

Citizen Mobilization in the Fight to Save the Golden Gate Eucalyptus

Judd A. Howell

**Wildlife Ecologist
Golden Gate National Recreation
Area
San Francisco, California 94123**

INCREASINGLY OVER THE LAST two decades, natural resource managers and administrators have been confronted with opposition to agency resource management plans and proposals. Because of the environmental conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s, both state and federal governments' abilities to effectively manage natural resources have been questioned at almost every turn. The fact that groups form in opposition to established authority in natural resources management was and is looked upon by the agencies as irrational. Traditional sociological views about movements, beyond the belief that they were irrational, included ideas that people's participation in movements was rare, their discontent was transitory, and the actions of the move-

ment and institutions were sharply distinct (Jenkins 1983). Agency personnel often seemed surprised and dismayed by the resistance they encountered.

The sociological theory of resource mobilization deals with aspects of the process of group formation and action. Resource mobilization is a social process that occurs over time. It involves the interaction of people in the context of a group exchanging ideas and developing strategies and methods of problem solving. Resource mobilization can be thought of as collecting and using the tools needed by people to perform a specific task. Here, tools are analogous to resources such as labor, capital, expertise, or access to the legal system. Resources in this context should not be confused with the fact that many interesting conflicts, including the one described in this paper, are about access to, and management of, natural resources.

Current social theory recognizes alternative explanations about why people mobilize. Jenkins (1983) provided four perspectives about resource mobilization theory: 1) movement actions are rational; 2) goals are defined by conflicts of interest which are built into institutionalized power relations; 3) grievances are ubiquitous, that is, they apply to a wide range of issues; and 4) centralized formally structured movement organizations are more typical of modern social movements and are more effective than decentralized informal movement structures.

Another element of resource mobilization theory is that often movement entrepreneurs organize and focus the energy of newly form-

ing groups (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Group success was often tied to group size with smaller groups being more successful. Olson (1965) considered optimum group size to be five to six people. If groups form and mobilize into social movement organizations their success rests on their ability to produce tangible benefits that meet the goals of the group and on formal acceptance of the group by the main antagonist as a valid representative of legitimate interests (Jenkins 1983). The theoretical framework provides a series of hypotheses to evaluate in light of this case study.

Purpose of this Paper

The purpose of this paper was to explore the formation and mobilization of Marin County citizens into a group named POET, "Protect Our Eucalyptus Trees." POET opposed National Park Service (NPS) and California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) proposals to remove the Australian Blue Gum, *Eucalyptus globulis*, from 16 locations within Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) and Angel Island State Park in San Francisco. The parks planned to remove eucalyptus because of its status as an exotic plant, invasion into native plant communities, and fire hazard in the wildland-urban interface (Howell 1982a, Howell 1982b). POET's opposition was unexpected by the agencies. Ironically, the newspaper announced the controversial NPS removal proposal on Arbor Day 1986. Subsequently, POET brought considerable pressure, halting all removal of eucalyptus except for containment of specific groves.

The research described here examined the natural resource values of the broader community and roles

of key individuals in POET and the agencies, NPS and CDPR. This more traditional method focused on the members of the group, which McCarthy and Zald (1977, p. 3) called the "hearts and minds of the people" approach, and was coupled with current resource mobilization theory to examine the "link between collective action and pooling of resources" (Jenkins 1983, p. 549). Finally, Zald and Useem's (1982) theory of movement and counter-movement was examined in the context of this micro-debate.

Methodology

Primary data were collected using two methods. The first was to randomly select a sample ($n=40$) from 290 letters sent to NPS by the public in response to the 1986 Arbor Day announcement. This method included review of two public hearing transcripts (June 5 and Oct. 16, 1986) to establish the ideological and value context of the conflict. The letters were stratified into two categories, for and against the removal of eucalyptus. Using a random numbers table, 20 letters were selected from each stratum without replacement. Data from each were coded using a coding sheet and stored in a computer data base system. Data analysis followed non-parametric techniques set forth in Zar (1974), Lehmann (1975), and Norusis (1988). Issues and values were identified and pooled with the letter data.

The second method was to interview 10 individuals with knowledge of the events, five each from POET and the agencies, to address questions about the process of mobilization (Kerlinger 1973, Baum 1987). An interview schedule was developed to evaluate the roles of

the individuals and draw out details of group formation and resources mobilization.

Results: Community Values

The sample letters came from seven California counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Los Angeles, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Solano. The primary origin was Marin County (58%), the location of the proposed tree removal project, and secondarily from San Francisco County. Support and opposition tended to be evenly distributed among each county. Of the Marin County letters, 91.3% were from individuals and 8.7% were from organizations (n=23). Three letter writers offered their credentials to support their position about tree removal. All letters were written by adults: 10 male, 12 female, and one unidentified.

The 290 letters were stratified into two groups, 149 in favor and 141 opposed. The 40 randomly selected letters had nine categories of values. A tenth value, water quality, was raised in public testimony but not reflected in the letter sample. Each time a letter contained a topic it was tallied as indicating a value of interest to the letter writer. The values presented in the letters were: 1) protection of native plants (Natv); 2) inherent value of trees, regardless of origin (Tree); 3) individual's personal history about the tree's origin (Hist); 4) shelter from wind (Wind); 5) fire danger (Fire); 6) soil erosion from logging operations (Soil); 7) water quality (Watr); 8) wildlife habitat (Wldl); 9) aesthetics (Aest). The three most important values were trees, fire hazard, and aesthetics (Figure 1). Individuals who favored eucalyptus removal stressed native plants, fire hazard, and aesthetics,

while individuals who opposed eucalyptus removal stressed trees, personal history, wildlife habitat, and aesthetics. An examination of values by gender indicated females tended to stress the value of trees, while males stressed native plants, fire hazard, and wildlife (Figure 2). Letters from females tended to oppose eucalyptus removal while letters from males tended to favor removal. A chi-square test of the hypothesis (H_0) of no difference between females and males failed to reject (H_0) ($\chi^2=2.1267$; $DF=1$; $0.25>p>0.10$ (Figure 2). No sample letters provided hard evidence such as cited literature to support their arguments.

During the first public hearing before the GGNRA Citizens Advisory Commission (an unpaid group of local citizens appointed by the Secretary of the Interior which acts as a vehicle for public input to management of GGNRA) on June 5, 1986, 38 people testified about the NPS proposal; 20 favored and 18 opposed the removal. Among the individuals testifying, eight organizations were represented; six favored and two opposed removal. One group in opposition was a community group adjacent to a specific location of groves. During the Oct. 16, 1986, hearing, NPS presented a limited demonstration removal project; 27 people testified or had letters read into the record, with 13 favoring and 14 opposing removal.

Among the individuals testifying, five organizations were represented; four favored and one opposed removal. The four organizations that favored the NPS proposal were the California Native Plant Society, Marin Audubon Society, Tamalpais Conservation

Club, and People for a Natural and Wild Bay Area. The one organization in opposition was the Marin View Homeowners Association. This last group tentatively supported a removal test site but not in the location adjacent to their viewshed. The final vote of the Citizens Advisory Commission was unanimously for removal at a test site.

Ten interviews were attempted but only six were completed. Four interviews were completed with NPS personnel representing the following positions: 1) Superintendent; 2) Chief of Planning and Technical Services Division; 3) Plant Ecologist; and 4) Environmental Specialist. The NPS personnel ranged in age from 35 to 51; there were two males and two females. Only two POET members were interviewed, both males, aged 42 and 45. Two POET members did not return calls and one recommended that I talk to a third party.

Results: Case Study

On March 3, 1986, the NPS issued a press release announcing a plan to remove all eucalyptus from GGNRA and requesting public input. The San Francisco *Chronicle* published the press release on Arbor Day. By March 20, 1986, 290 letters were received expressing support or opposition and a number of natural resource values. On June 5, 1986, public testimony was taken by the Citizens Advisory Commission. At this time two individuals who would later become central to POET testified against the NPS plan. They were a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) scientist, Tom (not his real name), and a consulting forester, John (not his real name). During this period POET did not exist. The CDPR sup-

ported the NPS plan during the hearing and began formulating their eucalyptus removal plan for Angel Island. The NPS began to counter the opposition to tree removal by redesigning the plan. The new plan was designed as a pilot project to demonstrate the feasibility of removal and eradication of eucalyptus without long-term effects.

The new plan was released to the public and testimony was taken at a hearing on Oct. 16, 1986. Again support and opposition were evenly divided. Charles (not his real name) testified in strong opposition. At the end of the meeting a small group formed outside, talking to Charles about the NPS plan. The group which coalesced after the second public hearing exchanged phone numbers and organized meetings at participants' homes. Charles' wife christened the group POET and by March 1987 Charles was writing letters to NPS as the Coordinator of POET. The group grew to as large as 20 people. John became associated with the group at this time, providing forestry expertise, while Tom provided expertise but did not formally join the group. Charles mobilized the Marin View citizens with fliers and meetings. POET organized formal presentations to the Marin Conservation League, Environmental Action Committee of West Marin, Marin Audubon Society, and Marin Sierra Club. Communication among members of POET was extensive. They had numerous meetings and communicated frequently by telephone.

During internal meetings the NPS planned to put the project on hold, expending its resources on other issues. After repeated discussions with POET, the park chose to

pursue containment of certain eucalyptus groves. The CDPR aggressively pursued its Angel Island plan but was taken to court. The state agreed to halt action and write and Environmental Impact Report. At this writing, neither agency has removed eucalyptus as planned in their original proposals or the NPS demonstration proposal.

POET's basic goal as articulated during interviews was to stop removal of eucalyptus and hold the agencies responsible and accountable for planning and implementing timber harvest in a national park. The underlying issue was perceived as logging on public lands with all the negative values associated with it, the aesthetics of clearcutting, logging impacts, and private profit at public expense. At issue were federal forest management policies and practices. Strong feelings about U.S. Forest Service management were transferred to the eucalyptus situation. Frustration at not being able to influence the larger picture surfaced.

POET emphasized the credentials of Tom and John to refute NPS statements. Tom provided journal literature to support arguments about native plants and invasiveness of eucalyptus. Attacks on NPS credibility were made to the point of calling individuals "stupid." Through John's association with an attorney, two people were able to halt the state park plan.

Agency personnel were well-educated, represented by four Bachelor's and one Master's degrees in natural resource science and landscape architecture. No agency personnel belonged to national professional organizations of their peers. Two belonged to state professional

organizations. The two POET members represented a Ph.D. in Silviculture and a Master's in Fine Arts. The forester belonged to two national professional natural resource organizations. Charles belonged to more confrontational organizations such as Earth First and Greenpeace. The two POET members had fundamentally different values systems. One believed in the value of science, while the other was strongly influenced by aesthetics and a belief in the religious interconnectedness of all life on Earth.

Leadership of POET changed over time. At the beginning, Charles was seen as the leader even though he did not think of himself as such. During subsequent meetings power was transferred to a second party because of internal conflict. The NPS clearly believed that Charles and Tom were the leaders of POET. Some agency personnel believed Tom used POET to exercise control, although he repeatedly disavowed membership in POET. The second party was also seen as a leader of the group.

Discussion

Pierce and Lovrich (1980, p. 260) stressed the relevance of the analysis of environmental beliefs. By studying environmental beliefs, four factors could be evaluated: 1) the extent of coherent structure of thinking; 2) the degree to which beliefs are tied to ideological or partisan patterns; 3) the effect on communication between the public and policy makers, given the increased demand for public involvement; and 4) information about sophistication, coherence, and consistency of public thinking. They pointed out that people will be more likely to trust and admit in-

formation from sources whose orientation to the belief domain is consistent with their own. In the environmental policy domain, the core dimension is related to the emphasis given to preservation or development. The POET study showed that people did not trust agency information. Since agency personnel wanted to remove eucalyptus, their information was perceived as biased. Communication was affected between opponents and proponents because their beliefs differed. Removal of eucalyptus was identified with timber industry logging rather than as a native plant protection project.

With the elevation of ecological knowledge and public awareness of ecological issues, a social movement of grand proportions began in the 1970s and 1980s. This movement was extremely broad-based, as illustrated by the 1986-87 edition of *The Harbinger File*, which listed hundreds of groups concerned with California environmental issues (Harbinger Communications 1987). Social movement organizations (SMOs) formed in response to an equally wide range of issues and problems related to development and preservation. POET was an example of one SMO which formed in response to a perceived threat to natural resources the members wanted preserved.

After the second hearing, POET formed. It was not entirely spontaneous; it took a concerted effort by Charles to establish the first communication links. This action was consistent with McCarthy and Zald's (1977) entrepreneurial model of social movement development. The group mobilized: 1) a communication network, primarily by telephone; 2) expertise in forestry and

ecology to counter agency expertise; 3) labor to contact other groups, write letters, and prepare reports; 4) other groups with similar values and grievances; 5) organizational skills; and 6) access to the legal system.

In light of Jenkins' (1983) resource mobilization theory, POET was successful. Eucalyptus removal was halted and the group was formally recognized by the agencies and the courts as a valid representative of legitimate interests. From the beginning, POET had a clearly defined goal which transcended the tenure of individuals in the group. The individuals acted rationally (although some behavior was extreme) and were not among Olson's (1965) "lunatic fringe." The two POET members had grievances beyond the specific issue of eucalyptus removal. They saw this as a case in point reflecting problems observed elsewhere. Olson (1965) considered six individuals to be the most efficient group size. POET's group size varied from two to twenty, and was most successful at its smallest, when bringing suit against the state. This contradicts Olson's view that for people to protect collective goods, large numbers must contribute (Mitchell 1979).

In the case of Three Mile Island, Walsh (1981) recognized three important variables in resource mobilization theory: 1) individuals of higher socioeconomic status are more likely to mobilize because they have access to more resources; 2) mobilization is more likely when an organized protest ideology is available; and 3) the public hearing process can become an instrument of mobilization. POET fits Walsh's model very well. First, POET members tended to be well-educated,

indicating higher socioeconomic status. Second, they had a background of natural resource or environmental organization participation. Finally, POET was formed by participants who came to a public hearing as individuals but recognized grievances in common with others. By the second hearing, NPS had significantly revised its original plan in order to counter opposition. This can be seen as a countermovement to opposition before a formal opponent was recognized. As the arena shifted away from NPS to the CDPR, so did the focus of POET's energies.

Clawson (1975) wrote that in private land use planning it is usually a small group that does the planning with the plans benefitting some people more than others. It is important to ask who benefits more, and who is in control. The question of local versus government control is exceedingly important (Geisler 1980). It is at this point that the sources of conflicts may be recognized. Sabatier et al. (1987) described the "devil shift" as the amount of distorted perception individuals have about opponents. Opponents are seen as stronger and more "evil" than they actually are. Reactions to agency personnel reflected this pattern. Another factor is that civil servants are less willing to question the legitimacy of people with different beliefs (Sabatier et al. 1987, p. 471).

Mechanisms that recognize and use local control over natural resources need not be traditional (Fortmann and Bruce 1988). Local committees such as the Citizens Advisory Commission—but with a more specific planning focus, such as forest management—could facilitate creative planning and management rather than hinder it. Agencies

must recognize that they are perceived as an elite with exclusive access to specific natural resources knowledge. Involvement in agency affairs as a professional endeavor goes beyond mere practice. Involvement with peers from other agencies, academia, and the private sector is critical for maintaining a broad perspective. Knowledge shared in joint planning can result in cooperation and help maintain the trust in information developed by agency planning groups. Both agency and POET members expended considerable time, energy, and resources on this conflict. Conflict resolution is costly, not only to the individuals but to society, since valuable resources are diverted. During the planning stages of natural resource projects, *a priori* social research about community values, local control, and consideration for global issues could repay itself in conflict avoidance.

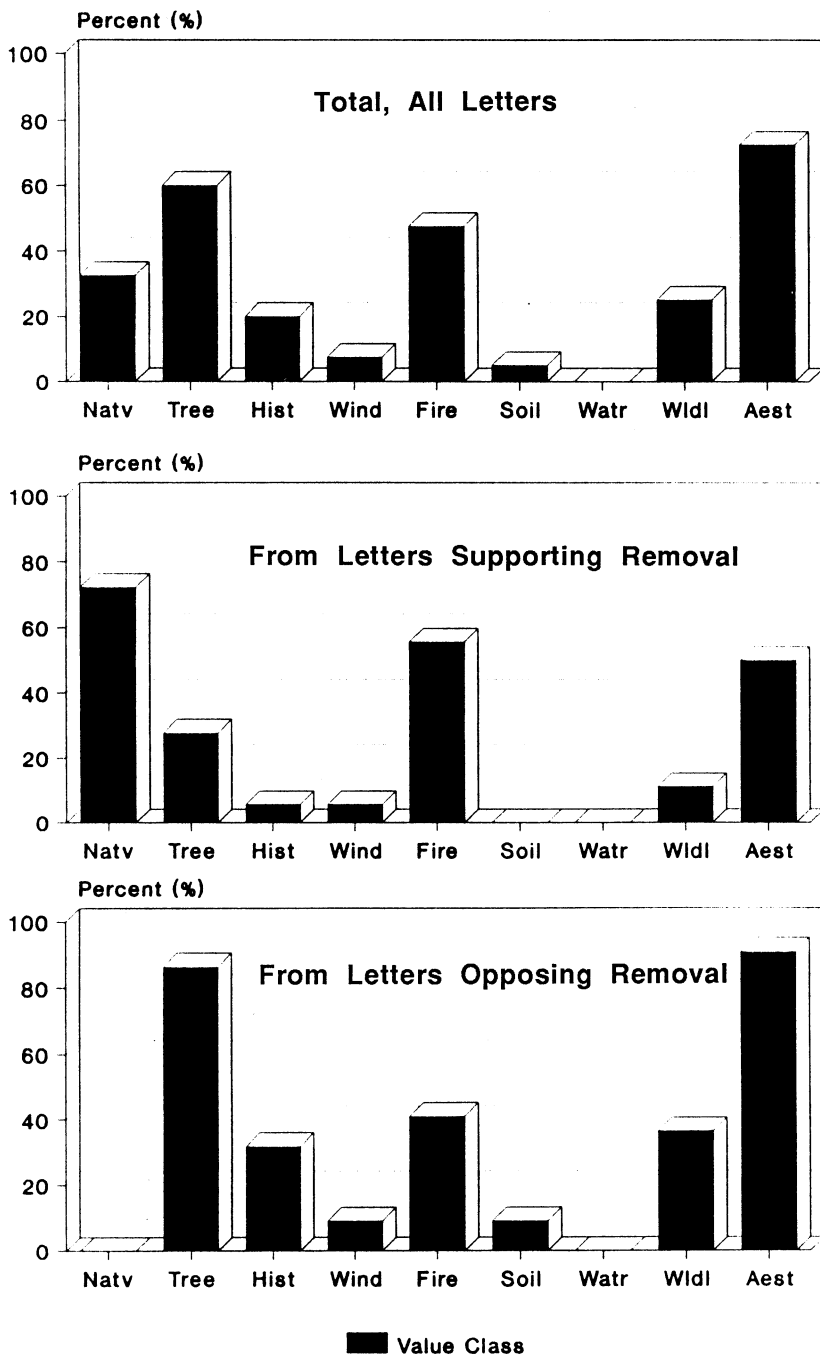
In closing, one point above all others rung true to me during the interviews. John stated that his disillusionment had its origin in the realization that people seemed to believe that scientific knowledge sprang out of the democratic process of open debate rather than through the exactitude of the scientific process. Too often in the public arena scientific information was misrepresented for purposes of persuasion.

C. S. Holling (1980) recognized degrees of uncertainty and that management decisions must be made without all the facts. Still, the facts must withstand the rigors of science. At some point in this process we must say: "Persuade me not; before you lies the truth, bloodied but unaltered by the battle."

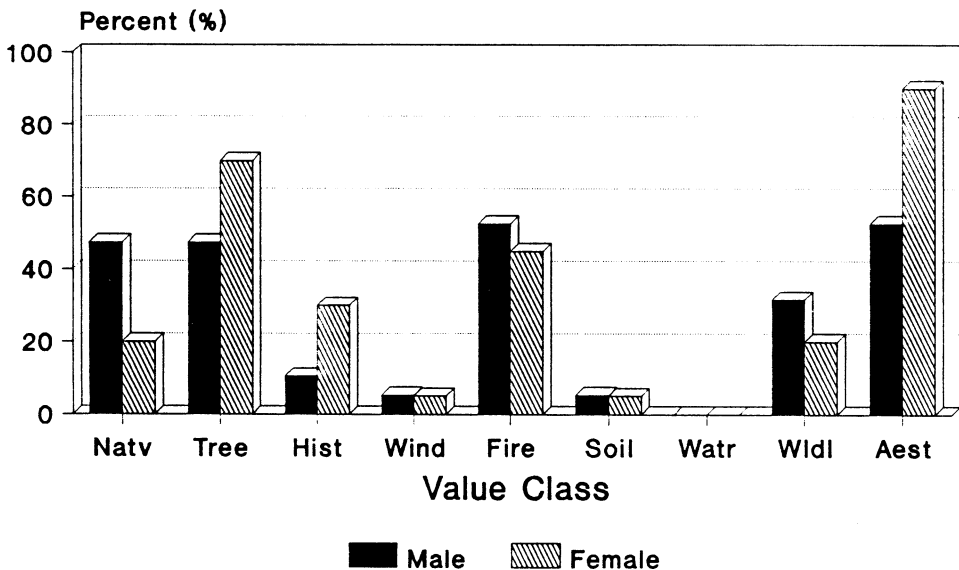
Literature Cited

- Baum, W. K. 1987. "Tips for Interviewers." Pp. 30-34 in *Oral History for the Local History Society*. 3rd ed. American Association for State and Local History, Nashville. 224 pp.
- Clawson, M. 1975. "Economic and Social Conflicts in Land Use Planning." *Natural Resources Journal* 15:473-489.
- Fortmann, L., and J. W. Bruce (eds.). 1988. *Whose Trees? Proprietary Dimensions of Forestry*. Westview, Boulder, CO. 341 pp.
- Geisler, C. C. 1980. "The Quiet Revolution in Land Use Controls Revisited," in *The Rural Sociology of Advanced Societies*, F. H. Buttel and H. Newby, eds. Allenheld, Totawa, NJ.
- Harbinger Communications. 1987. *The Harbinger File*. Santa Cruz, CA.
- Holling, C. S. (ed.) 1980. *Adaptive Environmental Assessment and Management*. John Wiley & Sons, New York. 377 pp.
- Howell, J. A. 1982a. "Bay Area Eucalyptus Fire Hazard." Unpublished MS, USNPS, San Francisco. 13 pp.
- Howell, J. A. 1982b. *Natural Resources Management Plan, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California*. USNPS, San Francisco. 131 pp. + addendum.
- Jenkins, J. C. 1983. "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 9:527-553.
- Kerlinger, F. N. 1973. *Foundations of Behavioral Research*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York. 673 pp.
- Lehmann, E. L. 1975. *Nonparametrics: Statistical Methods Based on Ranks*. Holden-Day, San Francisco. 457 pp.
- McCarthy, J. D., and M. Zald. 1977. "The Trend of Social Movements in America: Professionalization and Resource Mobilization." CRSO No. 164, Center for Research on Social Organization, Ann Arbor, MI. 30 pp.
- Mitchell, R. C. 1979. "National Environmental Lobbies and the Apparent Illogic of Collective Action." Pp. 87-121 in *Collective Decision Making: Application from Public Choice Theory*. C. S. Russell, ed. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. 296 pp.
- Norusis, M. J. 1988. *SPSS/PC+ V2.0 Base Manual*. SPSS, Chicago. 606 pp.
- Olson, M. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge. 186 pp.
- Pierce, J. C., and N. P. Lovrich, Jr. 1980. "Belief Systems Concerning the Environment." *Political Behavior* 2:259-286.
- Sabatier, P., S. Hunter, and S. McLaughlin. 1987. "The Devil Shift: Perceptions and Misperceptions of Opponents." *Western Political Quarterly* 40:449-476.
- Walsh, E. J. 1981. "Resource Mobilization and Citizen Protest in Communities Around Three Mile Island." *Social Problems*, 29:1-21.
- Zald, M. N., and B. Useem. 1982. "Movement and Countermovement: Loosely Coupled Conflict." CRSO No. 276, Center for Research on Social Organization, Ann Arbor, MI. 38 pp.
- Zar, J. H. 1974. *Biostatistical Analysis*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ. 620 pp.

Figure 1. Proportion of Values Mentioned in Letters



**Figure 2a. Total Proportion of Values Mentioned in Letters
(by Gender)**



**Figure 2b. Backing for Eucalyptus Removal Project
(by Gender)**

