

**Toward an Understanding of the Antecedents
of Environmentalist-Business Cooperative Relations**

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Different forms of environmentalist-business cooperation are emerging as a result of social, market, and political forces embedded in *market-based environmentalism*, an evolving paradigm that advocates promoting corporate environmentalism through economic incentives and sociopolitical reforms. A typology of environmentalist-business cooperation is developed based on market examples and analyzed using enviropreneurship, stakeholder, alliance, and political economy frameworks. It is argued that a sequence of political economy forces is motivating complex forms of cooperation. Propositions are advanced about the nature of these forces and the antecedents leading to specific cooperative forms identified in the typology. Research implications are also discussed.

Toward an Understanding of the Antecedents of Environmentalist-Business Cooperative Relations

Environmentalism-business cooperative relations are at the forefront of corporate environmentalism (Milne, Iyer, and Gooding-Williams 1996). Market, political, and social forces are motivating businesses and environmentalists to align to develop *enviropreneurial strategies* that integrate entrepreneurship and innovations to solve environmental problems and bolster marketing efforts (Menon and Menon 1997), exemplified by the landmark Solid Waste Task Force between the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and McDonald's that resulted in innovative cost-saving, ecological programs and an improved social image for the restaurant (Stafford and Hartman 1996). Cooperation derives from an evolving ideology -- *market-based environmentalism* (MBE) -- that advocates regulatory reforms and market incentives to encourage corporate environmental responsibility.

Given the traditional adversarial relationship between environmentalists and businesses, such paradoxical coalitions need to be analyzed with respect to their sociopolitical and economic motivations. In its proposed research agenda, the Greening of Industry Network calls for examining motivations for entering cooperation as a "tool" for global sustainability (Schot, Brand, and Fischer 1997). Additionally, Lober (1997) recommends "that a more detailed categorization of environmental collaboration is necessary" (p. 19) to illuminate partnership objectives. In response to these charges, this paper proposes a preliminary typology of environmentalism-business cooperative relationships to identify their antecedents. First, the paper outlines MBE, highlighting the role environmentalism-business alignment plays in public policy and marketing contexts. Second, it describes an exploratory study to uncover specific environmentalism-business cooperative forms based on market examples. Third, it integrates a political economy framework with environmental economics, enviropreneurship, stakeholder,

and alliance perspectives to derive propositions about the antecedents of cooperation and distinctive motivations for specific forms in the typology. Fourth, it discusses implications for future research.

MARKET-BASED ENVIRONMENTALISM

MBE calls for a change in the traditional use of *coercion* enacted by government and environmentalists to contain industry's ecological abuses (Levy 1997). Rather, MBE promotes market and political forces to enhance *rewards* that industry may gain from ecological practices. MBE proponents believe that public policy and economic reforms can be fashioned to obtain broad public and business support via (1) *regulations that create market incentives* (Stewart 1993) and (2) *business cooperation with relevant stakeholders* (Hemphill 1996; Hartman and Stafford 1997).

Public Policy Reform

Gray (1997) reports that traditional "command-and-control" environmental regulations typically yield only 80 percent compliance because such regulations damage competitiveness by stifling creativity, concentrating on clean-up instead of prevention, mandating inefficient technologies, and setting unrealistically-short compliance deadlines (Porter and van der Linde 1995). MBE reframes public policies to simultaneously promote environmentalism and competitiveness by focusing on outcomes rather than technologies and by employing phase-in periods, market incentives, and voluntary programs. Consequently, companies can experiment with initiatives in a flexible manner (Porter and van der Linde 1995). The 1990 Clean Air Act's acid rain section is considered model MBE legislation; its "capped tradable pollution credits"

program has reduced sulfur dioxide 140 percent ahead of schedule at 75 percent of the estimated cost (Gray 1997).

Lober (1997) proposes that emerging policy reforms have opened a "collaborative window" among stakeholders to address ecological problems, reflecting the realization that environmental issues are complex and transcend government capabilities. The disparity of power and expertise among relevant stakeholders requires collaboration for effective solutions. Environmentalist-business cooperation is one important form of stakeholder collaboration, and it plays two critical political roles. First, *environmentalist-business cooperation represents "self regulation"* (Hemphill 1996); businesses proactively working with environmentalists to improve operations can either preempt or help firms comply with regulations. Second, *environmentalist-business cooperation can facilitate corporate participation in public policy formation* (Hemphill 1994). Firms can leverage an environmental partner's expertise and social legitimacy to develop public policy proposals and lobby external political stakeholders (Polonsky 1996).

Business Cooperation

Along with regulatory reform, MBE advocates that businesses advance through *enviropreneurialism*, a multiple-stakeholder conceptualization of "green marketing" that integrates social, environmental, and economic goals (Menon and Menon 1997). Rather than viewing ecology as a cost or threat, enviropreneurialism redefines it as an opportunity; specifically, it is the "formulating and implementing of entrepreneurial and environmentally beneficial marketing activities with the goal of creating revenue by providing exchanges that satisfy a firm's economic and social performance objectives" (Menon and Menon 1997, p. 54). Research suggests that environmental programs can improve operational efficiencies, create new

technologies, achieve "early-mover" competitive advantages, and increase profits (Porter and van der Linde 1995; Russo and Fouts 1997). While some question long-term competitive benefits (e.g., Walley and Whitehead 1994), MBE is gaining acceptance among economists (Porter and van der Linde 1995), environmentalists (Krupp 1994), marketers (Menon and Menon 1997), and policy-makers (Gore 1993). Environmental partners can improve marketers' sociopolitical image and technical expertise (Milne *et al.* 1996). Environmentalist-business cooperation, however, may be enacted in different ways to achieve various objectives. The development of a preliminary typology is described next.

TYPOLGY DEVELOPMENT

An investigation on Lexis/Nexis (a comprehensive, on-line media database) was conducted for documents published between 1990 and 1996 that reported environmentalist-business relationships. Because cooperative relations are relatively new phenomena, the search focused on nine environmental organizations *known to cooperate with business* (EDF, Natural Resource Defense Council [NRDC], Conservation International, American Oceans Campaign, Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, Izaak Walton League, and Green Seal). Other organizations, such as Earth First! and Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, were not considered because of their anti-business missions (McCloskey 1992). The investigation did, however, reveal partnerships involving other groups, and these were included in the 155 cases of cooperation identified. Extending previously defined partnership "types" (e.g., Harris 1992; Mendleson and Polonsky 1995), a preliminary categorization scheme was developed and expanded after authors' review of the sample. Cases were analyzed with respect to marketing activities. The authors independently categorized the sample using the expanded typology to

evaluate its comprehensiveness. Intercoder reliability was .832 ($I_r = .894$ [Perreault and Leigh 1989]). Disagreements were resolved by discussion, and all cases were categorized.

The analysis identified six types of environmentalist-business cooperation, ranging from simple to complex. One simpler form was *licensing*, whereby a marketer licenses an environmental group's name and offers products under the group's "brand" (e.g., Bushnell licenses the National Audubon Society's name for its binoculars [Green MarketAlert 1994]). Another simpler form was *corporate sponsorships* in which marketers donate resources to the environmental group through involvement in relevant causes (e.g., Eastman Kodak's funding of the World Wildlife Fund's environmental literacy program [Green MarketAlert 1994]). A moderately-complex form of cooperation was *product endorsements* whereby an environmental group approves a product as "ecologically sound" (e.g., Rainforest Alliance certifies "good wood" harvested from "sustainably managed" forests [Schatz 1996]).

A more-complex form of environmentalist-business cooperation included *task forces* in which environmental group(s) and business(es) collaborate to analyze corporate practices to *propose* economically-feasible environmental solutions (e.g., EDF-McDonald's Solid Waste Task Force [Stafford and Hartman 1996]). A special form of task forces was also identified -- *green public policy alliances* -- in which environmental group(s) and business(es) collaborate to study, propose, and lobby for MBE government policies (e.g., EDF-General Motors' (GM) Mobile Emissions Reduction Credit [MERC] Program proposal [Hemphill 1994]). The central purpose of these alliances is to develop or modify environmental public policies so that regulations incorporate market considerations and incentives. In general, task force alliances tend to be shorter-term, issue-specific relationships; when key goals are accomplished, task forces are usually disbanded or expanded.

The most-complex form of cooperation identified was *green systems alliances* in which environmental group(s) and business(es) collaborate to *implement* economically-feasible environmental solutions (e.g., Bronx Community Paper Company, a joint venture employing ecologically-responsible processes joining NRDC, MoDo Paper Company, S.D. Warren Company, and the Kelly Community Improvement Association [Hemphill 1994]). Compared to task forces, green systems alliances entail longer-term, more strategically-comprehensive relationships, involving greater resource investment among partners and multiple environmental value chain activities (Hartman and Stafford 1998). The typology indicates that environmentalists and firms may align for a variety of political and economic purposes. The next section advances propositions outlining the antecedents of environmentalist-business cooperation, including motivations linked to specific forms.

ANTECEDENTS OF ENVIRONMENTALIST-BUSINESS COOPERATION

A political economy paradigm is used to frame antecedents of environmentalist-business cooperative relationships, augmented with concepts from environmental economics, entrepreneurship, stakeholder, and alliance research. The political economy perspective views social systems as "interacting sets of major economic and sociopolitical forces which affect collective behavior" (Stern and Reve 1980, p. 53). It centers on the interplay of power, the goals of power wielders, and economic exchanges (Arndt 1983). In marketing, this paradigm has provided a "foundation of theory" (Arndt 1983, p. 50), motivating robust frameworks for analyzing marketing systems (Arndt 1983), interorganizational relationships (Stern and Reve 1980), political exchanges with external stakeholders (Hutt, Mokwa, and Shapiro 1986), and environmental strategy (Menon and Menon 1997). Each of these domains relates to processes

underlying environmentalist-business cooperation.

The political economy perspective includes two dimensions: (1) *polity-economy* and (2) *internal-external*. *Polity* is the power-and-control system of a social entity, social network, or society. Polity encompasses both power and the values which power is used to achieve (Arndt 1983). *Economy* refers to the productive exchange system and capabilities of a social entity or society transforming "inputs" into "outputs." Thus, economy concerns task accomplishment and efficiency (Arndt 1983). *Internal* refers to intraorganizational resources and processes, and *external* refers to forces, resources, and processes outside the social entity or organization. These two dimensions create four political economy fields: (1) external polity, (2) external economy, (3) internal polity, and (4) internal economy.

Although the political economy framework does not specify a behavioral chain among the four fields, Arndt (1983) asserts that causal formations are possible. For example, the internal polity is commonly affected by the external polity and economy; in turn, the internal polity transmits behavioral norms and allocates resources to the internal economy (Arndt 1983). For more complex environmentalist-business cooperation, formation appears to result from an extension of this sequence. That is, if the internal economy cannot achieve its objectives, a partner with necessary capabilities from the external economy may be sought (cf., Bucklin and Sengupta 1993). Formation of the EDF-McDonald's Task Force (Stafford and Hartman 1996) reflects this extended pattern. Specifically, in the late 1980s, a sequence of events began when environmentalists and consumers protested the restaurant's waste generation, culminating in a boycott and negative publicity (external polity and economy). In response, McDonald's management (internal polity) enacted corporate waste reduction and recycling programs (internal economy). Critics charged, however, these efforts were largely inconsequential, motivating

McDonald's to partner with EDF (from the external economy) to meet both internal goals and external demands. EDF provided necessary environmental expertise and credibility to achieve McDonald's management objectives (Stafford and Hartman 1996). Hence, a sequence of political economy forces appears to drive complex forms of environmentalist-business cooperation. This is consistent with Lober's (1997) contention that emerging problem recognition, public policy, organization, and social forces are combining to "open" a "collaborative window," encouraging multi-party environmental solutions.

P1: Complex forms of environmentalist-business cooperation are motivated by a sequence of political economy factors.

Event 1: External political economy forces will motivate environmental sensitivity in the firm's internal polity.

Event 2: An environmentally-sensitive internal polity will enact environmental initiatives in the internal economy.

Event 3: If the internal economy cannot meet internal and external demands, the internal polity will seek a partner with necessary credibility and capabilities from the external economy.

The following discussion outlines how different forces in each of the political economy fields contributes to environmentalist-business cooperation.

External Polity

Increasingly, environmental, political/legal, and socio-cultural sectors of the external polity trigger environmentally-responsible corporate behavior (Lober 1997). Faced with intense political and institutional pressures, firms are likely to develop comprehensive and coordinated multiple stakeholder strategies for long-term survival (Hutt *et al.* 1986). These strategies reduce gaps between stakeholders' expectations and the firm's market behavior (Polonsky 1996).

Menon and Menon (1997) assert that such strategies can involve alliances with stakeholders, such as McDonald's Task Force with EDF.

Historically, environmentalists have been business opponents, seeing corporate profit and resource consumption as incommensurate with ecological values; thus, public and governmental pressures were necessary to enforce corporate environmental responsibility (McCloskey 1992). Today, however, many environmental groups see diminishing returns with "command-and-control" regulations and are adopting cooperative MBE views (Krupp 1994). Opinion polls show that citizens value a healthy economy in conjunction with environmental protection (Hemphill 1996); thus, many environmental groups are moderating their protests to be "mainstream" (Mendleson and Polonsky 1995). Elkington (1994) observes, "In contrast to the anti-industry, anti-profit, and anti-growth orientation of much early environmentalism, it has become increasingly clear that business must play a central role in achieving the goals of sustainable development strategies" (p. 91). Environmental groups are becoming more "business-like" (Milliman *et al.* 1994), employing technical professionals to consult with business (Ottman 1996). Many of the largest environmental groups cooperate with corporations in some way (Harris 1992). It is believed that "dialogue" and collaboration can instill deeper corporate environmental sensitivity. As businesses sense cooperative sentiments among MBE groups, they are more likely to collaborate.

Aside from changing environmentalist attitudes, the non-economic nature of regulation is tempering as well. President Clinton's "Reinventing Government" program, for example, reframes regulations to consider science and cost-effectiveness (Hemphill 1996). MBE regulation, involving outcome-based performance objectives and market incentives (discussed below), is an important component of this reform. Within this flexible regulatory framework,

industry is expected to enter into a new "social contract," working with stakeholders to address environmental, health, and safety issues (Lober 1997). Voluntary programs, such as the Environmental Protection Agency's 33/50 Program, have resulted in overcompliance with regulations to achieve positive public awareness (Arora and Cason 1995). Hemphill (1996) advocates leveraging reforms through environmentalist-business cooperation to establish "self-regulation" and lessen sociopolitical pressures.

P2: The stronger the perceptions of (a) regulatory/social surveillance, (b) "self-regulation" opportunities, (c) social image opportunities, or (d) environmental group cooperativeness, the greater the propensity for *firms* to engage in environmentalist-business cooperation.

P3: The stronger the perceptions of (a) poor corporate environmental performance, (b) ineffective environmental regulations, or (c) public expectations of simultaneous economic-environmental gains, the greater the propensity for *environmental groups* to engage in environmentalist-business cooperation.

Concerning specific cooperative forms to achieve positive public recognition, firms may engage in *corporate sponsorships*, which increases firms' social legitimacy (Harris 1992).

P4: The stronger the perceptions of opportunities for increasing social legitimacy, the greater the propensity for *firms* to engage in corporate sponsorships.

Because sponsorships are less-complex relationships that do not involve environmental analysis of companies, they are not likely to achieve ecological improvements. A recent study reported 60 percent of surveyed consumers perceived sponsorships were "just for show to improve the company's image" (Cone/Roper 1993, p. 5). To answer public questioning, firms may engage in more complex partnerships that improve corporate ecological processes, such as *task forces* and *green systems alliances*. The EDF-McDonald's partnership began as a task force, but eventually evolved into a comprehensive collaboration to include franchisees and suppliers. It implemented more than 90 cost-saving programs, ranging from replacing polystyrene clamshell boxes with

paper wrapping to outfitting restaurants with recycled materials (Murphy and Bendell 1997).

Environmentalists' involvement in corporate ecological programs increases corporate social legitimacy.

- P5: The stronger the perceptions of opportunities for increasing social legitimacy through ecological improvements, the greater the propensity for *firms* to engage in task forces and green systems alliances.

Shaping public policies is another response firms may take when facing intense political pressures (Menon and Menon 1997). *Green public policy alliances* unite environmental groups and businesses to lobby legislatures and propose regulatory programs that are enviropreneurially appropriate. Environmental partners enhance corporate legitimacy and expertise for crafting MBE regulatory proposals. For example, to increase air quality *and* new car sales, EDF and GM proposed MERC that would provide incentives for car owners to scrap high-pollution vehicles for low-pollution ones (Hemphill 1994).

- P6: The stronger the perceived need to increase legitimacy to propose MBE public policies, the greater the propensity for *firms* and *environmental groups* to engage in green public policy alliances.

External Economy

The foundation of MBE regulatory reform is that corporations possess superior technical, financial, and organizational resources to solve environmental problems. Public policies that create economic incentives, such as tax breaks and tradable pollution permits, can marshal these resources for environmental benefit (Stewart 1993). These reforms stimulate market opportunities for green technologies, processes, and products. International standards for environmental management systems, such as the ISO 14000 series, support global sustainability (Murphy and Bendell 1997), and governments increasingly consider environmental criteria in procurement practices (Gore 1993).

Alliance research suggests that when marketers lack internal resources or know-how, they frequently turn to external partners with needed capabilities (Bucklin and Sengupta 1993). Environmental partners can provide technical assistance for commercial venture opportunities (Milne *et al.* 1996). Most environmental groups, however, are specialists, and alliance architects must consider an environmental partner's resources and reputation for pursuing specific goals (Hartman and Stafford 1997). Likewise, environmentalists will seek corporate partners that offer opportunities for environmental progress. In the EDF-McDonald's alliance, EDF was interested in greening the fast food industry and purposely selected McDonald's due to its market visibility. Eventually, other restaurants and suppliers emulated McDonald's environmental programs (Stafford and Hartman 1996).

P7: The stronger the perceived (a) market opportunity or (b) availability of an environmental partner with appropriate expertise and social legitimacy, the greater the propensity for *firms* to engage in environmentalist-business cooperation.

P8: The stronger the perceived (a) environmental opportunity or (b) the availability of a corporate partner with appropriate market visibility, the greater the propensity for *environmental groups* to engage in environmentalist-business cooperation.

Licensing and product endorsements are designed to appeal directly to consumers. If the environmental "brand" possesses high recognition, licensing offers a simple cooperative way for firms to access new markets. Customers affiliated with environmental groups comprise attractive markets due to their affluence and high education levels (Harris 1992).

P9: The stronger the perceived equity of environmental groups' "brand names," the greater the propensity for *firms* to engage in licensing.

Not all environmentalist-business collaborations, however, fulfill a "communications" role to consumers. Under an environmentalist's licensed brand name, the *manufacturer/marketer* may neither be associated with the product nor receive public recognition (Mendleson and Polonsky

1995). Product endorsements, by contrast, explicitly signal the environmental qualities of products and firms. Evidence suggests that consumers perceive ecological claims made by environmentalists as significantly more credible compared to those of manufacturers or governments (Mendleson and Polonsky 1995). Through this more-complex form of cooperation, environmentalists that endorse products view themselves as public educators for environmentally-responsible consumption; in line with MBE, consumers can create a market force to encourage corporate sustainability (Hart 1995).

P10: The greater the perceived value-added benefit of ecological certification, the greater the propensity for *firms* to seek environmental groups' product endorsements.

P11: The greater the perceived opportunities to educate consumers about environmentally-responsible products, the greater the propensity for *environmental groups* to endorse commercial products.

Financial opportunities are also key motivations for environmentalists to align with businesses. Corporate sponsorships, licensing, and product endorsement fees are increasingly attractive fund-raising vehicles because of the perceived resource waste of traditional direct mail solicitations (Stafford and Hartman 1996).

P12: The greater the perceived opportunities for funding, the greater the propensity for *environmental groups* to accept corporate sponsorships, license their name to commercial products, or endorse commercial products.

Internal Polity

Top management's environmental sensitivity (Menon and Menon 1997) and the power base of champions (Drumwright 1994; Murphy and Bendell 1997) are two key internal polity forces encouraging environmentalist-business alignment. *Event 1* of P1 asserts that external political and market forces pressure corporate leaders to make enviropreneurial changes in firm

infrastructure, translating into innovations in job specifications, performance evaluations, and reporting relationships. For example, executives may be held accountable for environmental outcomes. Moreover, when natural resources are not managed sustainably, companies jeopardize their access to critical inputs (Hart 1995). As top managers realize the reciprocal nature of environmental sustainability and profits, they accept more willingly their environmental responsibility. As noted earlier, the adversarial values of many environmental groups are changing also (cf. Elkington 1994). The transition of these values, however, is largely driven by the ideals of the environmental group's leadership (Krupp 1994). Some groups remain staunchly anti-business (McCloskey 1992).

P13: The stronger top management's perceived importance of an environmental ethic, the greater the propensity for *firms* to cooperate with environmentalists.

P14: The stronger environmentalist leaders' perceived importance of an integrated economic-environmental mission, the greater the propensity for *environmental groups* to cooperate with business.

"Collaborative entrepreneurs" are critical catalysts for collaborations (Lober 1997), orchestrating cooperative environmental initiatives, selecting participants, and lobbying for participation (cf., Drumwright 1994; Murphy and Bendell 1997). Menon and Menon (1997) posit that these individuals' power directly influences levels of corporate environmental activities. The EDF-McDonald's alliance required championing by EDF's Executive Director Fred Krupp and McDonald's Senior Vice-President for Environmental Affairs Shelby Yastrow to build intraorganizational support (Murphy and Bendell 1997). By contrast, when Pollution Probe endorsed Loblaw's products, its leadership failed to champion the idea to staff and members, and the resulting internal strife contributed to the eventual dissolution of the certification relationship (Westley and Vredenburg 1991).

- P15: The greater the political power of internal corporate "champions for collaboration," the greater the propensity for *firms* to cooperate with environmental groups.
- P16: The greater the political power of internal environmentalist "champions for collaboration," the greater the propensity for *environmental groups* to cooperate with firms.

Internal Economy

Event 2 of P1 proposes that the internal polity will enact environmental initiatives in the internal economy. The internal economy's task is "to coordinate behavior and to allocate resources to produce an output of sufficient interest for external exchange partners" (Arndt 1983, p. 50). While Menon and Menon (1997) argue that the impact of the internal economy *structure* (specialization, formalization, and centralization) on corporate entrepreneurship is unclear, it does appear to impact environmental groups' amenability to corporate cooperation.

Traditionally, environmental groups have been loosely-structured organizations, lacking developed internal hierarchies (cf., Westley and Vredenburg 1991). However, many modern environmental organizations have instituted systematic management structures to administer ecological initiatives in the courts, legislatures, and industry. According to Milliman *et al.* (1994), "Corporations generally prefer working with environmental groups who are business-like, with clearly defined goals and an organized approach to working on problems and solutions" (p. 43).

- P17: The more "business-like" an environmental group's organizational structure and orientation, the greater the propensity for the *environmental group* to cooperate with business.

Likewise, internal economy *processes* (e.g., flows of activities and resources [Arndt 1983]) impact the propensity for firms to seek cooperation. Porter and van der Linde (1995) assert that environmental investments can improve operational efficiencies. *Total quality*

environmental management and *product stewardship* call for refashioning processes to accomplish environmental improvements (Hart 1995). *Event 3* of P1 proposes that when the internal economy cannot meet demands of customers, government, or other constituents, firms are likely to seek assistance from external stakeholders (Milne *et al.* 1996; Polonsky 1996). Three more-complex types of cooperation facilitate corporate access to environmentalist technical resources to improve internal economy processes: *product endorsements*, *task forces*, and *green systems alliances*.

- P18: The greater the perceived opportunities for obtaining technical assistance for effective environmental programs, the greater the propensity for *firms* to seek environmentalists' product endorsements and engage in task forces and green systems alliances.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This paper develops a preliminary typology of environmentalist-business cooperation and argues that a sequence of external-internal political economy forces are driving the most complex cooperative forms. The preliminary typology warrants replication and possible expansion using updated samples and additional reliability and validation techniques (Kolbe and Burnett 1991). Many factors are influencing cooperation, and to further examine these processes, case research offers an appropriate means of comparing sequences of antecedents to the predicted event patterns and contingencies proposed herein (cf., Yin 1994). Replication and multiple case histories can evaluate the robustness of findings for further theoretical development (Wilson and Vlosky 1997). Aside from antecedents, future research needs to specify the *consequences* of environmentalist-business cooperation. Westley and Vredenburg (1991) report that environmentalist-business relationships are typically unstable, given partners' fundamentally

different values (ecology versus profit). Political economy forces need to be identified that facilitate the integration of environmental and market goals contributing to relationship stability. Moreover, because society may view close environmentalist-business relationships as unorthodox, researchers must examine how partners can work with one another without undermining the public's trust (Murphy and Bendell 1997). Preserving the environmental group's reputation is critical for bridging necessary stakeholders (e.g., customers, regulators) for partnership success (Westley and Vredenburg 1991).

Critics charge that MBE and partnerships are forcing environmentalists to "cave" into business interests (cf., McCloskey 1992). Despite its success, the EDF-McDonald's partnership has been criticized for its narrow focus on wastes and its general disregard of other potentially more pressing issues, such as animal welfare and pesticide residues (Murphy and Bendell 1997). Environmentalists must weigh incremental ecological benefits resulting from cooperation against other traditional priorities aimed at broader constituencies, such as advocacy, consumption reduction, product reuse, and recycling. Given the increasing acceptance of cooperation, researchers need to more fully examine formation processes if the enviropreneurial potential of cooperation is to be maximized (Lober 1997).

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