access to mainstream organizations' resources, but that their representative local organization is currently successful *because* of its local focus and collaborations; and that there is a threat of mainstream organizations “co-opting”, taking over, not following the local organization's model, or “selling out” local organizations. A couple interviewees voiced concern that mainstream organizations sometimes received funding from polluting industries and therefore created a conflict of interest for those environmental organizations. Although no interview question directly asked, half of interviewees predominantly involved with local organizations, stated that it is better and more effective to collaborate with other *local* groups than mainstream organizations.

The following chapter involves discussion about these results and how they might be most usefully interpreted by organizations seeking to collaborate with other local and national groups, as well as engage more pro-actively with urban Latino communities in California or the Western United States.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Analysis of interviews yielded unique insights regarding urban Latinos and the environmental movement that are both supported by *and* previously unaddressed by current literature and testimonies. Interviewee responses may reveal some critical differences between the traditional environmental movement and the environmental conscious of urban Latinos who are becoming ever more visible in the modern environmental movement. Considering these differences, and adjusting to accommodate them, could serve to move the movement forward by exposing shortcomings of the traditional environmental movement and reconciling misconceptions, and therefore socially-fabricated barriers, to a more representative, diverse, and subsequently more effective environmental movement in the U.S.

The starkest difference between traditional movement concepts and the insight garnered from interviews lies in the definition of the word “environment” itself. The most consistent theme across all interviewees’ responses was a definition of environment as all-inclusively “surroundings.” This insight is significant because it indicates, unlike the movement’s traditional definition of environment, that environment to urban Latinos can be man-made as well as natural: that it is something always present, not just isolated nature. The prevalence of this definition could also be because of the urban setting of this research, and not explicitly unique to “Latinos,” but this conclusion appears incomplete when it is considered that many traditional, and now nationally reaching “environmental” organizations that commonly define ‘environment’ specifically in terms of nature, were

and are located in larger cities. If it were simply the situation of this research and interviewees in an urban setting that was responsible for the ubiquity of the “surroundings” definition, it would suggest that urban-based traditional organizations would also likely define environment in this way. Because this discrepancy exists, it would be useful for future research to pursue dialogues with non-Latino supporters of mainstream environmental organizations about their definitions of “environment” to explore whether urban non-Latino individuals (i.e. traditional supporters of mainstream organizations) define environment more as “nature” or “surroundings.”

While some within mainstream organizations are arguing that urban settings, and in general people, should be included in the definition of “environment,” they have not been embraced or accepted by all those in the mainstream environmental community (Revkin, 2012a; 2012b). This occurrence serves as external evidence of what some interviewees identified as one of mainstream organizations’ biggest challenges: resistance to moving away from traditional ideology and having flexibility with an organization’s model depending on the demographics of its represented community.

Also of significance was the almost unanimous identification of the most pressing environmental issues as those that are immediately threatening to humans as well as non-human nature. One might easily expect air pollution to be an issue in the urban setting, but the other commonly noted issues like water, land, and natural resource pollution and misuse is something that is prevalent in rural areas as well *and* affects rural humans as well as non-human life in rural areas. This ranking of environmental problems therefore does not necessarily stem from the interviewees’ location in a strictly urban setting.

These results further support that unlike the traditional environmental focus on conservation and preservation, Latinos, and specifically urban Latinos, may believe that “environment”, and its associated issues, encompass both human and non-human elements. Moreover, mainstream interviewees’ identification of environmental justice type issues as the most important suggests that even among Latinos involved with mainstream organizations, humans are included as an integral part of “environment”. Thus, the often singular focus of the traditional environmental movement may in fact be limiting the participation of a substantial number of passionate and concerned individuals in the U.S who does not feel their interests are represented by the movement.

Interviews also yielded interesting results surrounding interviewees' relationships with and perceptions of the term “environmentalism” and “environmentalist”. Namely, the surprising finding that interviewees involved with mainstream organizations were most critical of the term “environmentalism”, and that both they and local interviewees who felt uncomfortable with the word disliked it because it seemed to exclude human welfare from the discussion of “environment”. It is also interesting that interviewees who were not involved with or as familiar with mainstream organizations’ work more readily embraced the term “environmentalism” because they were able to better relate it to their personal definitions of “environment”- although none would readily identify him/herself as an “environmentalist” without prompting. These insights somewhat echo the findings of a recent poll in October, 2012 commissioned by the California League of Conservation Voters Education Fund. In line with the statements of the interviewee in the current research who opted for using the word “ecologista” over “ambientalista,” the poll

revealed that of the approximately 500 California Latinos polled, the majority preferred to be called a “conservationist” rather than an “environmentalist” (Perez, 2012). These findings are revealing and useful in that they suggest that the term “environmentalism” may not be the most appropriate to create a feeling of unity within the environmental movement, and may in some cases deter or discourage some individuals (ethnic or racial minorities, low-income, or others) from becoming involved with a larger movement.

Interviewees’ attitudes toward participating in either a mainstream or local environmentally focused organization are directly related to their beliefs about “environment.” Following that interviewees widely believed “environment” involved their surroundings (both human and non-human), the stability and health of the elements that supported life and health within those surroundings (air, water, land), and was not solely “nature,” interviewees tended to maintain more favorable attitudes toward participating in initiatives or with organizations that aligned with those prerequisite beliefs. Therefore, it makes sense that many became involved to engage locally and aid in the betterment of their surroundings, even if those were not specifically connected with wilderness or nature; even those who sought involvement with nature did so because they wanted to engage with nature locally, in their community, not in a removed or less intimate location. Moreover, this latter sentiment often was an extension of positive feelings relating to childhood access with nature because it was an immediate part of interviewees’ surroundings growing up.

Interviewees’ description of their involvement as “part of a culture of activism” too was consistent with the belief that environment is surroundings, and thus, the attitude

that involvement was to actively address *all* issues and challenges that faced their surrounding community- environmental, social, *and* environmental justice related.

Significantly, support or dedication to environmental justice or aspects of environmental justice (such as access to non-human nature, clean air, water, and land as it pertained to human health, and a voice in decision-making that affected the well-being of their community and surroundings) was a prevalent theme across interviewees, regardless of the type of organization with which they were involved. Interviewees were either involved in a local organization that addressed one or many of these issues, *or* they were actively trying to introduce, promote, and instill these concepts in the work they did with organizations that traditionally did not have a place for them in their predominantly nature-focused agenda (i.e. “[pushing] the bounds of environment”). This finding is especially valuable in that previous resources have only recognized Latino efforts for environmental justice on a local level or with community-based organizations, and not their contributions from within the mainstream environmental movement.

It is interesting that while some interviewees did see working through smaller local organizations as the best way to advance environmental justice, others seemed to think expanding or readjusting the model, approach, and agenda of prominent national organizations would be a highly effective way to achieve this. Such discrepancy in sentiments may be further evidence of the benefits and necessity of approaching environmental action with Latinos from multiple levels and conceptual starting points. In that the current research indicates organizational success comes from both a local focus *and* national reach or access to resources and reputation, it can be extrapolated that these

factors then provide credibility to different populations. As both interviewees and the literature note, collaboration is beneficial because it gets diverse groups involved in work of common importance, therefore supporting the utilization of all social capital and resources possible in addressing environmental challenges.

The potential for collaboration in the environmental movement is also evidenced by results of the current investigation in that specifically, the strengths of local organizations often aligned with the challenges of mainstream groups, and vice versa. While mainstream organizations struggle to get new demographics involved, local organizations were deemed successful because they know their community and are able to address barriers to the local community's involvement, especially when the local community involves low-income or ethnic minorities. On the other hand, many local organizations lack resources, funding, and people-power, which are all readily available to most mainstream organizations.

It is also significant that although many interviewees were not involved with organizations other than their own, their attitudes toward involvement with others was generally very positive. None expressed an aversion to involvement with other organizations and many expressed a desire to be a part of further efforts to address environmental issues. Moreover, it is interesting that some interviewees had or were attempting to involve themselves in environmental efforts on multiple levels by participating in both mainstream and local organizations' efforts. While the organizations' goals and initiatives may be different, these interviewees seemed to appreciate the holistic and multi-faceted nature of environmental issues by attempting to

personally combat them from different angles. While some interviewees did express criticism of participating with mainstream organizations, specifically because of their own experiences, many were open to or recognized some of the potential benefits of working through mainstream organizations to address environmental concerns.

Although attitudes about personal participation with other organizations varied, interviewees had an overwhelmingly positive attitude about their current organization's collaboration with other groups. Interviewee attitudes about inter-organizational participation reflected an understanding that collaboration could address many of the challenges they or others identified their organizations as having. While interviewees generally supported collaboration between organizations, they did acknowledge that collaborations could be difficult and required some work, but ultimately were worth it.

The finding that interviewees involved with local organizations were more in support of local-local collaboration than local-mainstream collaboration is also potentially enlightening. One explanation for this sentiment could be a lack of experience with mainstream organizations, although this is not likely as most interviewees who expressed this opinion did in fact have previous experience, personally or through their work, with at least one mainstream organization. Another possibility could be that interviewees had experienced rigidity in mainstream organizations, or "coopting" in the past, positions that were in fact expressed by a few interviewees. One interviewee involved with a mainstream organization claimed that mainstream organizations were often "intimidating" for Latinos or immigrants. This insight may suggest that interviewees who supported more local-local collaboration to advance their community

environmental goals did so because they viewed local organizations as more “accessible” to their community members.

An additional reason local organizations may be viewed as more accessible and less intimidating to some Latino community members is the prevalent use of Spanish within those organizations’ activities. Many mainstream organizations have begun to translate their webpage or other media materials into Spanish, but do minimal outreach in Spanish. In contrast, many local organizations in Los Angeles conduct meetings, host community events, engage in community outreach, *and* distribute media in Spanish. In the case of one mainstream organization with participants in the current study, the use of a real-time translator during community outreach meetings allowed for both English and Spanish speaking attendees to actively engage and contribute to discussions, as well as communicate with each other. Such occurrences though are still more of a rarity among mainstream organizations than among local.

Interestingly, interviewees’ own involvement, beliefs, and motivations did not seem to be influenced by the perceived or actual norms of people they considered close to them. While some interviewees’ definitions of environment and associated concerns were in fact similar to those of their family and friends, almost all believed theirs were to a higher degree than people close to them. In terms of actual participation in environmental efforts or organizations, all interviewees were more involved than those people close to them. Moreover, it was interviewee involvement and influence that caused people close to them to become more aware or active, suggesting that norms had very little effect on interviewees’ participation but might play a significant role in fostering participation of

individuals who have very little experience or understanding of the severity and interconnectedness of environmental issues.

While interviewees did feel that their professional peers or others involved with their representative organization tended to share their level of awareness and action, it is probably not appropriate to conclude that their peers' norms influenced them to become active and concerned to begin with. However, it is likely that their peers' attitudes contributed to the maintenance and further development of interviewees' convictions, serving as reinforcement or support.

It is not surprising that most interviewees' ideas regarding the best ways to help the environment aligned with their own involvement, indicating they felt a sense of control or efficacy through participating with their representative organization or organizations. It is also worth examining the statements of interviewees who expressed a lack of effective control through their current or past organizations. The two interviewees who described their local organization as moderately successful did so because while they felt it did a great job addressing some of the social needs of their area, they did not feel it focused enough on environmental issues. The one interviewee who described becoming uninvolved with two mainstream organizations in the past did so because she felt disempowered; the organizations were not open to her suggestions that flexing their model or expanding their agenda would be advantageous. In all three of these cases, regardless of organization characterization, interviewees felt less control because of an organization's narrow and "siloed" focus. This finding further reinforces the conclusion

that interviewees viewed holistic and multi-faceted work as necessary to address the issues affecting their environment or “surroundings.”

This perspective is also demonstrated by the diverse set of responses given by interviewees regarding the best ways to help with environmental concerns. The fact that interviewees did not agree on *one* way to best help the environment suggests that there is not in fact one best approach and a singular focus of all involvement would be incomplete. Because it is not realistic for individual organizations to attempt to address *all* of the interrelated issues through every approach possible, collaboration toward a shared goal between organizations with different foci and methods is a more efficient and effective way to appropriately incorporate the array of necessary elements to achieve change.

The most important element of such collaborative work is the establishment of it for a “shared goal.” Therefore, collaborations will not simply be useful because they have been agreed upon; they must be oriented around achieving a common goal, objective, or mission of all parties involved. As a few interviewees emphasized, collaborations must be “strategic” to be beneficial, and be created around individual initiatives, not as a requisite of a constant “partnership” between organizations. Even on the inter-organizational level, flexibility appears to be crucial for success of environmental action.

Suggestions

Given the insights gained through the current research, both from analysis and direct interviewee statements, and their potential implications for the environmental

movement, a number of considerations are suggested for appropriately exploring and initiating conversations with local Latino groups or individuals, or locally operating mainstream organizations, in order to pursue mutually beneficial cooperation toward the goal of environmental health. These suggestions are listed in full below.

- Address issues holistically, recognizing the threat or harm involved for both humans and non-human nature. Identify the problem as ‘harm is done to the living community’, not simply to one of these individual elements of the living community.
- Focus on the community as a whole. Consider environmental, social, nutritional, economic, educational, and health issues as interconnected and interdependent. Avoid attempts to separate issues and address them individually without examining their relationships to the others.
- Provide opportunities for youth to have experiences with non-human nature or environmental issues. Promote exposure to non-built environment at a young age, especially for children in urban or suburban areas where it is less readily accessible to help develop appreciation for and understanding of the interconnectedness of their surroundings.
- Seek opportunities to work locally on community issues. Approach such opportunities as means of addressing “community health” as a whole, not just the non-human nature aspects.

- Make environment personal. Refer to it as “their” or “our” environment, not “the” environment, as this sounds distant and abstract. Relate environmental issues to individual circumstances and make them personally relevant.
- Be cautious of sounding “preachy.” Allow and encourage the people involved to help develop the definition of a problem affecting their community (local, national, or global), as well as contribute to the creation of solutions. Provide guidance and clarity of concepts you are more familiar with than others, but do not assume to know what’s best for a community (your own or someone else’s).
- Emphasize and foster community empowerment. Strive to provide community members with skills that encourage the development of community self-efficacy. Create community networks that advance capacity so communities may continue to address current and future issues affecting their community on their own.⁴
- Provide opportunities for people to *actively* get involved in progressive action and change initiatives in ways other than donating money to an organization or cause or signing petitions.
- Offer tiered ways of becoming involved with environmental action so more proactive individuals may get involved with the same initiatives, campaigns, or work as their newly active family or friends.

⁴A recent example of this model and its success is that of the Communities United Coalition discussed on pages 22-23 that has remained active even after the conclusion of the campaign for which the coalition was created.

- Engage people to get involved in personal small change initiatives *and* larger campaigns or actions. Encourage people to make individual changes like reducing energy, water, or transportation usage, recycling, or eliminating plastic or toxics from their lives so they can see immediate benefits and feel a sense of contribution. But also provide opportunities for them to participate in bigger initiatives that require large numbers of people; this allows individuals to be involved with and feel confident and supported in long-term projects.
- Start building relationships with other groups (schools, community organizations, churches, etc.); network with groups *before* their help is needed or a benefit from access to their resources is obvious. Acknowledge that everyone has a stake in the health and well-being of the living community and that the groups' work addresses an important part of achieving that. Do not simply seek connections when something is needed.
- Collaborate on *issues*, do not pursue long-term *partnerships*. Groups or individuals may be reluctant to collaborate on an issue with which they find common ground if they feel it will require them to support every issue or initiative advanced by the "partner" organization.
- Adapt elements of a mission or project to better fit the unique demographic characteristics of specific areas. Organizations whose work targets communities in multiple locations should find ways to shape their programs to be more accessible to each distinct community and address the barriers unique to that

community. (For example, use of spoken and written Spanish language in all the organizations' public activities.)

- Be careful with use of the word “environmentalism.” Avoid using the term “environmentalism” or “environmentalist” unless an individual has already done so in a positive manner. Using these terms with inappropriate audiences may result in discouraging people to become involved with pro-environmental work.

While these suggestions were crafted using the results of the current study's interviews, it may not be appropriate to generalize these recommendations due to limitations of the current research. Future research would be beneficial to address these limitations and expand the scope of study on Latino, and other minority populations' placement within the modern environmental movement in the United States.

Limitations and Future Research

The current investigation has yielded useful preliminary insight on the topic of Latinos in the modern environmental movement in the U.S., but also provides opportunities, through its limitations, for further development of this knowledge.

The primary limitation of the current research was the modest scope of the study in that it consisted of only 22 interviews and two observation experiences. While interviewees represented a good split of perspectives from involvement with local and mainstream environmentally focused organizations, it would be useful to gain insights

from more individuals and from individuals involved with a greater cross-section of organizations, both local and mainstream.

Furthermore, due to the time and resources allotted for the research, only individuals older than 18 years who were involved with a local or mainstream environmentally focused organization were interviewed. Important additional insight would be gained through comparison of interviews with individuals involved in non-environmentally focused community organizations, individuals involved with neither environmentally or non-environmental community focused organizations (i.e. the lay public), and college students involved in an environmentally related discipline or campus group. It may also be useful to interview youth under the age of 18 about their perceptions of issues surrounding environment and the environmental movement. Comparison of these perspectives would provide a more nuanced and complete understanding of Latino relationships with environment and environmental organizations, specifically in an urban setting.

In addition to expanding the depth of participant populations, further study should involve Latino identified individuals in multiple urban settings across the country, beyond Los Angeles County. Moreover, future research involving Latinos in rural settings across the U.S. is needed to construct a more thorough knowledge of Latino environmental relationships. Because of the different challenges due to physical and geographical orientation faced by Latinos living in rural areas versus urban, it is possible that their responses to interview questions, as well as beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of control and norms surrounding involvement with environmental organizations will be

significantly different than those of the urban-based interviewees who participated in the current research. Analysis of both the differences *and* similarities between urban and rural Latinos' relationships with environment and the environmental movement would serve to shed more light on potential areas for expanding the modern movement to better represent and include these populations.

Finally, further research should explore the relationships of other minorities in the U.S. with environment and the environmental movement to develop means of increasing their inclusion, representation, and participation in pro-environmental action as this research has attempted to begin to do with urban Latinos. In terms of youth and other minority populations' relationships with environment and environmental issues, future research should also further explore the potential roles of non-English language and social media use in expanding the environmental movement in the U.S.

Conclusion

While the current study is small in scale and exploratory, it is appropriate to view it also as a pilot study and preliminarily explanatory. Through extensive analysis of interviews, this investigation has provided a more in-depth understanding of urban Latino relationships with environment and environmental organizations than have previous surveys and exit polls. Moreover, the current research includes interpretation of this understanding so as to make it applicable to advancing the evolution of the modern environmental movement into a more representative, holistic, and thus effective social endeavor.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Guide

Blue Questions = Latinos involved with Mainstream Environmental Organizations

Green Questions = Latinos involved with Local Environmental Groups

Beliefs about Environment

- 1) What does the word “environment” mean to you?
 - a. Do you think this is the way the majority of other North Americans understand the word “environment”?
 - b. Do you think this is consistent with the way most of the people close to you understand “environment”?
 - i. PROBE- family; friends; community?
 - c. What do you think are the best ways someone can help the environment?
- 2) Using your understanding of “environment”, what would you say are some of the most important environmental issues?

PROBE- in your community; United States; Globally?

 - a. What do you think are the best ways someone can be involved with efforts to address these issues?
 - i. PROBE- (examples) financially supporting organizations, signing petitions, writing or calling policy makers/representatives, physically getting involved in campaigns by protesting, educating community, running for political office, etc.?
 - b. How similar or different do you think your environmental concerns are compared to other people close to you?
 - i. PROBE- members of the community; friends; family?
- 3) What does “environmentalism” mean to you?
 - a. PROBE- How much do you feel this term describes your relationship with the “environment” (using your understanding of “environment”)?

Involvement with Environmental Organizations/Efforts

- 4) What motivated you to first become involved with (organization’s name)?
 - a. How would you describe your involvement with (organization’s name)? What do you do?
 - b. How long have you been involved with (organization’s name)?
 - c. Have you ever thought about leaving (organization’s name) or becoming uninvolved?

- i. PROBE- why/why not?
 - d. What role do you feel (organization's name) plays in working towards minimizing some of the environmental issues you mentioned earlier?
 - e. How successful do you feel (organization's name) has been at reaching its goals?
 - i. PROBE- at playing its role in addressing the environmental issues you described?
 - ii. PROBE- What are some of the main reasons you think (organization's name) has been successful? What do you think are some barriers/limitations/challenges to (organization's name)'s success? How do you think (organization's name) could be more successful?
- 5) Are you involved with any other groups that you feel deal with “environmental” issues? If so, which groups?
- a. What does/do (organization's(') name(s)) do?
 - b. Why did you become involved with (organization's(') name(s)) ?
 - c. How would you describe your involvement with this/these group(s)?
 - d. How long have you been involved with (organization's name)?
 - e. Have you ever thought about leaving (organization's name) or becoming uninvolved?
 - i. PROBE- why/why not?

[For local: If involvement with mainstream group, skip to question #7c]

[For mainstream: If involvement with local groups/coalitions, skip to question #8]

- 6) Are you familiar with any local environmental groups or coalitions? If so, which ones?
- a. Have you ever thought about becoming involved with any of these groups?
 - i. PROBE- Why/why not?
 - b. If you became involved with a local environmental group, how do you think your friends, family, and other community members would respond?
 - i. PROBE- supportive; question your reasons; be disappointed; indifferent/no reaction

- 7) Are you familiar with any national environmental groups? (Like: the Sierra Club, NRDC, The Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society, the Wilderness Society, etc.)
- a. Have you ever thought about becoming involved with any of these groups?
 - i. PROBE- Why/why not?
 - b. If you became involved with a national environmental group, how do you think your friends, family, and other community members would respond?
 - i. PROBE- supportive; question your reasons; be disappointed; indifferent/no reaction
 - c. How much do you feel like (national organization's(') name(s)) share your “environmental” concerns?
 - i. To what degree do you feel like they work to address the same environmental issues you are concerned about?
- 8) How involved are the people close to you (friends, family, community) with efforts to address some of the environmental concerns you listed earlier?
- a. How would you describe their involvement?
 - i. PROBE- Organized or individual efforts; involved with local or mainstream organizations?

Collaboration with other Organizations

- 9) Has (organization's name) worked with any other groups to address an environmental issue or issues?
- a. To what extent was/were this/these partnership(s) beneficial?
 - i. For those that were beneficial: What were some of the key things about the partnership(s) that made it/them most successful?
 - ii. What were some of the main challenges in making the partnership(s) successful?
- 10) To what extent do you feel that working with **national environmental groups/local environmental groups** would help or hurt the ability of (organization's name) to reach its mission and goals?
- a. Why?
 - i. PROBE- What might some of the benefits be? What might some of the problems be?
 - b. How do you think most other people involved with (organization's name) would feel about (organization's name) working with **national environmental groups/local environmental groups**?

i. PROBE- in favor/support; against? Why?

Personal and Community

- 11) What is your gender?
- 12) What is your age?
- 13) What is the highest level of education you have completed or are in the process of completing?
- 14) What is the highest level of education your parents have completed?
- 15) What is your work status?
 - a. Describe your work/job(s), homemaker, self-employed, etc.
- 16) How would you describe your family make-up?
 - a. Married, children, partnered, extended family, widowed, etc.
- 17) How long have you lived in the Los Angeles area?
 - a. Where were you born?
 - b. Where were your parents born?
- 18) How would you describe your community?

- 19) Is there anything else you'd like to share/tell me?
- 20) Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?
 - a. May I tell them that you suggested I talk to them?

APPENDIX B: Initial Invitation to Participate in Research

Dear _____,

Good [morning/afternoon.] My name is Kerry Leslie and I am currently a student at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California pursuing my Master of Arts in Social Sciences in Environment & Community. My research interests revolve around developing an understanding of urban Latino relationships with local and national environmental groups, as well as a general understanding of urban Latino relationships with “environment”, (and how these compare between self-identified Latino individuals, as well as how they compare to mainstream notions of “environmentalism” and appropriate relationships with “environment”). It is my hope that my research will provide insight into areas for cooperation and collaboration between environmentally concerned communities that can ultimately transform the modern environmental movement into one that simultaneously fights for the health of human and non-human life, as well as the economic and social justice that is intrinsically connected to that health in the U.S.

I believe the most valuable knowledge that can be gained in my research would come from personal conversations. For this reason, I would love the opportunity to interview individuals who are involved with (organization’s name) who *self-identify*, in part or in whole, as Latino (of any background). Because I hope to get a diverse collection of perspectives, I am interested in speaking to both individuals who work or hold a leadership position with (organization’s name) and community members who volunteer, participate in events and campaigns, or contribute financially to (organization’s name) as a means of supporting the group's mission and goals.

It is important to me that the individuals I interview identify themselves as Latino and are not simply identified as Latino by a third party; for this reason I would like to initially extend the invitation to voluntarily participate in interviews to all of (organization’s name)'s supporters. I would be very grateful if my invitation could be shared with others involved with (organization’s name) via whatever means you deem appropriate.

I will be in the Los Angeles area this summer from the end of May through the beginning of August and will be hoping to conduct interviews during this time. Further questions, thoughts, or suggestions about my research and possible participation by anyone interested is welcomed and appreciated. Please feel free to contact me by phone or email at your convenience.

I sincerely appreciate your time and look forward to hopefully working with (organization's name) in the process of my research this summer.

Thank you,
Kerry Leslie

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email@humboldt.edu

APPENDIX C: Final Report to Participating Organizations

Suggestions and Considerations for a Growing Movement

Shifting the U.S. environmental movement in a more representative, diverse, and influential direction

The modern environmental movement in the United States is at a crossroads and the changing demographics of the country offer an array of opportunities to expand the movement into one that is more representative, diverse, and ultimately, effective. Interviews with 22 Latino or Latina individuals, ranging in age from 18 to 60 years, and involved with environmentally related organizations across Los Angeles County provided great insight into some of the challenges and opportunities for getting the largely underrepresented population of urban Latinos involved with the environmental movement.

Environmental issues, and those pertaining to the health of both human and non-human nature, are very relevant to urban Latinos, and the environmental movement in the U.S. would benefit from the inclusion of their voice and perspectives as it struggles to move forward and create effective change in an ever-challenging political, social, and physical atmosphere.

Taken as a whole, interviews served to illuminate many of the existing and under- or unaddressed characteristics of the modern movement

that act as barriers to urban Latino participation and contributions. Moreover, interviews revealed numerous ways in which urban Latinos, as well as low-income communities, are successfully engaging with and enriching the environmental movement in LA County. Through careful consideration of both types of insights from interviews (barriers and successes), a short list of suggestions has been compiled regarding appropriate ways to explore and initiate conversations with local Latino groups or individuals, or locally operating mainstream environmental organizations, in order to pursue mutually beneficial cooperation.

The following suggestions are simply that, suggestions, and are not presumed to be all-inclusive rules for expanding the U.S. environmental movement; they are merely considerations, crafted through comparison of personal conversations, that may provide new direction and insight for individuals or groups seeking to expand their environmental influence and the representation and influence of the modern environmental movement in the U.S.

Suggestions

- Address issues holistically, recognizing the threat or harm involved for both humans and non-human nature. Identify the problem as ‘harm is done to the living community’, not simply to one of these individual elements of the living community.
 - Focus on the community as a whole. Consider environmental, social, nutritional, economic, educational, and health issues as interconnected and interdependent. Avoid attempts to separate issues and address them individually without examining their relationships to the others.
- Provide opportunities for youth to have experiences with non-human nature or environmental issues. Promote exposure to non-built environment at a young age, especially for children in urban or suburban areas where it is less readily accessible to help develop appreciation for and understanding of the interconnectedness of their surroundings.
 - Seek opportunities to work locally on community issues. Approach such opportunities as means of addressing “community health” as a whole, not just the non-human nature aspects.
- Make environment personal. Refer to it as “their” or “our” environment, not “the” environment, as this sounds distant and abstract. Relate environmental issues to individual circumstances and make them personally relevant.

- Be cautious of sounding “preachy.” Allow and encourage the people involved to help develop the definition of a problem affecting their community (local, national, or global), as well as contribute to the creation of solutions. Provide guidance and clarity of concepts you are more familiar with than others, but do not assume to know what’s best for a community (your own or someone else’s).
- Emphasize and foster community empowerment. Strive to provide community members with skills that encourage the development of community self-efficacy. Create community networks that advance capacity so communities may continue to address current and future issues affecting their community on their own.
 - Provide opportunities for people to *actively* get involved in progressive action and change initiatives in ways other than donating money to an organization or cause or signing petitions.
- Offer tiered ways of becoming involved with environmental action so more proactive individuals may get involved with the same initiatives, campaigns, or work as their newly active family or friends.
 - Engage people to get involved in both personal small change initiatives *and* larger campaigns or actions. Encourage people to make individual changes like reducing energy, water, or transportation usage, recycling, or eliminating plastic or toxics from their lives so they can see immediate benefits and feel a sense of contribution. But also provide opportunities for them to participate in bigger initiatives that require large numbers of people; this allows individuals to be involved with and feel confident and supported in long-term projects.

- Start building relationships with other groups (schools, community organizations, churches, etc.); network with groups *before* their help is needed or a benefit from access to their resources is obvious. Acknowledge that everyone has a stake in the health and well-being of the living community and that the groups' work addresses an important part of achieving that. Do not simply seek connections when something is needed.
 - Collaborate on *issues*, do not pursue long-term *partnerships*. Groups or individuals may be reluctant to collaborate on an issue with which they find common ground if they feel it will require them to support every issue or initiative advanced by the "partner" organization.

- Adapt elements of a mission or project to better fit the unique demographic characteristics of specific areas. Organizations whose work targets communities in multiple locations should find ways to shape their programs to be more accessible to each distinct community and address the barriers unique to that community. (For example, use of spoken and written Spanish language in all the organizations' public activities.)
 - Be careful with use of the word "environmentalism." Avoid using the term "environmentalism" or "environmentalist" unless an individual has already done so in a positive manner. Using these terms with inappropriate audiences may result in discouraging people to become involved with pro-environmental work.