Negotiating Identity Within the Sustainable Agriculture Advocacy Coalition

by

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ABSTRACT

Three prominent national coalition efforts to promote sustainable agriculture are examined: the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Integrated Farm and Food Systems Network, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. Research methods include participant observation, interviews, and a survey. Qualitative and quantitative results are presented.

Findings are related to theories about advocacy coalitions, interest groups, negotiation strategies, and identity politics. Results show evidence of an identity group within the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition. The presence of an identity group impedes the ability of sustainable agriculture advocates to make significant progress in the policy subsystem because participants focus on continuous internal coalition negotiations, avoid conflict that can clarify goals, and discount scientific data, relying instead on information generated through group dialogue.

Recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition are presented. Suggestions to augment the Advocacy Coalition Framework developed by Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith are offered.

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Biographical Note

Kathleen Ann Merrigan was raised in Greenfield, Massachusetts. Currently, she is Administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, an agency with a diversity of programs, 10,000 employees, and an annual budget of $1 billion. Her previous employment includes: Senior Analyst for the Henry A. Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture (1994-1999); Expert Consultant for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (Summer 1998); Senior Staff Member for the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry (1987-1992); Special Assistant to the Chief of Regulatory Affairs, Texas Department of Agriculture (1986-1987); and chief of staff to U.S. Congressman John Olver during his tenure as a Massachusetts State Senator (1982-1985).

Kathleen received her Master of Public Affairs in 1987 from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin in 1987. The title of her thesis is *Pesticide Policymaking in an Era of Interest Group Negotiations*. She was the student commencement speaker and Fulbright Grant recipient. She received her B.A. in English and Political Science from Williams College.

Selected previous publications include:

Politics, Policy, and IPM. In Emerging Technologies for Integrated Pest Management: Concepts, Research, and Implementation. George G. Kennedy and Turner B. Sutton, editors. St. Paul, MN: American Phytopathological Society Press. 2000.

Government Pathways to Reform. In Visions of American Agriculture. William Lockeretz, editor. Ames: Iowa State University Press. 1997.

Property is Nothing More Than Persuasion. In Genes for the Future: Discovery, Ownership, Access. June Fessenden MacDonald, editor. Ithaca, NY: National Agricultural Biotechnology Council. 1995.

Herbicide-Tolerant Plants: A Case of Science Gone Astray? In Health and Environment Digest, 9:1: 3-5. April 1995.

The Sustainable Agriculture Policy Agenda in the United States: Politics and Prospects. Coauthored with Garth Youngberg and Neill Schaller. In Food for the Future: Conditions and Contradictions of Sustainability. Patricia Allen editor. NY: John Wiley and Sons. 1993.

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My husband Michael Selmi and daughter Fiona have been helpful and loving during the writing of this dissertation. Soon-to-be-born son Seamus also cooperated!

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Chapter 1: Overview

Agricultural sustainability is a problem: After more than a decade of political debate and scholarly inquiry, policymakers still face substantial disagreement over its meaning, how it can be achieved, if at all, and questions as to the appropriate role for government in bringing about sustainable practices. This confusion is apparent in a variety of policymaking forums. In 1990, the U.S. Senate fiercely debated the definition of agricultural sustainability. No consensus could be reached, however, when Senators lined up for one of the few roll call votes on the omnibus 1990 farm bill covering everything from billion dollar commodity programs to food safety protections. An exasperated Senator Robert Kerrey of Nebraska bemoaned the muddled sustainability debate: "My concern is that we are getting behind the curve on environmental issues related to agriculture. . . .We are fighting against the clock" (U.S. Senate, 1990: 10316).[1]

Kerrey's warning has not pushed policymakers to any resolution on sustainable agriculture. Two years after the 1990 farm bill debate, the U.S. General Accounting Office issued a stinging analysis of the attempts by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to promote sustainable agriculture, calling them fragmented and conflicting (General Accounting Office, 1992). In 1994, the President's Council on Sustainable Development, searching for somewhere to begin, asked for public comment on the most basic of questions — what defines sustainable agriculture and how can government help? (The President's Council on Sustainable Development, 1996: 2). One of the most recent government reports on sustainable agriculture, issued by USDA in 1996, continues to underscore the lack of progress, laying part of the blame on the cultural and social associations embodied in the concept (USDA, 1996: 12). Clearly, policymakers do not know how to proceed in the subject of sustainable agriculture, despite the millions of taxpayer dollars spent in the last decade on a variety of commissions, reports, and programs to deal with the issue.

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[1] For a full discussion of the 1990 debate, see Youngberg, Schaller, and Merrigan, 1993.

Sustainable agriculture is a phrase that connotes agricultural practices that are environmentally sound, economically profitable, and socially just. Such practices must, according to the National Academy of Sciences, maintain natural resources and agricultural productivity for current and future generations, minimize adverse environmental impacts, provide adequate economic returns to farmers, optimize crop production with minimized chemical inputs, satisfy human needs for food and income, and provide for the social needs of farm families and communities (National Research Council, 1991a: 2). Because it encompasses interactions with the environment and society, sustainable agriculture is an important component of sustainable development (National Research Council, 1991a: 2).

The lack of government direction in sustainable agriculture is due, in part, to the severe dysfunction in what are traditionally known as interest groups. While theorists have a variety of views on how interest groups shape government policy, their role is indisputably integral to policymaking. Theodore Lowi, for example, describes policymaking as the result of a triangular trading pattern between administrative agencies, congressional committees, and interest groups — the latter having an iron grip on government decisionmaking. And while interest groups are always powerful, Lowi stresses that in agriculture, more than in any other policy arena, the policymaking agenda is determined by interest group demand (Lowi, 1979: 68). It stands to reason then: if government is flailing in sustainable agriculture it may, to some extent, reflect a failure of interest groups to influence the process effectively.

Sustainable agriculture is promoted by a diversity of interest groups. Dozens of organizations have been founded specifically to advocate sustainable agriculture and these include national organizations (e.g., Henry A. Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture), regional organizations (e.g., Center for Rural Affairs), and local organizations (e.g., Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement). In addition, numerous organizations concerned with science policy, humane animal care, farmer welfare, and consumer and environmental protection devote a portion of their resources to sustainable agriculture and regularly join forces with sustainable agriculture organizations to advocate for policy reform (e.g., Union of Concerned Scientists, Humane Association of the U.S., National Family Farm Coalition,

Consumers Union, and the Natural Resources Defense Council). Organizations not traditionally considered interest groups also promote sustainable agriculture. The National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, established in the early 1990s to influence federal agricultural policy, assumed that its members would consist entirely of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, to the surprise of the Campaign's organizers, many government agencies, university programs, and small businesses signed up to participate. Today, the Campaign is an organization of approximately 3,000 organizations and it reflects the diversity of advocates in the sustainable agriculture debate (Little, 1999: personal communication).[2]

The failure of sustainable agriculture advocates to direct government efforts has rarely been acknowledged, let alone analyzed. An exceptional self-assessment was voiced just as the U.S. Congress was concluding its work on the 1990 farm bill. Many of the best known and accomplished leaders in sustainable agriculture gathered at USDA to memorialize one of their own -- Robert Rodale, CEO of Rodale Press and Research Institute and son of J. I. Rodale, the man who developed the study and philosophy of "organic" farming. Speaker after speaker rose to pay tribute to Rodale, recounting victories in sustainable agriculture as part of their eulogies; that is, until Wes Jackson came to the podium. Jackson, a MacArthur Foundation "Genius Award" winner, book author and sustainable agriculture activist, cautioned against overstating policy gains and offered his bleak calculation of the work to be done: "What if we all came to Washington, complained to the powerful people that they are not listening, and then, suddenly, they turned the tables on us, and responded, 'You're right, all you guys are right! What should we do this afternoon on our farms?'" Jackson paused and then proceeded to say out loud what many knew in their hearts, "Nobody has an answer. We haven't got a clue"

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[2] The Campaign has participants in all 50 states. The Campaign is overseen by a steering committee whose members hail from 20 different organizations. The "rapid response network" of the Campaign includes its most ardent activists -- 17,000 individuals and organizations who have requested receipt of Campaign "action alerts," which call upon people to write letters and make calls to Congress and the Administration on emerging policy issues (e.g., Clean Water Act amendments). See Appendix A for additional information on Campaign participants.

(Stoneback, 1996: personal communication).

What do the 1990 farm bill experience, Jackson's assessment, and subsequent government sustainable agriculture efforts suggest? First, they provide stark evidence that sustainable agriculture policymaking is in disarray and, second, they suggest that sustainable agriculture advocates have failed to articulate a clear vision for government action. Each of these observations and their relationship will be further documented in the course of this dissertation but they are not the focus of inquiry. Rather, this paper moves quickly beyond these observations to confront the underlying reasons why sustainable agriculture advocates are ineffective in influencing policymaking; as a result, an analysis of the internal interactions among sustainable agriculture advocates forms the core of this work. Most significantly, this analysis contributes to the theoretical debate over emerging policymaking models by offering an explication of the nature and role of interest groups in the context of advocacy coalitions and identity politics.[3]

Guiding Question

A central question underpins this dissertation: *How is consensus (i.e., a common belief system) negotiated within an advocacy coalition?* This question guides the hypothesis development, research design, and literature review contained herein. Furthermore, this question spotlights what I anticipate will be the central obstacle — lack of consensus within the advocacy coalition — that prevents significant progress in solving the sustainability problem.

Emerging Conceptions of Interest Groups

Since the very early days of James Madison and Alexis de Tocqueville, American policymaking has been predominately understood through models depicting the interaction and

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[3] By interest group, I mean as traditionally used in political science literature and as conceived by David Truman (1951) and others. Extensive discussion of the meaning and role of interest groups is found in Chapter Two.

aggregation of individual interests, variously described as overlapping, competing, numerous, and oftentimes, latent. But none of these descriptions adequately capture the intensity of sustainable agriculture advocates, who almost always refer to themselves in collective terms such as "the community" or "the movement." Sustainable agriculture advocates are not easily placed in traditional policymaking models because, as Robert Reich argues, these models fail to account for the function and power of collective ideas and beliefs (Reich, 1990:6). While prevailing models assume that self-interested preferences determine a person's political behavior, people have been known to act based solely on what they believe to be right and wrong. Values can arise independently from an individual's life experiences. For example, it has been shown that perceptions of unemployment policies matter more than actual experiences in the job market and that people are willing to make lifestyle changes to protect the environment for future generations. Reich concludes: "Good policy analysis requires greater understanding of how ideas develop, how ideas are used, and how leaders may generate quality ideas and stimulate public debate" (Reich, 1990: 144).

The work of Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith is among the most promising adaptations of interest group theory to account for collective ideas and beliefs (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith argue that policy is best understood by examining coalitions and beliefs rather than individuals and interests; to this end, they have introduced a policy model known as the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). In this model, advocacy coalitions are defined as like-minded groups comprised of people who share a particular belief system and show a nontrivial degree of coordinated activity over time. Such coalitions include traditional interest groups (e.g., environmental NGO) as well as government workers, journalists, researchers, and others. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith posit a tri-partite belief system in which people simultaneously hold deep core beliefs (e.g., social equality), policy core beliefs (e.g., value of environment versus development), and secondary beliefs (specific policy actions); together these form the glue that holds an advocacy coalition together.

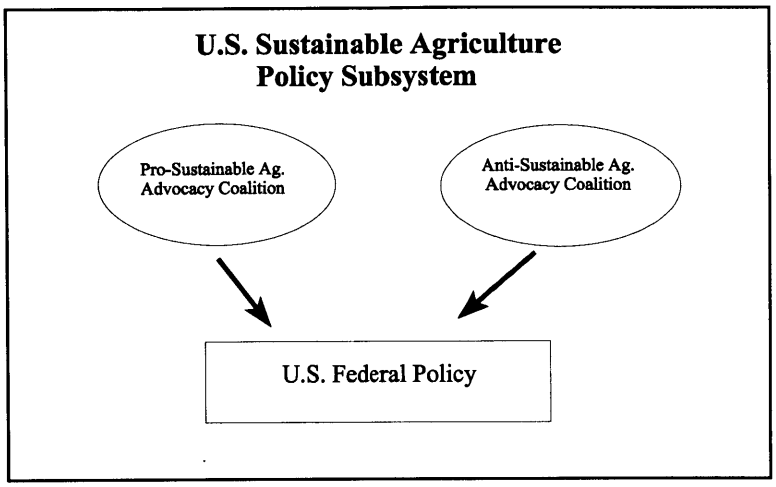

Figure A

The ACF is the theoretical model upon which this study is founded because, as this dissertation will document, sustainability is a concept based in a particular belief system and shared ideas. The ACF, as currently developed, provides only the launching point for this analysis because it does not explore the internal workings of advocacy coalitions. Rather, the ACF focuses on something called a policy subsystem, defined as a policy domain where actors from a variety of public and private organizations are actively concerned with a policy problem (see Figure A). Edella Schlager is among the scholars who have begun to recognize the limitation of this definition, saying that the ACF lacks an adequate explanation of collective action (Schlager, 1995: 244). This dissertation suggests ways to overcome the current limits of the ACF by augmenting the model based on insights derived from an examination of the internal workings of the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition. As a result, the enriched ACF becomes a more powerful explanatory tool.

In looking inside advocacy coalitions to better understand their relative ability to influence policy, the potential impact of identity groups is considered. The emerging field of identity politics, discussed further in the coming chapter, has challenged traditional conceptions of interest groups, finding them lacking when it comes to explaining, among other things, feminism, gay liberation, and racial policy deliberations. Michael Piore (1995) defines an identity group as a single group that encompasses so many of an individual's interests that it

becomes inseparable from that individual. Perhaps better understood by way of contrast, normally an interest group (e.g., the National Rifle Association) has individuals that are so different from one another and have so many separate interests (e.g., guns *plus* health care, school financing, foreign aid, etc.) that the group represents only certain elements of a person's beliefs (e.g., guns are good) rather than the individual's beliefs in their entirety. Unlike interest groups, an identity group tends to represent an individual's lifestyle and often, the same individuals are grouped together repeatedly in one organization after another (Piore, 1995: 20-21). Arguing for attention to identity groups, Piore observes that we are "prisoners of the individualistic framework through which we are accustomed to consider social policy and lack an intellectual apparatus with which to sort out the roles played by groups" (Piore, 1995: 59). Public policy and political leadership, Piore asserts, must begin to orchestrate conversations among identity groups.

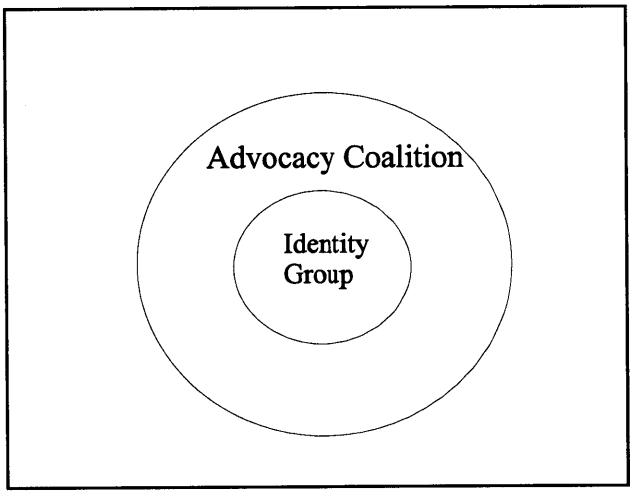

Figure B

Upon examination, an identity group is uncovered within the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition (SAAC) and it accounts for much of the overall dysfunction and lack of influence this advocacy coalition has had in the policy subsystem (see Figure B). Several findings, documented in this dissertation, point to the existence of this identity group. For example, many participants in SAAC are unwilling to compromise on what they consider to be the principles of sustainability ("policy core beliefs" in the Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith model)

and claim that those who do are either co-opted or have some malicious purpose. This is consistent with Piore's description of identity groups that emerge when: "Politics becomes a matter of principle, or even worse, of the integrity of the self, and compromise becomes an externally imposed hypocrisy, a violation, denial, or betrayal of self" (Piore, 1995: 37). Furthermore, many participants seem to be in search of community and place a higher value on dialogue and interactive learning than on concluding the sustainability debate. This is also consistent with Piore's postulation of "communities of meaning" in which individuals realize themselves through identity group dialogue. Thus, what I will argue is that SAAC is both an advocacy coalition and an identity group. To the extent that it seems to influence federal policy it must function as an advocacy coalition. Its ability to do so, however, is hampered by the fact that it is simultaneously an identity group. As such, its ability to function effectively in the political domain is sorely limited.

Agriculture as a Policy Arena of Choice

The theoretical questions embodied in this dissertation concern advocacy coalitions and identity politics. While many policy arenas could serve as the setting for this study, agriculture is selected for three important reasons. First, as will soon be described, the horrific destruction of our environment and the uprooting of rural America requires immediate attention. Second, there is a long tradition of scholars studying agriculture as a means to build general theories about policymaking: William Browne, Don Hadager, Grant McConnell, Theodore Saloutos, Theodore Lowi, Mancur Olson, Robert Salisbury, David Truman, Phillip Selznick, Graham Wilson, James Q. Wilson, and Harman Zeigler are among the best known scholars who have used agriculture case studies as a window onto group behavior and American politics. In fact, Browne asserts that, "Agriculture, as one of the oldest organized sets of interest involved in influencing U.S. public policy as well as possibly the single largest sector of the economy, is arguably the best possible choice for study of policymaking (Browne, 1988: xii). Finally, agriculture is what this author knows best and a career spent in this arena has provided exceptional access to key leaders and meetings and an irresistible opportunity to fuse

professional and scholarly interests in the search for an answer to the sustainability problem.[4]

Defining Sustainable Agriculture

Notwithstanding the use of various definitions by different organizations, the basic concept of sustainable agriculture is generally well understood. Just as poverty and inequality are understood despite ongoing debates about definitions, there seems to be a general agreement over the meaning of sustainable agriculture. There is also general agreement that most current agricultural practices, often referred to as "conventional agriculture" fail to meet these three criteria and are, in the long-term, unsustainable.

Thousands of articles and books explore the meaning of sustainable agriculture. In trying to figure out what it is and to provide a common framework, some authors distinguish among various degrees of sustainable agriculture using a strong versus weak sustainability conception. Some discuss the differences in terms of broad versus narrow sustainability (Allen, et. al., 1992). Many analysts distinguish between an exclusively ecology-based sustainability versus one inclusive of societal goals (Strange, 1988). Still others view the debate as a battle between a "bottom up" approach and a "top down" approach (Markandya, 1994). Most writers do agree that the definition of sustainability refers to, at the very least, endurance, multiple ends, and integrated means (Keeney, 1990).

A database search of the term "sustainable agriculture" was conducted for this study for the period 1994-1998; over 700 newspaper articles were identified.[5] Almost all the articles

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[4] My professional career has consisted of a series of agriculture policy jobs, with sustainable agriculture always central to my work. This has provided me a front row seat on many important occasions, including the 1990 farm bill debate, when I served as a staff person for the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee, at the memorial service for Robert Rodale, where I delivered a tribute from the podium, and at many of the events cited in this dissertation.

[5] LEXIS-NEXIS is a commercial database that catalogues various sources that are searchable by key words. This search was conducted within the Major Newspapers database, which contains major newspapers from throughout the country.

equated sustainable agriculture with environmentally sound agricultural production practices, such as techniques to prevent soil erosion and pesticide contamination. More recent articles explored the social dimensions of sustainable agriculture as well, including the preservation of small family farms. The search revealed surprising consistency in the broad meaning of sustainability.

After analyzing many of the definitions, a panel of scholars working under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences concluded that the variety of definitions of sustainable agriculture all explicitly promote environmental, economic, and social goals in their efforts to clarify and interpret the meaning of sustainability (National Research Council, 1991a: 2). These three goals also appear in the definition finally adopted by the U.S. Congress in 1990:

> *Sustainable agriculture is:* an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long term, satisfy human food and fiber needs; enhance environmental quality and the natural resources base upon which the agricultural economy depends; make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm/ranch resources; and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls; sustain the economic viability of farm/ranch operations; and enhance the quality of life for farmers/ranchers and society as a whole (FACT Act, 1990).

High Costs of Failure

By all accounts, American agriculture fails to meet the three criteria of sustainability -- environmental soundness, economic profitability, and social justice. The degree to which it fails, however, is profound. The lack of progress in achieving sustainable agriculture, given the ongoing efforts by SAAC to reform government policy, is surprising as well as deeply disturbing.

Environmental issues have been at the forefront of the sustainability debate and rightly so, given the sheer volume of the natural resources utilized in agricultural activity. More than half of all land in the 48 contiguous states is dedicated to agricultural use, including cropland,

grassland pasture or rangeland (Economic Research Service, 1997: 1).[6] The agriculture sector is the largest user of water; for example, freshwater irrigation withdrawals, primarily used for agriculture, amounted to 40 percent of the nation's total freshwater withdrawal in 1990 (Economic Research Service, 1997: 68).[7] Yet, the failure to preserve these environmental resources -- a central component of all definitions of sustainable agriculture, is all too apparent. In 1994, USDA developed baseline indicators to measure environmental performance in agriculture, with the first progress report published three years later. A brief examination of two indicators selected by USDA — pesticide use and water quality — as well as a third indicator — biodiversity, underscores the lack of progress in this component of sustainability.

America's reliance on pesticides continues to grow despite known environmental and health risks.[8] Total U.S. application rates rose from 215 million pounds in 1964 to 566 million pounds in 1995, an increase of more than 260 percent (Benbrook, 1996: 3).[9] According to USDA, total quantities of pesticides have generally increased since 1990 and reached a record level in 1994 despite the fact that many of the newer pesticide ingredients are applied at lower

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[6] The total land area of the contiguous 48 states is approximately 1.9 billion acres. Of this amount, cropland covers 460 million acres (24.3 percent of the total), while grassland pasture and range cover 589 million acres (31.2 percent of the total). The third major use of land in the contiguous 48 states is forest use, which includes 559 million acres (29.5 percent of the total). According to the Economic Research Service, the total land used for crops, pasture, or idled (retired from agricultural use in exchange for federal government payments) has trended down slightly since the late 1960s.

[7] The major withdrawal categories of fresh water include irrigation, thermoelectric, public and rural domestic supplies. According to estimates by Solley, Pierce, and Perlman (1993), the amounts by category are, respectively: 152 maf (40 percent), 246 maf (38 percent), and 52 maf (14 percent). In the Solley et. al. study, irrigation is primarily for agricultural purposes but also includes parks and golf courses. Irrigated cropland is essential for agriculture in certain parts of the country. In 1992, 279,000 farms irrigated 49.4 million acres of crop and pasture land.

[8] A majority of the articles in the LEXIS NEXIS search discussed pesticide reduction as a key component of sustainability.

[9] The statistic is even worse when you look solely at active ingredients, since companies have made great strides in reducing the amounts of inert materials.

rates (i.e., in ounces rather than pounds per acre). Even with the cancellation of especially toxic organochlorine insecticides like DDT, USDA nevertheless found, after applying its indicator of potential pesticide risk, that toxicity may be slightly greater in 1992 than it was in 1964 (Economic Research Service, 1997: 123). Random testing for pesticide residues in food is undertaken by USDA and, although few residues exceed the tolerance levels established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), USDA found residues on 71 percent of the food it sampled in 1993 and 46 percent of the food sampled in 1994 (Economic Research Service, 1997: 128). Indeed, the 100,204 cases of pesticide poisoning recorded by the American Association of Poison Control Centers in 1997, while troubling, do not begin to capture the more pervasive, but often undiagnosed, chronic illnesses that result from exposure to pesticides (American Journal of Emergency Medicine, 1998: 444).[10] In 1996, the Congress passed a new, more prohibitive statute to regulate the use of pesticides that would, among other things, address the cumulative and chronic effects of pesticides. However, at this writing, EPA is still struggling to implement the statute which is being challenged by the agrichemical industry and environmental lobby alike.

Water supplies continue to be endangered by agricultural practices. Sediment, nutrients, pesticides, salts, and pathogens associated with agricultural production contribute to serious water quality degradation. The exact extent to which agriculture degrades water is difficult to assess because of its nonpoint nature. Nevertheless, USDA has determined that agriculture is the leading source of impairment in rivers and lakes and a major source of impairment to estuaries (Economic Research Service, 1997: 83). In conducting its National Water Quality Assessment project, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) found pesticide residues in almost every sample it took from water and fish from streams and major rivers

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[10] The 100,204 cases includes 21,950 cases that required treatment at a medical facility. There was a 3.7 percent increase in reported poison exposures from 1996 to 1997. However, the AAPCC says that it is not possible to extrapolate rates of change from their data over longer periods of time because their membership and reporting guidelines have varied. AAPCC estimates that the number of persons exposed to all poisons has varied between 5.8 and 9.3 per thousand over their 16 years of recordkeeping.

(USGS, 1999).[11] Water quality degradation has been found in 25 percent of the surface waters that have been tested nationally (Frederick, 1991: 63). Studies show surface water quality improvements since 1972, but this is primarily due to pollution controls mandated for point sources (Economic Research Service, 1997: 83). And no improvements have been seen in surface water quality since 1990 according to the Water Quality Inventories published by the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency, 1995). Of even greater concern is the state of America's groundwater which supplies one half of the U.S. population with drinking water and is the sole source for many rural communities (Ervin, et. al., 1998: 8-15). Agriculture is cited as a source in 44 of the 49 states reporting major sources of groundwater contamination (USGS, 1999).[12] The good news is that so far, contamination of groundwater and surface water has rarely exceeded drinking water quality standards. The bad news is that these standards are considered by some to be inadequate since they are based on long-term average exposure to single chemical compounds rather than a mixtures of compounds more likely found in real-life situations.

Biodiversity continues to decrease.[13] Agricultural practices erode biodiversity by endangering species through chemical use and land cultivation and by narrowing the genetic base by propagating too few species. In its recent study of U.S. sustainability, the World Resources Institute determined that decreasing biodiversity is one of the two greatest threats to sustainability (World Resources Institute, 1997). As well, the National Academy of Sciences

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[11] In agricultural areas, 85 percent of the fish, 92 percent of the water, and 59 percent of the shallow groundwater contained pesticide residues.

[12] The USGS conducted a five-state study of groundwater in agricultural areas and found that the proportions of sampled wells with pesticide detections ranged from 4 percent (nationwide, rural domestic wells) to 62 percent (corn-soybean areas of the northern mid-continent after planting.) Pesticide concentrations were one microgram per liter or less in over 95 percent of the wells sampled during these studies.

[13] The term "agrobiodiversity" has been used in discussions of agriculture and biodiversity. This term includes species used in farming as well as the ways farmers exploit biological diversity. Because this is a new term with limited recognition, I have not chosen to use it. However, World Resources Institute does use the term, and it is well defined in their publications.

stresses that sustaining agricultural productivity will depend on the use of and access to a broad diversity of germplasm (National Research Council, 1991b: 1). While trumpeting the alarm over biodiversity, experts like Edward O. Wilson admit that it is impossible to determine the extent of the loss since we do not know the true number of species on Earth, even to the nearest order of magnitude (Wilson, 1988: 3). However, since USDA began tracking certain varieties in the early 20th century, significant losses have been recorded. Propagation choices have, for example, resulted in great uniformity in apple production. When USDA first began its accounting, over 7,000 apple varieties were grown in the U.S.; today 86 percent of those varieties are lost permanently with U.S. production consisting almost entirely of three varieties (World Resources Institute, 1997: 78).[14] Intensive cultivation has, for example, extinguished many native species in the Great Plains. Farming of the native prairies has so decimated native species that 55 species of grassland wildlife are listed as threatened or endangered and another 728 are candidates for listing (Ervin, et. al., 1998: 15). While these dramatic examples are just two among many, sustainable agriculture could reverse the trend. WRI concludes that "the conflicts between agriculture and biodiversity are by no means inevitable" [and] "with sustainable farming practices and changes in agricultural policies and institutions, they can be overcome" (Thrupp, 1997:1).

Agriculture is not profitable for the vast majority of farmers. People are losing their farms because they cannot make ends meet. For example, in 1980, a farmer received 37 cents of every consumer dollar spent on food; by 1997, this sum decreased to 23 cents (USDA, 1997: 10). As a result, the vast majority of surviving farms are not self-supporting -- three-fourths of today's two million farms have annual gross sales under $50,000, which qualifies them as "non-commercial" by USDA standards (Economic Research Service, 1994: 20). Economic problems are particularly pronounced in the hog industry. Adjusted for inflation, hog prices were lower in 1998 than at any time since the Great Depression (U.S. Senate, 1999: 2). The number of hog operations has declined from a little over one million in 1967 to approximately

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[14] Asparagus, 46 varieties in 1903, now 1 in NSSL collection, a loss of 97.8 percent; carrots, 287 varieties, now 21, a loss of 92.7 percent; lettuce, 497 varieties, now 36, a loss of 92.8 percent (Cary Fowler and Pat Mooney, 1990: 64-65).

114,000, a decline of 90 percent. Between 1980 and 1990, 80 percent of farming-dependent counties lost population (Economic Research Service, 1995: 25). In 1978, there were 2.3 million farms in the U.S. (USDA, 1981: 142); in 1994, this number decreased by 300,000 (Economic Research Service, 1994: 18). Young people see little future in agriculture; between 1982 and 1992, the percentage of farmers under 25 years of age was cut in half (USDA, 1989: 89). Today, more than a quarter of all farmers are 65 years of age or older (Center for Rural Affairs, 2000).

Failure is no less apparent when it comes to the less well defined but nevertheless important social justice agenda in sustainable agriculture. The issue of control over food is emerging as an important issue in sustainable agriculture. Despite record yields and, at times, tremendous agricultural surpluses, people go hungry in this country. Estimates are that 34.6 million people are hungry or food insecure, of which 13.6 million are children under the age of 12 (Congressional Hunger Center, 2000). According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 26 million additional people could be fed if the amount of edible food wasted in the U.S. each day was reduced by one third (Congressional Hunger Center, 2000). The lack of equitable access to food is cited by the Community Food Security Coalition (CFS), a participant in the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, as the reason for widespread hunger and the coalition was established to protect and promote local family-based agriculture as an alternative to a globalized food system. Control of food at the farm level is also increasingly an issue of sustainable agriculture. Many of the departures from farming can be attributed to the frustration caused by the increasing vertical integration and contract production which has reduced farmers' control of production decisions in favor of corporate board dictates. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, in testifying before Congress, stated, "There is a fundamental sense among many family farmers and ranchers that the market is stacked against them" (Glickman, 1999: 2).

Despite an increasingly urbanized society, the public does grasp the significance of many of these problems. Numerous public opinion polls indicate strong public support for

sustainable agriculture.[15] In 1994, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of USDA conducted a targeted study of NRCS employees and members of the public (NRCS, 1995a).[16] Respondents were asked to indicate the five most important natural resource issues from a list of 22 items. Sustainable agriculture was chosen by 34 percent of the NRCS respondents and 42 percent of the public respondents.[17] While not referring to sustainable agriculture specifically, a 1995 Gallop Poll to elicit public opinion on the appropriate degree of Federal involvement in agricultural natural resource issues suggested support for issues related to sustainability: 39 percent of respondents cited water-related environmental concerns as the most important natural resource issue; 57 percent said that farming's impact on natural resources should be regulated the same way as manufacturing and industry; and a mere 11 percent of respondents agreed that the current use of pesticides and fertilizers is safe for the food and water supply (NRCS, 1995b).[18]

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[15] Surveys related to sustainable agriculture are conducted frequently. A recent example of such a poll was released on May 14, 1999, with great fanfare. Ten public interest organizations (Humane Association of the United States, U.S. Public Interest Research Group, Sierra Club, Southern Environmental Law Center, Defenders of Wildlife, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Conservation Council of North Carolina, Clean Water Action of Minnesota, Clean Water Network, and Americans for the Environment) commissioned Lake Snell Perry & Associates to conduct a survey of 1,000 registered voters nationwide (margin of error $\pm$3.1 percent). The survey found that 80 percent of voters favor tougher, uniform standards to limit air and water pollution from factory farms, 77 percent have strong concerns about the abuse and inhumane treatment of animals on factory farms, and 68 percent indicated their willingness to vote for a political candidate who supports family farmers. My analysis of the survey questions finds them to be somewhat leading. Nevertheless, the survey does indicate increasing public knowledge of sustainable agriculture concerns. More information is found at www.hsus.org.

[16] NRCS commissioned Research and Polling, Inc. to conduct the mail poll in July 1994 with the overall purpose of assessing opinions regarding reinventing the agency. Surveys were mailed to the 12,800 employees or NRCS; 8,473 were returned, for a response rate of 66.2 percent. The general public returned 17,112 surveys (no information was provided on how many surveys were mailed to members of the public).

[17] Interestingly, but perhaps not surprising, sustainable agriculture, agricultural land conversion, and pesticides were the three issues that were perceived as more important by the public than by the USDA employees.

[18] The study was conducted during December 1994 and January 1995. The sample of 1,250 persons had a margin of error of less than $\pm$3 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence.

It is startling that, given broad public understanding of sustainable agriculture issues, so little has been accomplished to avert the severe environmental degradation and social turmoil that threatens the sustainability of American agriculture. These statistics, and similar data, are not particularly difficult to unearth; numerous publications, political speeches, and popular press articles employ such facts to underscore the plight of American agriculture. Rather, what will be shown is the surprising lack of attention paid to these statistics and the problem of generating specific policy remedies within SAAC.

Alternative Explanations

The ineffectiveness of SAAC within the policy subsystem has been observed by several scholars who offer alternative explanations for its lack of influence. Before launching fully into my own thesis, it is important to briefly highlight several of these alternative explanations. Most popular among them, is the argument that the opposition is simply too powerful. Even well- organized movements can fail, partly because of stiff resistance from equally well or better-organized opposition interest groups. In agriculture, entrenched interests ranging from traditional farm groups to huge agricultural marketing corporations and chemical companies have worked long and hard to thwart progress in sustainable agriculture. However, increasingly the American public supports many of the basic tenets of sustainable agriculture (e.g., pesticide-free food, environmentally friendly farming practices, and family farmers), which is likely the reason that much of the opposition now occurs outside of the public eye (e.g., campaign finance contributions rather than newspaper advertisements). Less visible as those efforts now are, they are still effective.

A second explanation is that sustainable agriculture is largely an amorphous and, therefore useless concept encased in romantic symbolism. William Lockeretz and Molly Anderson argue that people are attempting to solve too many problems within the notion of sustainable agriculture and warn that "blurring the boundaries between political and scientific purposes will prevent it [agroecology] from delivering what it can deliver" (William Lockeretz and Molly Anderson, 1993: 84). Other authors, including this one, agree that the sustainable

agriculture movement has a wide array of objectives that may encumber its ability to effect change. In an earlier analysis of sustainable agriculture, I, along with my coauthors, focused on sustainability as a symbol and cited Murray Edelman's (1964) analysis of how symbols are used to produce contentment and quiescence. We found that "after several decades of accelerating conflict over the future of American agriculture, sustainability has provided a comforting, although largely unanalyzed, symbolic refuge for an incredibly disparate array of agricultural interests" (Youngberg, et. al., 1993: 300).

Other popular explanations for SAAC's failure include that not enough time has passed to succeed in the bringing about the radical changes in American agriculture envisioned in sustainable agriculture. In a related explanation, some people argue that the sheer complexity of sustainability may make it impossible to achieve. Finally, numerous scholars view sustainable agriculture as a social movement, and explain its successes and failures within this context — the concept of social movements is considered in some depth in Chapter Two.

None of these alternative explanations obliterate my thesis yet, at the same time, none of them are wholly consistent. In the search for "answers" to the sustainability problem, each theory must be evaluated for its explanatory power.

Forthcoming Chapters

Four chapters follow this overview throughout which three prominent national coalition efforts to promote sustainable agriculture are discussed. In Chapter Two, the relevant literature which underpins my research is reviewed. A critique of mainstream views on how interest groups influence public policy is provided as well as recent elaborations on interest group theory concerning advocacy coalitions and identity politics. Of central concern is the Advocacy Coalition Framework, which is described and evaluated for its applicability to sustainable agriculture. Identity theories are overlaid on the ACF and the case is made that interest group theories must be adjusted to account for the function and role of identity politics. Negotiation theories are also reviewed, since much of the sustainability problem is embedded

in the internal negotiations between sustainable agriculture advocates. A review of scholarship specific to sustainable agriculture is presented, including recent work that attempts, unconvincingly, to portray the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition as a social movement. Finally, observations from participants at various meetings of the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture are provided to link the theoretical discussion with sustainable agriculture practice.

Chapters Three and Four are based on original research which consists of three components. First, a case study of the Kellogg Foundation-sponsored Integrated Farm and Food Systems (IFFS) Network, a newly emerging initiative to build a worldwide sustainable agriculture organization led by old and new entrants to the sustainable agriculture debate was undertaken. The IFFS Network was used as a heuristic case to help formulate and explain the hypotheses. Second, 20 long interviews with leading sustainable agriculture advocates who have been in the field for a decade or more were undertaken to gather information related to the hypotheses. Finally, with insights gained from the IFFS case and the interviews, I designed and administered a survey at the tenth anniversary conference of the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, the oldest and longest running U.S. government-sponsored sustainable agriculture program.

In Chapter Three, four hypotheses exploring the internal dynamics of the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition are formulated. They are generated using the IFFS Network case study. In brief, the four hypotheses are: (1) The more a person is ridiculed for his interests, the more his interests transform into issues of identity; (2) The more a person distrusts mainstream science, the more he will engage in consensus dialogues and group decisionmaking; (3) The more a person believes in collective knowledge, the less he will approve of hierarchal organizations; and (4) The more a person dislikes concentrated power, the less he will accept conventional leadership arrangements. The relevance of these hypotheses to advocacy coalitions, identity politics, and specifically, to the problem of agricultural sustainability is explained.

The tests of the four hypotheses are described and the results are presented in Chapter Four. Since the USDA SARE program is central to the questionnaire and relevant to the long interviews, the program's structure and history is briefly explained. Most importantly, the pattern of identity politics in the SAAC is detailed.

Conclusions from my research are discussed in Chapter Five. The chapter also presents recommendations to improve the effectiveness of SAAC and suggestions to augment the ACF. Finally, this dissertation concludes by identifying future research opportunities concerning advocacy coalitions and identity politics.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter places the sustainability problem within a framework of social science knowledge. The keys to solving the complex sustainability problem, however, do not exist in any one stream of literature. The topic of sustainable agriculture must be embedded within an integrated understanding of, and expansion upon, literature concerning interest groups, advocacy coalitions, identity politics, and negotiation. This chapter provides an overview in these areas, laying the foundation for successful theory development.

Interest Group Theory

The sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition (SAAC) is considered by many of its participants and by most observers to be a traditional interest group. Indeed, in many ways SAAC functions as an interest group. In this section, classic descriptions of interest groups and how they operate, the debate over the desirability of policymaking based on interest group bargaining, and two studies of agricultural interest groups are highlighted.

No one definition of an interest group is found in the vast array of social science literature on the topic, but few scholars appear to deviate significantly from the basic definitions provided in the writings of James Madison and David Truman. At the very earliest stages of American governance, Madison defined interest groups, or "factions" as he referred to them, as: "a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest" (Madison, 1961:78). In the early 1950s, Truman, perhaps the most influential interest group scholar, defined an interest group as "any group that, on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes" (Truman, 1951: 33). Political interest groups, he continued, make their claims through or upon any of the institutions of government (Truman, 1951: 37). Scholars have elaborated in various ways on these definitions. Most recently, William Browne, among the most prolific writers on

agricultural interest groups, elaborated on Truman's definition by suggesting that interest groups share three attributes: first, they voluntarily bring together people as "joiners"; second, these joiners share a common characteristic that differentiates them from others; and finally, groups exist to represent issues of public policy that fit the joiners' common concerns (Browne, 1998: 13).

These definitions provide a sufficient description of interest groups and are rarely contested; rather, the function of interest groups in American governance has been the primary focus of scholars through the years. The "pluralist" conception of interest groups dominates political science. As articulated by Truman and countless others, the pluralist school views society as a mosaic of overlapping groups, each representing *interests* rather than individuals. Simply put, every individual has a multitude of unique interests which bars any one group from fulfilling all his needs. The individual, therefore, must join more than one group in order for his interests to be to adequately represented. The result — groups represent only those particular interests that motivated individuals to join rather than the individual members themselves, all of whom have diverse interests and multiple affiliations. In this way, groups are *pluralistic* since an individual is associated with many groups. Michael Piore suggests that "the corollary of this way of looking at the world is that an individual's commitment to any particular group is limited" (Piore, 1995: 20).

In the pluralist model, groups mobilize in response to changing policy conditions that create political disequilibrium. It is assumed that people adversely affected by something will organize to remedy the situation. Furthermore, it is assumed that organized interests are homogeneous and easy to define, that elected representatives of any interest accurately represent each and every member, and that organized interests emerge in every sector so that groups effectively answer and check one another (Lowi, 1979: 51).

Challenges to the pluralist model are numerous.[1] Suffice to say that I concur with Deborah Stone who, after an extensive survey of the literature, concludes that pluralism is "naive" and argues that interest group theory must recognize that not all groups are equal and that people who join groups can be mistaken about their interests, unaware of alternatives, irrational, and not always free to choose among groups (Stone, 1988: 167). Policymaking is not only about solving public problems, Stone argues, but about how groups are formed, split, and reformed to achieve public purposes (Stone, 1988: 20).

Two critiques of interest group theory, both focused on why people join and stay in groups, are particularly relevant to this dissertation. First, the reflections on interest group theory offered by Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith will prove important to understanding SAAC. In their discussion of advocacy coalitions, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith argue that beliefs as well as interests must be examined to fully explain policy events. This is because people are motivated to act based on their beliefs and values rather than, as mainstream interest group theorists contend, solely on economic or political self-interest. On the rare occasions when beliefs are discussed within interest group theory, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith find that beliefs are assumed to be quite simple and thus their explanatory power is overlooked. Although Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith explicitly announce their departure from traditional interest group models and focus their study almost exclusively on beliefs, they nevertheless admit that self-interest does play a role in policymaking. According to Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, beliefs and interests covary. On this important point, however, they do not elaborate: the two scholars disagree with one another on the theoretical and methodological means to

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[1] Among the many critiques, I will mention three. Mancur Olson (1965) applies economic analysis to interest group behavior, suggesting the existence of a free-rider problem that can eliminate the incentive to organize. In contrast to pluralism, which claims that groups automatically organize, Olson finds that the "logic of collective action" produces organization only in the smallest or most individually oriented groups. Albert O. Hirshman (1970) contends just the opposite -- that people may organize simply for the pleasure of participating and notes that interest group organization seems to come in waves, as one group incites the organization of another. James Q Wilson (1973) suggests that people are more likely to organize when something effects them intensively so therefore the diffusion of effects, whether costs or benefits, inhibits organization.

disentangle beliefs and interests and thus leave aside this critical task (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993: 223-4). Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith also echo the criticism offered by Hugh Heclo (1978) and other network theorists, that the preoccupation with interest groups ignores the important and collaborative role played by administrative agency staff, journalists, researchers, and policy analysts, all of whom may participate in the broader coalition that seeks policy change.

The second critique that relates to SAAC is offered by Piore who argues that interest group theory fails to account for identity groups. Like Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, Piore faults mainstream interest group theory for its narrow focus on individuals and interests. Piore contends that a new kind of group — an identity group — has emerged and that policymaking models must be adjusted to account for this development. While commonly mistaken for interest groups, identity groups differ radically in that they represent people as opposed to interests. And, unlike interest groups, identity groups rarely overlap and are plural only in the sense that they are numerous.

Despite competing theories, it is universally recognized that interest groups wield substantial power in policymaking. For some, this power is too great. For example, Theodore Lowi condemns American policymaking as "interest group liberalism," a "vulgarized version of the pluralist model of modern political science" (Lowi, 1979: 51). Lowi argues that policymakers have gone so far to accommodate interest groups that they have essentially abdicated their responsibility to govern by parceling out the power to make public policy to interest groups (Lowi, 1979: 44). In contrast to Madison's view that interest groups are a necessary evil in need of regulation, American policymakers, Lowi contends, define public interest as the amalgamation of various group claims, with no independent judgement of those claims as long as access is provided to all organized interests (Lowi, 1979: 51). Lowi concludes that in America today: "The role of government is one of insuring access particularly to the most effectively organized, and of ratifying the agreements and adjustments worked out among the competing leaders and their claims" (Lowi, 1979: 18).

Applications of Interest Group Theory to Agriculture

Looking at agricultural policymaking through the prism of interest group theory provides two noted scholars with provocative perspectives on the success of SAAC. While I do not wholly share these perspectives it is necessary to acknowledge the existence of these important works, to draw questions for this paper based on their studies, and, when possible, to draw parallels in their research to support my own conclusions and policy prescriptions.

Browne carried out an extensive study of 130 prominent agricultural interest groups operating in the mid-1980s and his work falls within the main tradition of pluralism.[2] In it, he develops a theory that four types of interest groups exist in the agriculture policy domain, including "agrarian protest groups," the type of organization that encompasses sustainable agriculture activists.[3] Browne describes agrarian protest groups as ideological with "anti-establishment attitudes, combined with a somewhat mythical interpretation of family farming as a glamorized alternative life-style" (Browne, 1988: 84). This ideology produces uncommon mutual support between farmers and activists who come together for social interaction and agrarian fraternity as well as political advancement.

Agrarian protest groups do little more than protest according to Browne, and consistent with the premise of this dissertation, he concludes that these groups have very little impact on policymaking. He cites six reasons for the failure of organizations, such as those in SAAC, to effect policy outcomes. First, agrarian protest groups are easily labeled so busy policymakers dismiss them, thinking they already know where each one stands. Second, the pragmatism of policymakers leads them to reject the extreme positions held by agrarian protest groups. Third,

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[2] Although he faults the pluralist model for lacking explanatory power for agriculture because, he argues, agriculture is highly fragmented, with no central actor to integrate the demands of various organized interests

[3] This is one of four types of interest group organizations as defined by Browne. The other three are multipurpose organizations, single-issue organizations, and single project organizations.

the highly specialized congressional committees and administrative agencies bewilder agrarian protest groups who are unfamiliar with the ways of Washington. Fourth, agrarian protest groups provide no products for their members (in contrast to, for example, the American Farm Bureau Federation that provides insurance) so they are unable to attract large followings. As will be seen in the following chapters, none of these reasons correspond to my explanation as to why SAAC is ineffective. However, Browne cites two additional reasons for the failure of agrarian protest groups that relate to the hypotheses developed in the forthcoming chapter. Commitment to diffuse policy concerns makes it impossible for agrarian protest groups to develop well-defined policy proposals and their refusal to accept bargained policy victories eliminates them from decisionmaking fora (Browne, 1988).

Garth Youngberg analyzed the efforts of the National Farm Coalition (NFC) in the 1970s, which he describes as the most ambitious contemporary agricultural effort at coalition politics (Youngberg, 1979: 2). Referring to the iron triangle, Youngberg notes the weakening policymaking roles of Congress and the Administration provides increased opportunities for interest group influence. He finds however, after interviewing 22 members of the NFC (a few of whom would be likely participants in SAAC), and studying NFC records, that NFC was not as influential as it could have been. Consistent with Browne, Youngberg found that ideological compatibility was the factor that brought people together and common ideology allowed NFC to survive for more than a decade. While people joined the NFC to work on a range of agricultural issues, they also profited psychologically from membership since "the simple act of belonging is reassuring" (Youngberg, 1979: 17).

Youngberg points to internal coalition politics as the primary barrier to NFC success, rather than the broader policy domain dynamics that form the basis of Browne's critique. While NFC consisted of few groups that would be found in SAAC, some of the internal problems diagnosed by Youngberg echo those that plague SAAC. First, the NFC kept its organization virtually structure-less. Although the NFC had a strong and respected leader, the position remained voluntary and, despite great need, no staff was hired to operate a Washington D.C. office. Second, the NFC allowed members to participate without subordinating their

individual autonomy. Mechanisms that would enforce NFC views among its members were avoided and policy resolutions were couched in generally agreeable terms to avoid divisive issues. Third, by the time NFC overcame its internal difficulties and was ready to engage in the broader policy debate, issues were already framed, thereby limiting the ability of the NFC to direct the public dialogue. While many of these problems are similar to those in SAAC, Youngberg suggests they emanate from the desire by coalition members to avoid conflict, a somewhat different conclusion than drawn in this study.

Interest Groups and SAAC

Three conclusions can be drawn from this brief overview. First, interest group theory fails to consider groups that represent something other than interests. Pluralism, set up here as a strawman, nevertheless forms the basis of most interest group analysis. Yet pluralism does not recognize the difference between representing interests and representing something that is more consuming, whether it is beliefs and values as posited by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith or identity as posited by Piore, or something else unnamed within SAAC.

Turning to the example of the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture (Campaign), there is evidence that it functions as a traditional interest group. At its 1996 national meeting, a farmer speaking to the group traced the history of the Campaign, discussing the 99 meetings held across the country in 1992 to go over issues and to seek common ground. She expressed the growing political savvy of the organization when she noted that "we agreed not to bash one another in public if we didn't agree. We didn't want to be a cacophony of flesh eaters" (Merrigan, 1996a).[4] In 1994, she explained, the Campaign evaluated activities of the Lutherans, the Grange, and the Farm Bureau to see how they came to consensus. Learning by example, the Campaign issued ballots to its members and asked them to choose among a menu

[4] Throughout this chapter, participants at various Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture meetings are quoted. This quotations come from my personal notes. As I did not request permission to quote participants, no attributions are made. However, all the quotes used are from nationally recognized sustainable agriculture leaders.

of policy initiatives and to weight their votes according to how hard their organization would work on a particular project. One of the two Campaign co-chairpersons reflected that the Campaign had come a long way in its four and one half years, now having the political ability to turn out calls and letters, and he boasted that "We have 10,000 people signed up to respond to action alerts" (Merrigan, 1996a).

These two speakers recounted a very reasonable and not atypical process of interest group organizing and policy prioritizing. However, at that same meeting, other speakers expressed somewhat contradictory sentiments. A well-known nonprofit advocate insisted that the group focus on maintaining a dialogue rather than "pushing people to support things" (Merrigan, 1996a). The second Campaign co-chairperson agreed, stating that "we need to go deeper into that dialogue" (Merrigan, 1996a). To many in the crowd, the dialogue, in and of itself, seemed at least as important as effecting changes in the policy subsystem.

The literature abounds with studies demonstrating the power of interest groups, with some suggesting that policymaking is little more than interest group bargaining. Assuming this is the case, my second conclusion is that it is even more surprising that SAAC has had so little influence in policymaking, as discussed in Chapter One. At the 1993 national meeting of the Campaign, a farmer, impatient with the pace of the discussion, underscored this point as she berated the group "Agribusiness has already aligned itself with the environment. Listen to their promotions. I want to convey a sense of urgency. There's not going to be that many farmers left...It costs $3 to raise corn that sells for $1.80....I want to lecture people on the realities of farming. We should have been working on this years ago" (Merrigan, 1993).

Analyzing agricultural groups within the confines of interest group theory provides interesting and relevant explanations for SAAC's failure to effect policymaking. However, as will be described in Chapter Four, these explanations do not fully capture the dynamics within SAAC which are only revealed through an integrated understanding of interest group theory with advocacy coalitions, identity politics, and negotiation theory.

Advocacy Coalition Theory

In many ways, SAAC functions as an advocacy coalition. In this section, a classic description of a coalition is presented, the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is described, and applications of ACF are reviewed. Finally, the ACF is qualitatively applied to SAAC to demonstrate its fit.

A coalition is commonly understood as a union of individuals and groups that band together to influence public policy. According to Lewis Coser, coalitions form in response to conflict as people join together to fight a common enemy or to achieve a specific goal (Coser, 1956: 142). Unlike other forms of unification (i.e., interest group), coalitions may consist of members with little in common and who may even be antagonistic toward one another. Because of this, coalitions typically are unstable forms of socialization. Nevertheless, Coser does allow that, in rare cases, coalitions develop into permanent organizations through compromise, and the development of group loyalties, purposes and norms. The ACF was developed to analyze these "rare cases" in which coalitions, working together over time, develop collective values and beliefs.

The ACF was first introduced by Sabatier (1988) and refined through the collaborative efforts of Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993; 1997). Their work was prompted by an interest "in situations where technical information concerning problem severity and causes cannot be neglected," such as environmental disputes (Sabatier, 1997). As briefly described in Chapter One, the ACF is designed to understand policy change over periods of a decade or more within a policy subsystem, such as sustainable agriculture. Within the policy subsystem, actors are aggregated into advocacy coalitions, defined as groups whose members share a set of basic beliefs. Participants in an advocacy coalition include interest groups, legislators, administrative agency officials, journalists and others who engage in a non-trivial degree of coordinated activity over time in order to affect public policy. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith stress that scientists, often assumed to be neutral or policy indifferent, also participate in advocacy coalitions.

Beliefs are assumed to be complex consisting of basic values, ideas about policy goals, and perceptions about important causal relationships. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith posit an hierarchical, tripartite belief system consisting of deep core, policy core, and secondary beliefs. *Deep core beliefs* are ontological and normative beliefs which operate across virtually all policy domains (e.g., 'nature knows best'). Deep core beliefs are akin to religion and are very resistant to change. *Policy core beliefs* hold coalitions together and include fundamental value priorities (e.g., environment over development), basic perceptions concerning the seriousness of the problem and its principal causes, and strategies for realizing core values (e.g., market forces versus government intervention). Policy core beliefs, the focus of Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith work, are difficult to modify but may change over time with the gradual accumulation of evidence. *Secondary beliefs* concern the relative importance of causal factors, policy preferences, the design of specific institutions, and the evaluation of performance (e.g., whether to allocate resources to extension or research activities within the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, discussed in Chapter Four). Secondary beliefs can be easily modified in response to new data, experience, or changing strategic considerations and such beliefs are the focus of most administrative and legislative policymaking (see Appendix B for more information on Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's belief structure).

Policy change is caused by three things. Some change is attributable to the competition between interest groups within the policy subsystem. Some change is attributable to changes external to the subsystem, such as elections. But what interests Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith most, is the policy change that results from what they call "policy-oriented learning." Acknowledging contributions by Heclo (1974), Robert Reich (1990), John Kingdon (1984) and others, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith declare that the ACF "represents one of the more detailed attempts to delineate the role that ideas play in public policy" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1997: 33). Learning is defined as "relatively enduring changes in perceptions or behavioral intentions resulting from experience or the accumulation of information." Over time, each coalition adjusts its beliefs or changes its strategies according to its perceptions of the adequacy of the decisionmaking process, new information from research, and political

opportunities and constraints. There are, however, cognitive biases that affect this learning process. Among them, the ACF assumes actors weigh losses more heavily than gains and remember defeats more than victories. Because actors within a coalition hold the same world-view, they come to believe that people in other coalitions must reach differing conclusions because of hidden, nefarious interests. As a result, "there is a tendency for a mutual 'devil shift' to take place, as each coalition views the others as more evil and more powerful than they probably are. As a result, conflict resolution among coalitions is more difficult than classic rational actor models would predict" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1997: 10-11).

The ACF consists of 12 hypotheses which the authors contend can be tested against any policy problem covering a time span of a decade or more. These hypotheses concern advocacy coalitions, policy learning, and policy change and they are listed in the left-hand column of Table 2-1.[5] As a nascent and evolving analytic device, the ACF is, according to its originators, a framework rather than a theory. The difference, they argue, is that frameworks posit very general sets of variables and relationships. In contrast, theories have "clear causal drivers, clearer assumptions, and a much denser set of posited relationships that are logically interrelated" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1997: 46). Since its inception, numerous scholars have used the ACF as a tool to analyze case studies to determine its potential contribution to understanding policy change. By the close of 1997, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith were aware of 29 ACF case studies, 20 of which were studies of environmental or energy policy. While the ACF began as a framework, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith believe it will develop into a theory through the efforts of various scholars to propose refinements and additions to the ACF. So far, case study applications have prompted Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith to make some modifications to the ACF (in 1993, hypotheses 10, 11, and 12 were added and 4 was revised; hypothesis 5 was added in 1997). However, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith are reluctant to over-modify the ACF, saying that "our strategy should be to develop a relatively coherent theory that will explain 70% of policy change over periods of a decade or more rather than adding a

[5] In 1997, Sabatier reorganized the hypotheses around these three themes and argued that hypotheses 1-3 and 10-11 are about advocacy coalitions; 4-5 are about policy change; and 6-9 and 12 are about coalition learning.

'hodge-podge' of amendments in a misleading effort to 'explain' 100%" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1997: 44).

Table 2-1

Hypotheses drawn from the ACF (as revised and expanded through Dec. 1997)	**Applying the ACF hypotheses to SAAC** (untested assumptions)
Hypothesis 1: On major controversies within a mature policy subsystem when policy core beliefs are in dispute, the lineup of allies and opponents tends to be rather stable over periods of a decade or so.	***Hypothesis 1 fits SAAC.*** The Fertilizer Institute, Cattlemen's Association, Pork Producers Council, and American Farm Bureau Federation are among the groups that have been fighting against all SAAC initiatives for the last decade. At the same time, the Center for Rural Affairs, the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, and the National Family Farm Coalition (all of whom participate in the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture) are among the groups fighting for SAAC initiatives during the same period. Core opponents and proponents have been extremely stable over time and vie for the mass of undecided actors in the scientific and political arenas. Much of the fight has been focused on the SARE program, both at the national and regional levels.
Hypothesis 2: Actors within an advocacy coalition will show substantial consensus on issues pertaining to the policy core but less so on secondary aspects.	***Hypothesis 2 fits SAAC*** The opponents and proponents of sustainable agriculture are committed to their core stances, such as the relative value of chemical use in farming, but will give and take on various secondary aspects, such as support for federal assistance for precision farming. Although not used by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith to explore internal coalition dynamics, Chapter Four provides data to demonstrate that this hypothesis fits when applied within SAAC.
Hypothesis 3: An actor (or coalition) will give up secondary aspects of a belief system before acknowledging weaknesses in the policy core.	***Hypothesis 3 fits SAAC*** For example, a policy core belief within SAAC is that family farms are good and big corporate farms are bad (despite evidence that suggests that certain kinds of family farms contribute more pollution than certain kinds of corporate farms). Nevertheless, SAAC participants have compromised on the size of farms eligible for federal assistance in exchange for maintaining the principle that size should be regulated.

Hypothesis 4: The policy core attributes of a governmental program in a specific jurisdiction will not be significantly revised as long as the subsystem advocacy coalition which initiated the program remains in power within that jurisdiction — except when the change is imposed by a hierarchically superior jurisdiction.	***Hypothesis 4 mostly fits SAAC*** For example, SAAC participants have great control over the design of the SARE program. However, SARE has been modified, in some instances, by SAAC itself as a way to nullify opponents' attacks before they reach Congress. The result is that SARE is a more traditional program than SAAC would otherwise like.
Hypothesis 5: Significant perturbations external to the subsystem (e.g. changes in socio-economic conditions, public opinion, system-wide governing coalitions, or policy outputs from other subsystems) are a necessary, but not sufficient, cause of change in the policy core attributes of a governmental program.	***Hypothesis 5 fits SAAC*** For example, the 1994 congressional election brought Republican majorities to both houses of Congress. This lead SAAC to downsize its agenda and work within the 'Freedom to Farm' framework for governmental programs promoted by the new leaders of Congress.
Hypothesis 6: Policy-oriented learning across belief systems is most likely when there is an intermediate level of informed conflict between the two coalitions. This requires that: i) each have the technical resources to engage in such a debate; and that ii) the conflict be between secondary aspects of one belief system and core elements of the other, or alternatively, between important secondary aspects of the two belief systems.	***Hypothesis 6 fits SAAC*** For example, learning has occurred in SAAC and in the commodity groups over issues related to organic production. It is a core issue for SAAC and a secondary belief of the commodity groups. The political and technical battles between them have enlightened both sides and have produced meaningful compromise on issues such as the non-use of genetic engineering.
Hypothesis 7: Problems for which accepted quantitative data and theory exist are more conducive to policy-oriented learning across belief systems than those in which data and theory are generally qualitative, quite subjective, or altogether lacking.	***Hypothesis 7 mostly fits SAAC*** To some extent scientific data helps but SAAC participants are suspicious of the traditional scientific paradigm and are often at odds with the land grant university system that produces much of the relevant quantitative data. SAAC participants tend to view most scientific data as subjective at some level.
Hypothesis 8: Problems involving natural systems are more conducive to policy-oriented learning across belief systems than those involving purely social or political systems because in the former many of the critical variables are not themselves active strategists and because controlled experimentation is more feasible.	***Hypothesis 8 does not fit SAAC*** Science itself is seen by SAAC as part of the problem. One sustainable agriculture leader has said it is time to acknowledge and embrace our ignorance. There is profound respect for nature and a sense that it is impossible for humans to fully comprehend, let alone, control it.
Hypothesis 9: Policy-oriented learning across belief systems is most likely when there exists a forum which is: i) prestigious enough to force professionals from different coalitions to participate; ii) dominated by professional norms.	***Hypothesis 9 mostly fits SAAC*** Many forums of diverse stakeholders have engaged in joint fact finding and policy dialogue such as those held by the Keystone Center and the World Wildlife Fund. Also, professional societies such as the Weed Science Society have used their annual conferences to examine sustainable agriculture. However, as Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith say, information is filtered through existing belief systems, so learning does not always occur.

Hypothesis 10: Elites of purposive groups are more constrained in their expression of beliefs and policy positions than elites from material groups.	***Hypothesis 10 fits SAAC*** SAAC leaders are not given much latitude in determining how to promote sustainability as they must adhere to the entire ideology and check back with the coalition as a whole on most developments. In contrast, conventional agriculture leaders generally are empowered to make decisions on behalf of their coalition.
Hypothesis 11: Within a coalition, administrative agencies will usually advocate more moderate positions than their interest group allies.	***Hypothesis 11 fits SAAC*** USDA staff supportive of sustainable agriculture nevertheless take more moderate positions on a number of issues, such as livestock concentration and pesticide regulation.
Hypothesis 12: Even when the accumulation of technical information does not change the view of the opposing coalition, it can have important impacts on policy, at least in the short term, by altering the view of policy brokers or other important governmental officials.	***Hypothesis 12 fits SAAC*** Although opponents of SAAC refuse to embrace sustainable agriculture, technical information (produced primarily by SARE) has had a great impact on government officials who have, among other things, regulated animal feeding operations over the objections of the very powerful and dominant animal agriculture groups.

Limitations of the Advocacy Coalition Framework

Upon closer examination, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith discovered more coalitions than first appeared in one of their case studies, prompting them to conclude that they mistakenly over-aggregated coalitions within the subsystem because they focused on the first criterion for coalitions — a shared belief system — and largely ignored the second and necessary criterion — coordinated activity (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1997: 44). While this may be the case, it should not be surprising that the authors overlooked the divisions and subtleties within coalitions because this is not where their interest lies and it has not been the focus of ACF application. As stated in Chapter One, advocacy coalitions are treated as monolithic entities. The ACF has not been used to look inside advocacy coalitions to explore the rich and meaningful internal negotiations that undoubtedly affect the ability of a coalition to function in the policy subsystem.

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith acknowledge this shortcoming: "Many of the case studies

have not...systematically gathered data on the beliefs and behavior of actors within the subsystem, and thus the skeptical reader is unsure if alleged members of a coalition really do share a set of policy core beliefs and engage in some degree of coordinated behavior" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1997: 16). They reassure us, however, that in their own work they have meticulously coded public documents to ascertain the consistency of beliefs within a coalition. The problem with using the coding methodology as a sole measure of a coalition's beliefs and coordinated activity however, is that often public documents fail to reveal the whole story. Internal coalition politics are left aside at congressional hearings, for example, and while a hearing document may reveal the majority viewpoint within a coalition on any given issue, it is unlikely to reflect internal coalition divisions, controversies, and negotiations.

Accepting, for the moment, that beliefs are uniform within a coalition, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith still must explain why actors within a coalition act in concert. Edella Schlager contends that the ACF lacks an adequate explanation of collective action: "It does not explain why actors holding similar beliefs form coalitions to collectively press their policy goals, how coalitions maintain themselves over time, or the strategies coalitions adopt to pursue policy goals. For a framework significantly oriented to individual behavior, ACF raises, but does not satisfactorily address, many behavioral issues" (Schlager, 1995: 246). Citing relevant work by Elinor Ostrom (1990) that suggests coalitions survive by allocating the costs and benefits of collective action fairly as well as monitoring and enforcing coalition agreements, Schlager urges refinement of the ACF.

Eight Critical Areas in Need of Elaboration, Refinement, and Testing
as proposed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1997

(1) The scenarios of major policy change (i.e. change in the policy core) and the factors conducive to such change (including hypothesis 5);
(2) The conditions conducive to overcoming collective action problems, particularly testing the two coordination hypotheses developed from Schlager (1995);
(3) The role of coalitions in diffusing policy innovations and ideas among units of government, building upon the work of Mintrom and Vergari (1996) and Berry and Berry (1990; 1997);
(4) Within belief systems, much more analysis is needed to ascertain if policy core beliefs constrain, and are more stable than, secondary aspects (vs. vice versa);
(5) The conditions conducive to successful professional and stakeholder fora;
(6) The extent to which agency officials and academics are members of coalitions (by the ACF definition) in European countries. This might involve an adaptation of the 1992 Bay/Delta survey to one or more policy subsystems in Europe;
(7) The scenerios, and the factors affecting, the development of subsystems over time, particularly the transition from "nascent" to "mature" subsystems;
(8) Greater explication of the "model of the individual" within the ACF, particularly its relation to learning processes.

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith agree that the ACF overlooks problems of collective action and they invite scholars to propose relevant hypotheses as they adopt one such hypothesis, formulated by Schlager:

> *Coordination Hypotheses #1*: Actors who share [policy core] beliefs are more likely to engage in at least minimal levels of collective action if they interact repeatedly, experience relatively low information costs, and believe that there are policies that, while not affecting each actor in similar ways, at least treats each fairly (Schlager, 1995: 262).

The need to modify the ACF to explore internal negotiations within a coalition is becoming increasingly obvious to its authors and to scholars attempting to use it as a tool to explain policy change. Schlager and William Blomquist (1996) argue that the ACF hypotheses are poor in explaining how beliefs and learning are actually translated into policy. Indeed, the authors admit that the ACF assumes learning among members of the same coalition to be relatively nonproblematic. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith agree that there is a need for greater explication of the "model of the individual" within ACF, particularly its relation to the learning

process and they list this among eight critical areas in need of elaboration, refinement, and testing (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1997: 34) (See Box 2-1 for complete list).

Advocacy Coalitions and SAAC

Two conclusions can be drawn from this discussion of the ACF. First, the concept of advocacy coalitions and the ACF seem to fit SAAC. The coalition of organizations advocating sustainable agriculture include more than interest groups. For example, at the 1993 Campaign meeting, the importance of continued outreach to technical experts was discussed. A professor of nutrition addressing the group explained ways of further involving nutrition professionals in sustainable agriculture so to take advantage of their close contact with consumers, advising: "Knowledge is power, even among friends" (Merrigan, 1993). As will be seen in Chapter Four, SAAC participants also share a common ideology, typical of advocacy coalitions. At a 1997 Campaign meeting, a participant described a "Soul of Agriculture" project designed to "tap into a spirituality" that exists among sustainable agriculture advocates: "Its not about legislation, he said, "its about principles" (Merrigan, 1997).

Unlike other case studies structured to test whether an advocacy coalition exists, this dissertation assumes that the coalition of organizations and individuals promoting sustainable agriculture constitute an advocacy coalition as defined by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith. Furthermore, because the focus of this dissertation is internal coalition dynamics, assumptions are made concerning the applicability of the 12 ACF hypotheses as they pertain to interactions between competing coalitions in the overall sustainable agriculture policy subsystem. These assumptions are indicated in Table 2-1. Other than hypothesis 8, which runs counter to my experience, the ACF hypotheses fit SAAC reasonably well. Scholars, with an interest in testing and refining the current hypotheses, may find sustainable agriculture to be a useful policy subsystem for such an exploration; my own work however, is focused on augmenting the ACF with hypotheses concerning internal coalition negotiations.

This leads to my second conclusion — internal coalition hypotheses are necessary if the

ACF is to fully evolve into a theory of policy change. If beliefs are as important and complex, as Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith indicate, then it behooves us to examine them fully. Indeed, there is great interest in figuring out how a common belief system evolves within an advocacy coalition and how it may effect efforts to act collectively. This interest even exists within SAAC itself. At the 1993 Campaign meeting, one farmer observed, "We're too accustomed to getting a quick fix and therefore we haven't dialogued sufficiently on where our paths intersect" (Merrigan, 1993).

The ACF was developed to better understand policy change in policy subsystems dominated by technical issues. Sustainable agriculture is entangled in many technical issues, such as how to maintain and measure water quality. However, as seen in the forthcoming chapters, it also includes identity issues. It is as if Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith anticipate this extension, as they conclude their most recent assessment of the ACF:

> Several people have wondered whether ACF applies to policy domains — such as abortion, gun control, human rights, gay rights, school prayer, gender politics — in which technical issues are completely dominated by normative and identity concerns. Our own perception is that it should work very well in these areas. Clearly, these subsystems seem to be characterized by well-defined coalitions driven by belief-driven conflict who resort to a wide variety of guidance instruments at multiple levels of government. In fact, the perceptual distortions in the ACF's model of the individual contributing to "the devil shift" should be *particularly strong* in such policy arenas (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1997: 43).

Identity Group Theory

This dissertation will, in Chapter Four, offer evidence to suggest that an identity group exists within SAAC and that this identity group severely hinders the ability of the advocacy coalition to effect policy change. In this section, identity groups are described, the evolution of identity politics is highlighted, and the permeation of identity politics within non-biologically defined communities, such as labor unions, is considered. Finally, the impact of identity politics on civil discourse is discussed, with particular attention to the consequent ability of coalitions, such as SAAC, to succeed in the policymaking world.

Identity politics is a phrase coined by scholars in the late 1980s to explain the political evolution within racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual political action groups. Identity politics describes a particular perversion of interest groups and, by extension, advocacy coalitions, that occurs when people no longer seek to have their interests represented through membership in multiple groups. Rather, people find that all of their various interests become bound up within a single group and as such, the group itself begins to define the person, or as Piore says, the whole becomes more than a sum of its parts. Corporatist, rather than pluralist, identity groups are cohesive social groups that become associated with the individual's lifestyle (Piore, 1995: 7).

Identity groups emerge from a shared history of exploitation, oppression, and discrimination and, according to Todd Gitlin, in a liberationist sequence:

> first the discovery of common experience and interests; next an uprising against a society that had imposed inferior status; finally the inversion of that status, so that distinct qualitites once pointed to as proof of inferiority were transvalued into the basis for positive distinction. It is only this third stage — where the group searches for and cultivates distinctive customs, qualities, lineages, ways of seeing, or as they come to be known, "cultures" that deserves to be called identity politics (Gitlin, 1995: 142).

Exploitation, oppression, and discrimination are perennial problems however, and the literature offers little explanation as to why identity groups suddenly emerged in America. Some scholars note that identity groups emerged in the wake of the Vietnam War, speculating that people's disillusionment with the government motivated them to disassociate with mainstream America. David Hollinger, for example, speculates that the Vietnam War killed the Left's faith in the redemptive American dream, alienating people so much that they came to view the center of society as badly flawed and the periphery as a source of countervailing cultural power (Hollinger, 1995: 99). Gitlin concurs, adding that "the Left of the 1960s, which had fought for common goods, devolved into identity groups while the Right, long associated with privileged interests, claims to defend the common good" (Gitlin, 1995: 83). Not everyone agrees with this analysis, however. Piore, for example, speculates that identity groups emerged because of a decline of the family as an integrating social institution (Piore, 1995: 23). People were told to

move out of the home because of financial stress or emotional problems and because women began working more and were unavailable as caretakers. Once people moved out, they associated in new living situations with people like themselves so that the aged, the deaf, the gays, and so forth, became socially grouped. In yet another theory, David Harvey is among those who credit weakening class politics for the growth of identity groups. Reflecting on the case of a chicken processing plant fire that killed 25 workers for which there was little political response, Harvey concludes the lack of response was because people no longer identify themselves as working class, but rather as blacks, women, etc. (Harvey, 1993: 59).

Whatever the provocation, identity groups are believed to have first emerged within racial, feminist, and gay communities. One of the more interesting studies of racial identity is provided by Joseph Rhea (1997) who presents case studies of minority groups seeking, in the form of National Park Service monuments and Federal holidays, public recognition of minority achievements and of the injustices America has inflicted on minority groups. Describing a "race pride movement," Rhea finds monuments and holidays critical to identity since they represent collective memory. American Blacks, Rhea claims, have succeeded in obtaining such institutional representation in Martin Luther King Day which has improved Blacks' cultural status by expanding public recognition of the values of their past. The efforts of American Indians to transform Custer Battlefield into Little Bighorn Battlefield also shows the need for a minority group to gain a national admission of having been wronged so that its identity in the present is not disparaged. Interestingly, from his study of the Asian Americans' fight to obtain a monument at Manzanar, the site of Japanese internment during WWII, Rhea concludes that past events may take on greater significance for later generations than for those who actually lived through them. Finally, analyzing the controversy surrounding the Alamo, Rhea finds that Mexican Americans (and other Latinos), in contrast to the other minority groups studied, have been unable to unite around a vision of their contemporary identity because they fail to think of themselves as a people with a common historical experience. Rhea concludes his case studies with a provocative question: "Because memories of terrible injustices are now central to the self-understanding of many minorities, it is necessary to ask whether the identities built around these memories are fated to remain oppositional. It is not

obvious that recognition of the value of minority heritages by the majority will thereby enable those minorities to have a sense of inclusion" (Rhea, 1997: 126).

Census trends underscore the increasing attention paid to racial identity. Until 1969, the census survey included almost no ethnic questions. This was not a particular oddity of government policy; in the private sector, the Gallup organization did not routinely ask about ethnicity until after 1971. When such survey questions began to emerge in the 1970s, most Americans were reluctant to answer. Initially, few people indicated a racial category, perhaps out of a desire to assimilate or out of fear that an association with a racial minority would be disadvantageous, or both. Over time, this changed dramatically. For example, the number of Americans who identified themselves as American Indians on federal census forms increased by 259 percent between 1960 and 1990 (Hollinger, 1995: 46). Today, the census has evolved so that respondents can now choose more than one ethno-racial category. It is argued, for example, that people identity themselves not as Black, but as Black-Latino. America should no longer be viewed as a melting pot in which immigrant groups shed their unique identities and assimilate, but rather as a salad bowl, because, Hollinger says, it reflects the fact that America has become a "garden of plants each with its own autochthonous roots" (Hollinger, 1995: 65).

Identity politics took root in feminism, according to Liz Bondi (1993) when women shared experiences and discovered that their 'personal inadequacies' were actually the product of contradictory pressures on women and dominant myths about femininity. Bondi says this sharing "enabled women to rewrite their own stories, to insist that 'the personal is political', and to develop a feminist identity through which to challenge the subordination of women" (Bondi, 1993: 91). When feminism was challenged by Elizabeth Spelman (1990) and others, as too white, middle-class, and heterosexual, touting multiple feminist identities became popular, such as black-feminist, lesbian-feminist, and Jewish-feminist. Making feminism more inclusive was important, but, as Bondi points out, the advent of hyphenated identities suggests that identity is something to be acknowledged or uncovered rather than something that is constructed. Moreover, feminism became fractured as women began equating oppression with knowledge, so that women suffering more oppressions (e.g., suffering oppression as both a

Latino and as a woman) were thought to have greater insight. Agreeing with this assessment, Donna Haraway concludes that the multiple identity phase of feminism has been "endless splitting and searches for a new essential unity" (Haraway, 1990: 197).

Departing from the throng of writers focused solely on the impact of identity politics within racial, feminist, gay, and other biophysical communities, Piore describes how identity groups have crippled the labor movement. Until recently, employment disputes were dealt with through collective bargaining. Trade unions well represented workers and union leaders facilitated compromise by way of their experienced negotiation skills. But union membership is down, and Piore attributes much of this to the growing identification of people as black workers, woman workers, etc. Title VII contributed to this "problem" by creating a non-union mechanism for the pursuit of employment rights. People began organizing in terms of social stigma and began seeking political remedies based on race, gender, and other biophysical attributes. Piore concludes that the emergence of identity groups within the labor movement has seriously weakened the power of workers. In fact, Piore suggests that management is well aware of this phenomenon and seeks to exploit it, pointing to an aggressively anti-union company that happily supports organizations of workers grouped as women, blacks, and gays (Piore, 1995: 20).

If the labor movement has become infected by identity politics, what about other policy domains? The answer is that identity politics has indeed infected other domains, including that of sustainable agriculture. As will be seen in this dissertation, identity is not just about biophysical characteristics, although this has been the point of study. Rather the development of identity and identity politics is a social process by which a person becomes affiliated with one or more acculturating cohorts. Concurring, Hollinger suggests that we consider using the word "affiliation," rather than identity because it calls attention to social dynamics and "suggests a greater measure of flexibility consistent with a postethnic eagerness to promote communities of consent" (Hollinger, 1995: 7). Michael Keith and Steve Pile also see the potential for identity politics to extend beyond racial, feminist, and gay liberation communities. Describing a "cultural politics of resistance" they consider political mobilizations around

particular concepts of space and conclude that "politics is necessarily territorial but these territories are simultaneously real, imaginary and symbolic" (Keith and Pile, 1993: 224).

Wherever it may exist, identity politics is bad news for public policy. Gitlin underscores this point by presenting the case of a debate over textbooks in the early 1990s in Oakland, California. At the time, the existing textbooks were universally considered racist and so, after much investment, new multicultural textbooks were developed. Although arguably not perfect, these new books were a significant improvement in that they contained no major offensive text. Yet they were soon vigorously attacked by all minority groups, so much so that, in the end, Oakland schools either went without books or simply used the old racist ones. Gitlin asks: "Why did committed people devote so much energy to mobilizing against the most pluralist textbooks ever brought before the state of California?" (Gitlin, 142: 28). Piore presents another interesting case. In the midst of rallies at Gallaudet University where students protested the selection of a hearing President, a student was quoted as saying: "If I had a bulldozer and a gun, I would destroy all scientific experiments to cure deafness. If I could hear, I would probably take a pencil and poke myself to be deaf again" (Piore, 1995: 43). The extent that identity has led people to assert their separateness, no matter the cost, is striking. Hollinger notes that identity politics is self-confirming: "A people against whom boundaries were drawn respond by fortifying those very boundaries" (Hollinger, 1995: 153). Keith and Pile concur, noting that "politics is invariably about closure; it is about the moments at which boundaries become, symbolically, Berlin Walls" (Keith and Pile, 1993: 222). The result, according to Jean Bethke Elshtain: "Identity absolutism lends itself to expressivist politics, the celebration of feelings or private authenticity as an alternative to public debate and political judgement" (Elshtain, 1995: 59).

Policy problems become entrenched, according to Piore, when issues become attached to identity and touch upon the very core of people's self conception: "Politics becomes a matter of principle, or even worse, of the integrity of the self, and compromise becomes an externally imposed hypocrisy, a violation, denial, or betrayal of self" (Piore, 1995: 37). Piore argues that our political processes, so committed to individualism, have not taken into account the function

and role of identity groups. Like Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, Piore argues that we are "prisoners of the individualistic framework through which we are accustomed to consider social policy and lack an intellectual apparatus with which to sort out the roles played by groups" (Piore, 1995: 59). Jenny Bourne, lamenting the impact of identity politics on interest group effectiveness, declared: "Identity Politics is all the rage. Exploitation is out (it is extrinsically determinist). Oppression is in (it is intrinsically personal). What is to be done is replaced by who am I" (Bourne, 1987: 1).

Breakdown of Civil Discourse

People caught up in identity politics assert that "you can't possibly understand because you are not like me". The result is a severe breakdown in civil discourse such that people can only talk within their own communities. Charles Taylor, exaulting identity politics, describes "the powerful moral ideal that each of us has an original way of being human" and argues that "my discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others" (Taylor, 1992: 34). Yet, the dialogue that takes place between like participants in order to realize their identity is cited by critics of identity politics as a discourse perversion that threatens successful public policy.

The problem with identity politics, according to Bondi, is that it allows people to invoke a kind of personal immunity, such that "to authenticate knowledge in terms of personal experience is to make one's ideas and one's being indistinguishable. Consequently, anyone who criticizes knowledge generated in this way is liable to be accused of attacking the person from whom it originated" (Bondi, 1993: 94). Hollinger agrees, stating that, "we seek to live within the confines of the unique civic, moral, and epistemic communities into which we are born, to devote ourselves to our ethnos" (Hollinger, 1995: 59).

Richard Rorty writes on the importance of communication in public policy. He argues that we need to get rid of traditional notions of objectivity and the scientific method and "see the social sciences as continuous with literature — as interpreting other people to us, and thus

enlarging and deepening our sense of community" (Rorty, 1982: 203). Hope for societal progress, according to Rorty is in the "reappropriation of a common language" (Rorty, 1982: 202). Beginning with Thomas Kuhn (1962) who demonstrated the dependence of scientific truth on the practices of distinctively organized human communities, more and more literature is asserting that scientific knowledge is as much about who people are and their culture as it is about laboratory results. According to Hollinger, argumentation about knowledge is increasingly about epistemic communities and he concludes that: "If our judgments about what is scientifically valid and morally right have so much to do with the character of our communities, it is vital to be clear on just who 'we' are" (Hollinger, 1995: 60).

Thus, a critical role of public policy and political leadership, according to Piore, must be to orchestrate conversations between identity groups. Piore reflects on Hannah Arendt's notion of "communities of meaning." According to Arendt (1959), citizens in the Greek state achieved self-definition through actions carried out within the group context; thus, they existed as part of a community of action. Piore builds upon this analysis and describes "communities of meaning" in which individuals realize themselves. Such communities are not created through the aggregation of individuals but rather by the interaction among individuals (Piore, 1995: 137). Piore's discussion echoes a study by a team of sociologists in the mid-1980s in search of "habits of the heart" which found that Americans yearn for group identity and expression. Concluding that "private citizen" is an oxymoron, this team studied several groups able to elicit deep and lasting commitments which the team calls "communities of memory" (Bellah, et. al, 1985: 212).

Jurgen Habermas writes that discourse theory "grounds the fallibilist assumption that results issuing from proper procedure are more or less reasonable (Habermas, 1991: 63). Yet procedure seems to be of paramount importance to identity groups. Specific to sustainability, Richard Norgaard (1994) writes on the importance of civil discourse in achieving sustainable agriculture, concluding that process and product cannot be independent. How a person comes to "know" anything about science, about politics, and about culture is critical. Norgaard posits a coevolutionary paradigm, in which sustainable development is seen as a coevolution between

cultural and ecological systems: "The coevolutionary cosmology stresses the communal nature of knowing, making social life a process of sharing rather than of vote counting and enforcement, or of technocrats determining right answers and controlling lives" (Norgaard, 1994: 189).

This observation can be seen as foreshadowing my dissertation with its focus on the internal dialogues and negotiations within SAAC and my concern with the importance placed by SAAC on collective knowledge (see Chapter Three). In essence, Norgaard argues that agriculture has a long history of relying on cultural knowledge, rather than on "objective scientific" knowledge. In relation to sustainable agriculture, for many years the scientific establishment at best ignored and at worst opposed issues of sustainability. This may have occurred because of the influence of industry on research (Hightower, 1972) and because of the difficulty of treating sustainability in a multi disciplinary, broad-based manner that the scientific system does not easily accommodate. As Norgaard states, "When we set about trying to define sustainable development, we discover that our ability to conceive what it would really be in an operational sense is very limited. Our constrained ability to define what it would be is due to the limitations of Western science or, for that matter, any other way of knowing of which we are aware" (Norgaard 1994: 16-17).

And in reality, it has been the practice and experience of farmers that has brought the truths of sustainable agriculture to the fore, not the land grant university system or federal research laboratories. Not a surprising outcome according to Norgaard's principle of conceptual pluralism: "Different ways of knowing different aspects of the cosmos are really different and unlikely to merge into a coherent understanding of the whole.... People understand collectively; we are dependent on other people and how we are organized socially for much of what we know" (Norgaard, 1994: 93). Piore captures this point as follows:

> The key issue here is how one understands the relationship between the parts and the whole. Does the whole take its meaning from the parts? Or do the parts determine the meaning of the whole? The hermeneutic answer is that neither is the case. The meaning emerges in the movement back and forth between the parts and

> whole in what is known as the hermeneutic circle.... Again, this makes interpretation a social process. It is not a matter of the autonomous reader and an inanimate text, but something that occurs among people" (Piore, 1995: 124).

If identify politics cause SAAC participants to go their own way and not engage with people in the greater society, then they of necessity will develop their own science and ways of knowing.

Identity Groups and SAAC

Three conclusions can be drawn from this overview of identity politics. First, while scholars have yet to reach a common conclusion as to why identity politics has emerged, they do agree that discrimination and oppression significantly contributed to the formation of identity groups. While initially attributed solely to bio-physical communities, scholars now recognize that identity politics may be a factor in other types of communities, such as labor unions. Accordingly, many advocates of sustainable agriculture have been, or at least feel, oppressed or discriminated against because of their adherence to sustainable agriculture beliefs. As a result, issues of identity may be anticipated.

During the 1996 Campaign meeting, one co-chairperson admitted that he "searched for a long time for an organization that combined 60s activism and farming" (Merrigan, 1996a). Quoting from Paul Thompson (1995), he advised Campaign members that sustainable agriculture had migrated into two groups, loosely organized into anti-establishment versus establishment forces. The anti-establishment forces are on the "practical side" and include activists and practioners while the establishment forces include academics working on defining and characterizing the parameters of sustainable agriculture. He described the lack of communication between these two forces, observing that "for many of us practioners, the synonym for 'sustainable' is 'people we like to hang out with'" (Merrigan, 1996a). Acknowledging that this need for belonging may impede the Campaign's ability to think critically about sustainable agriculture, he nevertheless stressed that few academics fully understood what it meant to buck the system and be outcast by the neighbors (Merrigan, 1996a).

My second conclusion is that a celebration of separateness often accompanies identity. While people may, at first, feel forced into identity groups because of whatever differences they exhibit from mainstream society, over time these differences become the justification for isolation from other groups. Piore writes, "Today it is the cant of identity that many Americans expose, and the question is why. The beginning of an answer is that identity does more than exclude. It transcends the self, affirms a connection with others" (Piore, 1995: 128). As will be seen in the coming chapters, SAAC participants actively avoid dialogue with other groups in the policy subsystem — groups that must be dealt with before meaningful policy change can occur. One speaker admitted at the 1993 Campaign meeting that, "one of our struggles is to be more main streamed in the agriculture community" yet at that very same meeting, the celebration of separateness was evidenced when participants heralded the story of a North Dakota priest who refused to bless farmers' fields if they were treated with certain chemicals (Merrigan, 1993).

Finally, the complete and total association of the individual with the identity group creates difficulties in developing the kind of public discourse necessary for successful advances in public policy. Compromise, so essential to achieving political change, is considered by participants in identity groups as a betrayal of their very beings. The give and take inherent in public debate over public policy issues now becomes exeedingly personal as ideas cannot be separated from the person and his coherts in the identity group. Innocent submissions of new policy proposals can be interpreted as personal attacks by those who do not, from the start, wholeheartedly embrace them.

It is interesting to note that the effort to bring sustainable agriculture leaders together nationally to develop the Campaign first came together under the rubric of a "National Dialogue on Sustainable Agriculture." As will be seen, SAAC participants, while exposing a philosophy of openness, are very reluctant to consider, let alone, embrace ideas advanced by those outside of their advocacy coalition. Rather, they remain preoccupied with internal coalition discussions over the meaning and value of sustainability. Perhaps that is because, as will be discussed in the following section, sustainable agriculture may be as much about morals

as it is about environmental protection. This broader concept was discussed at the 1996 Campaign meeting when participants pondered whether "social justice" was a better fit for their interests than sustainable agriculture. The example of sugar farming in Brazil, a sustainable practice by environmental standards, was morally repugnant to the group. So abusive to rural labor, Brazilian sugar farmers typically died by age 32. This is not our kind of sustainable agriculture, the group concluded (Merrigan, 1996a).

Negotiation Theory

This discussion of identity politics and its potential implications for SAAC naturally leads to questions concerning the likelihood of SAAC participants to compromise and engage in public policy negotiations with non-SAAC people and organizations. H. Peyton Young defines negotiation as "the process of joint decision making. It is communication, direct or tacit, between individuals who are trying to forge an agreement for mutual benefit" (Young, 1991:1). Most negotiation literature describes principled, interest-based negotiations, otherwise known as mutual-gains bargaining. The theory behind such negotiations is that it is critical to focus on interests rather than positions, fairness rather than power, and collaborative rather than adversarial relations (Raiffa, 1982; Fisher, Ury and Patton, 1991; Susskind and Cruikshank 1987; Bacow and Wheeler, 1984). Interest in engaging in a negotiation depends on a person's BATNA — or Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement. If and when a person's BATNA exceeds the potential for a negotiated outcome, his interest in the negotiation is expected to cease. Appropriately structured negotiations among parties in a dispute can transform win-lose situations into joint-gain opportunities. However, successful negotiations, according to Larry Susskind and Jeffrey Cruikshank, depend on finding "room for inventing, packaging, trading, and redefining issues" (Susskind and Cruikshank, 1987: 192).

Negotiation can be especially difficult, even impossible, in situations involving different cultures or values. It is possible that sustainable agriculture may present such challenges. The multi-year isolation of participants within SAAC may have allowed this group to develop its own culture, further complicating efforts to negotiate within the larger policy

subsystem. While examination of cross-cultural negotiations may be drawing too extreme an analogy, even within a single culture, there are pockets of differences that can complicate a negotiation. Cynthia Chataway and Deborah Kolb, for example, discuss the importance of culture in an organization, using case studies to demonstrate that gendered norms and expectations can constrain and influence the forms of grievance expression open to men and women (Chataway and Kolb, 1993). Directly relating the potential dilemma identity politics presents for standard negotiation techniques, Elshtain explains, "to the extent that citizens begin to retribalize into ethnic or other 'fixed-identity' groups, democracy falters....If you are black and I am white, by definition I do not and cannot, in principle, 'get it.' There is no way we can negotiate the space between our given differences" (Elshtain, 1995: 73).

More significantly, negotiation in sustainable agriculture may prove impossible among members of SAAC if they find their sacrosanct values challenged. Several scholars discuss how negotiating values is more difficult than negotiating interests because values are much more about who people are than about what people want. Christopher Moore describes value disputes as those that "focus on such issues as guilt and innocence, what norms should prevail in a social relationship, what facts should be considered valid, what beliefs are correct, who merits what, or what principles should guide decision-making" (Moore, 1986: 174). Susskind and Cruikshank provide examples of value disputes not well suited for negotiation: determining whether public funds should be used to pay for abortion or whether additional nuclear power plants should be built, and they conclude, "Unless its possible to reframe the debate so that it does not focus primarily on sacrosanct values, success may be limited" (Susskind and Cruikshank, 1987: 192).

Clashes of strongly held values often underlie environmental disputes, such as sustainable agriculture. Douglas Amy says that environmentalists often "see themselves not so much as another interest group, but as part of a movement which is dedicated to creating an environmentally sane society" (Amy, 1987: 174). In such cases, Amy says, conflicts might involve divergent moral principles, legal rights, or world views, making environmental politics about moral actors crusading, "to get basic moral principles embodied in the law" (Amy, 1987:

176). Larry Bacow and Michael Wheeler concur, saying that the extent to which environmental disputes are triggered by different assessments of impacts, they are primarily conflicts over values (Bacow and Wheeler, 1984: 8). Examining the internal negotiations within an alliance of environmentalists concerned with forestry policy, Patrick Field speculates that multi-party, intra environmental debates are often more than policy negotiations in that they are also about relationship building and value expression. As such, these so-called negotiations are fraught with problems:

> Debates involving values are not trades or barters, but clashes of different conceptions of self and one's self in relation to other's in the world. In debates over values, the goal is to convince others of the accuracy, truthfulness, and rightness of one's argument. To trade or barter one's values would be to "sell-out". To compromise, in the sense of to make accommodations toward the other side, will neither advance one's self-interest nor improve joint gains, but will compromise, in a pejorative sense, one's most deeply held beliefs and values. (Field, 1994: 27)

Susskind and Field (1996) do, however, offer some hope that value disputes can be successfully negotiated. Acknowledging the difficulties inherent in negotiations in which values collide, they describe the worse cases as those in which "conflicts become intricately bound up with who people perceive themselves to be" (Susskind and Field, 1996: 158). Retracing the stages of value disputes outlined by Terrell Northrup (1989), they offer up nine prescriptions for preventing conflicts from reaching the final, and possibly intractable stage, when "maintaining the conflict becomes central to each party's identity" (Susskind and Field, 1996: 156). Their model for deescalating intractable conflicts requires: (1) searching for shared principles; (2) keeping open minds; (3) seeking to achieve real gains as seen through the critics' eyes; (4) avoiding belittling or ignoring critics; (5) looking to history to better understand the critics' beliefs; (6) acknowledging strong emotions while appealing to reason; (7) allowing for and seeking out diverse views on all "sides"; (8) avoiding "rights talk"; and (9) establishing facilitated forums focused on joint problem solving in a non-adversarial atmosphere.

Conflict Avoidance Through Organizational Structure

Public policy literature is replete with leadership and organizational studies: scholars focus on elections of leaders and the qualities that cause the ascendancy to power and diagram and analyze organization hierarchies. Indeed, many interest groups have well-known and outspoken leaders and very clear organizational structures. In the case of the SAAC however, there is little traditional organizational structure. For example, the Campaign consists of thousands of organizations who insist that the Campaign is not a "coalition" but a "network" of equal groups, no one group speaking for the entirely.

Policy networks are not themselves a barrier to conflict confrontation and resolution. Bernd Marin and Renate Mayntz define policy networks as: "policy making arrangements characterized by the predominance of informal, decentralized and horizontal relations" where actors are interdependent but largely formally autonomous (Marin and Mayntz, 1991: 15). Heralding social conflict as a vehicle for social progress, Pieter Glasbergen notes that while disputes make critical issues more acute, conflict within a policy network also induces exploration of beneficial alternatives. However, he does note that "these positive functions of disputes do not emerge on their own. In order to allow these functions to coalesce, an innovative type of decision making must be brought to bear, one that can handle disputes in a constructive way" (Glasbergen, 1995: 7).

The philosophy of decentralism reflected in policy networks is deeply entrenched in American politics. Kirkpatrick Sale describes the three tenets of decentralism: (1) big is bad (and the E.F. Schumacher corollary that small is beautiful); (2) power should be diffused and to the lowest level possible; and (3) the small community, in which each member is known to every other, is the most important human institution (Sale, 1996). From Thomas Jefferson's cries against "the generalizing and concentrating all cares into one body," to Ronald Reagan's popular campaign for "an end to giantism, for a return to the human scale," politicians have intuited the appeal of decentralism (Bryan and McClaughry, 1989: 23). Grassroots organizing and town meeting, face-to-face decisionmaking are held up by many practioners and theorists

as ideal forms of political participation.

Nowhere has the appeal of decentralism been greater than among agriculturalists. Farmer-based movements — the Grange and Farmers alliance, the Populist Party of 1892, and the Country Life Movement were early protests against the increasing commercialization and centralism of agriculture (Danbom, 1997: 9-10). In the late 1970s, the ineffective but inspired American Agriculture Movement sprung up, with 1,100 small local groups self-organizing, each with no dues, no rules, and no formal leadership (Stock, 1996: 160). Most recently, in the wake of the 1980's farm crisis and Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz's advice that farmers "get big or get out," the Family Farm Coalition and other sustainable agriculture groups formed to defend small family farmers in an increasingly industrialized world-wide system.

These farmer-based movements and other decentralized political efforts have been studied by theorists interested in the appeal of small group politics. Reflecting on decentralized systems, Jane Mansfield finds that small group participants report that they are more satisfied, laugh more, complain less, and look forward to meetings: "In smaller settings each member is more valuable to the others, because if a group is small, its identity becomes more important to every other" (Mansfield, 1980: 283). Direct participation in decisionmaking has been shown to be effective in developing group acceptance (Pateman, 1970; Verba, 1961). In the early stages of organization, it would follow that advocacy coalitions would benefit from decentralized decisionmaking because potential participants would, in their evaluation of various activities that compete for their time, choose a decentralized organization featuring small group activity.

Considering that decentralized organization may be helpful in attracting and maintaining participation in an advocacy coalition, is it possible that too much decentralism may be harmful to an advocacy coalition? Dennis Thompson finds that the dispersion of political power to smaller units benefits "those most disadvantaged in citizenship," — the disenfranchised minorities hoping to exert their views into mainstream debates (Thompson, 1970: 175-176). Mansfield, however, says Thompson's thesis is unproven and she describes the high costs associated with deliberate decentralization, concluding that: "As a strategy for

increasing citizens' chances of protecting and furthering their interests, decentralization works best when the scope of the decision need not be broad" (Mansfield, 1980: 279).

Phillip Selznick posits a relationship between decentralism and leadership that is potentially important to understanding advocacy coalitions and SAAC specifically. His basic argument is that it is impossible for an effective organization to simultaneously be decentralized and leaderless. Leadership must precede decentralism, he writes, because it is first necessary to have "a preparatory period of training in which leadership has the opportunity to influence deeply the ideas that guide decision-making at lower levels" (Selznick, 1984: 114).

> The need for centralization declines as the homogeneity...increases. A unified outlook, binding all levels of administration, will permit decentralization without damage to policy....Hence we shall expect that a relatively high degree of centralization will be required in the early stages of institutional development. Later, when homogeneity has been achieved, decentralism will be feasible without undue loss of control" (Selznick, 1984: 113).

Analyses of small groups support Selznick's proposition, as small groups are found to exaggerate the importance of consensus and to minimize conflict within the group. This is not good because "conflict unifies people just as it divides them" (Burns, 1978: 290). According to James MacGregor Burns, leadership is dissensual and organizations need to build dissensus into their structures. Why? Because "meaningful conflict produces engaged leaders who in turn generate conflict among the people....[conflict] organizes, motivates, sharpens popular demands, broadens and strengthens values" (Burns, 1978: 453). A critical role of leaders then, must be helping focus organizations on problems and determining strategies for resolving them.

The issue of leadership may become especially difficult when identity politics become entrenched in an advocacy coalition. Burns writes that when conflicts do arise in the small group, the cause is likely the affiliation of its members with more than one group. These overlapping affiliations, as discussed earlier in this chapter under interest group theory, is expected to create a "seedbed of potential conflict that becomes overt when group members,

responding to competing group claims, challenge those of the central group" (Burns, 1978: 293). The conflict created by these overlapping affiliations leads to group members taking roles, even briefly, as leaders. If participants in identity groups do not have multiple group affiliations, this catalyst for leadership is absent.

Negotiation and SAAC

Four conclusions can be drawn from this review. First, negotiating values is difficult. This review of negotiation literature suggests that negotiating values can almost be impossible when alternatives are viewed as either good or evil. Since advocacy coalitions are based on beliefs and values, it is reasonable to expect that coalition negotiation will sometimes be hindered by value disputes. This is also expected to be the case with SAAC. During the 1996 Campaign meeting, a speaker advised the group to place even greater emphasis on values: "The 60s taught us to rave, to be against things rather than for things. We're missing the boat by not putting our "values" forward....Our movement is driven by values" (Merrigan, 1996a). While it is possible that negotiations on some objectives of sustainable agriculture, such as reduced water pollution, may be successful, it will be critical to develop strategies to disentangle such objectives from sacroscant values.

Second, identity groups tend to operate in isolation because, it is argued, that it is impossible for those not in the group to fully understand. If an identity group does exist within SAAC, additional complications will likely arise such as a tendency to focus negotiation inward rather than with other segments of the broader policy subsystem. There may also be an inability to visualize and disinterest in better alternatives. A cultural divide may arise that separates sustainable agriculture advocates from others in the policy subsystem that is not so unlike clashes between different nations.

Third, decentralism is likely. Limiting groups to small numbers with multiple decision points helps maintain the illusion (for their own part) that everyone is the same. Seeking sameness in a world where they may have experienced ridicule for their beliefs is important to

members of identity groups. In agriculture, there is an additional impetus — a strong history of decentralism, where thinking takes place in relation to regions (any dairy farmer from Vermont will tell you dairy is not the same as in California) and by commodity ("This is wheat country. Take your corn elsewhere"). One Campaign co-chairperson explained to his group that the Campaign is "a 'non-organization-organization' that's diffuse and chaotic. We've been accused of being hyper-democratic... We all tend to think of where we come from as the center of the system. Systems have a lot of centers. The challenge is to see multiple systems and grab on. Its intellectually exciting!" (Merrigan, 1996a).

Fourth, the aversion to strong, centralized leadership is critical to identity and conflict avoidance. A National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture participant bemoaned the efforts of her colleagues to avoid conflict, "I have some problems with all this facilitation. We are always pushing for consensus when conflict helps sharpen our thoughts and brings us to a common philosophy" (Merrigan, 1996a). The Campaign consists of numerous member organizations who insist that the Campaign is not a "coalition" but a "network" of equal groups, with no one group or individual speaking for the entirety. Although this delays, and often cripples the Campaign's effectiveness in influencing policy, no amount of internal argument has led to a change in this status. Another Campaign co-chairperson, defending the organization of the Campaign said, "If you want to say who's important to this Campaign, you have to draw up a list. That's a change in leadership thinking that's a component of a strong organization" (Merrigan, 1996a).

Sustainable Agriculture as a Social Movement

Before turning to the hypotheses of this dissertation, it is necessary to acknowledge and consider the recent trend of theorists to view sustainability as a social movement. Indeed, framing sustainable agriculture as a social movement is tempting for three reasons. First, participants in SAAC often refer to themselves as the "movement" and, as described in Chapter Four, the political baptism of many sustainable agriculture leaders occurred within the 1960s student protest social movement and the 1970s anti-nuke and civil rights social movements.

Second, a social movement framework departs from the earlier technocratic conceptions of sustainable agriculture that focused solely on natural sciences. Finally, social movement literature is appealing because it reflects many of the elements and concerns encompassed in advocacy coalition and identity politics theory.

Social movements have traditionally been included in the subfield of sociology known as collective behavior. While theorists agree that the wide variety of social movement definitions has made the task of generalizing about social movement structure difficult, the working definitions of several prominent scholars are fairly consistent. John Wilson defines a social movement as "a conscious, collective, organized attempt to bring about or resist large-scale change in the social order by noninstitutionalized means (Wilson, 1973: 8); Anthony Oberschall defines a social movement as a "large-scale, collective effort to bring about or resist changes that bear on the lives of many" (Oberschall, 1993: 2); and Sidney Tarrow defines a social movement as a "collective challenge by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities" (Tarrow, 1994: 3-4). All of these definitions focus on the collective struggle for change, with significant departures in theory emerging only when various typologies and examples are proposed.[6]

Several rural sociologists have applied social movement theory to sustainable agriculture, arguing for a shift from the natural science perspective to an examination focused on the collective action by activist sustainable agriculture groups. Beth Barnham (1997) examines the evolution of sustainable agriculture groups in France, finding that such groups act collectively in response to problems caused by modernization and economic growth and seek ways to channel and restrict market impacts through the creation of new regulations, laws or

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[6] For example, some theorists discuss the "new social movements" which, they argue, arose in the 1970s and 1980s (therefore encompassing sustainable agriculture). These new social movements are distinguished by more radical forms of action, more decentralized organization, and more middle class and professional elite participation. Yet other theorists believe these distinctions are overdrawn, with Tarrow accounting for differences between current and past social movements as simply a cycle of protest within the political system that produces an expanded repertoire of collective action forms (Tarrow, 1989: 66-67).

social institutions. Her work discusses the social movement's search for legitimation and acceptance. Fred Buttel (1993) argues that sustainable agriculture is just the most recent stage of the modern agrarian struggle, differing from past agrarian social movements only in that participants hail from the natural sciences (as opposed to the social sciences) and focus little on social justice issues. In fact, much of agriculture throughout the years has been considered a social movement. Carl Taylor describes all of agriculture as a single, unitary farmer movement, analogous to the labor movement and describes ideology as the "glue" holding the movement together (Taylor, 1953: 2). Madeleine Adamson and Seth Borgos (1984) describe several farmer organizations operating at the turn of the century as social protest movements. Patrick Mooney and Theo Majka examine the "farm worker movement" arguing its similarity to the civil rights movement since participants are minorities seeking empowerment and dignity (Mooney and Majka, 1995: 223). Mooney and Majka hypothesize that there is a bifurcation of agrarian social movements, with commodity producers pursuing narrow economic interests and others pursuing postmaterialist values and that this later group is a new social movement that reflects the emergence of a postmodern agriculture.

Two important points can be drawn from a review of social movement theory. First, scholars studying sustainable agriculture have recently observed that it is much more than a technocratic effort to solve environmental problems such as soil erosion. Second, the leap to identity theory is not a large one. As Tarrow writes, organizers of social movements create collective identities (Tarrow, 1994: 3). Many of the communities studied by identity group scholars are the very same communities studied by social movement scholars — racial, feminist, gay, and now with this dissertation — sustainable agriculture groups.

Theory Integration

Five theoretical frameworks have been presented. Interest group theory was discussed to underscore its inadequacy in explaining groups that represent something other than interests, including SAAC. Social movement theory was discussed to demonstrate that there is a tradition of scholars examining the core values of sustainability which include more than

technocratic issues such as water pollution and farm size. To approach the central question of this dissertation — how is consensus negotiated within an advocacy coalition? — three additional theories were reviewed as I suspect an integrated understanding of advocacy, identity, and negotiation theory is necessary to solve the sustainability problem.

Throughout this chapter the importance of beliefs and values has been emphasized. Advocacy coalition and identity theories focus on the role of beliefs and values and how they affect group behavior in the policy subsystem. Both the ACF and identity group enthusiasts presume a single belief system — a common world view — within the coalition. In the ACF, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith are almost silent on this point, not explaining why this would be so. In identity groups, people presume that they have the same beliefs because they "look alike" or share other common characteristics.

The ACF posits a hierarchical, tripartite belief system. Secondary beliefs are the focus of routine policy disputes while deep core beliefs are impervious to negotiation since they do not change. Major shifts in policy therefore, must occur through the evolution of policy core beliefs which form the "glue" that holds coalitions together. Understanding these policy core beliefs and values is essential in determining what, if any, of these beliefs and values can be negotiated and the strategies to successfully do so.

If an identity group exists within an advocacy coalition, as postulated in Chapter One, several outcomes can be anticipated. An identity group within an advocacy coalition may mask important differences in policy core beliefs. For identity group participants, the "glue" may be more about group characteristics than about policy goals. The primary interest of such participants may be fraternity in a world free of discrimination, with policy goals, although important, relegated to a secondary status. The imperative of negotiating policy reform within the larger policy subsystem is therefore also secondary to inward negotiations directed at securing common bonds and understandings to preserve the all-important identity of the group.

Second, an identity group may create pressure within an advocacy coalition to adopt a

decentralized and essentially leaderless organizational structure. Conflict avoidance, so important to maintain an illusion of a common belief system, is facilitated by such organizational choices. In many cases, identity groups have chosen to splinter into hyphenated groups (Jewish-feminist, Black-Latino) and this tendency toward decentralization is seen in SAAC as well. Each group maintains its own identity, never compromising its values and beliefs in order to be a part of the whole.

Finally, the existence of an identity group within an advocacy coalition may complicate communication and learning within the advocacy coalition and, most importantly, with people and organizations in the larger policy subsystem. Identity groups can evolve into epistemic communities that develop their own culture, almost their own language, and for whom scientific "truths" must be generated and validated through group discourse.

Chapter 3: Hypotheses Formulation

In Chapter Two, the groups and individuals promoting sustainable agriculture were found to "fit" the model of advocacy coalitions described by Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith. But Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith express little curiosity as to what goes on within these advocacy coalitions, treating them as black boxes at best and as monolithic entities at worst. Edella Schlager and William Blomquist, on the other hand, suggest that "understanding the types of coordination mechanisms that are adopted, how well matched those mechanisms are to the environments in which they are used, and how effectively they bind coalition members together should reveal much about the successes and failures of [advocacy] coalitions" (Schlager and Blomquist, 1996: 664).

This dissertation seeks to shed light on the internal workings of the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition (SAAC) — workings that can and do affect the ability of the coalition to function effectively in the policy-making arena. In this chapter, four hypotheses are formulated. A case study of a network that is perceived to be illustrative of SAAC is used to explain the hypotheses. The results from testing of the hypotheses are presented in Chapter Four.

The Four Hypotheses

Participation in sustainable agriculture meetings and review of sustainable agriculture documents led to four propositions. First, there is an identity group at the core of the coalition, possibly extending more broadly throughout the coalition, that formed mainly in response to ridicule of the members' beliefs and values. Second, this identity group is obsessed with process rather than an action-oriented agenda that seeks change in current policies. Third, the identity group adheres strongly to the idea of decentralization. And, fourth, the identity group strongly distrusts the very concept of leadership.

These propositions form the basis of the four hypotheses which are:

1. The more people are ridiculed or marginalized for their interests, the more their interests transform into issues of identity that ultimately define the people in the group. This is important in relation to sustainable agriculture advocates because, as described in Chapter One, when issues are attached to identity, politics become a matter of principle and compromise is viewed as betrayal (Piore, 1995).

2. The more people distrust conventional science, the more they will emphasize decision-making processes. Rather than striking a balance between process and outcome-oriented work, identity groups exhibit an adherence to the adage "good process makes good outcomes."

3. The more people believe in collective knowledge, the more they will not approve of hierarchial organizations. It is postulated that decentralized decision making was critical to the development of the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition, but continued and extreme adherence to decentralization has limited the coalition's ability to succeed in the policy arena.

4. The more people dislike concentrated power, the less willing they are to designate or accept traditional leaders. This, in turn, may hinder their effectiveness.

With these concerns in mind, a case study was undertaken to determine if these hypotheses merited further inquiry. As the case study indicates, a major grouping of well-known sustainable agriculture advocates is willing to spend years and several millions of dollars on internal dialogues to fine tune their beliefs and values related to sustainable farms and communities. They do so knowing that each and every day they engage in internal discussions, more water is polluted from agrichemicals and more small farmers are pushed off their land.

The IFFS Case Study

The Integrated Farm and Food Systems (IFFS) Network was initiated and funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (Kellogg) as a multi-year, multi-million dollar project involving hundreds of sustainable agriculture advocates across the country. It is one of the largest and certainly the best funded sustainable agriculture initiative in the United States. Government entities such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the President's Commission on Sustainable Development have requested IFFS Network information and input — significant acknowledgment of the network's importance in the world of sustainable agriculture advocacy.

The IFFS Network is typical of a great many organizing efforts within the sustainable agriculture field. Many of the participants, for example, are nationally known and belong to numerous organizations that promote sustainable agriculture. This is important because, as a case study, IFFS must be representative of SAAC. The Kellogg Foundation selected the organizations to participate in IFFS, wrote the program guidelines, and provided participants substantial funding for their efforts. It is therefore fair to ask at the onset of the case study whether the IFFS Network can be trusted to be representative of SAAC at large. As one measure, there is substantial overlap in the memberships of the steering committees of the IFFS Network and the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture (See Appendix C for IFFS Steering Committee members). Two of the four co-chairpersons of the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture had prominent leadership roles in the IFFS Network and staff from the Campaign made presentations at the IFFS annual conferences. Second, the IFFS Network includes a cross section of national groups (e.g., Henry A. Wallace Institute), regional groups (e.g., Federation of Southern Cooperatives), state groups (e.g., Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture) and local groups (e.g., Darby Project). Third, IFFS Network participants represent most geographic regions of the country and include a mix of farmers, non-profit activists, government employees, and land grant university representatives.

Accepting that the IFFS Network is representative, then is it possible that participants felt coerced and said only what Kellogg wanted to hear? Sustainable agriculture policy work is funded primarily by foundations (e.g., Kellogg, Pew, Joyce, Noyes, Wallace Genetic) and to some extent, all of the organizations within SAAC could be said to be coerced by foundation mandates. I can only provide my personal experience as reassurance that the elements described in this case study do not inordinately reflect Kellogg influence. First, there were some people involved in the IFFS Network who received no funding (e.g., I served on the Steering Committee but neither I, nor my sponsoring organization at the time, received Kellogg funding). Second, there were people at the IFFS meetings described in this case study who publicly expressed concern about the potential for Kellogg to skew IFFS Network decisions, and as a result, the Kellogg grant officer was explicitly excluded from certain IFFS Network meetings to prevent this from occurring. Finally, my assessment of the IFFS Network, based on fifteen years experience in sustainable agriculture advocacy, is that it is indicative of SAAC.

For all its accolades as a major national force in sustainable agriculture, the IFFS Network is surprisingly disinterested in the subjects that are critical to sustainable agriculture. As examples, the network engages in few, if any, discussions of specific production practices to meet clean water goals. It supports no meaningful assessments of the impact of global warming on crop production. And the IFFS spends no time on the development of political strategies to modify government programs in support of crop rotation or to counter the actions of traditional opponents such as the American Farm Bureau Federation, commodity groups, or the chemical industry — all of which are advocacy coalitions operating in the same policy arena as SAAC. Instead, the IFFS Network devotes its resources and energy to facilitating internal negotiations among like-minded sustainable agriculture advocates over values and beliefs and how those values and beliefs are manifested in an organizational structure.

This finding heightens the suspicion that part of the solution to the sustainable agriculture problem lies in gaining a better understanding of the nature of interactions among sustainable agriculture advocates. In concentrating on internal advocacy coalition negotiations, this dissertation reflects the more recent scholarly interest in social dynamics. The case study

will show that the IFFS Network is beset with endless internal negotiations, hindering its ability to focus outward and work for policy and production reforms that would fundamentally improve agriculture.

Kellogg Sponsorship of IFFS Network

In the fall of 1989, Norman Brown, President and CEO of the Kellogg convened an ad hoc meeting on agriculture, rural development, and natural resources. Kellogg was on the verge of setting new foundation goals for the 1990s and was contemplating philanthropic contributions over seven years that would equal what Kellogg had given away during its first 60 years of operation (Kellogg, 1991; Thorburn, 1990a). Periodically, Kellogg had sought the advice of key leaders regarding the direction of the foundation's grant-making. With such dramatic change on the horizon, this meeting was critical.

Brown announced the meeting agenda. The key question was "How can the W. K. Kellogg Foundation be most effective in helping others address future needs related to agriculture, rural development, and natural resources?" (Brown, 1989). Five speakers were invited to make presentations: Garth Youngberg of the Institute for Alternative Agriculture and Jerry DeWitt of the Iowa State Extension Service, two nationally recognized leaders in sustainable agriculture; Paul Taylor, a farmer from Illinois and participant in the Kellogg leadership program; Steve Viderman, President of the Jesse Smith Noyse Foundation; and Orville Bentley, former Deputy Secretary of Research and Extension at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Each speaker itemized what he felt should be included in Kellogg's action plan. Viederman emphasized that "the main issue facing the philanthropic community concerned with environmentally sound agriculture is to ensure the move from interest to commitment" (Viederman, 1989). Bentley focused on the importance of recognizing that the structure of the agricultural research and education system is complex and decentralized, necessitating leadership capacity and innovation of all participants (Bentley, 1989). Taylor cited the need to

increase the scientific orientation of agriculture and food issues, establish producer networks for nontraditional agricultural production and marketing practices, and undertake studies to evaluate social effects associated with sustainable agriculture (Taylor, 1989). DeWitt noted the need to return to the lost art of critical thinking and urged Kellogg to support holistic and system approaches to sustainability. He argued that the agenda was not just sustainable agriculture, but really about building a sustainable society and a "return to values" (DeWitt, 1989). Youngberg contended that there is a heightened need for objective research, analysis, and information. He added that people must embrace ideology — the "morally sustaining ideas" described by Selznick (Selznick, 1966), and he also outlined how a collective vision could be developed. Many of his remarks focused on "community building." He concluded, "The problems in rural America today stem in part from a crisis in community and social identity," and he advised Kellogg to "fund programs that have community building as part of their agendas" (Youngberg, 1989).

On the advice of the committee, Kellogg made a significant investment in sustainable agriculture. Following two years of internal discussions and correspondence and meetings with sustainable agriculture advocates, the Integrated Farm Systems (IFS) grant program was announced in May, 1992. The request for proposals (RFP) listed two project objectives (Kellogg, 1992):

1. Help farmers find and adopt integrated and resource-efficient crop and livestock systems that maintain productivity, that are profitable, and that protect the environment and the personal health of farmers and their families.
2. Assist people and their communities to overcome the barriers to adoption of more sustainable agricultural systems so these systems can serve as a foundation upon which rural American communities will be revitalized.

The RFP stated the goal of the IFS was to tackle barriers, noting that "the greatest barrier may be personal attitudes and beliefs," and further stated that "the Foundation is giving immediate attention to project proposals that create the conditions through which people can

develop more positive attitudes and behaviors toward more sustainable farming systems and rural communities" (Kellogg, 1992).

In 1993, the first IFS grants were awarded to nine projects; in 1994, an additional nine projects were funded (Appendix D). Kellogg began devoting an increasing amount of its budget to agriculture and rural development, and by 1996, these issues consumed 17 percent ($42.3 million) of Kellogg's total budget (Kellogg, 1996). The IFS Network received a total of $8.2 million in its first three years of operation, with grant officers indicating a relatively long-term and open-ended Kellogg investment (Ladley, 1997).

By 1996, when participants changed the network's name to "Integrated Farm and Food Systems" (IFFS), Kellogg was eclipsing the investment made by the other grant makers who had traditionally funded non-governmental organization (NGO) activity in sustainable agriculture. In fact, Kellogg had such hope in the IFFS Network's ability to change the face of American agriculture, that NGOs, foundations, and even USDA watched with keen interest. Would the IFFS investment pay off? Kellogg staff indicated that if the experiment failed, the foundation would retreat from this funding area, and sustainable agriculture advocates were advised to use the money wisely and make it count (Thorburn, 1996: personal communication).

In the pivotal meeting that led to Kellogg's sponsorship of the IFFS Network and in the foundation's RFP, glimmers of information relevant to three of the four hypotheses appear. The sustainable agriculture advisors to Kellogg recognized that identity plays some role in sustainable agriculture, with Youngberg concluding that "problems stem from a crisis in community and social identity" and Viederman stating that "interest alone will not bring about change but that true commitment is necessary". The RFP placed the highest priority on tackling attitudinal barriers and belief systems rather than on specific farming or pollution control goals. The significance of decentralization was alluded to by Bentley and the RFP, and resulting grant awards were tailored to local, community-based collaborations rather than national projects. Finally, a review of the 18 projects (Appendix D) showed that the majority were concerned primarily with bringing together communities of people to engage in dialogue

about sustainable agriculture (e.g., Heartland Network and Holistic Resource Management projects). Far fewer projects were committed to measurable outcomes such as pesticide reduction (e.g., Future Harvest and The Darby Project).

IFFS Networking Conferences

Between 1993 and 1996, Kellogg organized and financed seven semi-annual conferences attended by hundreds of IFFS participants from the 18 individual projects. The goal of the national meetings was to form "a cohesive network of people able to learn from and collaborate with one another" (Kellogg, 1996) by providing "an opportunity for fellowship and community" (Gutherie, 1996). In August 1993, The first national meeting was in Montana in August 1993; the second took place in Arkansas in March, 1994. The activity that took the most time at both conferences, and that remains the most memorable according to conference participants, was the administration and discussion of standardized personality tests (Kellogg, 1993; Gutherie, 1996; McEvoy, 1996). In Montana, participants took the "KAI" personality inventory to measure how people react to change. In Arkansas, participants took the Myers-Briggs personality analysis that, among other things, classified people as introverts or extroverts (Kellogg 1993). Notes from the conferences and interviews with participants indicate that the purpose of the personality testing was to provide insights as to how different people respond to new ideas and handle conflict.

The theme of the next several conferences was community building. The August 1994 conference in Iowa, for example, focused on integrating the participants from the nine projects funded that year with the participants from the nine projects funded in 1993. Although many of the participants from the new IFFS projects had been involved with sustainable agriculture activities for some years, the conference organizers expressed great concern about bringing new people into the "friendship circle" (Kellogg, 1994). Participants broke into small groups and were asked to tell a story about a time when they felt like a part of a community. From these stories, participants were asked to list common characteristics of a community. The conference concluded as people "talked about building community through trust, which was

followed by a somewhat painful exercise in trying to establish community norms for the network" (Kellogg, 1994).

The remaining IFFS conferences focused on the process of collaborative decision making and on leadership. At the February 1994 conference in California, which was centered on the role of "leaders" in the sustainable agriculture community, participants said that they desired a "new" form of leadership, which they described as collaborative rather than traditional. In response to the discussion question ("Could it be that modern leadership is less from the front, where the leader puts a vision forward for others to follow?"), conferees concluded that "this new leadership of collaboration and community may actually function more from the side or even from behind" (Kellogg, 1994). When asked what sustainability meant to them and whether they thought it would be achieved in their lifetime, participants concluded that it was unlikely to be achieved until they were gone from the earth. As a result, they concluded it may be best to focus on "the process that will eventually lead to what we want to achieve" because "change and sustainability are congruent and interconnected" (Kellogg, 1994).

At the August 1996 conference in Maryland, a major portion of the agenda was devoted to sharing stories (Merrigan, 1996b).[1] Most of the presentations and topics concerned community building and the power of collective action. For example, Washington State project participants emphasized that transformational change begins with changing people's beliefs and described how they combined holistic decision-making, leadership development, and the consensus process to bring about change. Participants also made decisions about the future of the network because it was nearing the time when the first nine projects would deplete their non-renewable Kellogg grants. The conferees asked aloud, "Once we have finished

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[1] The author attended the Maryland conference as an invited guest to observe the network and make a presentation on the workings of the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture and the regional Sustainable Agriculture Working Groups. Quotations from participants at the conference are from the author's meeting notes but because permission to quote participants was not asked, attributions are not made.

detailing the lessons of our projects, is there any reason to continue meeting semi-annually?" and then overwhelmingly chose to continue the network, with or without Kellogg support. They agreed that the network would have to enter a new phase of development, moving away from its reliance on Kellogg support and guidance toward self direction and leadership by its members, and adopted the following mission statement:

> The mission of the IFFS Network is to support and strengthen the diverse, grassroots efforts of people doing collaborative, community-based work promoting food and farming systems that foster sustainability. The Network will serve as an avenue for dissemination and multiplication of this experimental learning, by fostering connections among a broad array of stakeholders (IFFS Network Agreement, 1996).

A 21-member Steering Committee was formed to provide "coherent leadership and a unified public voice" and assigned such jobs as developing a draft long-range plan, organizing necessary 501c3 paperwork, setting up the semi-annual meeting and monthly newsletter, and overseeing a small grants program. While participants ratified the Steering Committee and selected members, some expressed worries over sharing authority. One participant said he was "concerned that the organization is becoming too top heavy." The resulting Steering Committee charter took this concern into account, stating that the Steering Committee "is intended to be the Network's servant, taking its direction from the membership of the Network."

By the end of the meeting, the IFFS Network had agreed to a document that included goals, objectives, and a work plan. But not everyone fully embraced the document. One person said that the group "need[ed] to focus more on value and inclusiveness, need[ed] to find a way for culture to come into this — our culture — before hitting people with this document on structure." Another participant concluded that this was all well and good but that "we need to work on openness, listening, respect, and flexibility. We would like to emphasize process." One of the newly elected IFFS Steering Committee members assured the crowd that their

concerns were valid and tried to put the document into perspective by noting that it was a living document that would constantly undergo revision.

Elements related to all four hypotheses were in evidence at the IFFS conferences. Issues related to group identity were manifested in the attention paid to personality assessments (Montana and Arkansas) and through concern about incorporating newcomers into the IFFS "friendship circle" (Iowa). The desire for decentralized decision making was articulated by participants reluctant to accept a structure and the steering committee for the IFFS Network (Maryland). Traditional forms of leadership were criticized and discarded (California). In addition, the enormous value placed on process and community dialogue was clear. Not knowing when or how sustainable agriculture would be achieved, participants described the goal of good processes as the strategy to follow (California). Even the basic IFFS steering committee structure document was accepted only as a "work in progress" (Maryland).

Mid-term Evaluation of IFFS

By 1995, Kellogg had invested millions of dollars in the IFFS Network and decided the time had come to evaluate progress to date and determine whether continued Kellogg contributions to the network were advisable. Kellogg hired Rainbow Research, Inc. to conduct the evaluation. Rainbow is a non-profit consulting firm founded in 1974 and based in Minneapolis. Its mission is to help socially concerned organizations become more effective, Kellogg has hired the firm for a number of evaluation projects.

Throughout 1995, Rainbow interviewed more than 150 IFFS participants about the relevance of the IFFS Network to their professional and personal lives. The foundation asked Rainbow to answer certain questions, several of which relate to my hypotheses. For example, Kellogg asked, "What could be learned about identifying and developing leaders and about the capacity of grantees to provide leadership in their communities and effect public policy?" Rainbow concluded, "People who exhibit leadership capacities often don't identify themselves as 'leaders.'" The firm found that asking participants the question "How are you (more) active

and effective?" was much more revealing than asking them directly about their "leadership" (Rainbow, 1996). This finding is consistent with the tenor of discussions at the IFFS conferences and with my hypothesis related to leadership.

Kellogg was also interested in finding out what had been learned about facilitating collaboration among a wide variety of organizations. Rainbow suggested that Kellogg observe the organizational collaboration of those in minority communities, women's organizations, and other groups that have had "much hard experience in dealing with exclusion and barriers" (Rainbow, 1996). Furthermore, Rainbow emphasized the need to recognize the stress IFFS participants were under because they had less prestige socially and professionally. The opportunities provided by the IFFS conferences were important, Rainbow advised Kellogg, because these participants need to come together and connect with others like them from across the country (Rainbow, 1996). Interestingly, identity politics have been associated with minority and other disenfranchised groups, and the need for IFFS participants to come together as like-minded individuals is consistent with the hypothesis concerning identity groups.

In 1996, Kellogg asked Rainbow to undertake a second evaluation. This time, the evaluation focused on measurable project outcomes — specifically how did these IFFS projects change farming practices and move us toward more sustainable agriculture? Few specific outcomes were discussed. In fact, the evaluation noted the work of only three such projects, one of which was based in Ohio. The evaluators noted that more than one-third of the farms in the Darby, Ohio watershed had enacted, in accordance with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Program recommendations, Highly Erodible Land Conservation Plans and that more than 20 percent of all farmers in the watershed had joined Operation Future Association, which is the IFFS association dedicated to preservation of the environment and farmland preservation (Rainbow, 1997). The Rainbow evaluation found that vast majority of the IFFS projects evaluated in 1996 focused on community building rather than on measurable changes in farming practices. This finding is consistent with my hypothesis that the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition believes good process creates good outcomes.

An Identity Crisis

The newly formed IFFS Network Steering Committee met in March 1997 to work out details of how the network would continue to operate, expand, and collaborate with partner organizations such as the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture. That meeting began with a professional facilitator asking participants to relate how they were feeling and what expectations they had for the meeting. The purpose, stated the facilitator, was to "generate a renewed sense of community." The meeting was held in Ben Lomond, California, at Sequoia Seminars, a nondenominational religious retreat. Participants shared rustic cabins set in a redwood forest, and meetings and meals were held at a central facility on top of the hill adorned with posters quoting from Taoism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity.[2]

An unexpected turn of events occurred when one participant told the group that he was feeling very badly and had just experienced "perhaps, the worst two weeks of [his] life." The subject of his woes was a letter sent by his colleague at Ohio State University to their mutual boss, the Director of the Extension Service. The letter questioned whether it was appropriate for Ohio State personnel to participate in the IFFS Network, since it appeared to be "very focused on sustainable agriculture," and that "little effort has been made to involve 'main stream' agriculture." The colleague wrote, "I struggle with the question of who is empowering this group to work on policy change? Do we feel comfortable with these individuals, their philosophy, and conclusions on needed policy change?"

The IFFS participant from Ohio State was distraught and asked the group for guidance. With great hesitation, he admitted that he tended to agree with his colleague — that the IFFS Network did not reach out to conventional agriculture. His instinct was to involve the American Farm Bureau Federation, commodity groups, and other organizations in the IFFS

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[2] The author attended the March 1997 meeting as a Steering Committee member. Quotes of participants are from the author's meeting notes (Merrigan, 1997a).

Network. Such a strategy would lead to the kind of diversity within IFFS and the kind of credibility within agriculture necessary for dramatic change. A long conversation ensued, as people began to respond to his challenge. Overall, participants sympathized with his plight at the office, having themselves experienced similar threats for their adherence to sustainable agriculture. A participant from Massachusetts shared an interesting perspective. The letter was a good thing, he said, because "at least people aren't talking behind your back." At the conclusion of the evening meeting, however, there was little willingness to expand the scope of IFFS in the aforementioned ways. Instead, participants focused on providing moral support to the Ohio participant and assurances that he was not alone in the "battle."

The Ohio Darby Creek project was one of the few IFFS projects that Rainbow Research identified as achieving specific changes in farming practices. This may have occurred because the IFFS Ohio participant worked along more traditional lines than his IFFS colleagues. Or perhaps the Ohio participant was not ready to embrace the identity group within the sustainable agriculture coalition, questioning the wisdom of being separate from other agricultural and environmental efforts.

Beginning Again with the Chaordic Alliance

Shortly before the March 1997 meeting, Kellogg officials convinced the Steering Committee to abort most of its agenda and instead meet with Dee Hock and his staff of the Chaordic Alliance. Hock introduced himself and said that he was "in the 67th year of [his] becoming." Hock is a retired banker, as well as the founder and first CEO of Visa International. VISA is a for-profit membership corporation with ownership in the form of non-transferable rights of participation. Hock described briefly how he came upon the idea of VISA International almost 30 tears earlier, an entity that he described as a highly decentralized and collaborative organization. As Hock explained it, the VISA concept depends on simultaneous competition and collaboration. Affiliated banks issue their own (but standardized) cards and compete against each other for customers. At the same time, participating merchants must cooperate by accepting any Visa card issued by any bank. The

success of VISA is credited, as one article Hock passed around the room noted, to "The Trillion-Dollar Vision of Dee Hock." Hock called VISA an "enabling organization" with "elements of Jeffersonian democracy, elements of the free market, of government franchising — almost every kind of organization you can think about. But it's none of them. Like the body, the brain, and the biosphere, it's largely self organizing" (FAST Company, 1996: 3).

Aware that some IFFS participants might look askance at the VISA model, Hock was quick to say that with VISA International, they "got the organization only about 20% right". He emphasized that shortly after it was launched, he severed his business connections and retreated to a 200-acre farm, where he lived in semi-isolation for 10 years. At the prompting of the Joyce Foundation, Hock came back into public life in 1994 to help a variety of groups embrace his concept of organization called "chaordism." Hock emphasized that a successful organization, like Visa, will have both competition — a form of chaos, as well as cooperation — a form of order. He merged the words, then coined and trademarked the word "chaord" to describe such organizations (Appendix E). He founded The Chaordic Alliance, a nonprofit group in southern California, to "help groups discover their underlying belief systems." Hock told the IFFS Steering Committee, "Far better than a precise plan is a clear sense of direction and compelling beliefs that lay within you. The question is, how do you evoke it?" He told the Joyce Foundation that he would like to contribute to the building of five or six large, extremely successful examples of chaordic organizations. Most importantly, he said, these organizations would have to be four-dimensional. The often ignored fourth dimension, Hock said, was "ethical and spiritual.... All organizations are merely conceptual embodiments of a very old, very basic idea — the idea of community."

IFFS Steering Committee participants asked Hock for some examples, beyond VISA, of chaords. Hock said that Alcoholics Anonymous, the World Weather Watch, and the continent of Antarctica were among examples of chaords. Furthermore, Hock has worked with several organizations to discover the chaord within, including Ralph Nader's Appleseed Foundation, the University of Iowa Extension Service, and the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance. Each success, Hock says, will teach us a little more about how to do it next time. "We can have a

vision of what it will eventually be. But we won't see that in our lifetime. That's the fun of it, the mystery. That's why this kind of thinking becomes so enormously exciting, serious, and playful at the same time."

Hock asked IFFS participants to describe what it was that brought them together, besides Kellogg's money. A Michigan participant said, "As a human species we have lost our way on this planet in the wilderness called life. When you're lost, the most critical thing to maintain is hope. I have found this circle [of people] holds more hope than anywhere I've ever been." A participant from Nebraska said that "my community's been fractured. I want to preserve our rural community." A participant from California said she realized she was involved in an "elaborate distraction from the meaning of life. What I care most about was the connections, the people I love. This is sacred." After going around the room, with each participant sharing similar feelings, Hock remarked, "Society is bringing out our worst behavior, not our best." He stated that tribes and countries never die out from suppression or conflict but do so when they lose vision, and said that our society was on the brink of regressing to a dictatorial order. He added that it was too late for pessimism, that he "wanted to spend the rest of his days with people who have hope."

After listening to the group, Hock reiterated the six things he heard: "First, I heard a strong sense of wanting to belong and to give. Second, a concern for stewardship. Third a sense of community and of place. Fourth, a desire for real health. Fifth, a strong sense of inclusiveness — how do we bring in the people who are diametrically opposed to what we do? And sixth, a strong desire to be involved with something of value." He concluded, "I don't see this as 'sustainable agriculture' or 'conventional agriculture' but rather 'community agriculture'.... You have a bad case of the chaordic disease already. What I worry about is that you are about to cure it."

Hock proceeded to critique the Steering Committee organizational plan and IFFS Network mission statement and advised the group to throw the whole thing out and begin again by developing a common sense of purpose for the organization (Appendix E). Hock insisted

that the group define sustainability and asked everyone in the room to contribute their definition. Because everyone in the room had participated in numerous definitional exercises, several sighs of frustration were heard. A few participants wondered if the group was being asked to "reinvent the wheel," but Hock was persuasive. A Maryland participant did challenge the process, asking Hock and the group "What's the glue that will hold us together? What is there to get the local organizations to trickle up? With the VISA and fisheries examples, you get something you need by joining. What about with IFFS? Just a common belief system won't do it. There needs to be more."

All four hypotheses were in play through the introduction of Hock and the Chaordic Alliance to the IFFS Network. First, in relation to group identity, there was an element of spirituality surrounding the meeting — a religious retreat was chosen as the site, and Hock emphasized the importance of the ethical and spiritual dimensions of sustainability. In addition, there was a strong focus on the importance of community and community values. Second, the appeal of the VISA model for the IFFS participants was that it was decentralized — that individual banks maintain control and grant authority to the central bank. Finally, Hock described himself as in the process of "becoming" and extolled processes rather than precise plans since participants are unlikely to see sustainable agriculture in their lifetimes.

Choosing a "Chaordic" Path

In describing the elements of a chaordic organization, Hock told the IFFS group that the challenge lies in creating consensus on basic principles, which usually boil down to no more than a dozen. Only after a group decides on principles should issues of structure be discussed. At that point, "We ask what concept of structure will allow us to adhere to our deepest beliefs." Hock emphasized that a chaordic organization must be self organizing and self governing. When asked how his concept of organization differed from network theory or decentralization, Hock stated "There were common elements." Hock took several opportunities to bash the university system, saying that "basically, academics write BS papers and don't know what

they're talking about." These comments appeared to be well received by many in the group who nodded their heads in agreement.

A poll of participants resulted in an agreement to continue, although a few participants seemed skeptical. Hock said that developing a world-wide sustainable agriculture chaordic organization would require a huge investment of time. He asked the group to designate eight to ten people as "Framers." These individuals would work closely with Hock and the staff at the Chaordic Alliance to draft principles for the group in multi-day meetings every six weeks over an 18-month period. In addition to these meetings, the Framers would need to meet every eight weeks with the remaining members of the Steering Committee — renamed Design Team Members — to discuss the drafts and obtain group "buy in." Thus, the Steering Committee would be replaced by Framers and a Design Team. Framers were asked to commit 40 days over the subsequent 18 months to develop the concept of the world-wide sustainable agriculture chaord and Design Team Members 20 days during the same time period. This was a daunting commitment for many participants who work for small non-profit and resource-constrained organizations or university extension services or were self-employed farmers. Yet no recruitment was necessary; people volunteered.

A few weeks after the meeting with Hock at Ben Lomond, a participant from Montana sent an e-mail message to the other participants. Knowing that the Framers would continue to work on defining sustainable agriculture, she has this to say:

> I'd like to share a new definition of sustainable agriculture that I came up with on the airplane trip home from Ben Lomond. I thought it might help inform the dreaded but inevitable discussion on definitions for the Chaordic glossary: "Sustainable agriculture is a systems, or ecological, approach to management that seeks social, environmental, and economic health at every level." The idea here is to define the approach, not the agricultural system, since none of us knows what a truly sustainable agricultural system looks like in all (or even any) environments (Matheson, 1997).

The IFFS Network continues to meet, in small and large groups, with and without Dee Hock, to sort through various organizational issues and discover whether there is a chaord within.

Lost Opportunities in Sustainable Agriculture

This brief history of the IFFS Network does not document every IFFS meeting, project effort, or conversation. As with all case studies, it is intended to provide the reader with a clear sense of the important elements. In summarizing the case, care was taken not to shortchange any meeting notes or discussions that focused on specific natural resource objectives. No lengthy discussions were skipped that concerned problems with and/or potential solutions for ground-water protection, pesticide contamination, crop rotations, manure management, genetic diversity, and other natural resource issues commonly identified as significant to sustainable agriculture. Similarly, no in-depth discussions of specific rural community objectives such as water, sewer, and housing infrastructure needs were ignored. There simply were no such discussions or solutions at the meetings attended, nor is there any mention of them in the historical documents studied. Perhaps the most perplexing element of this case is not what is there, but rather what is missing.

The IFFS Framers and Design Team committed to an 18-month drafting process, during which they retreated to various locations and spent days around tables trying to reach consensus on the mission, principles, and structure for the IFFS Network — for the second time around. By many measures, 18 months is a long time. For example, at current rates, it is estimated that 1.5 million acres of farmland are lost in this country every 18 months (USDA, NRCS, 1992). At current rates, two and one-half billion tons of erosion will occur in the United States within 18 months (USDA, 1997: 7). Every day of every year, wetlands are converted, ground water is contaminated, and soils are salinized.

The social costs of maintaining current agricultural practices are also high. Fewer and fewer small and moderate-sized farms are profitable. As a result, thousands number of farmers

leave agriculture every year, and while only few people begin farming. Because of the dissolution of the farming community, rural townsfolk lack the resources to maintain adequate waste water and sewer systems. The odd priorities of U.S. Department of Agriculture programs were dramatized by a group of environmental and rural development activists during the 1996 legislative debate on the farm bill. They pointed out that between 1985 and 1995, $250 million in commodity subsidy payments were made to residents of Arkansas County, Arkansas, regardless of need. This same county has 5,000 families without potable water, something the federal government could remedy with far less than it spent subsidizing crops (Environmental Working Group, 1995).

None of these specific natural resource or rural development needs were discussed in any detail at the IFFS Network meetings. Yet, these issues are the focus of most studies and commissions concerned with sustainable development. Did the IFFS Network fail to discuss these issues in depth because the organization is comprised of the wrong people — the uninitiated, uninformed, or uninvolved? To the contrary, there is ample evidence that these people are the nationally recognized leaders of the sustainable agriculture community. Many of them have worked together in various sustainable agriculture and rural community coalitions for years. Many have been invited to share their expertise at USDA, EPA, and PCSD forums. Many have published influential articles on various issues concerning agricultural sustainability. In fact, there is no reason to suspect that IFFS Network participants are anything less than typical of the broader sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition. Furthermore, all the evidence suggests that Kellogg is serious about promoting sustainable agriculture and believes that the work of the IFFS Network and, more recently, the network's association with Dee Hock will lead to significant advances.

Revisiting the Hypotheses

The first hypothesis postulates that the more people are ridiculed or marginalized for their interests, the more their concerns focus on issues of identity that ultimately define the people in the group. This is important in relation to sustainable agriculture advocates because,

as described in Chapter Two, when issues are attached to identity, politics become a matter of principle and compromise is viewed as betrayal. As revealed in the IFFS case study, the primary focus of IFFS participants is internal negotiation over the principle values and beliefs upon which to establish a future worldwide sustainable agriculture organization.

If an identity group does exist within SAAC, it would have major implications for the kind and quality of negotiations that can occur. It would mean that the advocacy coalition's ability to engage in policy-oriented learning over time (a key premise of the Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith thesis) would be seriously hampered because members of the identity group would be less open to having their basic core beliefs challenged and would resist change. In addition, the existence of an identity group would lead to communication — and, possibly, cultural — gaps between the identity group and the broader membership of the advocacy coalition. This disconnect would require spending time and energy on internal negotiations that could otherwise be devoted to obtaining desired outcomes in the policy arena. And while an identity group would contribute to coalition stability, an important feature of advocacy coalitions according to Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, it could also contribute to exclusionary practices that would turn away potential participants.

The second hypothesis focuses on an obsession with process, suggesting that the more people distrust conventional science, the more they will emphasize decison-making processes. Participants at the IFFS meetings apparently do distrust conventional science or at least are not convinced that it works. One lesson from the IFFS meetings that Rainbow Research gleaned was that "The food system will change not just through efforts to reform longstanding institutions such as land grant universities, but through the emergence of new institutions more clearly dedicated to environmentally friendly, community-friendly agriculture.... Land grants have not been leaders in developing sustainable systems, for sure" (Rainbow, 1996). As one participant told Kellogg, "While science is of crucial importance, education about natural resources and agricultural issues should not remain totally in the domain of science. Fund some humanities programs that use plays, poetry, and story-telling as approaches to identifying and clarifying the issue" (Youngberg, 1989).

Rather than striking a balance between process and outcome-oriented work, identity groups exhibit an adherence to the adage "good process makes good outcomes," which can hinder the ability of an advocacy coalition to produce measurable outcomes. As Hock told IFFS participants, "Our commitment is to the process that leads to everything being known". Groups engaging in good decisionmaking processes are likely to have improved outcomes, but blind faith in good processes will not alone lead to product-oriented results. Applying this hypothesis to sustainable agriculture, it is postulated that SAAC has placed process above all else as the most effective strategy to achieve sustainable agriculture. As was seen in the IFFS case, great importance is placed on inclusive, supra-democratic, community-based dialogues which are thought to be the essential element needed to determine the meaning, value, and policy needs for SAAC.

If the desire for good processes outweighs all else facing the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition, it would have major implications for the kind and quality of negotiations that can occur. First, opportunities for immediate policy reform may be bypassed as the coalition devotes its energy to internal dialogue. Second, the lack of goals and measurable outcomes may deter potential participants from engaging in the coalition. Finally, and most importantly, the belief that process alone will solve the sustainability problem may sidetrack many of the potentially influential and experienced sustainable agriculture advocates, meaning the overall debate in the policy subsystem would not benefit from their expertise.

The third hypothesis postulated that the more people believe in collective knowledge, the more they will not approve of hierarchial organizations. Applying this second hypothesis to sustainable agriculture, it is postulated that decentralized decisionmaking was critical to the development of SAAC but that continued and extreme adherence to decentralism has limited the coalition's ability to succeed in the policy subsystem.

Aware of the debate over the value of decentralism to advocacy coalitions, the IFFS Network was selected. As was revealed in the case description, participants in the IFFS Network consider decentralized decisionmaking to be essential to the Network's success. If

decentralism is strongly adhered to within the broader SAAC, as indicated by the IFFS Network case, it would have major implications for the kind and quality of negotiations that can occur. First, it would mean that few, if any, top-down decisions could be made and therefore the response of the advocacy coalition to any emerging policy debate would necessarily be slow and piecemeal. Second, the various participants within an advocacy coalition would find it difficult to come to an overall consensus as each individual group expects autonomy. Third, other advocacy coalitions within the policy subsystem would find it difficult to negotiate with SAAC because of the multitude of decisionmakers. Finally, the multiple decisionmaking points may lead to internal contradictions: as one critic of government devolution observed, fifty or more separate choices add up to no choice at all (Donahue, 1997: 22).

The fourth hypothesis states that the more people dislike concentrated power, the less willing they are to designate or accept traditional leaders. Applying this fourth hypothesis to SAAC, it is postulated that without designated leaders, the advocacy coalition will fail to achieve desired reforms in the policy subsystem. If SAAC indeed has little tolerance for hierarchies and centralized decisionmaking, as postulated earlier, it may follow that participants are also adverse to assigning leadership roles among its members because doing so would place certain individuals or groups in a position where they could speak for the entirety. Even the most respected and accomplished members of SAAC protest any formal leadership designation. This may be because the absence of leadership and hierarchies is essential for all individuals to identify with sustainable agriculture — the cause and its community — as opposed to its leaders and its structure. It may be the unspoken resolve of tension between organizations in the quest for foundation funding. It may also be because those within the sustainability coalition believe they are working to "save the world," and designating a leader is too closely aligned to designating a savior.

The case of the IFFS Network highlights the role of leaders within the network. The case reveals that IFFS participants are reluctant to grant leadership responsibilities even to broad-based committees. If participants in the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition are

loath to assign leadership roles within the coalition, this will affect the kind and quality of negotiations that can occur. First, a lack of designated leaders would likely cause delays in the coalition's response to events in the policy subsystem and therefore limit its effectiveness. Second, participants in the larger policy subsystem would be frustrated in their efforts to negotiate with the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition because no designated leaders are available to meet, speak, and negotiate on behalf of the coalition. Third, and most importantly, the lack of leaders to ferment conflict would hinder the coalition's ability to sharpen their positions and strengthen their values.

In Chapter Two, perspectives on SAAC were shared by participants in the Campaign. In this chapter, the case of the IFFS Network was used to formulate and explain the hypotheses. Concluding this first phase of research, it is time to proceed to Chapter Four where the third national coalition effort on sustainable agriculture — SARE — is examined and extensive testing of the hypotheses is discussed.

Chapter 4: Hypothesis Testing

The preceding chapter presented the IFFS case study, from which four hypotheses were formulated. In this chapter the hypotheses are tested to determine their usefulness in explaining the internal workings of the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition (SAAC). The chapter begins with a brief review of the SARE program — chosen as the focal point for testing the hypotheses — followed by a review of the methodology for testing the hypotheses, which included face-to-face interviews and a survey. The chapter then provides test results from the interviews and the survey for each of the four hypotheses.

SARE — The Nexus of Sustainable Agriculture Policy Development

To investigate the four hypotheses, it was necessary to choose a focal point, or common reference, familiar to most people involved with sustainable agricultural issues. The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the most significant federal policy effort related to sustainable agriculture and, for this reason, was selected as the venue for my interviews and survey.

The SARE program is housed in the Research, Education, and Economics mission area of USDA and its purpose is to provide competitive grants for research and education projects to further knowledge and adoption of sustainable agriculture practices. The SARE program defines its mission as follows: "to increase knowledge about — and help farmers and ranchers adopt — more sustainable practices that are profitable, environmentally sound, and beneficial to local communities and society in general. SARE provides funding for research, demonstration, education and extension projects carried out by scientists, producers, educators and private sector representatives" (SARE, 1998).

SARE is strictly a science and education grant program, however, most people who call or write USDA or the Environmental Protection Agency about any aspect of sustainable agriculture are referred to the SARE office regardless of whether their request has anything to

do with science and education. For example, SARE program staff have been asked to help with habitat designation, credit reform, organic farming certification, and other issues that fall broadly within the scope of concerns raised by environmentalists and small farm promoters. While SARE program staff sensibly reroute these requests to appropriate USDA agencies, the frequency with which this occurs underscores the fact that the SARE program is viewed as the "home" of sustainable agriculture within the federal government.

As the "home" for sustainable agriculture, the SARE Program has been at the heart of political controversy over the notion and value of sustainable agriculture. To begin with, it took several years of fighting before the SARE program was fully birthed. First introduced as legislation in 1983, then authorized as part of the 1985 farm bill, the SARE program was nevertheless inoperable until it received its first appropriation in 1988 — some $3.9 million to fund competitive grants for agricultural research and education. Appropriations for the program since then have generated an annual appropriations battle between supporters and opponents of sustainable agriculture. Funding for the SARE program reached its pinnacle in 1995, at a little more than $12 million, then declined to an average $11.5 million from 1996 through 1999. This decrease occurred despite the efforts of sustainable agriculture activists to increase congressional appropriations for the program.

Over the past decade, the SARE program funneled $80.6 million to support 1,200 projects in three categories. First came the competitive grants project, which distributes grants that typically range from $30,000 to $200,000. Initially, the grants went primarily to university researchers because Congress was concerned about scientific credibility. Later, in part because SAAC prevailed, the grants were expanded to include scientists, producers, and others through what the SARE program calls "an interdisciplinary approach". In 1992, a second competitive grants category was established, directed at farmers and ranchers to run on-site research experiments. Grants in this category are awarded in amounts between $500 to $10,000. The third category, established in 1994, funds professional development, again on a competitive basis, for Cooperative Extension Service staff and other agriculture professionals. The

objective is to "spread the knowledge about sustainable concepts and practices gained from SARE projects" (SARE, 1998).

Examples of SARE program grants include training of USDA Natural Resource and Conservation Service and Cooperative Extension Service staff in management intensive grazing (MIG) so that they can assist southern ranchers. The goal is to increase use of forage in southern pastures from 30 percent under conventional methods to 70 percent under MIG methods. In North Dakota, a producer grant helped a ranching couple convert to MIG techniques and protect wildlife habitat on native prairie. Grants have supported economic case studies to determine the benefits of an organic dairy in Vermont; farmer cooperatives and marketing studies to help farmers access markets and develop small-scale processing facilities; crop rotation studies involving lupin, tropical corn, and hybrid pearl millet; and studies of cover crops and new tillage regimes (for additional information on SARE program grants and funding see Appendix F).

A 1994 SARE report to Congress included a revealing prefatory statement: "SARE has fought many battles, been battered and bruised, endured victory and defeat, and successfully carried the torch for sustainable agriculture in this country" (SARE, 1994). The SARE program has served as a unifying force across the country for SAAC participants. It has helped sustainable agriculture gain scientific credibility. In some cases, it has served as a shield for scientists through sanctioning of research efforts that may be viewed as questionable or unacceptable by many people in traditional agriculture. But the SARE program has also served as a lightening rod for controversy, which Senator Kerrey learned (see Chapter One), in part because the debates over sustainable agriculture go beyond research and extension to encompass the philosophy of science, sociology, and rural development, among other subjects.

Evidence of the Advocacy Coalition

In a 1994 survey of participants of the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture (Campaign) the importance of the SARE program not only outranked all other sustainability

initiatives but was viewed as twice as important as any other effort. The SARE program has served to build the network of sustainable agriculture advocates who have met across the country through lobbying and research efforts. It has provided SAAC with a formal framework and connection to governmental decisionmaking. Numerous documents and events highlight the close connections between SAAC and the SARE program.

First, SAAC has a visible lobbying presence in support of the SARE program. Numerous letters and written testimony to the various congressional authorizing and appropriating committees over the past decade provide a clear paper trail of the efforts of SAAC. As a staff member of the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee from 1987-1992, I was repeatedly lobbied by sustainable agriculture advocates in favor of the SARE program. At the same time, representatives of commodity groups and agribusiness lobbied against the program. In a personal memoir, former SARE program director Patrick Madden discussed the need for the advocacy coalition: "Support of these private organizations was simply essential to continuation of the program. Without their endorsement, and particularly if they opposed the program, it would be dead on arrival in the appropriation committees" (Madden, 1995).

Second, the SARE program was structured to accomodate SAAC demands. It was designed to emphasize regional leadership and regional decision-making reflecting the decentralized authority that is a trademark of SAAC. Program guidelines were also developed to place more emphasis on grassroots involvement in the program. Madden justified this decision: "in light of possible criticism from Wisconsin non-profits who where upset at not being included in the administrative councils, we decided to modify the program guidelines to stipulate that the private organization in each state had the prerogative of selecting their own representatives for the SARE administration" (Madden, 1995).

Third, the SARE program expanded its grantmaking to accomodate SAAC demands. Because of concern that too much money was going to traditional research as opposed to farmer-led research, SAAC successfully lobbied Congress and the administration for a set aside program for producer grants. According to its legislative mandate, the primary goal of the

SARE program is to develop and promote widespread adoption of more sustainable farming and ranching systems. Initially, SARE program administrators focused exclusively on natural resource studies. Now well established, the SARE program has broadened to include within its scope several projects oriented toward the broader social goals of enhancing the quality of life for farm families and rural communities. This came about only through the insistence of the advocacy coalition, although it has yet to amount to significant sums of money. Again, Madden acknowledges SAAC's influence, "The language concerning family farms was deliberately introduced as a result of extensive discussions with private nonprofit organizations" (Madden, 1995).

Finally, participants within SAAC have even undertaken formal evaluations of SARE. In March 1996 participants from regional SAWGs (Sustainable Agriculture Working Groups), and critical members of the Campaign, met together in Washington to conduct the first national SAWG evaluation of the SARE program. Participants asked whether "their" program was living up to their needs and objectives. It was determined that there was a need for all SAWGs to get together regularly and compare notes to ensure that the SARE program "does the right thing". Overall, participants were pleased with current SARE operations though they acknowledged that it had been an uphill battle. One participant reflected, "We've spent a lot of money teaching researchers how hard it is to farm" while another stated, "The vision of these words [the authorizing legislation] were ahead of time. Now it's starting to match" (Merrigan, SAWG, 1996). A representative of the southern region said that their administrative council now formally solicited SAWGs for membership. Participants laughed at her tale of how she succeeded in moving the SARE program meetings from a traditional hotel to a 4-H camp which prompted a government bureaucrat to nervously observe, "I think this is a communal conference facility" (Merrigan, SAWG 1996).

Research Methodology

I chose to use both a written questionnaire and personnel interviews to test the hypotheses to provide a more complete and accurate assessment. The questionnaire is

particularly noteworthy for two reasons. First, it represents a step forward since there has been little effort at quantification in this field of study. Second, most studies of the sustainable agriculture community rely solely on interviews. The questionnaire used in this study is the largest survey of people involved with sustainable agriculture issues to date in this country.

My overall survey design, including the two methods (questionnaire and interview), is described by Arlene Fink as a cross-sectional survey that provides "a portrait of a group during one time period, now or in the past" and which may rely on more than one type of survey measure (Fink, 1995c: 49). Fink lists as a benefit of cross-sectional design the ability to provide "baseline information on survey participants and descriptive information about the intervention" (Fink, 1995c: 64). As for risks, Fink notes that "external validity can be a problem if the sample is not representative of the population" (Fink, 1995c: 60), a risk that I minimized through the selection processes described below.

Empirical testing is needed to augment what can be gleaned from the qualitative aspects of this investigation. In turn, the empirical testing of beliefs, values, and culture benefits from the results of the interviews which provide critical contextual insight for sound interpretation of the questionnaire data. Collaborative use of the two methods also allows cross-checking to determine whether either the interview or questionnaire has weaknesses through ill-conceived design or whether the hypotheses were incorrect. For each hypothesis discussed in this chapter, therefore, the results from the two research methods are intertwined in the process of evaluating the hypothesis.

Personal Interviews

I conducted 20 face-to-face interviews from August 1996 to March 1997. The interviews were open ended, approximately 90 minutes in duration, and conducted using an interview guide to ensure that the subjects would be prompted to address similar topics and questions (see Appendix G for protocol). The interviews were taped, transcribed, and coded

for applicability to the hypotheses. Respondents were told their remarks would not be attributed and, in such form, are included in this chapter.

Selecting people to interview. Selection of subjects took into account five factors. First, all were recognized national leaders in sustainable agriculture as evidenced by their positions, memberships, and general reputations. For example, three of the four people who have served as co-chairperson of the Campaign during its history were interviewed as was one of the two co-chairpersons of the IFFS Steering Committee. Second, the subjects represented a reasonable regional distribution — 17 states. Third, gender distribution reflected that of the SAAC at large — 7 females and 13 males were interviewed. Fourth, subjects were selected from the following sectors in proportion to the participation of the sectors in sustainable agriculture broadly and SARE specifically: scientific (6 people), non-profit advocacy (6 people), farming (6 people), and government (2 people). Finally, care was taken not to have organic farmers and advocates, who represent a subset of sustainable agriculture, to be overrepresented within the group — only 7 of the 20 interviewees were in the organic sector in some capacity. See Appendix H for a list of interviewees.

In his discussion of interview methodology, Grant McCracken suggests that less is more and concludes that 8 to 10 respondents is often sufficient (McCracken, 1988). In keeping with the less-is-more guideline, I selected the number of participants that would reasonably reflect the diversity of the sustainable agriculture movement. McCracken also emphasizes that the group is not chosen to represent some part of the larger world but to provide "an opportunity to glimpse the complicated character, organization, and logic of culture" (McCracken, 1988). In this respect, my interviewees represented a kind of panel of informants.

Robert Weiss notes several uses for interview research, including the ability to obtain process descriptions and holistic understanding of groups that carry out interrelated functions (Weiss, 1994). For these reasons, interviews are at the heart of my study. I chose open-ended interviews because they tend to elicit more data than structured interviews and because they help protect the integrity of the interview. The questions do not overwhelm the subject and

bias the results. Rather, interviewers are allowed to be surprised by information that emerges and that they may not have known to seek.

In addition, I conducted the interviews in confidence. Respondents lie infrequently (Weiss, 1994), but some researchers recommend confidentiality promises as a means of eliciting greater disclosure (Johnson and Joslyn, 1991).

The Questionnaire

In any written questionnaire, the greatest concern is to design good questions. Will they be understood by respondents? Will they result in what I want to know? Linda Bourque and Eve Fielder state that the ideal solution is to find sets of questions that have already been developed, tested, and used and "simply adopt those questions as written" (Bourque and Fielder, 1995: 32). They list several advantages to this approach, including: "[S]election of possible answer categories has already been worked out and tested in prior studies.... [I]nstructions have been developed and tested.... [U]sing questions exactly as they were used in another study allows the data you collect to be compared to the data collected in those prior studies or to a standard population" (Bourque and Fielder, 1995: 32). Because there have been few, if any, extensive questionnaires developed for surveying participants in sustainable agriculture issues, the avenue suggested by Bourque and Fielder was not applicable in my situation. Future researchers may find it useful to incorporate the questionnaire used in this study into their work.

To design good questions for this study required an understanding of the potential respondents' culture. Participant observation research is critical in reaching this understanding. As Fink states, "Remember that questions are asked in a social, cultural, and economic context" (Fink, 1995b: 17). Familiarity with the values and experiences of the population to be tested allows one to design questions that make sense to respondents and to which they will respond more willingly. Such familiarity also increases the likelihood that meaningful

inferences can be drawn from respondents' answers (Office of Management and Budget, 1983: 29).

The sequence of research is therefore important. I purposely delayed development of the questionnaire until I had completed the IFFS case study and conducted the 20 personal interviews. These two tasks, together with my 15 years in the field of sustainable agriculture, aided me in designing a questionnaire that was widely understood by the respondents. Terms that may be confusing outside the world of sustainable agriculture held common meaning for survey participants and were readily grasped.

The questionnaire is found at Appendix I.[1] It contains 39 questions, including seven basic demographic questions. Many of the topics explored in this study concern subjective values and beliefs. Therefore, 24 of the questions — the vast majority — require responses based on an ordinal scale. Respondents chose answers along a continuum of six choices ordered from the positive (strongly agree) to the negative (strongly disagree) or "don't know", the seventh choice. Ordinal scales are normal in survey work. In fact, Fink describes them as "extremely common" and notes that "typical surveys tend to have more ordinal measures than any other kind" (Fink, 1995b: 49).

Five multiple choice questions were included, and three open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire required a written response. On questionnaires, open-ended questions are less likely to get a response, but I was interested in collecting at least some information, possibly data I did not expect, that stemmed from questions not forced into categories.[2]

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[1] While the literature contains much about the design of questions, it has little to say about the physical layout of written questionnaires. The only specific recommendation was that the instrument be readable, or "easy on the eyes." I therefore hired a graphic designer to help develop the layout, trusting that she knew better than I what would work best.

[2] A second purpose of the open-ended questions was to get information to assist SARE program managers. Over the years, I have worked to improve the SARE program and saw the questionnaire as an opportunity to provide staff with useful information from people who are familiar with the program. I also used these questions as an incentive for SARE conference

Pre-testing of the questionnaire was necessary to determine if the instrument contained errors or needed correction before distribution. While it is important to pre-test a draft questionnaire with the population under study, it is also necessary to use subjects who will not be participating in the actual survey (Fink, 1995a: 86). The draft of this questionnaire was administered to ten people working in sustainable agriculture who are typical of the population to be tested. They were asked to complete the draft questionnaire at their leisure, the same direction given to the actual study respondents, and to time themselves. Subsequent meetings with each of the ten pre-test participants resulted in several modifications to the instrument.[3]

Bourque and Fielder note that questionnaires should be no longer than 12 pages and that most range between four and 12 pages (Bourque and Fielder, 1995: 69). They also state that "when a questionnaire is administered in a completely unsupervised administration, it is imperative that the questionnaire be completely self-sufficient, or able to "stand alone" (Bourque and Fielder, 1995: 7). The questionnaire in this study was six pages, one of them containing instructions and five presenting the questions. My goal was to design the questionnaire so that it would be self explanatory and would take an average of 10 minutes to complete. Pre-testing indicated the goal was accomplished.

My desire to keep the questionnaire relatively short and easy to understand stemmed in part from the population I had decided to survey — participants at an upcoming SARE conference (see Selection of Questionnaire Population immediately below). I believed this

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organizers (see discussion under Distribution, Collection, and Analysis of the Questionnaire) to help "sell" the questionnaire.

[3] A second test of the questionnaire would have been ideal, but cost and time constraints prevented this step. Had the second test been run, I might have caught two minor errors in the questionnaire — a typographical error on the first page that caused a one-year overlap between two of the options respondents were given to indicate when they entered sustainable agriculture advocacy, categories that were designed to be mutually exclusive. Second, several respondents reported that they were momentarily discouraged by the appearance of the middle two pages because it looked to them that completing the questionnaire would take a very long time. Had I known, there may have been ways to design the pages to look less daunting. Also, a second pre-test might have enabled a review by survey design experts as Fink (1995b: 25) suggests.

format would secure an acceptable rate of return for three reasons. First, I expected that many of the respondents would be farmers who typically disdain paperwork. Second, there was no real incentive for anyone at the conference to complete the questionnaire.[4] Third, I knew I would be asking people to fit the questionnaire in among many competing activities.

To further improve the odds that people would fill out and return the questionnaire, I placed the name and logo of my employer on the cover page. My employer at the time — the Henry A. Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture — was well-known, respected, and at the forefront of the sustainable agriculture debate. Identifying the questionnaire with the Institute would likely enhance the credibility of the instrument and overall effort.

Selection of Questionnaire Population. I chose to distribute the questionnaire at the Tenth Anniversary Conference of SARE ("Building on a Decade of Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education") in Austin, Texas, March 5-7, 1998.

The purpose of the conference, according to organizers, was to celebrate the achievements of the program and look forward to the next decade. The conference brochure advertised that the meeting would "bring together researchers, farmers and ranchers, agricultural extension agents and other educators, sustainable agriculture advocates, and other partners for three days of informative sessions and a farm tour on a variety of profitable, environmentally sound, and socially responsible agricultural topics."

The keynote speakers, representing a cross section typical of sustainable agriculture, included Jim Hightower, the ex-commissioner of agriculture from Texas; USDA Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Rich Rominger; three farmers; one activist from a non-profit organization; and a research professor. I participated on the planning committee, which

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[4] I had relatively nothing to offer respondents to encourage their completion of the questionnaire. An example of a real incentive that can guarantee a high response rate is the typical practice at many USDA Extension Service conferences, where the only way to get a lunch ticket is by turning in a completed survey.

consisted of a mix of advocates, researchers, and farmers. The event included technical and non-technical poster sessions that were heavily attended. Concurrent sessions featured marketing, soil quality, the structure of agriculture, animal agriculture, and on-farm research, among others. Interestingly and as further evidence of the relevance of the case study in Chapter Three, one conference session, "Community Partnerships: Models of Networking," featured the Kellogg IFFS network.

The conference was advertised through several channels. All 717 individuals and organizations listed in SARE program's *The Sustainable Agriculture Directory of Expertise* received an announcement through the mail. An announcement was published in the National Agriculture Library's Sustainable Agriculture Network calendar of events that is mailed to 500 people. The director of the sustainable agriculture division of the National Agricultural Library also sent notices of the conference to her list of 300 people high in the echelons of sustainable agriculture. The announcement was posted on the internet at the SANET site and the SARE web page for months prior to the event. Organizations such as the Campaign sent information out to their networks, and I personally saw announcements in the newsletters of several organizations. The SARE program regional councils put out the word at the regional level as well, and all of the councils offered limited scholarships to help ensure the attendance of some activists and farmers who could otherwise not afford to participate. The general sense of the conference organizers, and one with which I concur, was that announcements of the conference permeated the sustainable agriculture world.

Representation of the SAAC at the SARE conference. I have no reason to suspect that attendance at the conference did not adequately reflect the overall make-up of sustainable agriculture advocates. The SARE progam has been the primary point of focus of the Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture and numerous other groups for more than a decade, and SARE-sponsored events appear to be an excellent avenue for accessing a representative cross-section of those involved with sustainable agriculture. The one exception was the relatively high proportion of academicians who attended, although this was not unexpected. These people normally have program funding for travel to out-of-state events. Box 4-1 lists selected

organizations that had members attend the SARE Conference and that I consider to be part of SAAC. While this list is not inclusive, and does not account for the many farmers who participate in SAAC but who listed their organization as the farm, it does provide clear evidence that SAAC participants were plentiful at the SARE conference.

Box 4.1

Selected Registered Participant Organizations at the SARE 10th Anniversary Conference Who Also Participate in the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture or other SAAC Activities

National Organizations
National Campaign for Sus. Ag
The Nature Conservancy
Audubon Society
American Farmland Trust
Rural Coalition
Henry A. Wallace Institute
RAFI
Rodale Institute
Mothers and Others

Regional Organizations
Federation of Southern Cooperatives
Center for Rural Affairs
Michael Fields Ag. Institute

Local Organizations
Sea Change (Philadelphia, PA)
Area Food Circle (Columbus, MO)
Hartford Food System (CT)

State Organizations
Practical Farmers (IA)
The Food Alliance (OR)
NOFA (NY)
Kerr Center for Sus. Ag. (OK)
Coalition for Sus. Ag. (NH)
Organic Growers Assoc. (TX)
Sus. Ag. Society (IL)
Sus. Ag. Society (NE)
Appalachian Ministry (KY)
Innovative Farmers (OH)
Sus. Farming Assoc. (MN)
Kansas Rural Center (KS)
Certified Growers (CT)
Integrated Food & Farming (MI)
SAWG (MA)

According to a March 20, 1998 follow-up letter from conference organizers, approximately 450 people attended the conference. The list of registrants, attached to the letter, included 428 names, of which 266 were men, 148 were women, and 14 were of unknown gender. In checking these numbers against the questionnaire results, it appears that the conference registration undercounted at least women at the conference, since 197 women

turned in questionnaires. I suspect that unregistered female farm spouses may have accounted for some of this discrepancy.

Distribution, Collection, and Analysis of Questionnaire. Distribution took several forms. The first day of the conference, I handed the questionnaire out at the registration desk, although I did not catch everyone. I also provided copies to seminar leaders and asked them to announce it. The second day, I put the questionnaires on the tables in the morning just before the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture was to speak, and went to the podium to ask people to participate. SARE conference organizers mentioned the questionnaire that day because they were interested in feedback on their program. I also handed out the questionnaire to people at the poster exhibits. The third day, I met the buses going out to the farm tours and passed out additional questionnaires.

For collection, I placed a box on the registration table, where it remained throughout the conference. Some people handed me their completed questionnaires as I went around the conference asking for them. Fifteen people mailed questionnaires to me after the conference. In all, I collected 298 completed questionnaires. If 450 people attended the conference, as suggested by SARE conference organizers, then the 298 represents 66.2 percent of conference attendees. However, as previously stated, I have evidence that the 450 count at least underestimates women in attendance and therefore can merely state that a return rate of 66.2 percent as the upper limit. More than half (57.7 percent) of the people who completed the questionnaires answered one or more of the three open-ended questions.

Although the exact rate of return may be unknown, it is nevertheless extraordinarily high and represents the most extensive participation in any national survey effort of sustainable agriculture participants. A combination of factors explain the high rate of return. My employer and I are well known among many of the conference participants, and several of them told me that my personal appeals, which I persisted in for three days during the conference, were effective. The SARE conference included a high percentage of academicians and people with graduate degrees, who because of their own research efforts might be more

cognizant of the need for and purpose of such a questionnaire. Finally, I had strong support from the conference organizers.

To analyze the results, I developed a database of the questionnaire answers. Each questionnaire was coded, and the results of all but the open-ended questions were entered into a database software program. Responses to individual questions were calculated as well as correlations among certain questions. A chi-square test of independence was used to perform all significance tests.[5] I then categorized the responses to the open-ended questions. I read these answers for any comments particularly relevant to the hypotheses. This chapter focuses only on certain question results, but the entire data collection is located in Appendix K.

Questionnaire Respondents. There was a reasonable geographic spread among the respondents. The exception was a slightly higher proportion of Texans, most likely because the conference was held in Austin. The average age of the respondents was 46.4 years. Twice as many females responded as did males. Two occupations dominate. Just over one third (35 percent) of respondents are employed at a university as a researcher, teacher, or agriculture extension service agent. Almost half of the respondents (46 percent) farm. Not everyone is a full-time farmer, however, and even some of the university professors also indicated that they farmed part-time. There were slightly fewer full-time farmers (64) as opposed to part-time farmers (74) which is consistent with national trends where more and more people are farming as a second job either because they must have a second job out of financial necessity or because they take up farming as an avocation or hobby.

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[5] In order to perform the chi-square tests, the data was re-coded in the following manner. Any response indicating agreement ("strongly agree", "agree" or "partly agree") was coded as a "1" in the database and any response indicating disagreement ("strongly disagree," "disagree" or "partly disagree") was coded as a "2". Any "Don't Know" responses were coded as missing. This was done in order to isolate only those respondents who had an opinion of both the independent and dependent variables. I also did not want significance of the chi-square tests to be affected by those without an opinion of one of the variables.

Overall, the respondents were highly educated — 69 percent held masters or doctorate degrees (many of the full-time farmers held PhDs), while only 10 percent stopped their education short of bachelor degrees. This is in line with much of the literature and with comments of participants in the personal interviews who indicated that highly educated people are attracted to sustainable agriculture.

Because the venue for the questionnaire was a national SARE conference, one would expect most people attending to have some connection to the program. Questionnaire respondents confirmed this speculation; 79 percent answered that they had a formal connection to the SARE program. Such connections included serving on one of SARE's administrative or technical committees or being a grant recipient or collaborator.[6] It is reasonable to ask if this population is representative of SARE rather than the sustainable agriculture community. However, as noted earlier, SARE has been the focal point of sustainable agriculture debate and the primary source of funding for projects related to sustainable agriculture for many years. The close association with SARE acknowledged by many of the respondents reflects the fact that sustainable agriculture has been centered in the program and that many of the primary players use events sponsored by SARE to meet, discuss, and learn.

Because advocacy coalitions develop over a decade or more, according to Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith, and because the process of identification with a group also occurs over time, I asked people how long they had been involved in sustainable agriculture. More than half (54.2 percent) of the participants answered ten or more years. I also asked when people became "active" in sustainable agriculture, and only 4 percent said they did not consider themselves an active participant. In attempting to refine the level of activism, I asked whether the respondents were members of one or more non-profit NGOs that work to advance sustainable agriculture. More than half (58.2 percent) of the respondents were involved in

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[6] Actually, connections to the SARE program also included those with formal employment relationships to the program, current or past. At any given time, the number of SARE staff is less than 12, so the number of respondents indicating some sort of staff relationship totaled 17, which, as expected, was not a large category of respondents.

NGO activities and of those involved, 78.3 percent indicated that they were highly active (defined as dedicating 12 or more hours of participation per year, excluding reading organization materials such as newsletters).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis #1 — Identity

The more that people are ridiculed or marginalized for their interests, the more their interests transform into issues of identity.

What causes the emergence of an identity group? From my literature review, I determined that one causal factor for identity is feeling ridiculed and/or marginalized by society at large. Thus, I chose ridicule/marginalization as the independent variable for hypothesis one. I then sought to measure the relationship of this independent variable to features that, extrapolating from the literature, authors commonly ascribe to identity groups: a strong sense of community, cultural identification, an unwillingness to compromise, and a fear of being co-opted. Additionally, because Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith find that advocacy coalitions are built around shared beliefs and values, I sought to determine the extent to which there are shared beliefs and values within the advocacy coalition as well as within any identity group that may exist within the advocacy coalition. Thus, these five features serve as my dependent variables.

I developed questions for the personal interviews and the questionnaire to test this hypothesis. On the questionnaire, I measured the incidence of the five variables within the population that had indicated feeling ridiculed or marginalized and compared the results to the incidence of those same variables within the non-ridiculed/marginalized population. Significant divergence between the two populations was seen as support for the hypothesis. In the interviews, no questions corresponded directly to the questionnaire, but this line of inquiry

was related to the chosen variables. Incidence of both the dependent and independent variables within the interview group was also seen as support for the hypothesis.

In constructing this hypothesis, the intent was to operationalize the concept of identity by establishing causality and to determine whether the participants in SAAC, or a portion of those participants, fit this definition of an identity group. As the case study in Chapter Three reports, many SAAC participants were ostracized in their community or workplace for their adherence to sustainable agriculture beliefs. In the literature on identity politics (e.g., Piore, 1995; Rhea, 1997; Gitlin, 1995; Harvey, 1993; Bondi, 1993; Haraway, 1990; Keith and Pile, 1993; Elshtain, 1995; Bourne, 1987; Selmi and McUsic, 1996), the major tenet seems to be that members of the group — whether organized racially or along other lines — feels that no one other than their compatriots within the group can understand their identity. Is this true within the SAAC?

Independent Variable #1: Feeling Ridiculed. To obtain a universe of respondents who, in some real or perceived way, had been ridiculed for their adherence to sustainable agriculture, I asked participants in the questionnaire to respond to the following statement:

> ***At times, I have been ridiculed or dismissed by colleagues and/or neighbors for my efforts to promote/practice sustainable agriculture.*** *(questionnaire #8)*

Almost three-fourths of all respondents indicated that they had felt ridiculed to some degree, with 17 percent indicating that they strongly agreed with this statement. In combining the categories "strongly agree," "agree," and "partly agree," a total of 74 percent concurred with the statement, a very strong response.[7]

[7] Throughout the Hypothesis Testing section, percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number for ease of reading.

The interviews reinforced the fact that sustainable agriculture advocates feel ridiculed or dismissed. While I asked no direct or indirect questions regarding ridicule, almost all of the interviewees provided unprovoked testimonials and stories describing the ridicule they had endured. Often these stories were in response to the first question I asked in the interviews: How did you become involved in sustainable agriculture? It seemed the interviewees saw these events as essential to my understanding of their individual stories. In addition to these testimonials, not one person interviewed gave any information or made any statement that contradicted or undercut the notion that ridicule commonly besets those who advocate sustainable agriculture.

Most interviewees discussed the ridicule as a usual event and described it as aggressive and flagrant. Universities were cited as a contributing force: "I learned from my professor that organic agriculture is kind of silly, it's okay for deadbeats and people who have an irrational fear of chemical pesticides" (View #1). Neighboring farmers contributed to the ridicule: "We took some bad feelings from the conventional farmers who are saying that sustainable agriculture is a guy with a bandana eating bark off the north side of the street" (View #13). Harassment was also described: "We were the first organic farm to join the Growers Cooperative and I took a tremendous amount of razzing. Farmers would say to me, 'Oh hi, I just had some Captan [a pesticide] for breakfast this morning' " (View #18). Another farmer quipped: "The organic people are used to being regarded as loony tunes by all of their friends and neighbors" (View #2). The level of ridicule can be so extreme, that one interviewee drew this parallel: "It's probably like being Jewish in Israel where you've got lots of enemies, so you coalesce around the struggle that people have in common" (View #7).

A few interviewees related their surprise at the response of their neighbors and colleagues to their sustainable agriculture beliefs and practices. A farmer discussed his transition to organic agriculture: "I had to back off and repackage the whole concept of organic just for the purpose of being able to be a member of the local community, my church, and everywhere else. I said, man, this really is not a whole lot of fun" (View #11). A non-profit advocate similarly described her beginnings: "I was astounded to find that you could barely

say the word sustainable agriculture in the late 1980s to anyone in government or the big agricultural enterprises without making people angry — apoplectic!" (View #4). While she concluded that she was naive to assume that others would be as enthusiastic as she was about the idea of integrating environmental and social objectives into agricultural policy, the painful backlash experienced years ago nevertheless remained vivid.

Thick skin is useful for those involved with sustainable agriculture because of this almost certain ridicule, and sustainable agriculture advocates have such skin according to the observations of one government worker: "They're not afraid of being singled out or being ostracized or being made fun of" (View #3). One professor admitted his own early ridicule of sustainable agriculture: "I was approached in the 70s by a farmer who wanted help in Florida — pest hell state — to go without pesticides. Well it just floored me. My first reaction was, get down on your knees and pray. I dismissed him. But these farmers just stayed in there and kept telling me that I needed to help." He concluded his story by saying that sustainable agriculture advocates should be proud of their resistance to the establishment and suggesting that the controversy associated with sustainable agriculture eventually captured him: "I'm usually a square peg in a round hole. It didn't take me long with my colleagues to find out that they didn't share my views. Well, you know me, the more people who don't like something like that, the more I dig in" (View #8).

But some interviewees indicated they were fearful of ridicule and reprisals and sought to keep their views hidden. An extension agent told me, "No one knows [at the university] that I'm working on sustainable agriculture. I'm undercover. In that position, I don't feel the negativity. I don't feel the risk. I don't have the scars that other people have and I can see the positive future" (View #20). In describing the ridicule of his neighbors, a farmer said he learned the hard way not to identify himself publicly with sustainable agriculture: "I did my first no-till corn planting and I got laughed at. How can a farmer do that, leave trash on the fields? My neighbors looked off and drove on....So in putting together our [stewardship organization], we purposely avoided use of the term sustainable agriculture" (View #17).

In analyzing the questionnaire results, I examined the population of respondents who had participated in sustainable agriculture activities for a decade or more, assuming that these "pioneers" would have been the most ridiculed. Of this group, 82 percent responded positively to the statement regarding ridicule, with a fairly even distribution among those who strongly agreed, agreed, and partly agreed. However, even among those just joining SAAC, there was great agreement with the statement. A few of the interviewees were hopeful that ridicule may abate over time. One professor predicted, "The world will change. Some of the older people like me will retire and new people will be hired with a whole different perspective" (View #8). As sustainable agriculture becomes more accepted, the element of ridicule — so integral to identity politics — may diminish in the future. One interviewee noted that "it's particularly encouraging that you no longer get tarred, even verbally with the word sustainable. It seems to be an acceptable concept" (View #12).

Dependent Variable #1: Community Identification. Is sustainable agriculture an individual's foremost community — her or his emotional and intellectual home? As developed in the identity politics literature, this almost exclusive identification with like people stems in part from a sense that no one else could possibly understand save those people who share the same attributes — race, sexual orientation, or in this case, a devotion to sustainable agriculture.

I first needed to determine to what extent, if at all, the concept of community was embedded in the sustainable agriculture advocacy world. With two exceptions, my interviews strongly indicated that the notion of community formed the bedrock of SAAC. Careful not to introduce the term "community" during the interviews, I waited to hear whether the interviewees would use it. In 18 of the 20 interviews, the term community independently emerged in discussion. In the two interviews where the it did not arise independently, I introduced the term and asked whether the interviewees used the word to define those working in sustainable agriculture. Both said that they did.

The tone and type of response is best captured by a woman who left her job as a professor at an urban university in the early 1980s to search out an "intentional community."

Failing in that endeavor, she turned to organic farming and in this world, her quest for community was answered:

> There are communities of place and communities of interest. I'm involved with my local community as place in one kind of way, and I'm involved with the sustainable agriculture community in another kind of way. The word community means the kind of caring that neighbors have for one another. It's more than just sitting down and doing one sort of thing together. It means that you care about one another as human beings and that if you're in distress you can call for help. A lot of us rankle at the term organic industry because we don't think of ourselves as an industry at all. Being organic farmers to us is a way of life. And even though our neighbors aren't doing it, it's something that we share with this community of interest. It helps us with some practical things like how to better manage the land for good business. But it also says something about our spiritual involvement and our values as human beings (View #18).

On the questionnaire, respondents were asked to answer the following question related to community:

> ***Aside from my family and church, the community I most fit-in and identify with is that of sustainable agriculture.*** *(questionnaire #4)*

This statement was agreed to by 70 percent of all respondents, confirming that individuals working in sustainable agriculture place great value on their associations in this field. Checking the responses between the two sub-populations — those who reported having experienced ridicule versus those who had not — revealed significant divergence. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents who experienced ridicule agreed with this statement, while 61 percent of those who had not experienced ridicule agreed with the statement. While 61 percent indicates a strong allegiance to the community notion of sustainable agriculture, the difference in the two sub-populations is statistically significant (p-value = 0.006) and confirms that ridicule enhances a sense of community among sustainable agriculture advocates.

In the interviews, I asked why the term community was used. I said that I found this interesting because in general people involved in the petroleum or library profession do not use

it. Why was sustainable agriculture different? Why not use "industry," "movement," or some other language? "It's not a cerebral thing, and it's not a job thing," an NGO advocate explained. "It really is a passion. Outside of my marriage, the people I care most about are in this community because of the values and commitment that I share with them." Elaborating, he continued, "So it's not just commitment to a common purpose that makes the community because the petroleum industry has a commitment to a common purpose. It has to be some of this stuff about being more willing to be challenged and learn and listen and grow and to be supportive" (View #6). A similar view was expressed by a government worker: "I don't say the pork producers community or the cattleman community. Sustainable agriculture is a community in the sense that the people involved share common interests, beliefs, philosophy, and vision" (View #3).

Again and again, those I interviewed spoke with emotion about the importance of the sustainable agriculture community in their lives. One farmer, in her efforts to differentiate and elevate the sustainable agriculture community from others in which she had been involved, compared sustainable agriculture to the religious denomination she grew up in where barn raisings and mutual care were common: "I married a man who doesn't fit easily into his local community. The sustainable agriculture community values him for all of who he is and so it has expanded my notion beyond are they going to come and raise my barn roof and things like that. It is a community in the sense that there is a shared value, and there is real love and commitment to each other" (View #7).

Upon reflection, several interviewees provided their thoughts as to why community is so important in sustainable agriculture. The correlation between ridicule and community identification was explicitly made by several interviewees. One person, making this link, said: "To be a successful pie in the sky you need to have inner strength, you need strength of community far more than your family. This is a family" (View #12). Another interviewee said: "We're a minority and that makes it easier to come together. We're under attack — misunderstood — that makes it easier to find comraderie together because all of a sudden you're in a group which you can speak to and they understand what you're talking about and

have the same philosophies and goals. I'm looked at as strange in my neighborhood because of what I'm trying to do. And in some farm groups I'm looked at as a radical" (View 10). The SARE program was specifically noted as a community haven for advocates who had suffered ridicule by their colleagues: "All the campus discussion was anti-SARE. Slowly, however, I found a few soul mates" (View #8).

A few of the interviewees indicated that the community component of sustainable agriculture is partly a substitute for something missing in peoples' lives. "Our world is so urban and so alienated where people often find themselves no longer connected to people in their neighborhoods as they once were" said an NGO advocate. "Movement communities can actually begin to provide a substitute for social reality that is actually lost for a lot of folks who are inside of it. But if you look at people working in sustainable agriculture, or any of the environmental community, people have folks that they have known for years and those people probably feel closer to their work community than they do to most of the folks that live next door" (View #4). An organic farmer offered this perspective: "We think the utopia of community is exactly what we're doing. It's a consciousness-raising kind of thing. The food that we eat — laced with poisons — has basically deadened our own personal consciousness level. Part of this dissolving of community is part of the fact that our food system has deadened our awareness" (View #11).

Many interviewees turned to sustainable agriculture — or began to recognize sustainable agriculture — as an opportunity to work for social change. Several of the interviewees had been very active in protest movements in the 1960s. An NGO advocate, admitting that some of his earlier forays into farm politics was "sort of trying to find the sixties again," found sustainable agriculture after being involved in a series of "lefty populist farm organizations." After joining SAAC, he reports: "Intellectually, everything fits together now much more clearly than it ever has for me. I had felt disjointed for a long time" (View #6). Several of those interviewed equated sustainable agriculture to social change work: "When people talk about being part of a community, they really are interested in social change. We're not working to make our organizations stronger or to have greater resources. We're working to

produce change that is going to have broad benefits" (View #4). Pleased by the idea that sustainable agriculture may be contributing to social change, a farmer said: "A man told me you've got settlers and you've got pioneers and we're the pioneers in search of a new direction in agriculture. That really hit me when he said that, and I realized that what I was doing was not just beneficial to me but it could go very far. It's very satisfying to know that you've done something that can benefit other people" (View #13). In these statements, at least some of SAAC participants acknowledged that something more than an interest in sustainable agriculture is motivating them, as one interviewee described: "It's great to work with and be part of this larger network working toward a better world. I think it's always been a part of my being to be involved in things that are trying to make things better and it doesn't really matter if it's in sustainable agriculture or some other context" (View #9).

Two interviews provided alternative, but not inconsistent, explanations of this community concept within sustainable agriculture. An extension agent mused that farmers, more than other groups, are in search of community: "Farmers, by their nature, are isolated and independent, and they value time together in ways that a lot of other individuals don't because of their work around other people. So maybe farmers have a kind of intuitive feeling of wanting that kind of relationship with others such that other professional organizations wouldn't have that same kind of spirit" (View #20). A university professor offered up a semi-technical explanation as to why he used the term community: "Every opportunity I get when I have my freshman in the room, we talk ecosystems and about the individual within the population of the community. I believe even from the most formal definition of ecology that it's a true community. And I think the sustainable agriculture community realizes this and knows that they have to work together" (View #14).

Only one interviewee disagreed with the idea that sustainable agriculture was the primary community in her life, outside of church and family: "My community is where I farm, where my family lives and all that it entails — the town, the people on the farm, the relatives, the friends, and everything. I'm not saying that people here [sustainable agriculture meeting] are not part of that community, but it gets too big and I need communities to be smaller and

more understandable" (View #15). As will be seen, the idea that communities must be kept small and local is integral to Hypothesis #3.

Dependent Variable #2: Cultural Identification.

Sustainable agriculture has its own culture, including what you might call a spiritual component. *(questionnaire #15)*

A commanding 78 percent of respondents agreed with this statement. This high level of agreement somewhat masks subtle differences between the ridiculed and non-ridiculed sub-populations. Of those experiencing ridicule, 84 percent agreed with the statement while 78 percent of the non-ridiculed population agreed. The difference is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.256).

The interviews reinforced the notion that sustainable agriculture has its own culture. One NGO employee independently introduced the concept of a culture clash: "Today you have those who are interested in marketing, packaging, communications — all the professions of a food system needed to bring a product from seed to table. That's where the growing pains come from because you are starting to mix cultures" (View #12). He illustrated his point with the following story: "I'm on a conference call of organic farmers from all around the country — a novelty in and of itself — when I hear this whinnying in the background, and I finally say is someone vacuuming the living room? A farmer says, `No, I'm on the cellular phone in my John Deere and you hear me at the end of the row when I lift my disk and turn my tractor to go the other direction!'" He concluded: "Many of the founders of the movement are living a certain lifestyle. The style of life that is organic — that living-lightly-on-the-Earth, self-sufficient style that is in conflict with the infrastructure of the marketplace of automation, of growth, of development, of allied professions. Those nexus points are rough."

A farmer described the difficulties he had trying to break into sustainable agriculture circles: "One of the issues that needed to be talked about was who should be at this meeting,

who's not here. [One participant] said, `I'll tell you who's not here — the Farm Bureau's not here,' and she went on and on about the Farm Bureau. Finally she stopped and I just raised up and told her who I was [director of a state farm bureau]. After the meeting broke up, word spread quickly that the Farm Bureau was at the meeting and I was avoided like the plague." He even described subtle dress codes that underscore the cultural divide: "When I go to Washington, I usually wear a suit and tie, and I wore one to that meeting and I never noticed that I was the only person that had on a suit and tie, but somebody said to me — and I'll never forget it — `man you're really taking your life in your hand showing up in a suit and tie'" (View #17).

Religion was often raised as an issue in the interviews. Many referred to their own participation in the churches or the importance of spirituality in their lives. Sustainable agriculture seemed to many of them a logical extension of their spiritual lives: "I'm part of a religious denomination that is agriculturally based in that I'm a Mennonite. I saw [a person] speak about how he decided to become an organic farmer and he used religious language which I understood and it was the religious language that talked about a ministry to the soil which made me understand in an intellectual and emotional way what I hadn't been able to understand with simply political language or factual language or anything else" (View #7). One NGO advocate described how he had used religious leaders to draw farmers to SARE: "We had this wonderful, radical nun call some of these Cajun sugar growers and they came because they're good Catholics and she's a nun and she asked them to host local farm visits for the sustainable ag people. And although they thought we were organic hippie weirdos, they came" (View #6). Directly likening sustainable agriculture to religion, one NGO employee said: "People emote into it and they are belongers, believers, part of a community. They are not one of the 12 apostles and they may not even be evangelists, but they are in the congregation and most of them are there every Sunday in the same seat" (View #12).

Several interviewees emphasized that sustainable agriculture is much more than appears in the literature on the subject: "I look at it almost as an alternative world view or a different cosmology and not just an environmental tweaking of our existing world view. I'm not sure if

the sustainable agriculture community in total really realizes how different their world view is" (View #14). Another said: "It's not just the sort of political stuff. We care about the land and we care about real communities and farmers and stuff — there is also a willingness to struggle with personal growth" (View #6). Describing a project to examine the beliefs and values of sustainable agriculture, an interviewee discussed the difficulty in capturing all that sustainable agriculture embodies: "Sustainable agriculture, in the broadest definition, includes faith and humanities relationship to the land and it's responsibility to future generations. It's all encompassing. Our purpose is to define our core values and moral imperatives. It's not about what farm practices to use. It's quite a bit bigger than policy. It's philosophy and faith" (View #5).

Over time, the culture of sustainable agriculture may become diluted as new entrants arrive. An extension agent, while recognizing the cultural aspects of sustainable agriculture, said that it was possible that more people would be tempted to join sustainable agriculture because of the potential profits (e.g., organic premiums) and therefore overcome their aversions to the cultural aspects: "Take the example of organic soybeans selling to the Japanese. Well, all of a sudden it's not a religion, it's not a philosophy, it's a business practice and the guy wants to figure out how to do it" (View #8).

Dependent Variable #3: Unwillingness to Compromise. In an identity group, people are unlikely to compromise, according to Michael Piore, because they feel that they are compromising their very being. The failure of people to compromise as a result of identity politics is a common theme in the literature. To see if this phenomenon is at play in sustainable agriculture, I included the following statement in the questionnaire:

> ***Compromise is crucial if we hope to make sustainable agriculture the predominant form of US agriculture.*** *(questionnaire #9)*

I expected people to reject the notion of compromise, but the responses to the questionnaire indicated otherwise. Seventy percent of the respondents agreed with the

statement, although 40 percent of those who agreed marked "partly agree" on the questionnaire. This indicates some ambivalence. Of those who had experienced ridicule, 76 percent agreed with the statement, compared to 61 percent of the sub-population not experiencing ridicule. The difference is statistically significant (p-value = 0.019). This was the reverse of what I expected. I had assumed that the more people were ridiculed, the more they would become unbending in their views.

Success in any policy arena requires some compromise. In studying the responses, I realized that the questionnaire statement does not necessarily capture the respondents' willingness to compromise. Instead, it leads to a response about their understanding of the role compromise plays in determining policy. It appears that the people who answered the questionnaire have not forgotten their political science 101 teachings. And those who have experienced ridicule may be more keenly aware of the need for compromise to convince their colleagues and neighbors to accept sustainable agriculture. In actuality, it is possible that the ridiculed sub-population is wary of compromise. If this sub-population is indeed an identity group, they may be less likely to compromise despite their heightened awareness of the need for it.

The interviews proved useful in shedding light on whether individuals are willing to compromise and how they feel about engaging in compromise. The interview evidence is also somewhat mixed, although most interviewees indicated that the sustainable agriculture world at large had great disdain for compromise regardless of their own personal behavior. It may be a situation where people understand the need for compromise and can articulate it as a goal. Their actions however, do not always correlate to their words.

A somewhat defensive government worker confided, "Some people, because of their naivete and experience will hold to their principles and see it as all or nothing" (View #3). She went on to describe how she differed from the majority of sustainable agriculture advocates: "I could try and get the Secretary of Agriculture to go to the Wisconsin Integrated Cropping Systems Trial, to the farm, and see the site to make an announcement, but instead I opted for

just putting a paragraph or two into a speech. I mean, it's not what I totally wanted, but it's something. There are people who understand that and people who don't" (View #3).

A university professor described the acceptance of compromise as evolutionary: "Ten years ago, you really needed people who were uncompromising — they had to be to be heard. As more people have come into the movement and as time has marched on, sustainable agriculture has become more compromise oriented" (View #16). She described the division within SAAC over the role of compromise: "I think it's made it hard for some of the people who were the original advocates. Their experience, reasonably so, was that you didn't want to compromise because you couldn't trust the other person enough. I think, in some way, there is a different personality type prominent today. Some of the original leaders are not the kind of people to really pull a team together. They are very independent thinkers, very uncompromising — not the people that are carrying the second wave of sustainable agriculture who are better compromisers." However, the professor, like the government worker, was uncomfortable about her willingness to compromise, almost embarrassed by it: "I'm more of a second wave. I'm very much the compromiser, I think too much. I struggle to personally not focus so on trying to make everybody happy only to lose the ability to stake some ground and stick to it."

One NGO employee acknowledged the general resistance to compromise within the sustainable agriculture community, providing this explanation: "We're not bringing in the new constituency as well as we know we ought to. We're always brainstorming new constituencies, but what do we ever do about it? No one ever promises to be the one to build the bridge. I think necessarily every time you expand the community you expand the agenda. We already have too much to do — it's not the same as a turf problem, it's more like a reluctance to expand the turf" (View #5). One farmer emphasized that until compromise becomes part of the game plan in sustainable agriculture advocacy, many opportunities to bring in new converts will be lost: "My son-in-law farms 1,600 acres and is financially strapped. I try to talk him into sustainable agriculture but he says he can't take the chance, that he's barely making it now. He had to borrow more money this year than he did last, produced one of the highest yields in

the state, and yet he is broke. We can't push people to give up all chemicals. Farmers cannot go cold turkey. We've got to get a door to get them into it" (View #13).

One of the interviewees who lamented the sustainable agriculture community's general abhorrence for compromise concluded: "Some individuals have not exactly worked for collaboration or common ground, but have been somewhat confrontational. What is really important to me — and I don't know how the Federal Government can do this — is to find new ways to help people deal with conflict. The system we've got right now in terms of policy choice and how people line up and fight each other is not productive. We've got to find ways to work toward consensus" (View #20).

Dependent Variable #4: Fear of Co-option. Perhaps a better indicator of people's true willingness to compromise is their willingness to engage in dialogues with people whose views are unlike their own. If compromise is indeed important, it would be reasonable to expect SAAC participants to welcome opportunities to meet with and debate non-SAAC participants in the policy subsystem. However, in the IFFS case, SAAC participants seemed to worry that those outside of their small troop of believers would, if given the opportunity, co-opt and/or corrupt sustainability efforts. Is there an almost paranoid us-them mentality within SAAC? If so, does this relate to issues of identity?

> ***Many industry leaders embrace sustainability in public, but behind the scenes are undermining and co-opting the terminology.*** *(questionnaire #24)*

Sixty-eight percent of respondents agreed with this statement. Of the ridiculed sub-population, 83 percent agreed in contrast to the 71 percent who agreed within the non-ridiculed sub-population. The difference is statistically significant (p-value = 0.076). Among the non-ridiculed sub-population, a third of those responding answered that they did not know how to answer this statement. It is possible that people who have not been ridiculed and are not members of the identity group would have trouble making sense out of the statement.

During the interviews, the concept of co-option independently arose numerous times in discussions about the increasing popularity of sustainable agriculture. An NGO advocate encapsulated the dominant view: "Sustainable agriculture, as a word and as a concept, now is not only tolerated, but it is actually embraced to some extent by the folks in government. Almost everything good has a dark side. It probably means that the concept is in danger of being co-opted.... There is a danger that the entrenched interests are just going to call whatever it is they were going to do anyway 'sustainable agriculture'" (View #4)

USDA and land-grant university research and extension grant-making programs were often cited as evidence of co-option. A farmer who had participated on a committee to review grants for their applicability to sustainability commented: "The guys on the project had been asked to write a self evaluation as to whether they had contributed to sustainable agriculture or not. Some people were claiming sustainable agriculture when they barely had anything to do with it. And others were disclaiming it when what they were doing really should be considered part of sustainable agriculture, like a man working on reducing herbicides insisted that his research had nothing to do with sustainable agriculture. It seemed to me either misunderstanding or maybe the theological biases that had very little to do with what their research was" (View #18). An NGO advocate said of USDA, "People are taking the rhetoric of sustainability but they are having a much harder time at the implementation level. They have research policy guidelines that talk about sustainability but all of the implementation measures are right back to where they were before" (View #4). Trying to view this co-option in a positive light, a farmer commented on what she described as a renaming game: "At least we've gotten enough influence in the 1990s that people think it's important enough to co-opt sustainability. I read some grants to decide whether they were about sustainable agriculture or not. In the early and late 1980s, it was still pretty clear. The language was pretty clean about what they were doing. As we got into the early 1990s and the newer grants were written by researchers at universities, the language became real fuzzy with sustainable agriculture terms. So you had to really read it carefully to understand that no, it's just the terminology they are using, this is not sustainable" (View #15).

Some interviewees suggested that the term "sustainable" is susceptible to co-option, and it may be best to select a different word. An organic farmer said, "You need to kick the word sustainable out and just accept the fact that you have to put the word organic into it. When you use the word sustainable, it's an out to the conventional guys. You don't want them to turn the word around to meaning something else than what you and I both agree sustainable should be" (View #11). More than one interviewee related the history of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which they contend began as something akin to sustainable agriculture, but which is now dominated by chemical companies. A national IPM leader drew the analogy, among others: "IPM was originally intended by pioneers to be very different from what the majority have turned it into. Who in their right mind is going to say that I'm not interested in sustainability?" (View #14). To illustrate his point, he suggested that the World Bank's involvement in sustainable agriculture is "very, very different from the sustainable agriculture community's concept of equitable sustainable development. Notice that I'm putting the word equitable in front of sustainable development. When I put equitable there, that means I've got to make a value judgment. I've added a social value judgment."

Additional related interview comments are found under Hypothesis 2, dependent variable #2. Overall, it is clear that SAAC participants, especially those who have suffered ridicule, are reluctant, even frightened to engage "outsiders" in debate over agricultural policy. A farmer angrily stated: "What scares me is when I go to a Farm Bureau meeting and the biggest nozzleheads in the county stand up and say they're sustainable because they're making a profit — that's how they define sustainability. I fear we'll lose the original spirit of the definition because it will be bastardized by those who would try to make themselves appear more sensitive and modern. They picked up a buzz word and usurped it for their own purposes" (View #10).

Dependent Variable #5: Shared Beliefs and Values. In an identity group, the supposition that people share the same values and beliefs is taken for granted. But the identity politics literature indicates that people in identity groups actually share fewer beliefs and values than one might expect and that this can cause problems in negotiating policy reform. The "big

picture" values and beliefs that bind members of an identity group together also tend to cover up important differences. Not every African American, for example, holds similar views on abortion, although African Americans may strongly identify with one another because of shared racial backgrounds. Because identity masks differences, it is more difficult for members of the group to develop a policy agenda than if those differences were recognized and efforts were made to address them.

Note that a sense of shared beliefs and values is an attribute of an advocacy coalition, according to Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith. In the case of SAAC, I suspect that I am dealing with an identity group encased within an advocacy coalition (see Chapter 3). Therefore, I chose to use this variable in the study, even though it may be a false assumption on the part of the participants.

Two levels characterize this issue — what the reality is and what people think the reality is. The following statement was designed to test the recognition of shared views. Of course, what people do is a truer test than what they say. Nevertheless, it is important to discern the self-perception of SAAC participants on this issue because that self perception may play a vital role in how they undertake policy work.

Advocates of sustainable agriculture disagree over a surprisingly number of fundamental beliefs and values. *(questionnaire #20)*

Fifty-three percent of respondents agreed with the statement, while 32 percent disagreed. Of those who agreed, half said they only partly agreed, suggesting some ambivalence. The sub-populations showed little difference; 58 percent of those who felt ridiculed agreed, while 62 percent of those who did not feel ridiculed agreed. The difference is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.586). With hindsight, I would have changed this statement. While it is possible that there is no difference between how the sub-populations view values and beliefs within SAAC, it is also very likely that the phrasing of this statement diluted the test. The insertion of the word "surprisingly" adds a subjective layer that may have

affected results (I could be testing for surprise). Therefore, the data, coupled with the statement construction, do not allow for definitive conclusions from the questionnaire.

The interviews were more informative. I asked participants if there were shared beliefs and values within SAAC and, if not, to describe some of the divisive issues. Generally, interviewees expressed great consensus on the importance of sustainable agriculture as well as the major components of sustainable agriculture. A farmer captured many people's views when he stated: "A common belief is that it is better to be a steward of the land, to leave your land as good or better than you found it. Production at any cost is not the answer. There is also a belief that we need to acquire a better method of selling products to get out from corporate control in the marketplace" (View #13). Another interviewee stated: "There is a sense of common, shared goals" (View #10).

Although all of the interviewees emphasized the importance of the social component of sustainability, some of them described other SAAC participants as protesting the inclusion of social goals. A farmer said: "There are certainly people who are involved in sustainable agriculture and see it in terms of changes in methods of production. The biggest cleavage is between people who see it that way and the people who have a much broader view and see it as part of a way of life" (View #18). A professor reinforced that view: "There are definitely shared beliefs about the importance of the environment and the importance of looking at the bigger picture in the longer term. But there are still a lot of social issues, particularly around labor that are divisive" (View #16).

From the interviews, it appears that discord within sustainable agriculture seems not to be about core beliefs and values but rather how those beliefs and values emerge in the debate over the suitability of specific policy devices to achieve sustainable agriculture. One obvious divide concerned the selection of a policy agenda to save family farms. An NGO advocate stated: "There is a group of organizations who always work to use policy for the economic benefit of family farmers and so support price supports, etc. We lost that battle and we're phasing out to a free market" (View #5). Expanding on this point, another NGO advocate said:

"Trying to determine the key to family farm survival is divisive. Progressive income tax and multilateral trade agreements and targeted income support are divisive. Also there is a division between regulation and incentives for environmental protection" (View #6).

Despite much sharing of fundamental values and beliefs, the interviews exposed a reluctance to tease out specific policy differences. An NGO representative described it this way: "In a decentralized movement, there are subtleties of interpretation, application, mission, and vision, which are compounded with the practicalities of geography, soil type, and climate. The divisive points come on those subtle interpretations of my belief versus your belief." He continued, "It's kind of like getting the Catholics, Lutherans, and the Episcopalians in the room to agree on the liturgy. I am not sure how important it is since there is no reason why they can't live in harmony with 90 percent of the same script" (View #12).

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith postulate that there are three layers of beliefs: deep-core beliefs, near-core beliefs, and secondary beliefs. It appears from the interviews that participants have fairly good agreement on deep-core beliefs (e.g., sustainable agriculture is critical), but that they show much less consensus on near-core beliefs (e.g., regulation versus incentives as policy tools) and even less consensus on secondary beliefs (e.g., House Resolution 506 versus House Resolution 1231). Secondary beliefs are easily changed, but the lack of consensus on near-core beliefs, which Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith do not expect to change significantly, could well pose a problem within SAAC.

Hypothesis #1: Summary of Results. There is sufficient evidence to argue that an identity group, of a major magnitude, exists within the SAAC. I found that three-fourths of all respondents (74 percent) felt ridiculed for their adherence to sustainable agriculture beliefs and practices. Within this ridiculed sub-population, the results of the questionnaire and the interviews indicated significant correlation with two key indicators of identity politics — a strong and emotional sense of community and an us/them outlook evidenced by fear of co-option. Additionally, the vast majority of all respondents to the questionnaire recognized the cultural/spirtual aspects of sustainability.

The questionnaire results did not offer compelling evidence on the compromise variable, but my interviews suggested that the ridiculed population was uneasy with compromise, and that, furthermore, when reviewed in the context of the co-option response, their disinclination toward compromise became apparent. Finally, as suspected, there is less consensus on fundamental beliefs and values than within many of the advocacy coalitions described by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith. While there was no significant difference between the two sub-populations on this point, in each case more than half of the respondents agreed that it is surprising that sustainable agriculture advocates disagree over so many fundamental beliefs and values. This is further evidence that an identity group may lurk within the advocacy coalition. A summary of the questionnaire findings is found on the following page in Table 4-1.[8]

It is possible to speculate that the causality in Hypothesis #1 is just the opposite of what I have presented — that is, farmers with different beliefs may endure differing degrees of ridicule based on those beliefs. In other words, the more dogmatic and uncompromising advocates for sustainable agriculture would invite greater ridicule. However, the fact that the SARE conference participants include a large percentage of academicians working in traditional settings, and in light of the interviews where people testified to their efforts to keep their beliefs hidden so not to incur ridicule, I do not believe this is the case.

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[8] In order for data to be included in these summary tables, a respondent must have answered agree or disagree to both the dependent and independent variables. If someone responded "don't know" to either of the variables or to both, then their response is automatically thrown out by SASS. This accounts for the slight differences in the total number of respondents seen in these summary tables from those presented in the text, where "don't know" answers are calculated and discussed.

Table 4-1

Summary of Questionnaire Data: Hypothesis #1

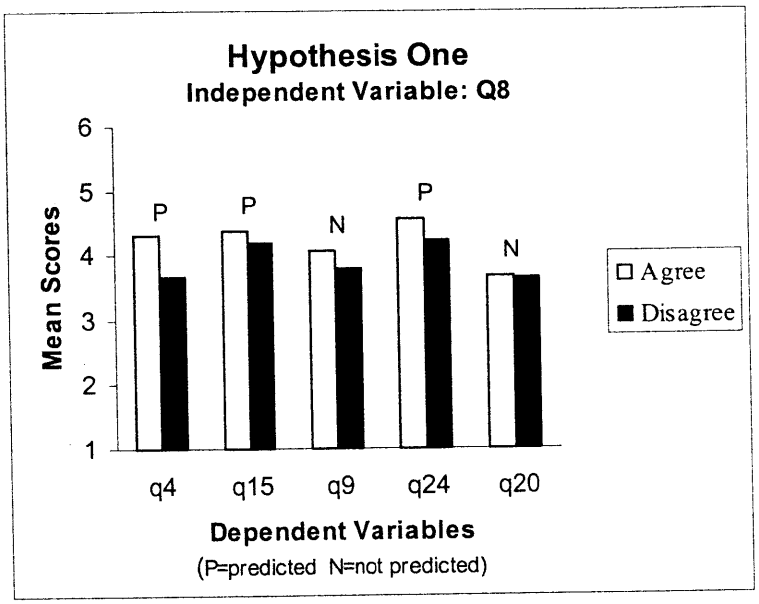
Independent variable: Question 8

Dependent Variable (DV)	n	% Agree with DV	% Agree with DV and Agree with Q8	% Agree with DV and Disagree with Q8	χ^2 Statistic	p-value
Question 4	276	74.6	78.5	61.3	7.525	0.006
Question 15	270	82.6	84.0	77.6	1.288	0.256
Question 9	274	73.0	76.3	61.0	5.470	0.019
Question 24	238	80.7	82.7	70.7	3.139	0.076
Question 20	256	58.6	57.8	62.0	0.297	0.586

The graph on the following page plots the mean responses ("mean scores") of the dependent variables by whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the independent variable. While not all of the chi-square tests produced significant results, there does seem to be a pattern that may suggest two sub-populations within the questionnaire respondents.

Plot 4-1

Mean Questionnaire Responses: Hypothesis #1



The hypothesis concerning identity was logically the first to be examined in this study. It was important to determine whether an identity group exists within SAAC before exploring how such a group might affect the workings of the larger advocacy coalition. The following three hypotheses accordingly focus on the dynamics of keeping the larger group central — or supreme to the desires of individuals — to help ascertain what influence the identity group has on the activities of the advocacy coalition.

Hypothesis #2 — Process Obsessed

The more a person distrusts conventional science, the more he will emphasize decision-making processes.

The IFFS case reported on the importance that participants gave to decision-making processes and their willingness to continue their dialogues in the absence of specific goals and tangible outcomes. This troubled at least one IFFS participant who, when interviewed for this dissertation, reflected: "You need to have an outcome and then that outcome should define the process. Take the IFFS network. That was a lot of process, and they're still defining process. They're not really defining what it is they want to achieve" (View #3).

Certainly, there are benefits to focusing on better decision-making processes. In this country, progress has been made in developing meeting tactics that recognize the importance of agreement. The concern in relation to this study is the proclivity to sacrifice science or even traditional inquiry in favor of obtaining answers from process alone. In relation to identity groups, the belief is that only that group, and no other entity, can deliver the answer. Group dialogue is central. How decisions are made is the ultimate value, not the content of the decision.

What causes a person or group to become so preoccupied with decision-making processes that policy resolution is impeded? My observation of the IFFS network coupled with my work in sustainable agriculture led me to determine that distrust of expertise is the causal factor for preoccupation with process. Therefore, I chose distrust of conventional science as the independent variable for Hypothesis #2. It should be noted that conventional science, as well as conventional agriculture, are terms commonly used and understood by SAAC participants. A basic dictionary essentially captures the meaning of conventional as it is used by SAAC: (1) Developed, established or approved by general usage — customary; (2) Conforming to established practices or accepted standards (Webster's, 1988). In contrast to

conventional agriculture, for example, SAAC participants categorize sustainable agriculture as "alternative."

At the outset, I expected the study population to emphasize decision-making processes over decision-making outcomes. That is, I believed they would be likely to endorse consensus dialogues and group decision-making with a process orientation rather than outcome orientation. I then sought to measure the relationship of the independent variable to features that typify an obsession with process: patience for endless dialogues, an unwillingness to define objectives, and a proclivity for consensus at any cost. These three features serve as the dependent variables.

Testing proceeded as in Hypothesis #1, and the results are similarly presented. However, in Hypothesis #2, I used two questions related to the independent variable and two questions for the first of the three dependent variables. In these cases, I was uncertain as to how best capture my idea, so I decided on these variations. In relation to the first dependent variable, I chose one variation that asked about trusting science and one that operationalized the concept through an example.

Two objectives underlie the construction of this hypothesis. First is the need to shed light on the role of scientific expertise in policy-making within advocacy coalitions — a particular concern of Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith. Second is the need to determine the extent to which SAAC participants become sidetracked over process concerns and why. At least one response elicited during the interviews described how differently sustainable agriculture advocates view their processes compared to those in other forums: "I don't see sustainable agriculture as one uniform thing. There are a number of different programs and organizations, and everybody tries to follow some sort of collaboration model. That's what's so threatening about sustainable agriculture. I think it has less to do with pesticides or non-pesticides or the subject matters of sustainable agriculture and more about it being a different process" (View #16).

An NGO advocate described the importance of process in sustainable agriculture and the tendency of scientists to underestimate the ability of everyone in the room to contribute to the discussion and used this story to make her point:

> The next revolution in science is not going to be Newtonian or Einsteinian-like with a new theory. It's going to be about how we do science and how we define rigor. We're in the middle of a complete overhaul in how we think about environmental problems. We've just begun thinking about the philosophy of science and how this might actually fit together. I've seen time and time again where scientists have told farmers that they don't know anything, that they don't understand how the scientific process works. At a SARE meeting, scientists were getting up and talking about how they couldn't include farmers because they just didn't have the discipline and requirements of science. [My husband, a farmer] stood up and began saying, "Well the last time he'd studied epistemology it seemed that there were two ways you could go." Some of the scientists in the room had never heard the term epistemology. They were blown away (View #7).

Independent Variable #1a: Scientific Distrust.

The more I learn about sustainable agriculture, the more I have come to question traditional mainstream science. *(questionnaire #12)*

This statement on the questionnaire was directed at identifying a sub-population of people who do not trust conventional science. Seventy-two percent of all respondents agreed with this statement, 26 percent disagreed, and 2 percent didn't know. This is especially interesting in that most of the respondents were highly educated; two-thirds held masters degrees or PhDs. To aid in the forthcoming discussion of the dependent variables, I named the sub-population of respondents who agreed with this statement the distrusters.[9] In contrast, those respondents who disagreed with this statement were named the trusters. For the reasons

[9] This variable tests whether there is change in a person's attitude toward mainstream science as a result of exposure to sustainable agriculture. It is likely that even mainstream scientists, following exposure to sustainable agriculture, will find their beliefs in traditional science eroding. I make this point, because otherwise my subpopulation labels — truster and distruster — may not fully capture this kind of occupance.

discussed previously, I expect that this distruster sub-population encompasses an identity group.

There are several potential explanations for the high percentage of sustainable agriculture advocates who agreed with the statement. Perhaps sustainable agriculture attracts those who naturally distrust conventional science. It may be that even for those who enter sustainable agriculture advocacy with a trust of and training in conventional science, the lack of accommodation by conventional science for sustainable agriculture results in an erosion of that trust over time. Or, it may be that after greater exposure to the ideas embedded in sustainable agriculture, participants no longer feel that sustainable agriculture can fit within the boundaries of conventional science. This independent variable is aimed at determining the extent to which distrust of conventional science occurs within SAAC and what effect such distrust has on the internal negotiations of SAAC.

To gain insight into this phenomenon, I asked interviewees if they believed that sustainable agriculture was becoming more scientifically credible. Only one person viewed sustainable agriculture as having evolved into a more scientific endeavor: "The major difference in sustainable agriculture over the decade is the cogent thinking, the strong focus, and the concerted effort to put science behind it" (View #12). An extension agent said that he thought sustainable agriculture had become more scientific because scientific measures, like soil quality indexes were used more often. However, he quickly amended this assessment: "I don't know, I wonder, is that true or am I more accepting of sustainable agriculture now than before?" (View #20).

Sustainable agriculture does not have to change, most said. Science does. Converting land grant university scientists to sustainable agriculture has been critical to its acceptance, several interviewees said. In other words, we did not change, they did, which echoed the statement of the extension agent above. One scientist offered: "SARE's biggest achievement in its first 10 years is really making sustainable agriculture scientifically credible among peers at land grant universities" (View #16). However, this interviewee distinguished features of

sustainable agriculture that set it apart from other areas of agriculture: "There are more people with degrees in anthropology or backgrounds in unusual places" (View #16).

Overall, there was acknowledgment of the tension between the sustainable agriculture way of doing things and that of traditional science. One scientist viewed this as a simple dichotomy: "There is a fundamental philosophical difference between those who trust science and technology and those who feel that there is something evil in chemicals and modern technology" (View #9). In most cases, people thought it was the approach to science that was really at issue. A university scientist told me that "the bulk of my work is behavioral. I work very closely with a rural sociologist" (View #2). To explain why he took this approach in his work, he described a recent survey that found only 2 percent of farmers in Wisconsin, despite 30 years of counseling by Extension, properly credit for manure nutrients on their farms. Mainstream science, as practiced, was failing he concluded. An NGO advocate echoed this need for a new scientific approach, most often embodied by sustainable agriculture advocates: "Our new extension guy is into the interdisciplinary science that is required to think about systems and sustainability. He is also into collaboration and trust building and listening. So it's the science melded with that listening and trust building and being able to have the human ability to be open minded, the ability to reflect critically upon your own assumptions. That seems like it's got to be married to science" (View #6).

The bottom line assessment is that science has failed sustainable agriculture, a point with which all interviewees agreed. In some cases, the lack of acceptance of sustainable agriculture by conventional science prevented applicable science from gaining recognition. One scientist described the difficulties that he had in getting his research findings accepted by the establishment: "I learned a lot about fertilizers and advocated a prohibition on the spreading of manure in the winter time. Of course, this ban only went into effect last year, 22 years later" (View #1). In other cases, the development of necessary knowledge has been thwarted. An organic farmer provided an example of his frustration with the scientific establishment: "You cannot find one microbiologist that can tell you what one ton of gypsum does to the soil micro-biologically" (View #11). He blamed this failure on the organization of

agricultural science: "We have a whole society of PhD elitists that know more than you know. But it's based on the falsehood of being singularly focused on a very narrow perspective. They need to go back to school and learn what holistic agriculture is all about. Do more than be an entomologist or a soil scientist, reevaluate how agriculture really works in the world of sustainable agriculture."

Independent Variable #1b: Farmer Knowledge.

I'm more likely to believe a peer-reviewed scientific article than a farmer's assessment of sustainable agriculture. *(questionnaire #5)*

Just as with the last independent variable, this statement was directed at identifying a sub-population of people who do not trust conventional science. Only 29 percent of respondents agreed with this statement, whereas 67 percent disagreed and 4 percent didn't know. As with the first independent variable, the vast majority of respondents indicated an uneasiness with traditional forms of science. For the purpose of discussing correlations with the dependent variables, I named the sub-population of respondents who disagreed with this statement farmer adherents and those who disagreed with it, article adherents. Farmer adherents are those who I suspect are part of an identity group within SAAC.

To elaborate on my earlier point, given that a large share of the respondents have masters degrees or PhDs and almost all have at least a bachelor's degree, it was surprising how suspect they are of the scientific establishment. Reflecting on the statement, I note that a peer-reviewed scientific article could very well include a farmer survey or research on a farmer's plot. In fact, many do. However, the battle line seems to have been drawn between the land grant scientist and the farmer. Who knows best? Respondents overwhelming sided with the individual farmer. In their minds, an individual farmer could trump a peer-reviewed journal article. Do they believe science is so seriously flawed that an individual can negate a journal publication? Apparently so.

In my interviews I asked a similar question — in the case of a disagreement, would you be more likely to believe a farmer or the results of a study by the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture? Not one person in 20 said they would take the ARS study over the farmer's opinion. Three interviewees avoided making the choice. A scientist said: "I would work with the farmers to design a test of the ARS results" (View #2). An NGO advocate pointed to the issue of grazing cattle along a stream bank which could contribute to water contamination but also could prevent erosion. With such problems, she concludes: "There is an element of truth to both what the farmer and scientist claim. The natural world is too complex" (View #5). Uneasy with the choice, a government worker with direct oversight of ARS said, "I would have to acknowledge the credibility of both" (View #3).

Seventeen of the 20 interviewees said that they would be more inclined to believe the farmer. Practice over theory seemed to be the focus, although good research studies should and do go beyond theory. Nevertheless, there was a chorus. An NGO scientist said, "It has a huge practical component in that the only people that can really tell you about how to deal with sustainable agriculture are the people who are farming sustainably. The farmers are the touchstones. We need to change the way we think about farmers and we should be more comfortable in following their lead" (View #4). In fact, a farmer complemented SARE for its elevation of farmer expertise: "SARE is directed much more toward the farmer. The recognition of the need for farmer participation has really expanded. To change agriculture, the research has got to be changed at the farm" (View #13). Another farmer said, "I'm fairly skeptical about research results until I think through the practicality of them because I have been exposed to any number of really good ideas that come from academic researchers which, after thinking through how I could do it on my farm, I realize that they are not doable. They're not doable within the amount of resources a farmer is likely to have compared to a research station" (View #17).

The question unleashed another attack on the university system. One farmer said: "Academics for the most part don't know what an integrated system means or what it's about. The whole academic structure mitigates against people doing collective effort or

interdisciplinary efforts" (View #18). A former farmer, now NGO advocate, said, "I never got much help out of the university programs — anything very sophisticated. I had to develop a ration for dairy cows. Sure, they are great at how to plant alfalfa, but as far as real innovative stuff, it seems to be coming from outside the university, probably outside of science" (View #6). He illustrated his point with the following story: "We were on a farm this morning and this guy hadn't been past the eighth grade, but he could talk in a very deep and complex way about what was going on in the soil. His cows were in a paddock, and you couldn't find a cow pie. I asked how come? He said because there is so much going on in the soil that it's consumed by the end of the week." While somewhat folksy and not substantiated by any study, the lack of cow pies nevertheless is a science of a kind, isn't it? he wondered aloud. And one interviewee observed, "The fact that we have farmers on our advisory committees deciding which grants should be funded is pretty threatening to a lot of people in universities" (View #16).

The scientists I interviewed were also appalled by how the system works. Trying to bridge the gaps and share expertise between the university world and the sustainable agriculture world, an Extension scientist described a SARE project he oversees: "They had to have a classroom in the field every Friday morning where university professors took off their hats and put on student hats. And the farmers came in and said I'm the teacher" (View #14). Knowing that sustainable agriculture farmers are a tough sell, another extension agent commented: "In conventional ag, I can go to a meeting and just because I'm from the university and have a PhD, I can sway a meeting all over the place. In sustainable agriculture, you're no more or less than anybody else. You better have a good argument, a good reason for it, or you're not going to get anyone to go along. The sustainable agriculture community is a better educated group, generally speaking, and much broader in their knowledge base" (View #8).

An Extension agent said the acceptance of science depends on the messenger. He provided an example in which, once he became accepted, his science became accepted: "We were telling [two farmers] to use no-till, but they convinced us that the way they were doing it

was right. But as they become involved in [sustainable agriculture project] something started going on in them. All of a sudden no-till and some of the things we thought they ought to be doing all along started to become more right!" (View #20). He concluded, "I have never seen any research study come out with the truth. You never really know the truth." Despite this acknowledgment and his own example of science prevailing, he concluded, "The truth is only true in the minds that practice it. I would definitely put my sense of truth in the hands of the farmers who are out there doing the work."

Dependent Variable #1a: Social Goal Value.

The social goals of sustainable agriculture are laudable but secondary to environmental goals. *(questionnaire #10)*

The premise for this statement was that social agendas are more subjective and require more dialogue for resolution than environmental agendas, which are more firmly established. Those who view environmental goals as more important than social goals would likely be less tolerant or interested in dialogue and process. I expected that newcomers to sustainable agriculture and the people who view sustainable agriculture as a policy or scientific objective, not as an interactive lifestyle, would be more likely to agree with the statement.

Overall, 69 percent of the respondents disagreed with this statement, whereas 27 percent agreed, in line with my expectations and a mere 4 percent didn't know. I was then interested in learning how much the answers depended on distrust of conventional science. In the distruster sub-population, 74 percent disagreed with the statement compared to 67 percent of the trusters, again in line with my expectations. The difference, however, is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.206). Of the farmer-adherents, 79 percent disagreed with the statement, compared to 59 percent of the article-adherents sub-population. The difference is statistically significant (p-value = 0.001). These responses indicate that the people I suspect to be a part of the identity group within SAAC are more likely to disagree with this statement, and

by extension, be more willing to invest time and energy in dialogues on somewhat vague social agendas.

I did not ask a question during the interviews specific to this variable, but comments related to the concern over inclusion of social goals in sustainable agriculture emerged. One interviewee said, "There are a lot of people who accept sustainable agriculture as environmentally sound agriculture and maybe struggle with the social quality of life part of it in theory, but feel hard pressed to implement it" (View #16). Another participant stated, "I've been pleased with the interest and balance between the scientific work and the more quality of life kind of issues and looking at some of the softer, less quantifiable aspects of sustainability. It's been a hard sell though" (View #17).

An interviewee provided an example of the struggle to implement the social agenda: "Our organization was debating whether to get involved with policy. The state turnpike commission was exploring the idea of running a highway through the middle of the watershed and cutting up a lot of farms. One of the farmers said, 'Isn't community and this social political issue part of our mandate? If we're serious about the economic, environmental, and community kind of things, we can't be in favor of this.' There has always been kind of the notion of win-win relative to economic and environmental soundness, but I had not seen any farmer apply them to a community issue. They got that notion of those overlapping values and recognizing that community was one of their values for which they had to stand up for" (View #20).

Two interviewees emphasized that agriculture includes the word culture and should be thought of in that vein. One said, "Agriculture is a human-managed production system. To ask almost any question about it, you have to have a social basis because it's a social system. My scientific community has not yet adopted that. Basically, we want it to be science, we want it to be the best possible, and we want it to be pure so we take all the subjectivity out of it. But you can't do that" (View#14). The other interviewee noted, "Now [our state] sustainable agriculture society has a grant to organize women's ag groups around the state. We're really

tickled that somebody recognized the need for that, that this is really part of sustainability and how to help the individuals help their families, that ag isn't just practices" (View #15).

It seems that social goals have become no less central than environmental goals for many of the old-time SAAC participants. One interviewee reflected, "The concept of environmentally sound farming practices which would have been the way I would have written my first SARE grant ten years ago, is totally different from the alternative world view concept that I'm describing now and that I'm struggling to write on" (View 14). If this view is held by many, than SAAC participants can be expected to invest greater and greater time in dialogues on social issues.

While the questionnaire outcome for this variable was as expected, it is important to note the potential weakness in this measure. Using a social versus environmental goal distinction as a proxy for how much a person cares about process versus outcomes may be questionable. Social goals can be "hard," definitive and goal oriented, such as reducing the decline in the number of family farms while environmental goals can be "soft," concerned with dialogue and process, such as eco-feminism and deep ecology. However, because Plot 4-2 shows the mean response on this variable cooresponds well to the subpopulation I am trying to identity, and because the interview data does provide some support for this distinction, I have left this variable in for evaluation by the reader.

Dependent Variable #1b: Discussion Value.

Too much time is spent talking about sustainable agriculture relative to the actual work that gets done. *(questionnaire #26)*

The objective for this statement was to discern the degree to which respondents felt comfortable with the abundance of time spent in discussion (process) versus setting specific goals and objectives for action. Overall, 47 percent agreed, 44 percent disagreed, and 8 percent answered don't know in response to this statement, which was fairly inconclusive.

Turning to the independent variables, within the distruster sub-population, 52 percent disagreed with this statement compared to the 38 percent who disagreed from within the truster sub-population. The difference is statistically significant (p-value = 0.040). Within the farmer adherents sub-population, 50 percent disagreed compared to 43 percent of those within the article adherent sub-population. The difference is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.333). While there a much greater percentage of suspected identity group participants identified by dependent variable 1a who disagree with this statement — my expected outcome — this does not hold true for independent variable 1b.

But here the interviews are extremely revealing. In all of the interviews, I asked people to respond to the statement "Good process makes good outcomes." This generated lengthy and animated responses, as interviewees sought to explain the importance of this insight. Overall, interviewees agreed with this statement. There was immediate recognition that things are done differently in sustainable agriculture, that it is more process laden forum than others interviewees had participated in. An extension agent talked about his conversion: "I've never been a process person. Sustainable agriculture has dragged me into more committees and trying to work through things in an equitable way. I've learned a lot about process" (View #8). Another person differentiated it from other forums: "In sustainable agriculture, most things are done by consensus and nobody is in the lead. Even as frustrated as we get, and it seems like we're wasting a lot of people's time, we've probably done the best we could do" (View #17). The consensus building, facilitation, and determination to solicit everyone's views prompted one farmer to share this observation about sustainable agriculture meetings: "Wives were definitely included and part of it, and that was one of the first things that I have been in...where they really included the wives. Most of the time when you go to a farm organization, wives were not there. They cooked. They weren't expected to hold any offices or do anything. It was a man's organization" (View #15).

Many of the interviewees actually raved about the importance of process and complimented their colleagues in sustainable agriculture for their recognition of its importance. "We've really invented the master co-processes for dealing with decentralism," exclaimed one

NGO advocate. "I totally believe that good process makes good outcomes. You have to invest in building a community of people that are working together. Community proceeds strategy. If you take the time to build the community so that people get to know each other and somehow come to understand their common goals, then a strategy will flow out real easily" (View #2). Another process advocate said, "If you do not have a good process, you can count on a skewed outcome that can take you fundamentally in the wrong direction. Even with a good process, you can still come out with the wrong answer, but I think you are 75 percent down the way if you have a good process" (View #4). And another interviewee chimed in, "More and more I am recognizing the importance of process in order to achieve sustainable agriculture. Process needs to be honored and respected so that people feel that they are part of this rather than that decisions are being made for them. And so I think process is incredibly important," although the person admitted that "there are also times when process can lead to stagnation and frustration" (View #9).

A few individuals felt that sustainable agriculture was not invested enough in process. The statement "good process makes good outcomes," according to one farmer, "almost sounds too organized. There's a certain amount of freelanceness that I think is necessary for a true process to work" (View #11). Another person said, "In holistic resource management, you have to develop your goals and objectives first. And the first goals and objectives are your quality of life goals and objectives. Maybe we need to spend more time planning" (View #14).

But some interviewees recognized that too much emphasis on process created some hardship. One person said, "From where I sit, it sure seems to move slowly. Where are the results of the actions, good or bad, successful or unsuccessful as opposed to more calls for action? How does one measure results? If those measurable results are reported, they haven't found their way to me. The discussions seem to be more on defining the system, the process, the relationship" (View #12). Another person exclaimed, "I'm less patient with process and I want to know how the world is different. After any meeting, I ask if I'm better off for this or the organization or the world? I don't know that we ask enough 'Is the world better off for

these meetings'" (View #7). And finally one person chuckled, "Every time we meet we devise a new decision-making process!" (View #17).

Dependent Variable #2: Definition Seeking.

It would be best if we decided once and for all on a clear definition of sustainable agriculture. *(questionnaire #16)*

I included this statement as a measure of a person's unwillingness to define objectives. My own experience is that despite the many meetings consumed by discussions on how to define sustainable agriculture, these discussions are replayed endlessly, year after year, with no conclusion on a definition or even agreement to abandon the idea of defining sustainability altogether. Thus, I expected the majority of questionnaire respondents to disagree with this statement, and that expectation was met. More than half — 58 percent disagreed, while 38 percent agreed and 4 percent didn't know.

I also believed that those who distrust science would be less inclined to pin down the definition of sustainable agriculture because in doing so, they would limit opportunities for free-flowing discussion on this issue. Indeed, 62 percent of those identified by independent variable 1a as having little faith in mainstream science disagreed with the statement, in contrast to 57 percent of respondents within the sub-population who view science in a more favorable light. The difference is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.466). I had expected the difference between the two sub-populations to be greater, as I found with independent variable 1b. Of the sub-population identified as farmer adherents, 66 percent disagreed with the statement, while just 47 percent of article adherents disagreed. The difference is statistically significant (p-value = 0.003).

I did not ask a question specific to defining sustainability during the interviews, but concerns about defining sustainable agriculture rose from the participants independently and often (see also quotes under Hypothesis 1, dependent variable 4). One NGO activist thought

the whole debate around defining sustainable agriculture was fascinating, and while she did not advocate a single definition, she did discuss the dangers of keeping sustainability so open ended: "The intention of being inclusive can lead to real fuzzy boundaries. There have been lots of discussions about whether we should define sustainability, whether we should use other terms, whether we should talk about healthy systems, which would then include the economic well being of people and the ecosystem and the consumer. The lack of some clear definitions has led to some tension, which people don't always acknowledge" (View #7). This fuzziness, she continued, can make sustainable agriculture susceptible to co-option: "I get confused by the lack of definition. Sometimes I wonder how much of this is driven by the corporations. As long as the chemical companies can argue that no till is sustainable, are we helping that? This move toward inclusion is wonderful and problematic at the same time." Similarly, a university professor, while not advocating a single definition, did describe the "infiltration" of people and organizations who were taking up sustainability because of its popularity, rather than embracing it in a meaningful way: "When I left the first meeting of the PCSD [President's Commission on Sustainable Development] with Vice President Gore, I was astounded by the number of black limousines in the parking lot that apparently had their motors running since they delivered people to the meeting. That image will be with me for the rest of my life" (View #14).

One farmer asked: "Why do we have to define sustainable agriculture? Each of us defines it our own way. It doesn't even have to be called sustainable agriculture, it's what we're doing that counts" (View #13). Another interviewee also challenged the notion of defining sustainability: "The most basic element of sustainable agriculture is the community. A farmer can't be sustainable by himself. Farmers do not practice sustainable agriculture. It's the local community. Then a subset would be the farmer, and a sub-system of the farmer is the field, and a sub-system of the field is the soil, and of the soil, the microorganisms. Evolution has not quit, nor have we quit on evolution. There is no final recipe for sustainable agriculture. It's just a direction" (View #20).

In offering a different point of view, an organic farmer and an advocate of defining sustainability, shared his worst fear, "In the beginning, people generally understood what 'natural' meant. It wasn't very long before people were saying that everything under the sun was natural, even if it came from the plastic plant. I'm afraid sustainability is going the same way. In the beginning it should have been defined" (View #10).

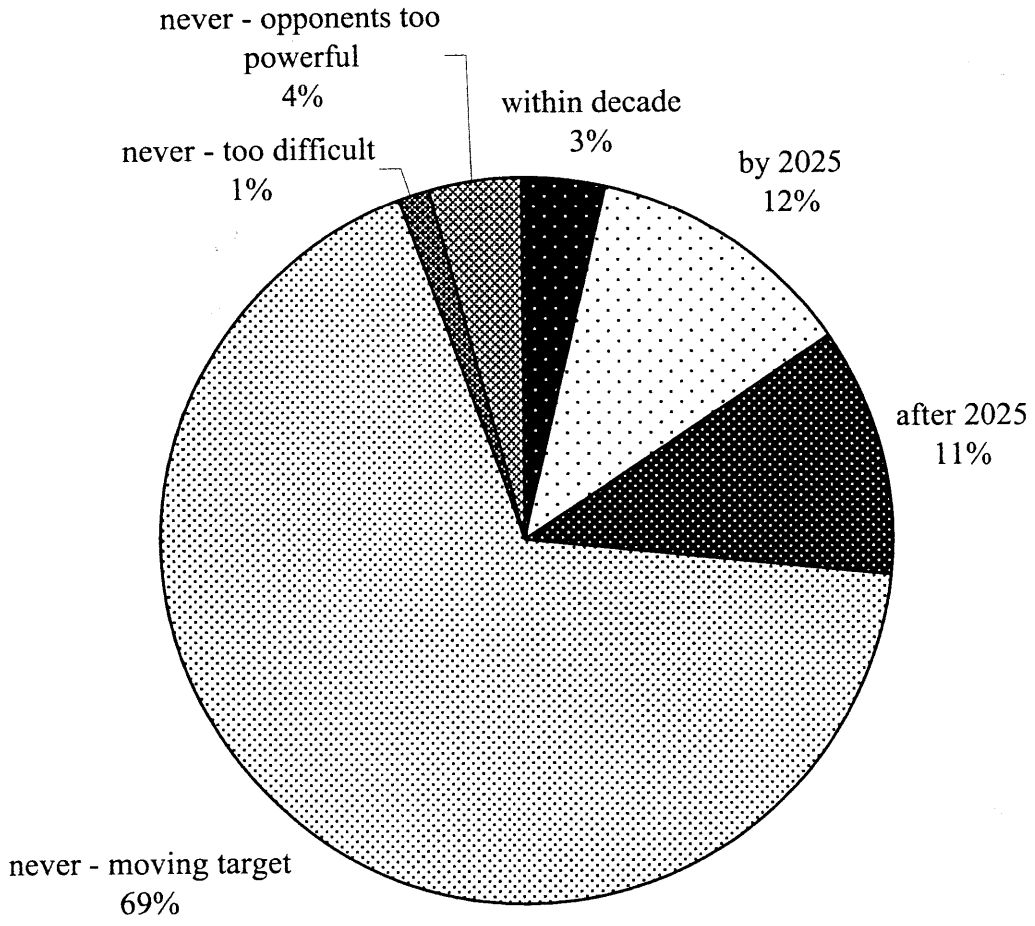
In a question closely related to the statement on defining sustainable agriculture, I asked respondents to the questionnaire: When will we achieve "sustainable agriculture"? The choices for responding are listed on the following page.

My best guess is that agricultural sustainability will...(check one)
- be achieved within the decade
- be achieved by the year 2025
- be achieved sometime beyond 2025
- never be "achieved" since it is a moving target; an evolving vision of how to do better
- never be achieved because it is intrinsically too difficult
- never be achieved because opponents to sustainability are too powerful

Although I suspected that many, probably a majority, of the answers would be that we will not achieve sustainable agriculture, I was nevertheless surprised by the overwhelming 73 percent of respondents who answered that sustainable agriculture will never be achieved. Of this group, only 1 percent said it would be too difficult, and only 4 percent gave powerful opponents as their reason. The remaining 68 percent said sustainable agriculture will never be achieved because it is a moving target, an evolving vision. Of the 27 percent who do think sustainable agriculture is achievable, only 3 percent think it will be achieved within the decade, while 12 percent said it would happen by 2025 and another 11 percent saying it would occur sometime after 2025 (see pie chart on the following page).

Interviews provide further insights and support for this astounding questionnaire result. A university professor described sustainability as "a point on a scale. It's just like saying we

will have justice in America" (View #8). A NGO scientist said, "No idea that is important enough to get the better of your professional life is going to be resolved. Never. But you do make progress along a trajectory. Sustainable agriculture is an enormously powerful idea and, if it succeeds, we will have transformed the way we think about the land, the way we think about food, the way we think about each other. But we are never going to get there. You just don't get there. You can't do enough" (View #4).



When will we achieve agricultural sustainability?

Most interviewees did not think sustainable agriculture was achievable and that, conceptually, this was the wrong question. A few provided examples of the impediments. One NGO activist shared this perspective: "There is going to be a whole new set of technology bad ideas out there that we will be fighting off. It will be a continuous struggle, kind of like protecting a wilderness area" (View #5). Speaking for the vast majority, an extension agent stated simply and firmly, "I don't think sustainable agriculture is achievable" (View #20).

Dependent Variable #3: Consensus Orientation.

Sustainable agriculture meetings are over facilitated and too consensus oriented. *(questionnaire #21)*

This statement was designed to elicit the willingness of respondents to engage in lengthy dialogues and their level of ease with internal disputes. Overall, 32 percent of respondents agreed with this statement, while 50 percent disagreed and 17 percent didn't know. This is in line with my expectation that few SAAC participants view their processes in any negative light. It should be noted that this statement elicited the second highest percentage (17 percent) of "don't knows" on the questionnaire, leading me to wonder whether this is an indication of ambivalence or confusion over the meaning of the statement.

Turning to the independent variables, of the distruster sub-population, 64 percent disagreed with this statement compared to 52 percent who disagreed within the sub-population of trusters. The difference is statistically significant (p-value = 0.076). Of the farmer adherents, 63 percent disagreed, whereas 56 percent of the article adherents disagreed. It would seem that those who distrust conventional science are more likely to disagree with this statement but the difference is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.288).

Much of the response from the interviews related to this variable is presented in the discussion of Hypothesis #3 (Collective Knowledge). Analysis of small groups in the literature shows that these entities tend to exaggerate the importance of consensus and to minimize

conflict, despite evidence that conflict can help a group by sharpening and thereby strengthening values. On this point, one comment seems particularly pertinent. One interviewee stated, "The sustainable agriculture movement really strives to be very inclusive....We have to deal with money and power although it's not really stated very much openly, but there is conflict between people in different organizations because they disagree about some kind of standard. You forget, you don't focus on the conflict, you go to areas that people do agree upon" (View #9).

Hypothesis 2: Summary of Results. Responses to the questionnaire and from the interviews show clearly that within sustainable agriculture there is intense distrust, and in some cases outright disdain, for conventional science. Even the SARE program, central as it is to the sustainable agriculture community, does not escape criticism in this arena. As one participant reflected on the shortcomings of SARE: "My sole involvement with SARE is helping write a couple of failed proposals. We basically think that our proposals were too process-oriented for SARE. They were about building consensus and exploring together and sharing experiences. We concluded that they wanted something with more replicability and with a measurable outcome. Heaven knows we need more research, but I don't think that's the main interest of the community groups or even the farmers" (View #5).

There is inconsistent coorelation values, however, between the two constructions of the independent variable with the four dependent variables. As seen in the following summary tables, there is significant coorelation between independent variable 1a with dependent variables 1b and 4 while independent variable 1b significantly coorelates with dependent variables 1a and 2.

Table 4-2a

Summary of Questionnaire Data: Hypothesis 2

Scientific Trust

Independent variable: Question 12

Dependent Variable (DV)	n	% *Dis*agree with DV	% *Dis*agree with DV and Agree with Q12	% *Dis*agree with DV and Disagree with Q12	χ^2 Statistic	p-value
Question 10	285	72.3	74.3	66.7	1.601	0.206
Question 26	271	48.3	52.0	37.7	4.211	0.040
Question 16	281	60.9	62.1	57.3	0.532	0.466
Question 21	245	61.6	64.7	51.7	3.155	0.076

Table 4-2b

Summary of Questionnaire Data: Hypothesis 2

Farmer Knowledge

Independent variable: Question 5

Dependent Variable (DV)	n	% *Dis*agree with DV	% *Dis*agree with DV and Disagree with Q5	% *Dis*agree with DV and Disagree with Q5	χ^2 Statistic	p-value
Question 10	279	72.8	58.5	78.7	11.854	0.001
Question 26	264	48.1	43.4	50.0	0.938	0.333
Question 16	275	60.7	46.8	66.3	8.969	0.003
Question 21	239	60.7	55.6	62.9	1.129	0.288

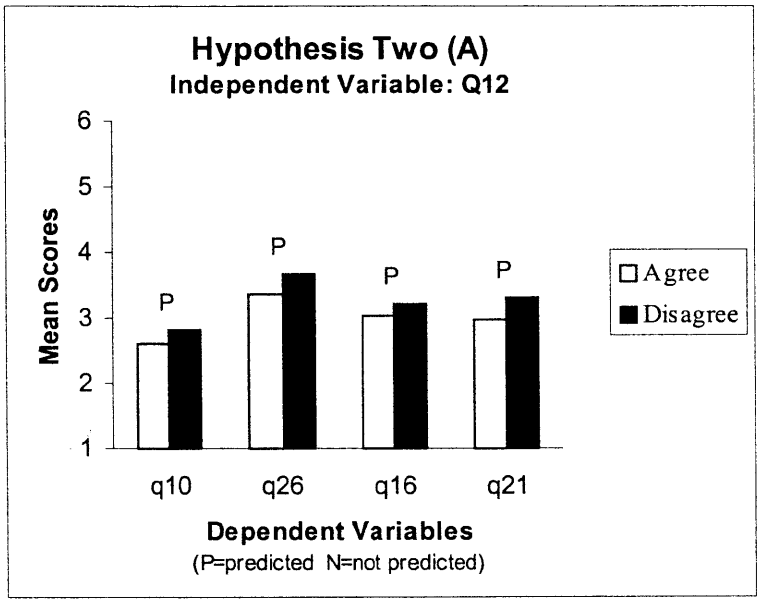
The correlation among the independent variables and dependent variables for this hypothesis was uneven. Nevertheless, the combination of the results from the questionnaire and the interviews provides evidence that those who distrust science — those in the center of SAAC — are more likely than other people to tolerate lengthy dialogues and less willing to define objectives. Whether or not they will seek consensus at any cost can not be determined by these data.

I plotted the mean responses of the dependent variables by whether respondents said they agreed or disagreed with the independent variables. As was found in hypothesis #1, a pattern appears even when the chi-square tests do not produce signficant results.

Plot 4-2a

Mean Quesionnaire Responses: Hypothesis #2

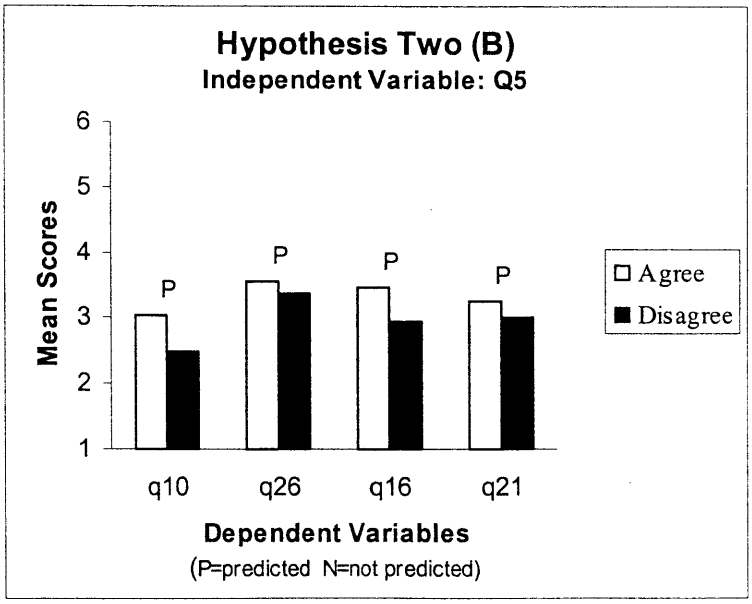
Scientific Distrust



Plot 4-2b

Mean Questionnaire Responses: Hypothesis #2

Farmer Knowledge



Hypothesis #3 — Collective Knowledge

The more a person believes in collective knowledge, the less he will approve of hierarchial organizations.

In Hypothesis #2, SAAC participants exhibited a very strong allegiance to the idea that good process results in good outcomes, as manifested by the participants' distrust of expertise. This allegiance was particularly evident among those people who are likely to comprise an identity group within SAAC.

Hypothesis #3 attempted to gain more insight into what SAAC participants believe constitutes a good process. Because they distrust expertise and because they place emphasis on ensuring that everyone participates in sustainable agriculture discussions, I thought SAAC participants would equate good process with collective knowledge. That is, I expected SAAC participants to contend that it is critical for each individual in the room to contribute expertise because the collective result is the best outcome possible.

In the IFFS case study, the appeal of Dee Hock was the value he placed on decentralized decision-making. The IFFS case and discussion in some of my interviews led me to believe that a strong adherence to collective knowledge results in a strong preference for decentralization. SAAC participants are expected to dislike hierarchial organizations because such top-down structures (and even bottom-up structures) do not facilitate the kind of collective dialogues and decision-making favored by SAAC. The purpose of this hypothesis was to determine the extent to which beliefs in collective knowledge and decentralization exist within SAAC, and therefore may exist within advocacy coalitions in general and within identity groups acting inside advocacy coalitions.

Some information from my interviews that supports this hypothesis was presented in the discussion of Hypothesis 2, dependent variable #3. Those statements focused on the

importance of facilitating meetings so that all voices are heard and on the value of consensus in decision-making. In addition, the discussion of Hypothesis 2, independent variable 1b, emphasizes the distrust of expertise and the faith in farmer wisdom expressed by SAAC participants.

Constructing questionnaire statements to test this hypothesis was difficult. How can one capture the idea of collective knowledge in a sentence? Unlike other issues within SAAC, the notion of collective knowledge is not discussed outright. In fact, it is based on my observations of the IFFS network and my own experience, not on dialogues within SAAC. There are no commonly used words or phrases to trigger rejection or ratification by the respondents, although some evidence suggests that SAAC participants are trying to figure out their own decision-making processes. A government employee, when asked to describe how decisions were made within the sustainable agriculture community, said, "Decision-making? I wish I knew. There are people involved in various organizations throughout the country, and it's somewhat an organic process in a way, and somehow it happens" (View #9).

I devised two statements (independent variables 1a and 1b) to capture the notion of collective knowledge. To represent respondents' disdain for hierarchial organizations (and by extension, their embrace of decentralization), I developed four dependent variables. Testing proceeded as in the prior two hypotheses.

Independent Variable #1a: Knowledge Generation.

I'd learn more about sustainable agriculture by hearing from everyone in the room than I would listening to any one expert. *(questionnaire #23)*

Seventy-four percent of all respondents agreed with this statement, while 24 percent disagreed and 2 percent didn't know. This was consistent with my expectation that SAAC participants prefer round table discussion, not expert testimony, to generate ideas about sustainable agriculture. For purposes of the subsequent discussion, I refer to the respondents

who agreed with this statement as the collective knowledge sub-population and the respondents who disagreed with this statement the expert knowledge sub-population.

Several interviewees discussed the importance of collective knowledge. The notion is perhaps best captured by this description of SAAC offered by an NGO advocate: "It's a decentralized group whose good ideas knit together and become cumulative. That is why the community has made sustainable agriculture so strong, and that is why it's needed to implement it and make it part of the paradigm that reflects not just a style of life, but a choice of civilization" (View #12). One university professor struggling to explain the role of group knowledge in his teaching, said, "I play facilitator. I really teach very little. I merely pull together people that I know that know more than I do about lots of things, and I just expose students to it" (View 2). An extension agent was quick to report that his involvement in sustainable agriculture has made him rethink his ability to decide things on his own: "I can see things more clearly, I'm a better judge of things, although I'm not a judge" (View #20). The only true place to find sustainable agriculture, according to one interviewee, is within the group dialogue: "You would find [sustainable agriculture] by going to conferences or meetings or physical gatherings of that kind" (View #17).

Again, the universities were targets of criticism. A farmer emphasized that the notion of collective knowledge runs counter to university thinking, saying, "The whole academic structure mitigates against people doing collective efforts" (View #18). She went on to provide an example of what she believes was a wonderful idea to facilitate learning in sustainable agriculture. Serving on the SARE committee, she and the other farmers endorsed a proposal "to take some photographs on farms to capture the highly emotional moment that illustrated why a farmer had made a decision to change to more sustainable practices and then set up these fish bowl circles where the farmers and their photos would sit in an inner circle and discuss them with one another. And then extension people and other ag professionals would sit in the outer circle and watch this process.... The point was to give the professionals some insight into the spiritual and emotional and other kinds of non-economic, non-technical reasons why a farmer chooses to change." The proposal was rejected, she said, but her endorsement of it

illustrates the role of collective knowledge in that it was the conversation among farmers that provided the lesson, not a lecture by any one farmer or, for that matter, university expert.

Independent Variable #1b: Expertise Sourcing.

The best sustainable agriculture ideas are generated by broad-based participatory group discussions rather than by individual experts. *(questionnaire #11)*

Overall, 69 percent of respondents agreed with this statement, 24 percent disagreed, and 7 percent didn't know. I had expected that people would place a high value on group discussion and collective knowledge. From here forward, respondents who agreed with this statement are referred to as group listeners and respondents who disagreed with this statement are called expert listeners.

Some remarks from the interviews help clarify the notion of collective knowledge. An NGO advocate, in describing differences between the way SAAC generates knowledge and the way that scientists with whom she works generate knowledge, observed that "we need to redefine scientists as co-learners and facilitators" (View #7). And, in explaining how decisions are made within SAAC, a farmer commented, "It's kind of decision by committee. We're not organized. And it's really good because the people in this mix are diverse enough to keep the juices going" (View #11).

The idea that collective knowledge is supreme was expressed by a farmer in describing her efforts to develop an organic farming standards manual: "Every single person I asked to participate said yes, and it came together in the most amazing way.... That project involved several hundred people being interviewed or reviewing pieces of it or contributing to it. So it was an enormous collective effort at putting together a book that expresses the group wisdom" (View #18). Similarly enchanted with the concept of collective knowledge, an NGO advocate described how to move forward in sustainable agriculture: "The challenge is to design

encounters or learning opportunities, whatever those might be, in such a way that people can figure out how to listen and challenge their own assumptions" (View #6).

Dependent Variable #1: Coordination.

Sustainable agriculture suffers because advocates are uncoordinated and 'doing their own thing.' *(questionnaire #7)*

This statement was designed to determine whether respondents view the lack of hierarchial organization within SAAC as detrimental. Overall, 43 percent of respondents agreed with this statement, while 51 percent disagreed and 6 percent didn't know. My expectation was that more people would disagree. Upon reflection, I am concerned that this statement is ambiguous for at least two reasons. First, the statement does not measure whether a respondent would favor more coordination, just the recognition that there is a cost associated with the lack of organization. Second, a respondent could disagree with this statement because he believes sustainable agriculture advocates are coordinated.

Measuring the correlation with independent variable 1a, I found that among the sub-population of respondents valuing collective knowledge, 48 percent agreed with this statement. In contrast, within the sub-population of respondents who valued expert knowledge, 38 percent agreed with this statement. As I surmised, those respondents who favor collective knowledge over expert knowledge were more likely to disagree with this statement. However, the difference is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.148).

Assessing the correlation with independent variable 1b, I found that the group listeners were almost evenly divided over the statement (49 percent agreed with the statement). There was a significantly greater divide in the expert listener sub-population, where 37 percent agreed. The difference is statistically significant (p-value = 0.091). Again, this was consistent with my expectations that those believing in collective knowledge would be more likely to agree with this statement.

There were no interview questions related to this variable.

Dependent Variable #2: Network Preference

Networks are preferable to formal coalitions because individual organizations retain more autonomy. *(questionnaire #13)*

Fifty-eight percent of all respondents agreed with this statement, while 17 percent disagreed, and 25 percent responded "don't know." This was the largest number of "don't knows" registered for the entire questionnaire. It is possible that this occurred because some respondents were not clear about the distinction between a network and a coalition.

There may be confusion over differences between these two organizational structures on the part of SAAC members responding to survey. But there has been great debate within the Campaign over these two models. As discussed in Chapter One, the Campaign is the only extensive — and by some accounts, national — organization among the thousands of grassroots groups involved in sustainable agriculture. Still, the Campaign has very little organization and carefully describes itself as a network, not a coalition. This is because of intensive debate among participants, who expressed strong opposition to a formal coalition structure for fear that it might require them to give up some autonomy and possibly force them to support positions with which they do not fully agree.

There were no interview questions directly related to this variable, but a founding co-chairperson of the Campaign was one of the people interviewed for this study. He found the Campaign network "quite interesting" because of the collaborations. Instead of a desire to see the Campaign evolve into a more formal structure such as a coalition, however, he advocated disbanding the Campaign on a regular basis to prevent losing touch with the grassroots and to ensure a decentralized mode of decision making: "There is a narrowing of true believers and a little inbred community that other people won't join because they're outsiders. My opinion is

that maybe we should just start all over again, just give it a breathing space for a year or a few months. Think again about a broader circle" (View #6).

Measuring the correlation with independent variable 1a, I found that among the collective knowledge sub-population, 79 percent agreed with this statement. In contrast, 71 percent of the expert knowledge sub-population agreed with this statement. This was as expected, in that those respondents who favor collective knowledge over expert knowledge tend to agree with this statement. However, the difference is not statistically signficant (p-value = 0.187).

The correlation with independent variable 1b was similar. Eighty-two percent of the group listeners sub-population agreed with the statement. Among the expert listeners, 63 percent agreed. The difference is statistically significant (p-value = 0.005). Again, this was consistent with expectations. Those believing in collective knowledge were more likely to agree with this statement.

Dependent Variable #3: Industrialization.

The problems generated by an industrialized agriculture system are outweighed by the consumer benefits industrialization provides. *(questionnaire #17)*

I designed this statement to capture respondents' views of industrialized agriculture, which the literature defines as a vertically integrated system (Welsh, 19??: ##); that is, agriculture that depends on structured, hierarchal organization. Thirty percent of all respondents agreed with this statement, but twice as many — 63 percent — disagreed and 7 percent didn't know. This was in line with my expectations that SAAC participants oppose vertical integration of agriculture, probably because they believe it eliminates opportunities for small family farmers.

I had expected the collective knowledge sub-population to more strongly disagree with this statement than the expert knowledge sub-population. However, there was no statistically significant differences between these two sub-populations with either construction of the independent variable. Measuring the correlation with independent variable 1a, 73 percent of the expert knowledge group disagreed[10], compared to the 66 percent of the collective knowledge group that disagreed. The difference is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.346). The results were similar in measuring the correlation with independent variable 1b. There, 73 percent of the expert listeners disagreed, while 65 percent of group listeners disagreed. The difference is also not statistically significant (p-value = 0.212).

The interviews were also less than revealing on this topic, partly because there was no question that related directly to this variable. Some interviewees did denounce the increasing industrialization of American agriculture, however. One farmer contrasted U.S. policy with that of Denmark, where organic farming extension agents exist along with ecological colleges and generous government loan programs to assist sustainable agriculture. The farmer recognized the challenge that faces sustainable agriculture in overturning industrialization trends: "The forces that are on the side of chemical agriculture and genetic engineering and the industrialization of agriculture are tremendous — the economic and military power that they have is overwhelming. So we're up against very great odds" (View #17). Another farmer mused, "It's very strange. It seems like the stronger sustainable agriculture gets, the stronger large, conventional farming gets. People still believe the message that you have to get bigger to survive. It's like the rich and the poor. We're getting bigger farms, and we're getting this really strong base of small, sustainable farmers. And there's not much in the middle" (View #15). Coming to the same conclusion, a government worker predicted, "Agriculture is going to have a dual structure more and more" (View #3).

It is likely that this variable is either flawed — that is, it does not measure the element I was seeking to measure or else sustainable agriculture advocates do not dislike industrialization

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[10]Note that in this variable I am focusing on the "disagree" results to measure correlation.

as much as I had anticipated. Indeed, some people may argue persuasively that industrialized agriculture can be found on an old fashioned family farm, with the same kind of structure and hierarchy as a more agrarian farm. The critical difference may be the kind of farming techniques that are used as opposed to how those organizations are structured. Secondly, there is likely great association in respondents minds between "industrial" and "corporate" farming where some of the differences may include issues beyond hierarchical structure.

Dependent Variable #4: Decentralization.

Decentralized decision-making is essential to successful sustainable agriculture outcomes. *(questionnaire #25)*

This statement is the most direct in asking a respondent's value of decentralization. An overwhelming 81 percent of all respondents agreed with this statement, the highest percentage of agreement on any statement on the questionnaire. Only 9 percent of respondents disagreed and 10 percent didn't know. This result alone should be of interest to policy makers as they struggle to find ways to interact successfully with SAAC.

Measuring the correlation with independent variable 1a, I found that 92 percent of respondents valuing collective knowledge and 86 percent of the expert knowledge sub-population agreed with this statement. The difference is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.169). The high level of agreement with this statement makes teasing out differences between the sub-populations difficult. There was, as expected, a slightly higher level of agreement among those who believe in collective knowledge.

That result was hardly more pronounced in assessing the correlation with independent variable 1b. There, 92 percent of group listeners and 87 percent of expert listeners agreed with the statement. The difference is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.315). Again, this was consistent with expectations.

During the interviews, I asked people to tell me how they viewed the regional structure of SARE, which is so different from many USDA programs. An NGO advocate described SARE as a "decentralized model, which means that a lot of people and a lot of different places had to work hard to make the SARE program viable. It incorporated a whole new set of folks into the decision making about ag research. To do this, they had to fight a lot of barriers and an institutional enemy. I see SARE's decision-making process as a new chance to provide input for a much broader group of folks in a quasi-democratic process. So that's a big challenge, and it is hard. The more people you add, the more complex decision making becomes. But that is absolutely at the heart of what they're doing" (View #4). Another NGO advocate said that grassroots decentralization is critical to sustainable agriculture and specifically to the SARE program, despite the best efforts of Congress to centralize it. He noted that it was "an irony that decentralization lead to consequential success on Capitol Hill, which then centralized sustainable agriculture through the farm bill and SARE and the NOP [National Organic Program], which is in turn helping decentralism" (View #12).

While the SARE program was hailed as more decentralized than typical USDA programs, it may be still too centralized for some. A government worker said, "Maybe [SARE] needs to be broken into smaller groups to be even more responsive" (View #3). A scientist commented that SARE needs to reflect a decentralized model because "sustainable agriculture is more respectful of regional decision making than other types of agriculture. The SARE regional organization is critical" (View #16). Yet an NGO advocate did admit, "I'm sure the regional structure is inefficient. A fair amount of resources are used to have all those meetings. But a move to centralize it would be bad" (View #6).

One farmer had this to say about the importance of decentralization within SAAC: "Get 12 or 15 entities that are going along their own way. So they all got their only little thing that they're working on, but you get them together, and there's a lot of strength there. Because each one of them has some technical or political knowledge that added together is pretty powerful. In a conventional ag group, they're just used to sitting down, being told something,

and saying 'Yeah, well that sounds about right' and then leaving. It's a real difference. (View #15)

Hypothesis 3: Summary of Results. There is sufficient evidence to argue that the more a person believes in collective knowledge, the less he will approve of hierarchial organizations. The questionnaire found a high level of faith in collective knowledge. There was 74 percent and 69 percent agreement with the two constructions of the independent variable that was based on the principle that collective knowledge is preferable to expert knowledge. Turning to the dependent variables, I found the more that people believe in collective knowledge, the less concerned they are about the lack of coordination within sustainable agriculture organizations, and the more likely they are to favor a less hierarchal form of organizational structure (a network as opposed to a coalition), and the more likely they are to believe decentralization is critical to success in sustainable agriculture. This last point elicited the highest level of agreement among questionnaire respondents (81 percent), and it is worth repeating that this is an important finding for policy makers who seek to further the sustainable agriculture agenda.

Concerning the variable regarding industrialization of agriculture, the reverse of what I expected occurred; that is, those believing in collective knowledge were somewhat less likely than those believing in expert knowledge to find fault with industrialization. Rather than being a counter finding to the overall hypothesis, however, I suspect that the variable construction was flawed.

Table 4-3a

Summary of Questionnaire Data: Hypothesis #3

Knowledge Generation

Independent variable: Question 23

Dependent Variable (DV)	n	% Agree with DV	% Agree with DV and Agree with Q23	% Agree with DV and Disagree with Q23	χ^2 Statistic	p-value
Question 7	275	45.8	48.3	38.2	2.092	0.148
Question 13	221	77.4	79.4	70.6	1.745	0.187
Question 25	263	90.5	91.9	86.2	1.891	0.169

Independent variable: Question 23

Dependent Variable (DV)	n	% *Dis*agree with DV	% *Dis*agree with DV and Agree with Q23	% *Dis*agree with DV and Disagree with Q23	χ^2 Statistic	p-value
Question 17	274	67.9	66.3	72.5	0.888	0.346

Table 4-3b

Summary of Questionnaire Data: Hypothesis #3

Expertise Sourcing

Independent variable: Question 11

Dependent Variable (DV)	n	% Agree with DV	% Agree with DV and Agree with Q11	% Agree with DV and Disagree with Q11	χ^2 Statistic	p-value
Question 7	262	46.2	49.2	37.3	2.849	0.091
Question 13	212	76.9	81.7	63.0	7.905	0.005
Question 25	253	90.5	91.6	87.3	1.008	0.315

Independent variable: Question 11

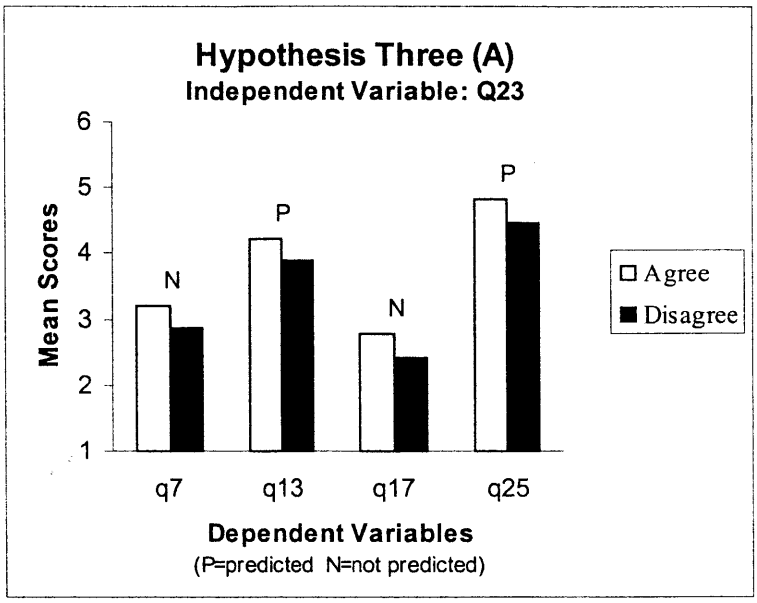
Dependent Variable (DV)	n	% *Dis*agree with DV	% *Dis*agree with DV and Agree with Q11	% *Dis*agree with DV and Disagree with Q11	χ^2 Statistic	p-value
Question 17	263	67.3	65.1	73.2	1.559	0.212

On the following page, two data plots display the mean averages for the sub-populations for each of the dependent variables. As was seen in the first two hypotheses of this dissertation, individual analysis of the variables do not always lead to statistically significant coorelation. However, an interesting pattern does appear when these variables are considered as a group. This pattern has convinced me to not to discard variables that did not fully meet my expectations. Rather, I leave it to other scholars to take these results, finetune the construction of the variables, and explore ways to better explain this phenomenon.

Plot 4-3a

Mean Questionnaire Responses: Hypothesis #3

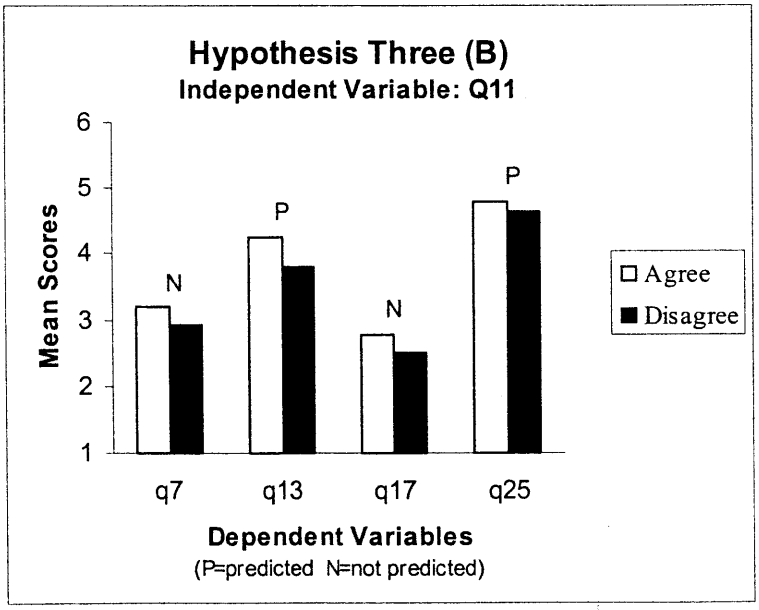
Knowledge Generation



Plot 4-3b

Mean Questionnaire Responses: Hypothesis #3

Expert Sourcing



Hypothesis #4 — Leadership

The more a person dislikes concentrated power, the less willing he will be to designate and/or accept traditional leaders.

Why is it that when you go to a sustainable agriculture meeting, you can't find a person in charge? Even the development of meeting agenda require the constitution of a committee. Why is it that the Campaign is led, for example, by a steering committee, not a president, whereas the National Farm Bureau Federation, National Farmers Union, and other agriculture organizations have presidents or similar leadership structures? In trying to explain this situation, I speculated that the cause of this aversion to traditional leadership was a dislike of concentrated power — of " bigness" — because concentrated power is viewed as taking over or limiting control of decision-making.

This hypothesis flows naturally from the preceding three hypotheses. Identity is embodied by the group and is not vested in any individual. As the literature indicates, the distinguishing factor between interest group theory and identity group theory is a shift from focus on individuals to focus on the group. In addition, as evident from discussions above, SAAC participants believe there is great benefit from group processes and profound wisdom in collective knowledge. If hierarchal structure and individual leaders are established, the all-important group dynamic may be threatened. Therefore, I selected as my independent variable the premise that large corporate farms are inherently incapable of becoming sustainable. The two dependent variables are that it is time to have a national leader for sustainable leadership and that behind-the-scenes leadership is preferable to conspicuous individual leadership.

The objective of this hypothesis is to explain why SAAC does not appoint, elect, or otherwise select individuals to fill traditional leadership roles. A second aim is to determine how this fact, if it is indeed a fact, fits into other key findings of this study — that there is a

sizable identity group within SAAC and that SAAC participants place extremely high value on group processes and collective knowledge.

Testing of this hypothesis proceeded as with the other hypotheses. Only one direct question was asked regarding leadership. Because fewer statements on the questionnaire related to this hypothesis than to any other, there are fewer data to analyze.

Independent Variable #1: Corporate Hate.

It is inherently impossible for a huge, corporate farm to be sustainable. *(questionnaire #6)*

My expectation that most respondents would agree with this statement on the questionnaire was not met; 38 percent of all respondents agreed, but 58 percent disagreed. It may be that the statement was worded too strongly. Replacing the word "impossible" with "unlikely" may have elicited a different response, one more in line with my expectations. It may also be that the relationship that I expected (similar to dependent variable #3 under Hypothesis #3) does not exist.

The response from the interviews indicated that sustainable agriculture advocates are highly suspicious of corporate ownership. Although I did not ask a question about this issue, a number of comments related to it surfaced. For example, one NGO activist said, "We see rural populations leaving and the infrastructure disintegrating. I think it is really important that we continue to fight the flight to larger farms rather than smaller farms, which are manageable" (View #7). A farmer said, "We were starting to get real concerned about corporate farming and the opportunity they were seizing in the early 1980s — watching investors and corporations starting to buy land" (View #15). Another farmer said, "Production at any cost is not the answer. We need to acquire a better method of selling products to get out from corporate control. The corporate company sells units — they don't care what — it's the unit of

sale. And when they sell units, they make money and look good for their stockholders, and they get their million dollar salaries and life goes on" (View #13) .

The government has been complicit in this corporate takeover of American agriculture, according to one NGO activist: "Few large economic sectors have been guided as purposely or have met the objectives of a government policy as well as agriculture. USDA, in conjunction with the producer community, particularly the large producers, has had an implicit policy — to reduce the number of farmers, drive people off the land, and industrialize the enterprise. These have been the guiding principles for fifty years and a whole range of tools from research to tax policy have been used to make sure it happened. It does show that government policy can work, in a perverse way" (View #4).

Only one interviewee discounted concentrated ownership as a problem, providing this example: "When the big markets, Ralph's for instance, created an organic section of the store, all of these small operators were totally panicked and said, 'We're going broke and this is not what we want to see happen and you've got to stop these big guys — they're going to push us out.' In fact, it helped expand the market. The new organic converts expanded the market for the small guys" (View #11).

Dependent Variable #1: Leadership.

It is time to select a national leader to coordinate activities and represent sustainable agriculture in media and policy forums. *(questionnaire #14)*

Confounding my expectation that the majority of respondents would say no, I found that the results were split almost evenly: 44 percent of all respondents agreed with this statement, while 43 percent disagreed. An additional 12 percent responded "don't know," a fairly high percentage "don't know" response for this questionnaire.

In analyzing the responses from those people who believe that corporate farms are bad versus those who do not, I found no significant difference: 42 percent of those who think corporate farms are bad also believe it is time to select a national leader, while 46 percent of those who do not think corporate farms are bad believe the same (p-value=0.125).

The questionnaire results are not conclusive in regard to my expectations, but the interview results appear to substantiate it. I asked each interview the following questions: "You are the person greeting the Martian's spaceship. The Martian says, 'Take me to your sustainable agriculture leader.' What do you do?" In responding, 17 out of 20 people refused to mention an individual's name. The three who did chose to mention several people at the same time.

Several interviewees laughed, saying that the Martian asked the wrong question. "It's like when the settlers approached the Indians — who is your leader so he can sign a treaty? The Indians never seemed to be able to communicate to them that it's not how they operate. So it would be a similar type of question — there just ain't no leader" (View #5). Another interviewee said, "It's too simple to pick one person" (View #16). A researcher refused to answer, saying instead, "That's difficult for me. I happen to know a half dozen people that I consider to be doing a boss job on the farm. But that superimposes my values and judgement" (View #2). A government worker said he took his lead from nature: "I would take this person to the redwoods of California or the Grand Canyon or some incredibly beautiful magical place on this earth" (View #9). Several interviewees indicated that, in general, farmers as a group are the leaders in SAAC. "I'd take him to a farmer who's doing it. That is the person who is really doing it right there on their farm — those folk are the leaders. The rest of us are running around trying to do all this and prophesying and organizing stuff" (View #15). One person said, "I would take the Martians to the SARE program. I would give them a list of the non-profits that are involved in it and just take them to the people. In some ways, that's our problem. In conventional farming you can go anywhere and go to the [Farm Service Agency] but you can't go to the sustainable ag headquarters" (View 13).

Some interviewees went on to explain why sustainable agriculture is void of traditional leadership positions. An NGO employee said, "If you tried to find a leader, you probably couldn't find one. You'd find more like a web than you would a pyramid. Much more than in conventional ag. And the other part is you are going to find people much less willing to be led. Most of them are good thinkers, and they'll go along with you to some extent, but they are not just going to sit there and nod their heads" (View #8). A farmer explained, "We don't have a leader. I don't think of anybody as being our leader, and there certainly isn't much of a chain of command. Your rank is not determined by your office or your title. It's based on the work you do, your commitment, your track record, your levels of achievement, the kind of human being that you are to the other people within the community" (View #18). And a university professor stated, "A national leader? I'm increasingly parochial in my vision" (View #2).

Two people out of 20 indicated that this leaderless existence may be problematic. One farmer said, "I don't think we have a leader. That's a problem. We have organizations that are in the lead and working hard for us, but we don't have a CEO or president" (View #13). An NGO advocate observed, "It has never coalesced in a single person. I can't think of anybody I would call a leader of the sustainable agriculture movement. There are downsides to it. It sometimes helps to have your idea embodied in a single person — e.g., Jerry Farwell for the Moral Majority — because that is how the rest of society can handle it. It might have been better had there been a single individual who embodies sustainable agriculture that would have given the issue a kind of visibility. It is a convenient way for people to pick up ideas" (View #4) .

Dependent Variable #2: Anti-Leadership.

It is far better to have 'behind the scenes' leadership teams than conspicuous individual leaders. *(questionnaire #22)*

My expectations that the response to this statement would be overwhelming agreement were not met. Less than half (47 percent) of respondents agreed with this statement, while 37

percent disagreed. This is far less conclusive than the 60 percent to 70 percent or more consensus for many other statements on the questionnaire.

There was no significant difference in the correlation with this dependent variable and the responses of those people who do not like corporate farms (49 percent agreed) and those who have no particular aversion to corporate farms (54 percent agreed) (p-value=0.484). The responses from the interviews did little more than confirm that sustainable agriculture has no identifiable leaders. As one participant put it, "It's one of the unfortunate paradoxes of our community that we're not as united as you might think. We tout the same philosophy but we don't really live it sometimes. People are always jockeying for territory and power and that really interferes with the coalescing of the community. The organic community is split into factions more than it should be and has several pockets of leaders without a clear designation of who the leader is. There is more of a circle of leaders who don't work as closely as they should together. I could take him [the Martian] to one person and say this is the leader of our faction of our community" (View #10). Another said, "It's [the industry] not a pyramid anymore, it's a tetrahedron, and you are working in a three-dimensional, and you're networking all over, and your team leader changes" (View 12).

In relation to SARE, one interviewee stated: "I worry a bit about the SARE program developing too much of its own bureaucratic mechanisms and structure and things like that and maybe every five years it needs to step back and make sure it's truly founded on a coalition and that nobody tries to take control of it. The ecosystem world view that I'm trying to describe does not fit well with the control phenomenon of the industrial model.... I'm going to have to take you to two dozen farms managed by the best movers and shakers in the sustainable agriculture community, and that is the leadership that drives it. We have a diffusive, distributed system of leadership, if you must — to get me to use that kind of terminology — and I believe it very strongly" (View #14).

Hypothesis 4: Summary of Results. I am rejecting this hypothesis for two reasons. First, there is a lack of substantial evidence that either proves or disproves it. Second, the

results indicate that the posited causal relationship — people have an aversion to traditional leadership styles because they believe such leadership may usurp the group decision-making process — is wrong.

What the results clearly show is that this issue may comprise some of the more complex and divisive topics within SAAC. Six of the 24 statements in the questionnaire generated a fairly even split among respondents, and two of those six are the dependent variables for this hypothesis. This may portend the need for significantly more analysis and dissection of the variables. If the hypothesis is worthy, then the variables need to be reshaped.

Table 4-4

Summary of Questionnaire Data: Hypothesis #4

Independent variable: Question 6

Dependent Variable (DV)	n	% Agree with DV	% Agree with DV and Agree with Q6	% Agree with DV and Disagree with Q6	χ^2 Statistic	p-value
Question 14	255	51.0	45.2	55.0	2.354	0.125
Question 22	246	55.7	58.5	54.0	0.490	0.484

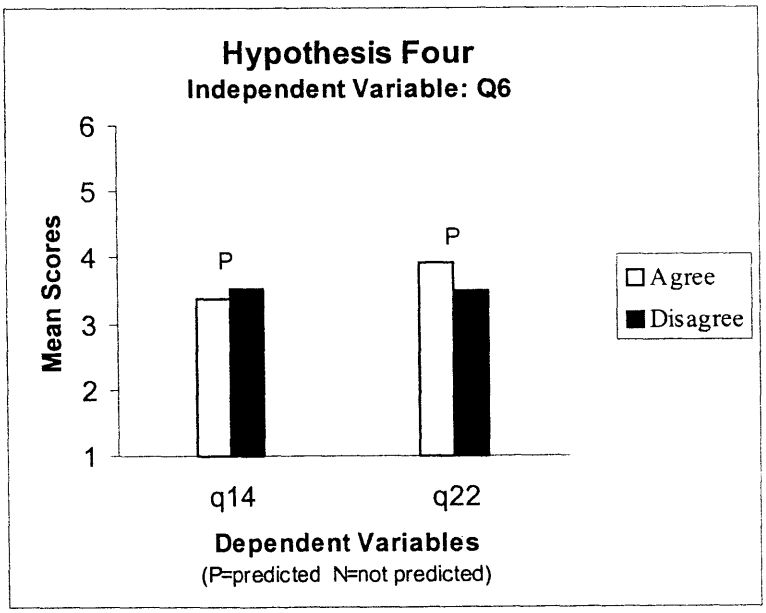
Clearly the most interesting data are the responses collected from the interviews. As those and my own experience attest, there are no traditional leadership roles within SAAC. What this study cannot do is explain why. It may have to do with the decentralized nature of SAAC, but even small grassroots sustainable agriculture groups in the countryside shy away from leaders. It may have something to do with the workings of identity groups, but even in identity politics there are known leaders. It may also be connected to an obsession with

processes and collective knowledge, but a leader could facilitate these processes rather than command and control. As noted earlier, leaders can be critical because they promote the kind of conflict necessary to focus organizations on problems and the strategies for resolving those problems.

The plot of mean variable results for this hypothesis shows a similar pattern from the plots of hypotheses 1 through 3.

Plot 4-4

Mean Questionnaire Responses: Hypothesis #4



Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the four hypotheses that form the core of this study and which were tested with a representative group of SAAC participants through a qualitative technique (face-to-face interviews) and a quantitative measure (a written questionnaire).

Hypothesis #1 concerned identity, postulating that the more people are ridiculed or marginalized for their interests, the more their interests transform into issues of identity. There is sufficient evidence that a significant identity group exists within SAAC. Two-thirds of all respondents (74 percent) felt ridiculed for their adherence to sustainable agriculture beliefs and practices. Within this ridiculed sub-population, the results of the questionnaire and the interviews indicated significant correlation with three key indicators of identity politics — a strong and emotional sense of community, a recognition of cultural/spiritual aspects, and an us/them outlook evidenced by fear of co-option.

Hypothesis #2 focused on obsession with process within sustainable agriculture, suggesting that the more people distrust conventional science, the more they will emphasize decision-making processes. Responses to the questionnaire and from the interviews clearly indicate that there is a high level of distrust, even disdain, for conventional science within sustainable agriculture. While correlation among the independent and dependent variables for this hypothesis was uneven, the combined results from the questionnaire and interviews showed that those who distrust science — those in the center of SAAC — are more likely than other people to tolerate lengthy dialogues and less willing to define objectives.

Hypothesis #3 postulated that the more people believe in collective knowledge, the more they will not approve of hierarchial organizations. The questionnaire found a high level of faith in collective knowledge, with 74 percent and 69 percent agreement on the two constructions of the independent variable that was based on the principle that collective knowledge is preferable to expert knowledge. Correlation of the dependent variables with the independent variables showed that the more people believe in collective knowledge, the less

concerned they are about the lack of coordination within sustainable agriculture organizations, the more likely they are to favor a less hierarchal form of organizational structure, and the more likely they are to believe that decentralization is critical to success in sustainable agriculture. This last point elicited the highest level of agreement (81 percent) among questionnaire respondents.

Hypothesis #4 stated that the more people dislike concentrated power, the less willing they are to designate or accept traditional leaders. I rejected this hypothesis because there was no substantial evidence to prove or disprove it and because the results indicated that the causal relationship may be wrong. That relationship was described as follows: People have an aversion to traditional leadership styles because they believe such leadership may usurp the group decision-making process. What the results clearly showed is that this issue may encompass some of the more complex and divisive topics within SAAC, signaling the need for significantly more analysis and dissection of the variables. If the hypothesis is worthy, then the variables need to be reshaped.

Chapter 5 presents recommendations for policy makers and SAAC participants who are interested in moving the sustainable agriculture agenda ahead and who may benefit from recognition of the fact that an identity group, which may be hindering progress, is operating within the sustainable agriculture coalition. Before proceeding to Chapter 5, however, there is an additional result from the interviews that relates to the findings discussed above. As noted earlier in this document, the SARE budget, at about $12 million a year, is very small in relation to the overall USDA budget for research and extension programs — approximately $1 billion annually. Each year the Campaign surveys its network to determine the priorities for lobbying congressional appropriators. Without fail, SARE tops the list, far above other priorities. And each year, the Campaign requests the full sum authorized for SARE in the 1990 farm bill — $80 million dollars. Neither the President's budget nor the congressional budget offers more than a few million dollars increase at any one time.

Given these circumstances, I asked all interviewees if they would accept the following "deal:" The SARE program is now funded at approximately $10 million annually. If tomorrow I told you that the federal government would spend ten times that amount — or $100 million — on sustainable agriculture research and extension every year, but in doing so would abolish the SARE program, would you take the deal?

Of the 20 people interviewed, only five said they would take the deal. Four of those people describe themselves as among the more recent converts to sustainable agriculture. All five put conditions on their acceptance. As one said, "I'd take the deal even though you know some of [the money] is going to be siphoned off into something you don't want that isn't sustainable agriculture" (View #8).

The majority of interviewees expressed views similar to an NGO advocate, who said, "My guess is that the $100 million disbursed though existing mechanisms would very quickly rename whatever they were doing. At the end of 10 years of that kind of regime, you would have lost most of what makes sustainable agriculture revolutionary" (View #4).

Turn down real money that could be used for necessary research on both the environmental and social components of sustainability? Yes. This response might seem irrational to people who are not familiar with SAAC, its close connections to the SARE program, and its emphasis on and investments in community, spiritual discussions, decentralized structure, and group wisdom — all elements that help form the core of SAAC and that motivate the identity group within SAAC's midst, as shown through testing of the hypotheses presented in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This dissertation concerns beliefs and values and the way in which they affect the ability of an advocacy coalition to succeed in the policy arena. From the outset, it argues that understanding what makes an advocacy coalition either successful or prone to failure requires a close examination of the "glue" that holds the coalition together — the glue that Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith define as core policy beliefs and values. This study indicates that in the case of sustainable agriculture, policy beliefs and values are secondary to the shared sense of identity that defines the group. Thus, the sustainable agriculture advocacy coalition (SAAC) may respond to certain external pressures in ways that differ from other advocacy coalitions in which core policy beliefs and values dominate.

This dissertation contains the results of the most extensive national survey of sustainable agriculture advocates to date. It documents the internal dynamics of SAAC through an examination of the three most prominent national sustainable agriculture coalition-building efforts in the United States — the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture (Campaign), the Kellogg Integrated Farm and Food System Network (IFFS), and the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE).

My foremost conclusion is that an identity group does, indeed, exist within SAAC. Participants in interviews and a national survey conducted as part of the research for this dissertation responded with a high degree of similarity to key questions concerning their involvement in sustainable agriculture. This chapter examines the relevance of my findings to ideas about advocacy coalitions developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith and the implications of identity politics for SAAC. Prescriptions based on these findings as well as ideas for future research are suggested.

Augmenting the ACF

The advocacy coalition framework (ACF) does not, as shown in Chapter Two, examine the internal workings of advocacy coalitions, a weakness that the authors themselves acknowledged following Edella Schlager's efforts to assess the mechanisms of coordinated behavior within coalitions. Schlager's work and this dissertation are likely the first of many studies that will recognize the complexity of beliefs and values and their influence on the internal dynamics of coalitions. In this respect, they are both important to refining the theory underlying the advocacy coalition framework.

Policy change, according to Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, is the result of policy-oriented learning. The existence of an identity group within an advocacy coalition can have a significant impact on the prospects for policy-oriented learning because the primary function of such groups is to provide a context in which people realize themselves as individuals (Piore, 1995: 177). It is critical, therefore, to recognize that identity groups are real and design policy development mechanisms that account for their existence. Methods to determine whether an identity group is operating within an advocacy coalition are also important.

Based on my research, I recommend that the ACF be augmented by adding the following hypothesis concerning internal coalition dynamics:

> *The existence of an identity group within an advocacy coalition can impede the ability of that coalition to affect change in the policy subsystem.*

Two key premises of Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith are brought into question by this research. First, while the authors contend that their focus on advocacy coalitions represents a major departure from interest group analysis, their lack of attention to internal group dynamics does not allow the reader to differentiate fully their work from the individualistic framework that grounds most public policy analysis. Rather, as in this study, an explanation of the group dynamic that transforms the group into more than a sum of its parts (Piore, 1995) is necessary to

understand how groups may differ from cohorts of individuals working together for policy change. In the case of SAAC, for example, the group itself provides refuge and self-realization that gives it a context not considered within interest group theory. Second, while I agree with the authors that deep core beliefs are impervious to change, I do not share their optimism that policy core and secondary beliefs are always susceptible to policy learning. The group dynamic uncovered within SAAC shows a profound distrust of science with the result being exclusive reliance on collective knowledge generated through group dialogue. Thus, it is critical that policymakers not presume that scientific expertise will produce, in all cases, the kinds of policy learning within advocacy coalitions described by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith.

Implications of Identity Group Formation Within Advocacy Coalitions

Research findings stemming from the work conducted for this dissertation strongly indicate that an identity group does exist within SAAC. Chapter Three, which presents a case study of the IFFS, and Chapter Four, which discusses the results of the questionnaire and extensive interviews conducted for this dissertation, found that sustainable agriculture advocates exhibit many of the key characteristics of an identity group. They are internally focused and often feel ridiculed or marginalized (74 percent of the people who responded to the questionnaire said they had been ridiculed). Participants acknowledge achieving self-realization through their participation in the identity group, and a distinct culture has evolved around this particular identity. Members of the identity group are loathe to compromise on a whole host of issues because they believe compromise will undermine their very being. They fear being co-opted and view the world through an "us-versus-them" prism. Based on the outcomes of this research and a review of the literature on identity groups, I conclude that an identity group within an advocacy coalition can shape the behavior of the coalition by creating pressure for continuing internal negotiations, conflict avoidance, and a reliance on group-generated information.

Inward Negotiations

When an identity group forms within an advocacy coalition it creates pressure to focus

on continuous internal coalition building rather than negotiations with other coalitions in the policy subsystem. This seems to occur for three reasons. First, "identity-consumed" individuals seek ongoing dialogue with others in an advocacy coalition to secure common understandings that solidify the identity of the group. Second, identity-consumed individuals, having suffered what they perceive as discrimination and ridicule, hold little hope that those outside their group will listen to reason. So, working with them, and possibly compromising to accommodate their needs, is not considered an acceptable option. Finally, and most importantly, an identity group within an advocacy coalition can create problems in that coalition by convincing participants that there is consensus on policy beliefs and values when, in fact, it is identity, not policy concerns, that provide the glue holding the coalition together. When policy matters must be decided there is likely to be less of a consensus than the members expected, creating the need for further internal negotiations.

Conflict Avoidance

An identity group within an advocacy coalition can create pressure to establish a decentralized and essentially leaderless organizational structure. Because identity-consumed individuals are likely to achieve self-realization through group interaction, they are usually intent on avoiding conflict that could jeopardize the existence of the group. By maintaining a decentralized organization, subgroups within the coalition avoid subordinating their identity, and thus avoid compromise on basic values or beliefs. By adopting alternative leadership structures such as rotating chairs, steering committees, and the like they can avoid the anointing of leaders, who could, as James MacGregor Burns (1978) argues, effectively inflame conflict to clarify group goals. The lack of a clear hierarchy or leader will frustrate the efforts of others in the policy subsystem seeking to identity spokespeople with whom to negotiate.

Group Validation of Truths

An identity group within an advocacy coalition can impede policy oriented learning. The need to generate reliable through group dialogue encumbers decisionmaking by reconstructing

information in ways not understood by others in the policy subsystem. This is especially true for scientific information, with identity groups assuming that their collective knowledge is superior to outsider knowledge, even where the outsider knowledge is the product of expert input. Further complicating policy learning is the group learning process that occurs within an identity group which makes it hard for others in the advocacy coalition, as well as those outside of it interested in negotiating policy reform, to fully comprehend and communicate with the group.

Negotiating Identity

Several authorities have suggested that because agricultural sustainability is largely an environmental issue, identity politics should not prove a hindrance to policy reform efforts. Piore, for example, states that after the economy, the most important universal issues in public policy are environmental (Piore, 1995: 179). Todd Gitlin adds, "Of popular movements that actually exist, the ecology movement alone on the Left has serious potential for crossing the identity trenches" (Gitlin, 1995: 235). Also, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith hypothesize (ACF Hypothesis #8) that problems involving natural systems are more conducive to policy oriented learning. The reason for all of this optimism is that environmental issues are supposedly open to scientific resolution. These scholars envision opposing coalitions sitting around a table and jointly discussing and accepting scientific data. But as described in Chapter Four, science is treated differently when identity is at stake. The problems experienced by SAAC were not any easier to resolve than if the issues confronted by SAAC were solely concerned social policies.

The results of my research indicate that when identity groups come into play, it is exceedingly difficult for consensus to be negotiated within the coalition. Thus, SAAC must develop mechanisms to resolve internal and external debates within the policy subsystem that take identity obstacles into account . As Piore states, we need an alternative way to manage "the politics that identity groups create" (Piore, 1995: 195). The following six strategies may ease (but not eliminate) some of the more vexing problems that render identity-affected advocacy coalitions ineffective in the policy subsystem.

Prescription #1: Expose the Issues of Identity. If people, both inside and outside an advocacy coalition are unaware that identity concerns are affecting it, negotiations are not likely to achieve progress in the policy subsystem. Few people know to look for identity concerns within an advocacy coalition. Until Piore produced substantiation of identity politics inside labor unions, the identification of identity issues had been limited to racial, feminist, and gay communities.

To some extent, this prescription parallels one offered by Lawrence Susskind and Patrick Field regarding the resolution of value disputes. They suggest looking at the history of an issue to understand the critics' arguments and beliefs (Susskind and Field, 1996: 181). For those people and organizations outside of the affected advocacy coalition, knowing that identity is at play would allow them to negotiate with the advocacy coalition more effectively, shape their expectations appropriately, and follow some of the tactics below. Within an affected advocacy coalition, exposure of identity concerns may have marginal benefits. While it is unlikely that identity group participants will change given an identity diagnosis, those participants within the coalition unaffected by identity may seek resolution on discrete issues (prescription #5), choose to secede or seek alternative means of pursuing their policy goals. Alternatively, highlighting the role identity plays within a coalition may allow that coalition to alter its goals so that perceiving or creating identity becomes the central policy focus in an explicit rather than an implicit manner.

I have profound respect for the people interviewed for this dissertation, for Campaign leaders, and for the many SARE conference participants who participated in the questionnaire. In some ways, what they are doing — seeking a better world and valuing each idea and person more than is usually the case in the policy-making arena — may be more important than achieving sustainable agriculture. But I maintain that there is a need to recognize where goals between the identity group and others within the coalition may diverge.

Sustainable agriculture advocates place a high value on dialogue, introspection, and education (e.g., 69 percent of questionnaire respondents had a masters or doctoral degree). It

may be that SAAC participants will consider my conclusions and develop an alternative explanation for the phenomena I have observed. As Gary King and his colleagues stress, "theories are not verifiable because we can never test all observable implications of a theory" (King, 1994: 100). At a minimum, it is my hope that exposure of the crippling effects of decentralism and lack of leadership within SAAC will be recognized regardless of whether SAAC participants accept my explanation of identity politics as the causal factor.

Prescription #2: Educate Non-Identity Participants. Because individuals within an identity group are unlikely to change in any dramatic way, attention needs to be focused on the other participants within the policy subsystem, both potential allies and those who are opposed to sustainability. It may be that people interested in negotiating with identity groups may find important insights on how to approach identity groups from the vast literature on international, cross-cultural negotiation. Educating these individuals about the presence of an identity group and the characteristics of identity groups in general would likely allow them to better choose among negotiating strategies. But several tactics are immediately obvious. For example, people interested in negotiating with an identity group should recognize the inherent limitations to such negotiations and adjust their goals accordingly. Negotiators should be extremely careful not to challenge core identity beliefs and values, the subjects of which will likely never be open to reconsideration and the mere suggestion to the contrary may close down negotiations altogether. Ideally, non-identity participants should seek to have important information introduced by someone operating within the identity group so that the information is readily accepted and debated. Finally, negotiators should not hold out for consensus among participants, but rather seek to achieve agreement among significant portions of the advocacy coalitions on policy reforms.

In the case of SAAC, I have four specific suggestions. First, avoid challenging the issue of small farms. While this is a policy core belief and value, it is at the same time, an identity core belief and value. Even beginning discussions with pledges that policy reforms will be size-neutral does not alleviate concern within the identity group that they may be asked to compromise on the issue. Second, establish non-negotiating time and space that is at least equal

to the time spent in formal negotiations. Fraternity is so important among identity-consumed participants and the extent to which fraternity is shared with a wider circle will, as in all negotiations, allow less antagonistic interactions. Third, siphon off a few identity group leaders and invite them to non-negotiation fora whose purpose is the exposure to new ideas about sustainability. Universities and organizations in other countries may be especially useful for this role. Finally, facilitators both within SAAC meetings (e.g., the Campaign) and broader policy subsystem meetings (e.g., USDA advisory committee on biotechnology) should not inordinately delay decisions in an attempt to achieve consensus among all participants. Rather than relying strictly on consensus, voting and other traditional means of assessing group feelings should be utilized so that progress can be made.

Prescription #3: Engage "Borderland" Institutions. This is one of the prescriptions offered by Piore that I believe has great value. Borderlands are areas where the mixing of different groups or ideas is possible, despite the presence of identity concerns. Piore draws from the work of the anthropologist Renato Rosaldo (1989) who describes borderlands as places that foster recognition and respect, and cites as an example Hispanic women writers introducing feminist concerns into internal discussions of Hispanic communities. Expanding on this example, Piore suggests that labor unions could act, not as competitors with identity groups, but as borderland institutions that orchestrate conversations with identity groups to achieve progress in policymaking. Such progress would occur by the exposure of identity-consumed individuals to policy themes that would then be imported back into their identity groups. Piore advises, "From a borderland perspective that dialogue internal to the organization is more important than the positions the organization actually endorses at any given time" (Piore, 1995: 166).

Understanding identity politics means understanding that identity group participants will not cross borders into other organizations. Unlike interests that are activated through a multitude of overlapping interest groups, identity is only realized through the singular affiliation to one group that then defines the individual (Piore, 1995). As no borders will be crossed, it is then important to locate institutions that may exist on the periphery of the identity group and determine whether negotiations may occur there with people from "the other side" without

posing a threat to core identity issues.

In the case of sustainable agriculture, places of worship — churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques — may serve as effective borderland institutions. Such places of worship are not competing policymaking institutions. Places of worship could offer community and, with some effort, provide an environment free of the ridicule that haunts many SAAC participants. Religious leaders could take on formal facilitation roles within local communities to search for intersections of interest among the broad array of participants in the policy subsystem.

I suspect that SAAC, for example, would be amenable to efforts by religious leaders to facilitate negotiations on sustainable agriculture for three reasons. First, as cited in Chapter Four, a strong sense of spirituality is expressed by sustainable agriculture advocates. In fact, in writing a survey question to test the value people placed on sustainable agriculture, I carefully structured the hierarchy — "besides my family and church, the community I most identity with is..." Second, the Campaign already has dozens of faith-based organizations as members, demonstrating an interest by the worship community in sustainable agriculture and vice versa (e.g., United Methodist Church of NC, American Baptist Churches of IL, Catholic Rural Life Conference, Presbyterian Sisters of Blessed Virgin, SD, NY State Council of Churches). Finally, as mentioned in Chapter Two, in 1998 a "Soul of Agriculture" project was funded by the foundation community at the request of SAAC organizations to "tap into a spirituality of the agricultural constituency that hasn't been organized to any great extent" (Merrigan, 1997b). The launching of this project, which ironically had few religious leaders at the helm, nevertheless demonstrates a strong interest among SAAC participants in thinking "more deeply and creatively about the ethical dimensions of agriculture" (Soul of Agriculture, 1998).

Prescription #4: Seek People on the Periphery. In cases, such as in sustainable agriculture, where the identity group does not account for the whole of the advocacy coalition, it is critical to locate advocates within the coalition who are not consumed by identity concerns. Once located, these advocates need to assume a more active role in engaging the larger policy

subsystem. The problem, of course, is that these non-identity advocates cannot say that they are speaking for the entire coalition. To some extent, this weakens the non-identity advocates' negotiating position. However, the continual, inwardly focused dialogue within identity groups ensures an extremely low likelihood of achieving consensus within the advocacy coalition. Recognition of this dilemma by other participants in the policy subsystem may make them eager to accept entries from factions of advocates willing to come to the table.

Susskind and Field suggest that one way to resolve value disputes is to "allow for and seek out diverse and complex views on all 'sides'" (Susskind and Field, 1996: 186). This important insight — that it is unreasonable to expect all advocates within a coalition to hold identical values and beliefs — gives hope that a careful analysis and dissection of a coalition can pinpoint those organizations and individuals more susceptible to negotiation. For example, Susskind and Field cite a successful effort to move forward on what is usually a very polarized debate over animal rights. Care was taken to eliminate extremists from both "sides" of the issue, leaving the more moderate groups in the middle to engage in productive dialogue.

Specific to sustainable agriculture, it may be useful to consider elevating the roles of two groups within SAAC that are sufficiently on the periphery to be free from issues of identity. National environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club, have, for the most part, contributed their names to sustainable agriculture efforts but leave the details of engagement to their local chapters. Over time, these local chapters become more closely affiliated with community-based SAAC efforts than with the broader environmental community. Direct intervention by nationally-based and politically seasoned environmental staff may result in obtaining forward movement on some aspects of sustainability. Second, ridicule has been determined to be a causal factor in the development of identity concerns. As acceptance of sustainability is growing, it may be possible that younger people will no longer encounter ridicule, or perhaps will not be as affected when it does occur, and thus be free of identity issues. While it is difficult to envision a 20 year old negotiating key issues of sustainability with the president of the Monsanto Company or the American Farm Bureau Federation, efforts to bring together younger people, representing all sides of the issues surrounding sustainability, may lead to relationship

building that will set the stage for future joint problem-solving.

Prescription #5: Establish Discrete, Achievable Goals. People in identity groups have experienced real, or perceived discrimination, leading them to conclude that the world is against them. Such a world view undoubtedly leaves people within identity groups little to no hope that progress can be made in the policy subsystem. The extreme us-them mentality and the corresponding unwillingness to compromise makes it difficult to accept anything but complete "victory." This pessimism is especially inflamed by activists on the Left who, for whatever reason, tend to dwell on policy defeats and rarely herald victories. While admittedly difficult, it may be possible to segregate secondary beliefs from policy and deep core beliefs and determine a subset of those secondary beliefs amenable to policy negotiation. Even the smallest gain in the policy arena is progress and discrete gains may, in the long-term, create a climate where productive dialogue between advocacy coalitions is possible.

The diversity and magnitude of the goals that fall under the rubric of sustainability are daunting. The obsession of SAAC participants with "process" is significant. No doubt this contributes to the stunning finding that three fourths of questionnaire respondents believe sustainability is not achievable (Chapter Four). Such a view at the outset, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to motivate people to engage in the policymaking debates. It may be possible to take some of the more important policy issues and reframe them in such a way that they are not immediately linked to sustainability. Donald Schon and Martin Rein suggest that intractable policy problems — those that are highly resistant to resolution by appeal to evidence, research, or reasoned judgment — are best resolved through a thoughtful process of renaming and reframing (Schon and Rein, 1994: xi).

Prescription #6: Fund a National Sustainable Agriculture Headquarters. Unlike the previous prescriptions that may generically be applied to all advocacy coalitions struggling with identity issues, prescription #6 is designed specifically for SAAC. It is highly unlikely that SAAC itself, given its history and the predispositions of its participants as documented in this dissertation, would devote the necessary resources to establish and maintain a national,

Washington D.C.-based office. The foundation community, however, as the primary source of SAAC funding, could easily accomplish this feat.[1]

A national office is needed to facilitate negotiations with policymakers in Congress and the Administration, as well as with other national organizations participating in the policy subsystem. Decisions are made daily in Washington D.C. that have significant impact on agricultural sustainability, and policymakers seeking guidance on the issue often do not know where to turn. A national office, with a permanent professional staff, including policy specialists, lobbyists, and scientists, would give sustainable agriculture greater visibility and thus offer a resource for policymakers. The national office would also facilitate the work of SAAC participants by providing a watchdog role, identifying opportunities for influence, coordinating SAAC activities pertinent to Washington D.C. policymaking, and translating concerns between policymakers and the grassroots.

Ideally, a national office would be funded for not less than a ten year period. While few grants are awarded for such extensive periods, such a commitment would signal the importance of the national office to SAAC participants. Long-term funding also would eliminate the national office from competing with other SAAC participants in annual funding quests, which

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[1] The foundation community has been funding sustainable agriculture activities for almost two decades, although a national office has yet to be established. The closest version of a national office was the Henry A. Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture (Institute), located just outside Washington D.C. in Beltsville Maryland. The Institute was established to build the scientific legitimacy for sustainable agriculture, with the vast majority of its work focused on research and education issues. For most of its 18 years, the Institute had a tiny professional staff--one or two people. Only in the mid to late 1990s, did the Institute garner the funding to expand its staff, cover a wider range of issues pertinent to sustainability, and add a satellite office in Washington D.C. to directly interact with national policymakers. Just as the Institute was approaching this vision of a national office, however, foundation funding dried up. In 1999 a remnant of the Institute was absorbed by Winrock International, with other functions disbanded. A second organization, the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, located in Washington D.C., serves, in a limited way, as a national office as it is the only remaining sustainable agriculture presence in the greater Washington area. However, its three staff members are funded and directed by a coalition of mid-west sustainable agriculture groups and thus SAC's agenda reflects regional concerns.

currently provides a frequent source of organizational conflict. Finally, long-term funding would enable the national office to prioritize its activities concurrent with national policy activities, as opposed to foundation grantmaking cycles.

Given the resounding adherence to a philosophy of decentralism documented in this dissertation, why would I believe that SAAC participants would do anything other than disregard a national office? To build strong connections with the Campaign, IFFS, and other SAAC organizations, the national office would have three critical features. First, two funded positions would be established for "visiting outreach coordinators" responsible for communicating policy issues to and from the multitude of organizations that comprise SAAC. Just as universities host visiting scholars, the national office would award these outreach positions for one-year, non-renewable terms to various SAAC grassroots participants. Second, the national office would have an annual budget to support activities of grassroots groups that facilitate the goals of the national office. For example, if important legislation is pending before the U.S. Senate, the national office would have funding to bring grassroots activists to Washington to share their views with policymakers. Finally, the national office would have visitor space — desks, computers, phones — to accommodate SAAC participants during their business visits to Washington which would help build relationships and facilitate coordinated activity. These three features would immediately and intricately link the national office with SAAC at large.

Opportunities for Further Research

Several areas of concern to identity politics, advocacy coalitions, and sustainability in particular, require additional study. To begin, it is clear that the beliefs and values holding advocacy coalitions together are complex. This dissertation considers only those situations in which beliefs and values are dominated by identity concerns. Numerous other explorations of internal coalition dynamics are necessary to uncover the many-faceted aspects of belief and value systems before the advocacy coalition framework is sufficiently explanatory. Second, the results of my research concerning the willingness of SAAC to compromise were inconclusive as were the results of how SAAC dealt with the very important issue of leadership. My instinct is

that both issues are exceedingly important and merit additional consideration. Third, it may be time to consider posing the radical solution of moving forward on the "sustainability" agenda by completely abandoning the concept entirely and reframing important environmental and social issues within the context of other policy subsystems. Fourth, in Chapter Two I briefly reviewed literature concerning social movements and noted that several scholars are looking at SAAC through that prism. The relationship, if there is one, between identity politics and social movements remains to be explored. It would be useful to understand whether identity groups coexist with social movements or whether identity, in the case of SAAC, is mistaken for a social movement. Fifth, it would be useful to take the hypotheses of this dissertation and explore their relevance to the global sustainable agriculture debate — are elements of identity politics emerging with the sustainable agriculture coalitions in other countries as well?

Finally, it would be useful for scholars to reevaluate my hypotheses and contemplate alternative explanations. Since this is the first time the advocacy coalition framework and identity politics have been linked, I must admit uncertainty with my conclusions. As Paul Diesing notes, "[W]hen we test a hypothesis experimentally or statistically and get confirming data, we have not actually confirmed the hypothesis. We have produced a regularity, but our interpretation of the regularity is one of an infinity of possible interpretations" (Diesing, 1991: 314).

Summary

An identity group exists within SAAC. The questionnaire and interview data confirm its existence but, given the values of the chi-squared tests, we can also conclude that this identity group does not represent the whole of SAAC. Certainly some participants within the advocacy coalition are there simply to pursue policy goals.

The presence of this identity group, however, has had a profound impact on the kind and quality of negotiations that occur within SAAC and between the coalition and other actors in the policy subsystem. After 15 years working within SAAC, I have struggled to understand why it

is that as a coalition we fail to achieve significant policy reform. Upon reading Piore's description of the deaf Gallaudet student who exclaimed that if he were "cured" he would take a pencil and poke his eardrum to be deaf again, I was rocked by the realization that there was something more at stake within sustainable agriculture policy debates than I had acknowledged. We are likely shocked by the deaf student's declaration; "[b]ecause we interpret the meaning of hearing in the context of our own communities of self-definition, we misinterpret its meaning in the deaf community" (Piore, 1995: 131). In much the same way, it is difficult to stand outside SAAC and fully comprehend the dynamics within this advocacy coalition that often derail its attention from policy pursuits.

It is not my contention that identity groups are bad or that we should find ways to eliminate them. Identity groups, such as the one that exists within SAAC, can provide important community harbors and empowering mechanisms for those cast aside by society. Specific to policy reform efforts, the need to realize identity within the group context may help in the creation and maintenance of important coalitions, like SAAC, that may otherwise disband over time. However, as we enter the new millennium, I maintain that our only hope for progress toward sustainability lies in altering our policymaking apparatus to accommodate the existence of this identity group.

The IFFS Network has all but disbanded, with internal IFFS negotiations failing to produce a vision of a worldwide sustainable agriculture organization acceptable to all IFFS participants. Farms are failing, people are leaving rural America, water resources are degraded, global warming is increasing, and despite America's extraordinary agricultural production, hunger persists. We have so little time left. I'm not unwilling to accept, let alone herald the conclusion, that sustainability will never be achieved.

Appendices

A-J

Appendix A
National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture Participants

The National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture
P.O. Box 396, Pine Bush, NY 12566
(845) 744-8448; fax: (845) 744-8477
email: Campaign@magiccarpet.com; web: www.SustainableAgriculture.net

The Campaign membership is constantly evolving, so much so, in fact, that the Campaign never has a completely current membership roster. On July 7, 2000 the Campaign had, according to a letter mailed to me from Amy Little, Executive Director, the following members by category:

Approximately 1,900 Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
Approximately 600 farm-related NGOs
Approximately 200 other Campaign "partners"
Approximately 370 educational institutions
Approximately 350 for-profit organizations

The following brief list provides a sample of some of organizatons listed as Campaign members on July 7, 2000:

ACRES USA; AFL-CIO of Iowa; American Garden Clubs; Arkansas Coalition for Responsible Swine Production; National Center for Appropriate Technology; Accokeek Foundation; Alabama Citizen Action; All Season Food Co-Op; American Great Baptist Churches of Great River, IL; American Farmland Trust; Animal Welfare Institute; Arrowhead Mills Company; Audubon Society of FL; Chefs Collaborative 2000; Certified Organic Growers of CT; Church Women United of NY; Citizens for Health; Clean Water Action of NH; Colorado Environmental Coalition; Community Alliance of Family Farmers; Ecology Center of the Berkely Farmers Market; Endangered Species Recovery of CA; Environmental Working group; Everygreen Market Co-op of ID; Farm Aid; Farm Verified Organic; Farmers Legal Action Group; Federation of Southern Cooperatives; Gray Panthers of West LA; Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger; Hawaii Bio-Organic Growers Assoc.; Heifer Project International; Henry A. Wallace Insittute for Alternative Agriculture; Hudson River Club; Land Stewardshp Project; Land Loss Prevention Project; LA Environmental Action Network; Montana Farmers Union; Maharishi University of Management; Main Rural Workers Coalition; MA Dept. Of Food and Agriculture; National Corn Growers Association; National Family Farm Coalition; National Wildlife Feration of VA; Natural Resources Defense Council; Nebraskans for Peace; New Mexico Community Foundation; Organic Farming Research Foundation; PA State Grange; Pesticide Action Network; Pheasants Forever of KS; Portland Public Market; Promised Land Network; Sierra Club of MO; SD Izaak Walton League; The Land Institute; The Nature Conservancy of WY; Turtle Creek Cooperative; U.S. Catholic Conference; Union of Concerned Scientists; Vegeterian Resource Group; Urban Wildlife Coalition; VT Land Trust; WA State Dairy Federation.

Appendix B

Structure of Belief Systems of Policy Elites

(taken from Sabatier & Jenkins Smith, 1997)

	Deep Core	Policy Core	Secondary Aspects
Defining characteristics	Fundamental normative and ontological axioms.	Fundamental policy positions concerning the basic strategies for achieving core values within the subsystem.	Instrumental decisions and information searches necessary to implement policy core.
Scope	Across all policy subsystems.	Subsystem-wide.	Usually only part of subsystem.
Susceptibility to change	Very difficult; akin to a religious conversion.	Difficult, but can occur if experience reveals serious anomalies.	Moderately easy; this is the topic of most administrative and legislative policymaking.
Illustrative components	1. The nature of man: i. Inherently evil vs. socially redeemable. ii. Part of nature vs. dominion over nature. iii. Narrow egoists vs. contractarians; 2. Relative priority of various ultimate values: freedom, security, power, knowledge, health, love, beauty, etc.; 3. Basic criteria of distributive justice: whose welfare counts? Relative weights of self, primary groups, all people, future generations, nonhuman beings, etc.	Fundamental Normative Precepts: 1. Orientation on basic value priorities; 2. Identification of groups or other entities whose welfare is of greatest concern; Precepts with a Substantial Empirical Component: 3. Overall seriousness of the problem; 4. Basic causes of the problem; 5. Proper distribution of authority between government and the market; 6. Proper distribution of authority among levels of government; 7. Priority accorded various policy instrument (e.g., regulation, insurance, education, direct payment, tax credits); 8. Method of financing; 9. Ability of society to solve the problem (e.g., zero-sum competition vs. potential for mutual accommodation; technological optimism vs. pessimism.; 10. Participation of public vs. experts vs. elected officials.	1. Seriousness of specific aspects of the problem in specific locales; 2. Importance of various causal linkages in different locales and over time; 3. Most decisions concerning administrative rules; budgetary allocations, disposition of cases, statutory interpretation, and statutory revision; 4. Information regarding performance of specific programs or institutions.

Appendix C
IFFS Leadership Structure

IFFS Steering Committee and Chaordic Alliance Members

Name	Affiliation
Patricia Allen	CASPS, U.C. Santa Cruz
Carol Anderson	Carol Anderson & Assoc.
Gayle Bartlett	City of Berkeley
George Boody	Land Stewardship Program
Tim Bowser	P Assn. for Sustainable Ag.
Janet Brown	Marin Food and Ag. Project
Maccene Brown	Land Loss Prevention Project
Andy Clark	USDA
Claire Cummings	Urban Habitat
Colette De Phelps	Palouse Clearwater Environ. Inst.
Kendall Dunnigan	Berkeley Comm. Gardening Collab.
Gail Feentra	U.C. SAREP
Andy Fisher	CFS Coalition
John Fawcett-Long	The Food Alliance
Jeff Goebel	WSU Holistic Mgmt. Project
Tom Guthrie	MIFFS
Denny Hall	Operation Future/Ohio State Univ.
John Hall	Michael Fields Ag. Inst.
Ken Hecht	CFPA
Michael Heller	Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Oran Hesterman	W. K. Kellogg Foundation
Dee Hock	CEO Emeritus, VISA Internat'l; CEO, Chaordic All.
Gary Huber	Iowa State Univ.
Jerry Jost	Kansas Rural Center
Linda Kleinschmit	Nebraska Sustainable Ag. Society
Laura Lauffer	Carolina Farm Stewardship Assn.
Ed Maltby	CISA
Nancy Matheson	AERO
Barbara Meister	Consultant, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Kathleen Merrigan	
Lee Meyer	Dept. of Ag. Econ.
Meg Moynihan	Michigan Integrated F&F Systems
Kerstin Ohlander	CASPS, U.C. Santa Cruz
Lynda Prim	The Farm Connection/WSAWG
Shirley Sherrod	Federation of Southern Cooperatives
Maudelle Shirek	City of Berkeley
Kai Siedenburg	SAWG
Bryant Stephens	Arkansas Land and Farm Dev. Corp.
Geoff Strawbridge	Chaordic Alliance
W.C. Tims, Rev.	Arkansas Land and Farm Dev. Corp.
Rhonda Winters	Rainbow Grocery
Larry Yee	Dir., Ventura Ofc., UC Coop Ext.; Chaordic All.

Appendix D
IFFS Grants 1993-1994

Northwest Ag Options Network (Montana/Idaho/Washington)
lead organization: Alternative Energy Resources Organization
A project to facilitate the formation of farm and ranch improvement clubs and community support clubs. Grants in the range of $800 to $1,500 were awarded to small groups of people seeking local solutions to problems related to farm and community sustainability. Clubs were encouraged to invite the participation of the local ag service agency. An annual gathering of all the clubs is held to share experiences.

Connecticut River Valley Community Initiative for Sus. Ag. (Massachusetts)
lead organization: Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts
Six organizations collaborated to bring togher diverse stakeholders in the area's food and farming system to identify common ground and creat a shared vision through use of the "Future Search" model. Dinners and retreats brought about agreement on general principles and guidelines.

California Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture (California)
lead organization: University of California Agroecology Program
Create innovated models for community-based education and coalition building. Identify barrriers, organize community coalitions to overcome them, support leaders, share information.

Holistic Resource Management (Washington)
lead organization: Washington State University, Department of Animal Sciences
Intensive traiing and applicaiton of holistic decisonmaking, convey leadership principles and consensus process. Build capacity in 158 Washington livestock/crop porducers, reosurce managers, and tribal member.

Partners in Agriculture: Sustaining Farms and Rural Families (North Carolina)
lead organization: Land Loss Prevention Project
Forge an enduring partnership of farmers, ag organization, universities and communities to identify, develop, and adapt sus ag systems for the beneift of rural NC citizens.

Nebraska IMPACT Project (Nebraska)
lead organization: Center for Rural Affairs
Develop farmer leadership and institutional capaiticy to promote and increase the understanding of IFS on farms and communities in Nebraska.

Future Harvest: Farming for Profit and Sustainability (Maryland/Deleware/D.C.)
lead organization: Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Identify barriers and design, develop and implement specific strategies to increase the adoption of sus ag in Maryland and Deleware. Form alliances between farmers, environmentalists, community members and others and build a strong network with a common vision.

Wisconsin Integrated Cropping Systems Trial (Wisconsin)
lead organization: University of Wisconsin, Agronomy Department
Provide a community focal point for discussing the importance of a prosperous and environmentally sound ag to the future of farming through integrated cropping systems trails and establishment of on-sit learning cernters.

Stewardship Farming Program (Minnesota)
lead organization: Land Stewardship Project
Increase the membership and expand chapters of Sustianble Farming Associaiton of Minnesota, disseminate information, eduate farmers in use of holistic managment and monitor the viabiity of this approach to improving the finaces and biodiversity on farms in Minnesota.

Southwest Georgia Alternative Agriculture Project (Georgia)
lead organization: University of Georgia, Department of Continuing Education
Develop technology to help farm communities move to sus ag and to link farm communities, agribusinesses and regionally important community service institutions.

Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation (Arkansas)
lead organization: Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation
Provides advocacy, education, technical assistance, and leadership training for 42-county area in eastern and southern Arkansas. Focus on land retention, family farm development, and land-based development for limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers.

Shared Visions: Farming for Better Communities (Iowa)
lead organization: Practical Farmers of Iowa
Develop a model to help rural communities provide support, guidance, and teamwork needed for acceptance and use of sustainable farming systems.

Kentucky Leadership for Agricultural and Environmental Sustainability (Kentucky)
lead organization: Community Farm Alliance, Inc.
Help farmers, university faculty, and leaders of agricultural agencies and organizations increase sustainability of farming systems.

Regional Infrastructure for Sustaining Agriculture (Pennsylvania)
lead organization: Rodale Institute
Develop a regional infrastructure model for sustaining agriculture as a prototype for farmers, policymakers, marketing and technical support professionals, and consumers.

Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems (Michigan)
lead organization: Michigan Agricultural Stewardship Association
Demonstrate agriculturally and environmentally sustainable farming systems by developing community learning and leadership networks.

The Darby Project (Ohio)
lead organization: The Nature Conservancy

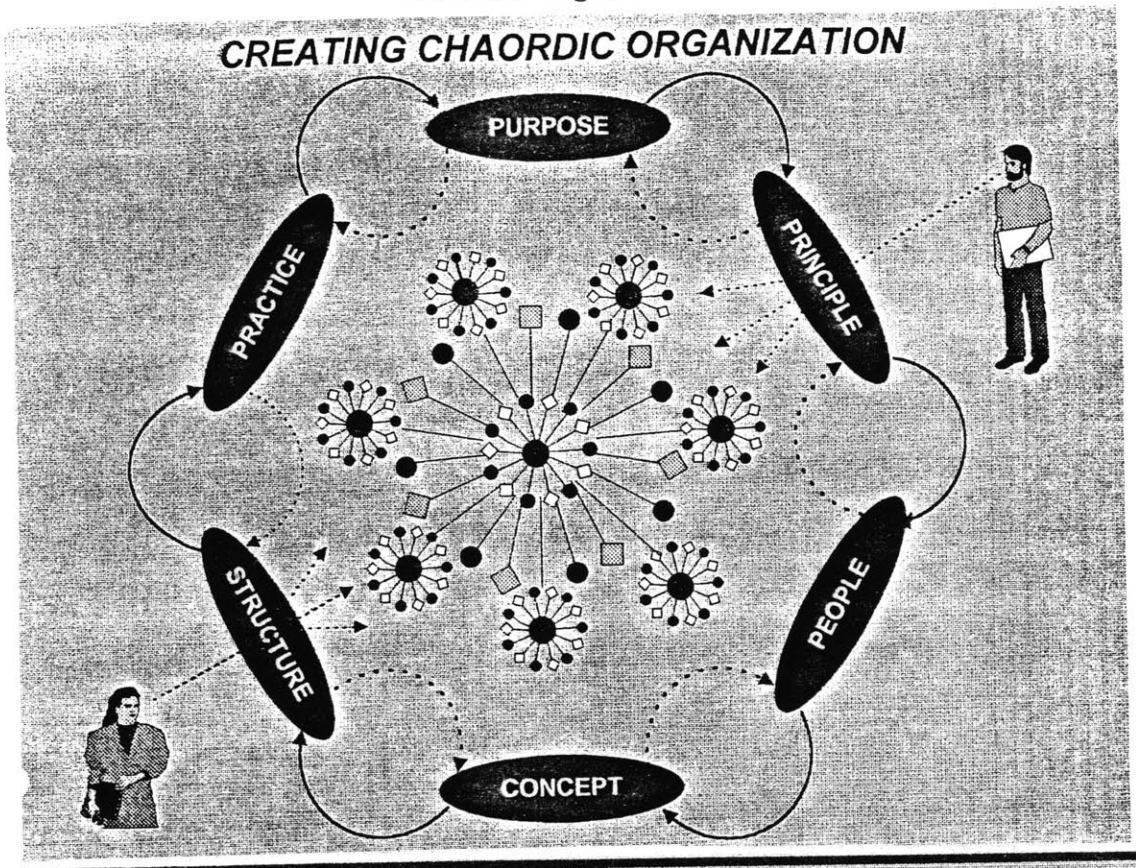
Help big Darby Creek watershet to design a future ag production system that enhances protection of natural resource and net farm income. Control ag non-point source pollution through a voluntary and educational approach.

Heartland Network (Kansas)
lead organization: Kansas Rural Center
Empower farmers and rural communities to develop and practice integrated farming systems that balance profit with resource conservation. Reinvigorate hope for family farmers.

Northwest Food Alliance (Oregon/Washington)
lead organization: Washington State Department of Agriculture
Expand use of sus ag by identifying, developing, and utilizing market incentives and through technical support and on-farm research.

Taken from IFFS Network brochure sent to me by the Kellogg Foundation.

Appendix E
Choardic Organization



Purpose
A clear, simple statement of intent. An unambiguous concept of the future. That which identifies and binds the community together as worthy of pursuit.

Practice
The deliberations, decisions and acts of the members of the community functioning within the structure in pursuit of purpose in accordance with principles

Principles
A statement of fundamental belief against which structure, decisions and conduct will be judged. The fundamental constraints that will bind people in pursuit of purpose.

Structure
Constitutional details of rights, obligations and relationships between all members of the community.

People
The initial members of the community necessary to the effective initiation and continuance of it.

Concept
A general perception of a structure that can that be trusted to be just, equitable and effective with respect to all discussions, decisions and acts in pursuit of purpose in accordance with principles.

I-1

IV. Principles

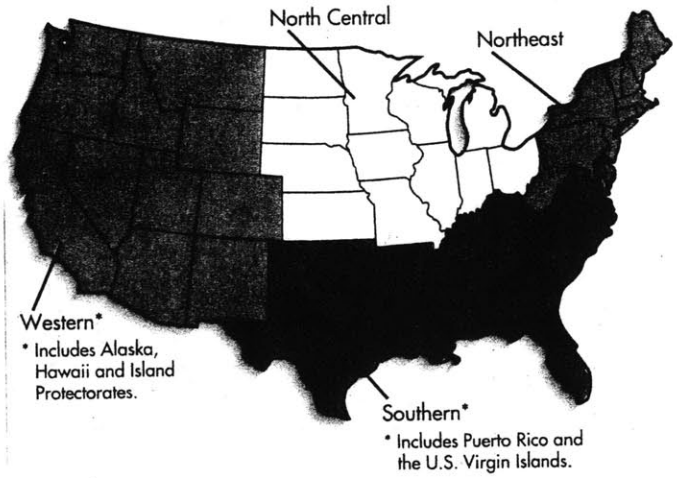
A. Principles of Organization

Principles - Proposed	Discussion Points
1. Any individual or group desiring to belong and willing to subscribe fully to purpose and principles has the right to belong. *Designers - Boulder, CO - 5/18/97* 1. Each and every part of _____ shall be open to any individual or institution that fully subscribes to the Purpose and Principles. *Framers - Half Moon Bay, CA - 6/29/97*	▸ should "open" apply to only central part, or all constituent parts? ▸ those who accept P&P and Constitution have right to belong ▸ right of self-organization obligates the parts to be open (refer to 2) ▸ members self-select by accepting P&P
2. Right to self-organize at any scale. *Designers - Boulder, CO - 5/18/97* 2. All participants shall have the right to organize in any manner, at any scale, in any area, and around any issue or activity which is relevant to and consistent with the Purpose and Principles. *Framers - Half Moon Bay, CA - 6/29/97*	▸ who has right, jurisdiction, when smaller or larger fractals form ▸ rights are subject to certain obligations to the whole (i.e., how decisions are made) ▸ specificity (scale, area, etc.) helps to clarify the purpose and inform the concept
3. Open, accurate and honest sharing of knowledge, information and methods provided confidentiality is not violated or competitive advantage destroyed. *Designers - Boulder, CO - 5/18/97* 3. All participants shall openly, accurately, and honestly share knowledge, information and methods in a manner which has minimum impact on confidentiality or competitive advantage. *Framers - Half Moon Bay, CA - 6/29/97*	▸ issue of what is ethical, fair and accurate; complete, relevant; equitable obligation to share ▸ share vs. exchange; open vs. complete (implies an attitude of willingness, trust, desire to make better) ▸ chose simple, clear words ▸ acknowledged any sharing has some impact on competition and confidentiality

Principles - Proposed	Discussion Points
4. Make no decision and perform no function at a higher or more central level than can be accomplished at a more local level. *Designers - Boulder, CO - 5/18/97* 4. All decisions shall be made and all functions performed at the point closest to the area or issue of concern. *Framers - Half Moon Bay, CA - 6/29/97*	▸ stated in the affirmative ▸ better defines local ▸ emphasizes concern and relevance ▸ decisions and functions better than power and activities ▸ point closest can be geographic or related to issue/activity
5. Decisions or deliberations shall be made at the most local level that includes all relevant and affected parties. *Designers - Boulder, CO - 5/18/97* 5. Decisions and deliberations must be made at every level by bodies and methods that fairly represent the diversity of affected views and interests and are not dominated by any single view or interest. *Framers - Half Moon Bay, CA - 6/29/97*	▸ important relation of parts to the whole ▸ deals with who is represented in discussions and decisions ▸ one of the most important principles for the development of concept ▸ embraces diversity yet promotes unity ▸ concerned with both structure and process (bodies and methods) ▸ ties closely with Principle 4 ▸ includes diversity within a particular interest
6. Money and resources should appropriately flow to the most local level and constituent parts. The local level has a corresponding responsibility to provide sources essential to the health of the whole. *Designers - Boulder, CO - 5/18/97* 6. Money and other resources shall flow to and be prudently used at the point closest to the area of issue of concern which best supports the Purpose and Principles. *Framers - Half Moon Bay, CA - 6/29/97*	▸ addresses all levels, not just local ▸ folds in the corresponding responsibility ▸ explains appropriate ▸ ties first issue to entire body of belief ▸ uses qualitative words like supports ▸ includes prudent use, consistent with values ▸ deals with control issue ▸ meaning of resources, see Lexicon ▸ addresses the issue that purely local control could mean shutting minorities out of communities (quotas)

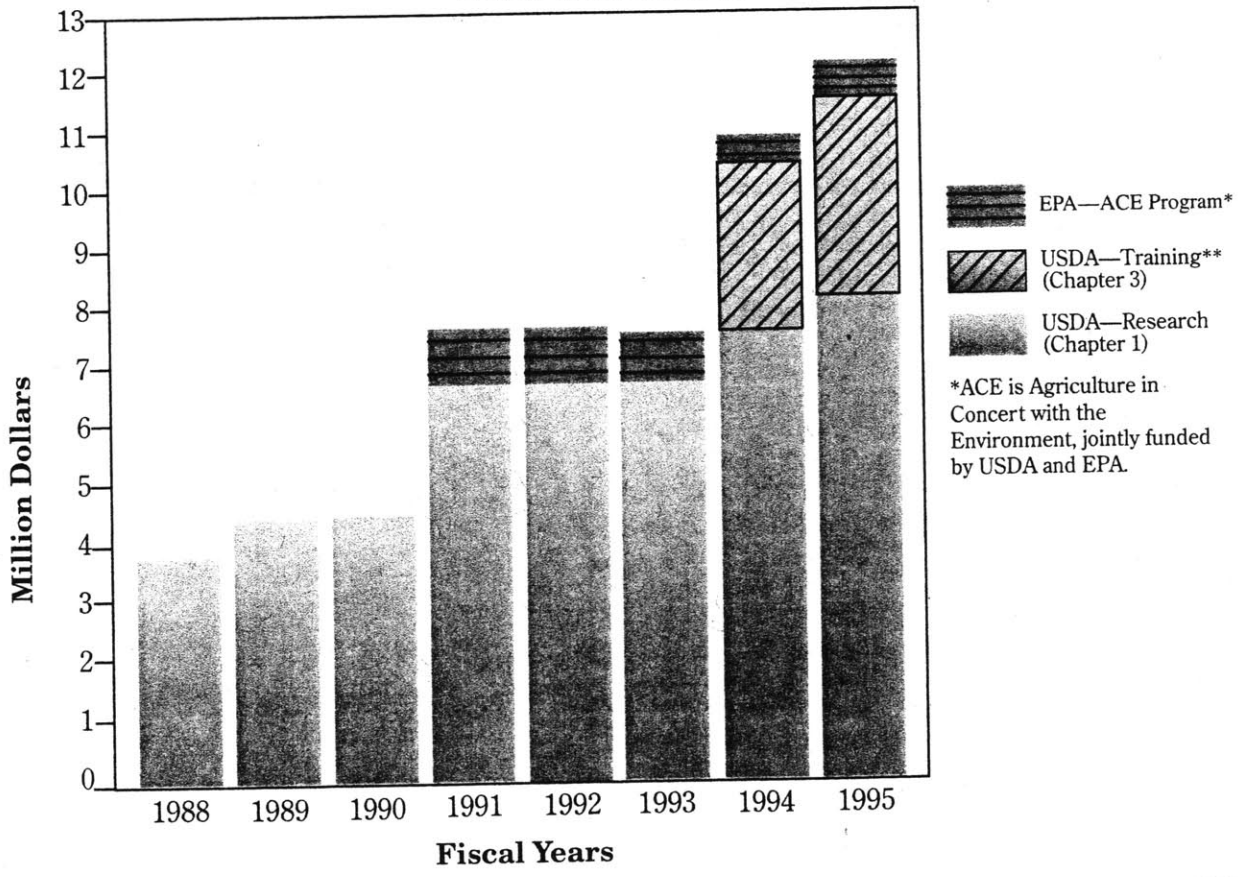
Principles - Proposed	Discussion Points
7. **Conflict can and should be constructively, creatively, and cooperatively resolved, without resort to social, ecological, economic or personal violence.** *Framers - Half Moon Bay, CA - 6/29/97*	▸ violence as social, ecological or physical ▸ can economics be violent ▸ avoid management by combat ▸ conflict is natural, not taking position against conflict ▸ personal violence includes psychological ▸ explore definition of violence ▸ what is social violence; what is ecological violence ▸ learning from failure ▸ conflict happens and can be positive ▸ if conflict is resolved, won't violence be avoided? ▸ what started out as a given provided lots of unresolved discussion
8. **We believe that all participants must use their best efforts to advance the purpose in accordance with the principles in ways which enhance the capacity of the system, as well as that of each participant.** *Framers - Half Moon Bay, CA - 6/29/97*	▸ emphasizes do we have affirmative obligation? ▸ accountability to the whole; spirit and desire of part in relation to the whole; mutual obligation of all parts to one another ▸ intention and best efforts; not mandatory or prescribed ▸ somewhere need a sanction if repeated and willful disregard of purpose and principles ▸ capacity covers welfare and integrity or is more specificity needed ▸ capacity in broadest sense, all-inclusive ▸ don't diminish others to advance self
9. **We believe that waste must not systematically accumulate in nature, including extracted substances and substances produced by human society.** *Framers - Half Moon Bay, CA - 6/29/97*	▸ what is our frame of reference ▸ deal with fundamental earth conditions and also social ▸ discussion re developing several principles for ecological, economic and social aspects for design team to develop

SARE/ACE Regions



How Much Money?

SARE and ACE Funding from USDA and EPA
Fiscal Years 1988-95



Appendix G
Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol—Questions

Questions were not necessarily asked in any order but interjected when appropriate during the conversation. If the concern underlying the question was addressed by the interviewee during the course of other responses, the question was not asked. In other words, this was the prompt sheet that I used to steer the conversation in directions that I was interested in.

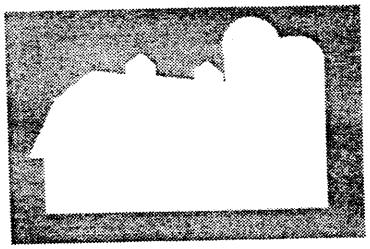
- Tell me about your background and how you came to be involved with sustainable agriculture.
  —Home state? Occupation? Age? Religion?
  —When did you first get involved with sustainable agriculture? Do you have any relation to SARE?
  —What are your organizational affiliations?
- As you have watched and participated in the sustainable agriculture debate over the years, what has changed?
  —Who is involved? What has been the evolution in beliefs?
- What are the pros and cons associated with broader interest and involvement in sustainable agriculture?
  —If someone mentions co-opting, follow up: What do you mean? By whom? What are the dangers? What could be done to prevent the dangers?
- Has there been more scientific rigor applied to sustainable agriculture as the years have passed?
  —What have been the benefits? Any downsides?
- How have the changes affected the SARE program?
  —Are grants more or less on target?
- How much time do you spend on sustainable agriculture?
  —Non-business hours? Weekends? Woven into your social life?
- How important is sustainable agriculture to you? The SARE program?
  —Can you provide examples of other issues equivalent in value?
  —Can you see a time in your life when you won't be involved in sustainable agriculture?
- Tell me about the kind of people who advocate sustainable agriculture. Can you make any generalizations?
  —Qualities? Values?
  —What makes you/them tick?
- (Once interviewee uses term community) Why is it, do you think, that sustainable agriculture advocates refer to themselves as "the community?"
  —For example, you don't hear the petroleum industry or the librarian society refer to themselves as "the community."
  —How can you tell who's in "the community?"
- Does everyone share the same basic beliefs?

—If not, what are some of the divisive issues?

- Are there different degrees of commitment to sustainable agriculture among those involved with SARE?
  —If so, please describe.
- Are there different views on compromise?
  —Should you? How much?
- Now that sustainable agriculture is becoming accepted at USDA, would it make sense to integrate SARE into the mainstream programs if it were a way to obtain more resources?
  —For example, abolish SARE in exchange for $100 million for sustainable agriculture (10 times the current SARE budget) to be distributed among NRI, ARS, and ERS or other USDA programs.
- Consider this hypothetical situation. You discover that some farmers you know and respect hold an opinion that is contradicted by a new ARS study. Would this surprise you? Would you be more inclined to believe one of these sources over the other? How would you reconcile the conflicting information?
- To what extent does it matter who delivers information pertinent to sustainable agriculture in terms of its acceptance, especially if the information contradicts what is generally thought to be true?
  —For you? For other sustainable agriculture advocates?
- What do you think most influences you in terms of your views on sustainable agriculture?
  —Others in the sustainable agriculture community? USDA administrators? Are there any differences?
- Who do you consider to be the opinion leaders in sustainable agriculture and why do they have that role?
- What have you done to sway people to your point of view?
- Can you share an example of a pivotal moment, related to SARE, when either you or someone else turned the tide of the discussion and changed opinions in an important way?
- A space question — upon climbing out of his spaceship, the Martian asks — "take me to your leader, explain to me the chain of command." What do you tell him?
- React to this statement — "Good process makes good outcomes."
- Has the balance between process and outcome-oriented work and discussion been about right?
  —For the SARE program?
  —In the world of sus ag generally?

Appendix H
List of Interviewees

Date	Name	Sex	State	Profession
8/26/96	Hal Hamilton	M	KY	Farmer/NGO activist
8/27/96	Tom Guthrie	M	MI	Farmer
8/27/96	Miles McEvoy	M	WA	State Department of Agriculture
8/27/96	Carolyn Raffensper	F	ND	NGO activist/farmer
8/28/96	Tom Stoneback	M	PA	NGO activist
9/7/96	Jill Auburn	F	CA	Professor/researcher
9/7/96	Fred Magdoff	M	VT	Professor/farmer
9/11/96	Margaret Mellon	F	DC	NGO activist
9/18/96	Bob Quinn	M	MT	Farmer/rancher
9/19/96	Steve Pavich	M	AZ	Farmer/rancher
9/23/96	Barb Meister	F	DC	USDA political appointee
9/27/96	George Bird	M	MI	Professor/researcher
9/29/96	Mike Linker	M	NC	Agriculture Extension Service
10/21/96	Tom Trantham	M	SC	Farmer
10/29/96	Fred Madison	M	WI	Professor
10/30/96	Liz Henderson	F	NY	Farmer
3/4/97	Linda Kleinschmidt	F	NE	Farmer
3/5/97	Denny Hall	M	OH	Agriculture Extension Service
3/24/97	Loni Kemp	F	MN	NGO activist
3/?/97	Michael Sligh	M	NC	NGO activist



HENRY A. WALLACE INSTITUTE
FOR ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE

Appendix I
SARE Questionnaire

SARE
Questionnaire

(USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program)

Instructions

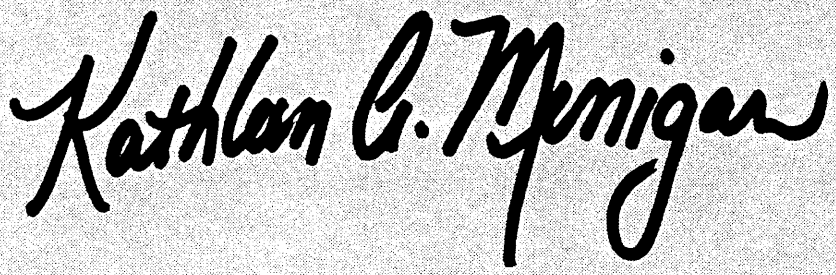
I would appreciate your help in completing this short, but important questionnaire which is being distributed to all participants at the 10th anniversary SARE conference. Your views will be held in the strictest confidence.

Results will be aggregated by the Wallace Institute and shared with the SARE program and the public at large. Look for the results on our web page later this year at: http:\\www.hawiaa.org

We will attempt to collect your completed questionnaire at various junctures during the conference. Also, a drop-off collection box is located at the registration desk. If you are unable to complete the questionnaire while in Austin, we would be most grateful if you could mail your response to:

Henry A. Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture
9200 Edmonston Road, Suite 117
Greenbelt, Maryland 20770-1551

Thank you for your cooperation! If you have questions or concerns about this questionnaire, look for me, Kathleen Merrigan, at this conference site or call me at my office at (202) 544-0705.



Questionnaire

1. During which time period did you begin participating in activities related to what is now known as "sustainable agriculture"? (check one)

   ❑ prior to 1983
   ❑ 1983—1988
   ❑ 1989—1994
   ❑ 1994—present
   ❑ I do not consider myself an active participant

2. My best guess is that agricultural sustainability will... (check one)

   ❑ be achieved within the decade
   ❑ be achieved by the year 2025
   ❑ be achieved sometime beyond 2025
   ❑ never be "achieved" since it is a moving target; an evolving vision of how to do better
   ❑ never be achieved because it is intrinsically too difficult.
   ❑ never be achieved because opponents to sustainability are too powerful.

Please turn the page.

Please indicate the extent to which the following statements are consistent with your beliefs and experience.

3. Sustainable agriculture practices should be mandated by law because voluntary adoption takes too long. . . . . .
4. Aside from my family and church, the community I most fit-in and identify with is that of sustainable agriculture. . . . . .
5. I'm more likely to believe a peer-reviewed scientific article than a farmer's assessment of a sustainable practice. . . . . .
6. It is inherently impossible for a huge, corporate farm to be sustainable. . . . . .
7. Sustainable agriculture suffers because advocates are uncoordinated and 'doing their own thing'. . . . . .
8. At times, I have been ridiculed or dismissed by colleagues and/or neighbors for my efforts to promote/practice sustainable agriculture. .
9. Compromise is crucial if we hope to make sustainable agriculture the predominant form of U.S. agriculture. . . . . .
10. The social goals of sustainable agriculture are laudable but secondary to environmental goals. . . . . .
11. The best sustainable agriculture ideas are generated by broad-based participatory group discussions rather than by individual experts. .
12. The more I learn about sustainable agriculture, the more I have come to question traditional mainstream science. . . . . .
13. Networks are preferable to formal coalitions because individual organizations retain more autonomy. . . . . .
14. It is time to select a national leader to coordinate activities and represent sustainable agriculture in media and policy forums. . . . . .
15. Sustainable agriculture has its own culture, including what you might call a spiritual component. . . . . .
16. It would be best if we decided once and for all on a clear definition of sustainable agriculture. . . . . .
17. The problems generated by an industrialized agriculture system are outweighed by the consumer benefits industrialization provides. . .
18. Grassroots input and acceptance should determine sustainable agriculture research agenda. . . . . .
19. It took going to meetings and/or joining an organization before I fully understood the meaning of sustainability. . . . . .
20. Advocates of sustainable agriculture disagree over a surprising number of fundamental beliefs and values. . . . . .
21. Sustainable agriculture meetings are over-facilitated and too consensus-oriented. . . . . .
22. It is far better to have 'behind-the-scenes' leadership teams than conspicuous individual leaders. . . . . .
23. I'd learn more about sustainable agriculture by hearing from everyone in the room than I would listening to any one expert. . . . . .
24. Many industry leaders embrace sustainability in public, but behind the scenes are undermining and coopting the terminology. . . . . .
25. Decentralized decision-making is essential to successful sustainable agriculture outcomes. . . . . .
26. Too much time is spent talking about sustainable agriculture relative to the actual work that gets done. . . . . .

strongly agree	agree	partly agree	partly disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

We would like to know a little about your background so we can see how different people feel about the topics covered in this confidential questionnaire.

27. Age _____

28. Sex ❑ Male ❑ Female

29. Home Zip Code _____

30. Education
Check one for the highest level completed or degree received. If currently enrolled in school, check the level of previous grade attended or highest degree received.

❑ 12th grade or less
❑ High school graduate or equivalent
❑ Some college
❑ Bachelor's degree
❑ Master's degree
❑ Doctorate

31. Select one category that best describes your primary occupation.

❑ farmer
❑ university research scientist or professor
❑ extension agent
❑ federal or state government agency staff
❑ for-profit business employee
❑ non-profit NGO (non-governmental organization) employee
❑ media
❑ foundation representative
❑ other _____

32. Is farming currently a secondary occupation?

❑ yes ❑ no

33. Was farming ever your primary occupation in the past?

❑ yes ❑ no

34. Check all categories that describe your current and/or past affiliation with the SARE program.

❑ Principal investigator on SARE project grant
❑ Collaborator on SARE project grant
❑ SARE Administrative Council member
❑ SARE Technical Committee member
❑ SARE Operations Committee member
❑ SARE staff member
❑ other _____
❑ no formal affiliation

35. Are you a member or employee of one or more non-profit NGOs (non-governmental organizations) that have, as part of their agenda, the advancement of sustainable agriculture?

❑ yes, currently
❑ no, but have in the past
❑ no, never

36. If you answered yes, how active are you in NGOs and their activities?

❑ very active
(requiring 12 or more hours of participation per year, excluding reading organization materials like newsletters)

❑ moderately active
(requiring between 1 and 12 hours of participation per year, excluding reading organization materials like newsletters)

❑ minimally active
(read publications but not attending meetings or working on projects)

37. Thinking back over the past 10 years, have your views on sustainable agriculture changed in any significant way? If so, how?

38. Describe the most significant contribution of the SARE program.

39. Describe the most important improvement you would like made to the SARE program.

SARE SURVEY RESULTS

Question 1	Responses
prior to 1983	90
1983-1988	64
1989-1994	66
1994-present	58
not active	13
Totals	291

Question 2	Responses
within decade	10
by 2025	35
2025+	32
never-it's a vision	195
never-too difficult	4
never-opponents too strong	12
Totals	288

Age (ave.)	46.4

Sex	
M	97
F	197

Zip (if seen 3+ times)	
53705	3
55108	3
57006	3
68739	3
74953	4
95616	7

Question 30	Responses
12th grade or less	2
High school grad or equivalent	10
Some college	18
Bachelor's degree	59
Master's degree	92
Doctorate's degree	114
Totals	295

Question 31	Responses
farmer	64
university scientist or professor	72
extension agent	32
fed or state gov't staff	22
for-profit business employee	4
non-profit NGO employee	48
media	2
foundation representative	5
other	47
Totals	296

Farming currently secondary	
Y	74
N	222

Farming ever primary	
Y	107
N	188

Question 34	Responses
Principal Invest on grant	84
Collaborator on grant	106
SARE Admin Council Mbr	35
SARE Tech Cmte Mbr	56
SARE Op Cmte Mbr	11
SARE Staff Mbr	17
No formal affiliation	64
other	56
Totals	429

Question 35	Responses
Yes, currently	170
No, but have	44
No, never	78
Totals	292

Question 36	Responses
Very active	137
Moderately active	23
Minimally active	15
Totals	175

Question 3-14

Answer	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14
sa	14	53	8	36	8	52	39	6	67	50	18	28
a	24	71	17	38	35	90	86	29	84	91	69	57
pa	95	84	61	38	85	78	84	45	55	74	86	47
pd	26	20	73	49	36	9	18	55	33	25	31	35
d	66	49	84	83	88	42	36	90	28	40	17	66
sd	65	12	44	42	28	11	21	62	10	12	2	28
dk	8	9	11	12	18	16	14	11	21	6	75	37
Agree	**133**	**208**	**86**	**112**	**128**	**220**	**209**	**80**	**206**	**215**	**173**	**132**
Disagree	**157**	**81**	**201**	**174**	**152**	**62**	**75**	**207**	**71**	**77**	**50**	**129**
Don't Know	**8**	**9**	**11**	**12**	**18**	**16**	**14**	**11**	**21**	**6**	**75**	**37**

Question 15-26

Answer	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26
sa	38	20	29	56	24	21	8	16	45	58	62	21
a	106	37	29	106	67	56	33	58	99	85	114	38
pa	89	55	31	92	71	81	54	66	76	59	65	82
pd	14	50	29	20	26	44	42	55	35	21	14	42
d	26	78	58	13	63	53	90	44	31	22	9	76
sd	7	45	102	5	31	13	19	11	5	4	3	14
dk	18	13	20	6	16	30	52	48	7	49	31	25
Agree	**233**	**112**	**89**	**254**	**162**	**158**	**95**	**140**	**220**	**202**	**241**	**141**
Disagree	**47**	**173**	**189**	**38**	**120**	**110**	**151**	**110**	**71**	**47**	**26**	**132**
Don't Know	**18**	**13**	**20**	**6**	**16**	**30**	**52**	**48**	**7**	**49**	**31**	**25**

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