

**Fostering Environmental Responsibility on  
the Part of the Watermen of Chesapeake Bay: A Faith and Action Research  
Approach**

by  
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**Introduction**

Henry Kendall, Nobel Laureate, said this, “Environmental problems at their root are human, not scientific or technical.” Neither environmental professionals nor academics can hope to solve environmental problems with a reductionistic approach that simply addresses a particular scientific or technical issue absent the human context in which these issues exist. Public policy professionals and scholars need to generate approaches and solutions to environmental problems by, with, and for people, and within the holistic, normative, and relational context of a peoples’ community and culture. However, “many academics, policymakers, environmentalists, and scientists maintain the hegemony of the scientific method to define all knowledge. Those holding this worldview, certain of its successful achievements in prediction and manipulation of the physical environment, often *without intention* devalue the ideas, experiences and accumulated wisdom of the majority of humankind” that would foster holistic solutions to environmental problems” (Smith, 1997). The case study presented in this paper provides a holistic and normative approach to resolving environmental conflict and fostering environmental stewardship based on a community’s faith worldview.

**The Case: Conflict among Tangier Islanders and Environmentalists in the Chesapeake Bay**

Over the past decade, many have warned that prevailing societal patterns seriously threaten the planet. This is the case with the Chesapeake Bay. Human-made pollution from cities, farms and fisheries, microbial disease, and over-harvesting of fisheries by watermen has left only one fishery--the blue crab-- as the basis for the waterman’s economy. The specific human problem to which the case study addresses is the social conflict between the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) environmentalists and the resource dependent and faith-based waterman community of Tangier Island over how to deal with the pollution of the Bay and island, the decline of the fisheries, and limiting harvest of oysters and blue crabs. This case study sought to answer the primary question, “Whether faith-based stewardship could provide a framework for the Tangier people to willingly change their practices to better steward the fishery and the island environment and plan for their economy’s sustainability?” A secondary question addressed was, “Whether faith-based stewardship could foster a better relationship between the Tangier community and the environmentalists.”

The Tangier Island case study uniquely addresses the solutions to the decline of the blue crab fishery and the conflict with environmentalists by generating knowledge with, by, and for the Tangier people and within the context of their community's faith-based worldview, biblical stewardship ethic, and cultural and economic needs. I based this case study on a liberating understanding of the nature of inquiry--an inquiry that fosters communal movement: movement from the way things are to the way things could be. I set out to foster both personal and social transformation through relationship building. At the heart of the transformations was a research process that involved investigating the circumstances of place and culture; reflecting on the needs, resources, and constraints of the present reality; examining the possible paths; and consciously moving in new directions. Knowledge was generated through a knowing with the mind and heart that incorporated personal and social understandings and authenticated personal and community experiences that led to transformational change.

### **Results of the Tangier Waterman's Faith-Based Stewardship Initiative**

During the initial two-month period in 1998 within which the faith-based stewardship initiative occurred, citizens of Tangier exhibited greater responsible stewardship of their island and the Bay's resources along with increased compliance with the civil laws through a waterman's stewardship covenant. Moreover, the effort led to improvements toward economic sustainability through employment generating efforts, better relations with environmentalists, greater respect for watermen by environmentalists, and increased political participation for women and disenfranchised watermen through the formation of two grassroots organizations. One year after the initiative, Tangiermen conducted stewardship outreaches to churches in Maryland and Pennsylvania farm communities. As a result, Pennsylvania farmers committed to a farmer stewardship covenant and a list of land and water stewardship activities to ensure they would not harm their Tangier "neighbors" down the Bay. The key to the success of this initiative on and beyond Tangier lies in the goals, methodologies, and approaches of the research design.

### **Goals for the Research**

The research encompassed three basic goals: (1) to expose academics, scientists, government officials, and environmentalists, to the important role of faith in the way people view the world and solve community problems; (2) to transform individuals' ways of thinking and acting for the benefit of the Tangiermen's community, economy, and island and Bay environment; and (3) to promote peaceful working relations between the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Tangier watermen for the benefit of the blue crab fishery and the health of the Chesapeake Bay. My hope was that this case might be a landmark effort to help environmentalists and scientists understand better, how faith can be a motivating force for changing people's views and behaviors toward the environment, environmentalists, and economic sustainability. I employed, therefore, a unique interpersonal model of engagement based on a research design that employed a mix of research and education methods that gave a voice to the people, and allowed for a multifaceted and participatory role for the researcher.

## **Research Design**

To implement the model of engagement, the challenge was to understand first the causes for the conflict and what role, if any, the Tangiermen's faith could have in resolving that conflict. I based my research design, therefore, on a "participatory paradigm" that provides "the conditions for personal and social transformation that redresses injustices, supports peace, and promotes democracy and ecological harmony" (Smith 1997, 183). It also allows the researcher to participate with the community in the generation of new knowledge for their benefit, and the benefit of the academic community (Heron and Reason 1997 quoted in Lincoln and Guba 2000).

I conducted two phases of research using a mix of methods—ethnography and action research. Ethnography was chosen because it is a research method directed at giving a voice to others by providing a means for the researcher to discover and understand people's unique history and views about their world. I chose action research because it put the problem solving process in control of the local people based on their worldview and enabled me, as the researcher, to assist the community toward an improved environmental, economic, and social situation. Prior to embarking on the ethnography, I conducted several months of important preliminary research on the regional and communal context in which watermen live and work and the relationship between watermen and scientists. I read numerous books on the history of the Methodist church in the region and its influences, the political and economic history of the region and the islands, and the psychological make-up of fishermen, islanders and their blood cousins the Appalachian mountain people. From this information, I developed a "cultural portrait" of the people and their relationship to the environment that revealed ways in which people, historically and presently, reacted to change, conflict, and outsiders and interacted with their environment. Moreover, I identified the key human, social and political forces for change in the community. This ethnographic research provided vital information in determining successful ways to institute change on the island.

## **Interpersonal Ethnography**

I conducted the ethnography under a participatory paradigm that allows the researcher to be more interpersonal and relational rather than impersonal and detached. Many scientists and social scientists believe incorrectly that being detached from the subjects is the only way to achieve an accurate representation of the reality of the situation. However, early in my research I identified regional "consultants," a group of people whom I contacted throughout my project whom provided an "outsider's view" of the people and their culture. With their help, I maintained the principle of objectivity, and validity of interview data and untangling varying accounts of the conflict while developing genuine relationships with the people I was interviewing.

To gain community acceptance and ownership of the research, I began with the "gatekeepers" of the Tangier community's worldview—the church and its leadership. I sought first the approval of Tangier Methodist church's board of directors that included

the Assistant Pastor, also Mayor of Tangier. I submitted a letter to the board explaining my background and the purpose for the research and a pastoral letter of reference. The board recognized that the research would benefit their citizens by providing a new understanding of scripture related to the fishery and the Bay, and by enabling them to have a greater voice in fishery policy. Hence, they saw me both as a researcher and as a messenger or, in their faith language, a missionary to their island.

The Virginia Waterman's Representative to the state board of fisheries first introduced me to the leaders among the Tangier Island watermen. His introduction provided me some credibility with watermen. I chose to live at the same economic level as the majority of the islanders in order to comprehend better their way of life and economic hardships. Moreover, I participated in church by attending worship services, teaching Sunday school, and reading the scriptures from the pulpit at services. My religious participation was not contrived but normal practice in my own life and one of the most important aspects of developing relationships, trust, and credibility among the faith community. I often assisted the women in the processing of crabs. In addition, I dressed according to island's conservative standards and asked permission from watermen's wives to conduct interviews with their husbands. More importantly, my residence was with a Tangier widow, my age, and her two children and, through her introductions, I developed genuine relationships with many islanders.

My ability to garner trust in a very short period and to work with the people on an equal level was a result of many factors. First, members and leaders of the Methodist church and a respected waterman representative formally introduced me to islanders. Second, the Methodist Church leadership and the Mayor of Tangier accepted the research and me as a messenger. Third, most in the community understood that my sincere desire was to serve the Tangier citizens and people of the region through my research. Fourth, I built lasting relationships among people on both sides of the conflict; relationships that still last to this day. Fifth, I respected Tangier's cultural mores and taboos by living according to them, including participating fully in the life of the Methodist church. Sixth, I lived with a Tangier family at the same economic level as the majority of islanders. Last, but certainly not least, I listened and incorporated people's ideas and views into every step of the ethnographic process. Environmental or other public policy projects that have as a central goal to promote social change of any sort can benefit greatly from ethnographic research conducted in a similar manner. An approach in which the change agent or researcher sincerely develops relationships and genuinely seeks people's views in a manner that is sensitive to their cultural values and worldview, will undoubtedly serve well the social and environmental change goals of any public policy and environmental practitioner.

### **Ethnographic Understanding of People and Conflict**

After six months of research, the ethnography revealed that the Tangier women, pastors, and lay church leaders were important change agents on the island and the church was the most powerful institutional force for change. It also showed that the biblical ethic of stewarding God's creation provided the Tangiermen with the basis for

“living right” with the environment. Many environmentalists had operated on the assumption that the Tangiermen not only did not have an environmental ethic but that their faith was the greatest hindrance to their acceptance of an environmental stewardship message. In fact, it never occurred to most of the CBF staff that faith provided any meaning or had any influence over the way the Tangiermen viewed the world let alone the Chesapeake Bay. As a result, the Tangiermen did not accept the environmentalist’s particular stewardship message because the environmentalists had not won the “right to be heard”. Some CBF staff did not take time to understand the Tangiermen’s faith worldview nor to speak in terms understood within that worldview. Many of the environmentalists did not reflect respect for the island’s cultural values. Their educational staff, some of whom are young college students, drank, partied, and smoked and did not participate in the life of the church. This led the Tangiermen to be suspicious of the environmentalist’s motivations for being on the island and suspicious of their message.

“Mistrust” was the single, most important cause of the conflict between the Tangier people and CBF. This mistrust stemmed from two categories of factors. First, the Tangiermen’s fear of losing their livelihood and way of life. The Tangiermen felt powerless to control fishery regulations and the steady decline of the fishery. Their inability to control their situation, fueled conflicts with outsiders they perceived threatened their livelihoods. Second, the conflict stemmed from the differences in worldview and language between the two groups. Watermen rely on experiential and historical knowledge and speak about the fishery within that context. Most environmentalists use a scientific approach and express themselves using technical and mathematical language. The two groups talked past each other, each not listening or understanding the other or sometimes, not respecting their neighbor’s worldview. This led to frustration, misperceptions, and mistrust.

### **Stewardship Ethic: A Bridge for Mutual Understanding**

Despite the mistrust, and worldview and language differences, the common goal bridging the gap between the watermen and CBF was a mutual, cultural value—the desire for clean islands and a healthy Chesapeake Bay fishery. My hypothesis was that the combination of a mutual conceptual understanding of environmental stewardship and respect for each other’s worldview could be key factors that would help ameliorate the conflict between the two groups. The challenge was to enable CBF officials and staff to more fully appreciate and respect the Tangiermen’s cultural values, faith-based worldview, and knowledge base in hope that it could lead to a working relationship between the two parties in support of environmental stewardship. Among the Tangiermen, the challenge was threefold: (1) to elucidate the biblical worldview as it relates to the created order, their neighbors, and obedience to civil laws, and for them to take account of the way in which they did or did not live up to this biblical worldview; (2) to awaken the island residents from their malaise, and inspire them to make a difference in their community’s present and future environment and economy; and (3) to assist them in establishing the organizational means to implement constructive change.

## **Faith-based Stewardship and Action Research Approach to Instituting Social Change**

At the Tangier Mayor's request, I returned to the island to work with people to develop a faith-based stewardship initiative led by Tangiermen. I implemented an approach to institute constructive change based on seven principles derived from the ethnographic studies of the people (cultural portrait), the conflict, and the human, political and social forces for instituting change in the community. First, the Tangier people were placed in a position of control and leadership. Second, the people were the generators and implementers of ideas. The Tangiermen already had ideas about ways to solve the problems they faced; they simply needed a channel through which to express them and an audience to listen. Third, I based the approach on their faith worldview and, its authority, the Bible. Their faith was the lens through which they understood the world and the paradigm from which they operated. In addition, their faith had served, historically, as an important mediating force against feelings of powerlessness, enabling some to rise above adversity, and institute necessary change for the benefit of the community.

Fourth, the approach involved the churches as the institutional framework and support with the pastors and laity in leadership roles. Fifth, as the implementers of change in the community, the Tangier women were part of the corps leadership. Sixth, I used a shared-praxis approach to education, a process of transformational change through critical reflection, reevaluation, reinterpretation, and re-habitation. This educational approach helped the women and watermen see the dissonance between their own beliefs and practices and to resolve the dissonance. Critical reflection occurred through various forums and means such as environmental stewardship sermons that employed creation hymns and religious pictures of Jesus in creation. In addition, it occurred through Bible studies on creation stewardship, community meetings, and one-on-one discussions. Last, the approach incorporated co-generated learning in which the researcher and community collaboratively problem solved. Co-generated learning took place in community meetings and in newly formed community groups called Families Actively Involved in Tangier's Heritage (FAIITH) and the Tangier Watermen's Stewardship for the Chesapeake (TaSC).

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as a researcher changed from being a participant observer while conducting the ethnography, to being a co-researcher and co-worker with members of the community during the action-research or faith-based stewardship initiative phase. The multifaceted and participatory role as an action researcher was an important component of the interpersonal model of engagement. At any given time, I was in one or several of the following positions: encourager, educator or messenger, and peacemaker who legitimized, sustained, and advocated. Central to all these positions was the role of a *paraclete*. The Greek translation of the word *paraclete* is "called along side of." Translations of "paraklesis" are "exhortation, encouragement, and comfort." It also means "helper, advocate, or pleader." In order to help the Tangiermen move toward an

environmentally and economically sustainable future, I, as the researcher, “walked along side of the people for a time.”

In this capacity, I reflected back to the local group things about themselves or habits that: 1) were not consistent with their faith worldview and did not accurately reflect concern for their fishery or environment; 2) would not be a productive way to approach discussions with people outside the community; or 3) would hinder them from reaching their goals. I did not shy away from naming certain behavior as wrong, such as breaking civil, particularly fishery laws. Overall, through pulpit messages, bible studies, and church and community meetings, I attempted to fill in pieces of their faith-based worldview with biblical principles that addressed economic, financial, and environmental stewardship.

Throughout the action research or stewardship initiative, I *encouraged* people to realize the valuable knowledge they already had to solve their community problems, and encouraged them to take risks and to institute beneficial changes. In addition, I assisted people in constructive conflict, discouraged destructive conflict, and provided support in times of disappointment, discouragement, and ostracization. I also facilitated the creation of the 2020 Vision by ensuring the consideration of every voice and idea in the community meetings along with encouraging people to think biblically and creatively-- “beyond the box” and “out of their comfort zone.” Moreover, it was critical to help people think of the three R’s: reduce, reuse, and recycle when developing community stewardship goals.

The most important role was that of *educator or messenger*. I presented new information and assisted participants in reflecting critically on their present actions in light of the new knowledge. I provided cases of successful attempts by other fishing communities to institute economic and regulatory change, and I brought to the island outsiders from other watermen communities to share their experiences in addressing fishery issues in the political arena. Teaching and sharing information better enabled the Tangier citizens to discuss issues with the forces of power. I also assisted people in inventorying and assessing the local resources available in their community to implement the effort. In addition, I provided scientific, economic, governmental, and environmental information from outside sources and guidance on how to read and analyze the documents. Moreover, I revealed how to work with people from outside institutions, such as government, and how to apply democratic approaches to civic governance. I also encouraged people to reflect on instances in their own history of how they accomplished projects with non-island groups.

My goal as a peacemaker was to elicit peaceful settlement and cooperation, making it a more attractive option than coercion or violence; to attend to issues of justice; to stand with the disputing parties in working through their conflict; and to enable the parties to deal constructively with future conflict. As a peacemaker, I did not make peace, but helped create the conditions that allowed the disputing parties to choose peace and reconciliation. In order to facilitate the right choice, I found myself being, at times, a *legitimizing*, one who tries to help establish the credibility of the weaker party’s needs in

the eyes of the skeptical stronger party. I encouraged outside professionals such as governmental officials, environmentalists and scientists to recognize, respect, and incorporate the watermen=s experiential knowledge and economic and social needs into their decisions and policies. When among the watermen, I urged watermen and others in the waterman=s community to recognize, respect, and incorporate scientific knowledge of the environmental professionals into their planning and decision making efforts for the island and fishery. I would be also, at times, a *sustainer*, by finding the resources enabling the weaker party—the Tangiermen-- to sustain their challenge. Last, I was an *advocate*, one who not only legitimizes and sustains the challenge of the weaker party, but also speaks openly with and for the weaker party, helping them to identify resources and articulate needs. I advocated and worked to legitimate the involvement of Tangier women and disenfranchised Tangier watermen in the fishery regulatory discussion and decisionmaking.

Paradoxically, the road to peace is sometimes through increased conflict@ (Kraybill 1981 in Emmerich 2003, 38). This was the case on Tangier. As the researcher, I questioned the status quo, particularly when the status quo excluded people from fully participating in the political process, or was anti biblical such as promoting illegal acts. Some watermen had a lot to loose if other watermen started obeying fishery laws as the stewardship initiative encouraged. Other people were misinformed or uninformed about the stewardship initiative and, as a result, were fearful that it would destroy their livelihoods. As a result, opposition to the effort took the form of death threats to me over the CB radio and ostracization from certain community members, law enforcement harassment of the Tangier watermen who took the stewardship covenant, and name-calling and ostracization of the leaders and members of the FAIITH and TaSC groups by family and friends in their own community. In addition, certain people passed around a “dossier” full of falsehoods about one of the outside speakers for the 2020 Vision conference that created fear throughout the community and led to a type of “witch trial” at one of the churches in which I was questioned for two hours. It was very difficult at times for everyone involved in the stewardship effort and made it imperative, at all times, that the researcher and the stewardship leaders educate people about their motivation for being involved in the effort, and remain humble, honest, sincere, loving, and above reproach. Despite the harassment, the watermen and women of the stewardship effort transformed themselves, their community and, unbeknown to them, people around the Chesapeake Bay.

### **Analysis**

For three decades prior to the stewardship effort, various environmental groups and individuals had promoted an environmental stewardship message on the island. However, they made little headway in affecting the Tangiermen’s worldview and behavior. Why did this effort enable such immediate and dramatic changes among the Tangiermen? Charles Kraft, formerly an anthropologist at Fuller Theological Seminary, provides thirteen factors that influence people’s acceptance or rejection of a worldview change (See Table 1). Seven factors in Kraft’s model aided the reception by the Mayor and Tangier leaders of the faith and community-based stewardship approach: (1) the



similarity of the researcher's worldview and language to the community's worldview (*In Kraft's categories "basic premises of source" and receptor's worldviews*"); (2) economic, technological and social changes and events that provided a receptive climate to new ideas (*Kraft's "pace of present change" and "security"*); (3) recognition that their current perspective was not sufficient to meet the community's felt need (*Kraft's "Self Sufficiency"*); (4) the legitimacy of the researcher as a messenger (*Kraft's "Advocate"*); and (5) recognition that the approach provided a framework to address the community's felt need to maintain their way of life and flowed from their faith-based worldview (*Kraft's "Fit of Idea" and "Relation of Idea to Felt Need"*).

Cultural change took place only when the Tangier people understood that they could generate a solution to their felt need-- to maintain their way of life on the island-- in a way that would be pleasing to God and according to biblical principles. Thus, Kraft's "Fit of Idea" and "Relation of Idea to Felt Need" were the most important factors in successfully creating transformational change among the people. Using Kraft's terminology, a "cultural peak experience," occurred among Christian and non-Christian islanders upon hearing an environmental stewardship sermon by the researcher during a service that combined both churches on the island. In the pulpit message, using rhetorical questions, the hymn *Jesus Savior Pilot Me*, and its iconic imagery, I asked the following:

*Is it not inconsistent to call upon Jesus to pilot you and then do to your neighbor and to Creation as you will? Can you be praying, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven' while dumping bait boxes, tin cans and other oil bottles overboard which pollutes God's Creation, or keeping small crabs which takes away the livelihood of your neighbor, and your sons and daughters? In essence, we should place a blindfold over Jesus' eyes (showed "Jesus Pilot Me" picture with blindfold over Jesus' eyes). What this says is, Yes, Jesus, you can pilot my life through the rough waters of the Bay, but do not watch what I am doing the other ninety-nine percent of the time . . . .*

The biblical messages within the sermon and the use of imagery and hymns prompted people to reflect about the way their actions toward Creation aligned or did not align with the biblical stewardship ethic. Fifty-eight men knelt at the altar and publicly committed to a stewardship covenant that required better stewardship of the fishery and creation, obedience to civil laws, honoring God by all the activities on their boat and brotherly accountability.

A linguistic and cultural transformation occurred when the islanders' discovered: (1) God is both Creator and Redeemer of all His Creation, (2) the Bible requires them to be good stewards of Creation and economies, and to obey the civil laws, and (3) stewardship of Creation is part of fulfilling the great commandment—to love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself. In addition, they learned that the Bible teaches that "neighbor" is an inclusive term applied to everyone whom they affect and all those who affect them. Their "neighbor" now encompassed people up and down the Chesapeake Bay, including environmentalists.

This realization along with correction of misunderstandings about intentions and motivations, led to forgiveness on both a corporate and individual level. Some in the Tangier community forgave their CBF neighbor when, in a meeting of the two parties, CBF asked for forgiveness for the mistakes they had made in the past. It also led to individual Tangiermen asking forgiveness from CBF staff for ostracizing them. A CBF employee from Tangier was stunned when a member of the community came to him and said he was sorry for treating him badly over the years just because he worked for CBF.

Recognition that their worldview lived-out clashed with their actual biblically based worldview, led many islanders to re-evaluate, reinterpret, repent, of their actions, and change their habits (rehabilitation). For many Tangier citizens, allegiance to God became paramount and pervaded many more areas of their lives. Their faith-based worldview became more holistic as they applied biblical principles of stewardship, civic virtue, hope, contentment, and forgiveness to their relationships with God, neighbor and Creation. The results were micro-paradigm shifts in thinking and rapid socio-cultural readjustment toward the island and Bay environment, the economy, relationships with environmentalists, and political participation.

Hope based on faith in God, inspired the Tangier residents to become more politically active. Their activism resulted in the creation of community stewardship meetings and a subsequent 2020 Stewardship Vision plan, a conference for outsiders at which they presented their vision, and not-for-profit groups. These processes, organizations, and plans empowered the Tangier people by supporting an internal locus of control over their community's environmental, economic, and social affairs.

### **Conclusion**

The success of the faith-based and interpersonal approach is evident in the personal and communal transformation toward the environment. Waterman Jan Marshall's statement reflects the personal transformation. *"I never saw any harm of throwing trash overboard until it was revealed to me that I was damaging my witness for Christ."* A waterman's wife reflects the community transformation, *"A lot of the feeling of helplessness is gone and there is a lot more confidence that there is a future and that our children and grandchildren may very well have a place and stay here on the island."* Moreover, the Faith-Based Stewardship Initiative provided a way for CBF and the Tangiermen to better understand and respect the other's motives, intentions, approach to learning, and worldview. Vice President of CBF stated, *"The relationship between CBF and Tangier has changed dramatically and profoundly, and I hope and think for the long term."*

The interpersonal model of engagement provided a framework for a genuine relationship and partnership between the researcher and the Tangier Island citizens to assist the Tangiermen in developing their own unique community stewardship initiative based on their faith worldview and their felt need to maintain their waterman-based way of life. Due to the initiative's holistic approach, environmental issues were considered within the context of Tangier's faith-based worldview and its accompanying stewardship ethic, which included means for addressing economic and cultural struggles and conflicts

with other stakeholders in the Bay=s fisheries. The faith-based and shared-praxis educational approach, aided by the researcher=s paracletic role, enabled the Tangiermen to evaluate their attitudes and bring their actions toward the environment, environmentalists, and their local economy into better accord with their faith beliefs. The initiative succeeded because the idea fit their worldview and met their felt need, the islanders looked at the outside researcher as a messenger with insights that could bring benefits to the community and because of the inside or island innovators or leaders who included respected men, women, and church and lay leaders.

Researchers can cross culturally apply faith-based stewardship with its action-reflection and Ashared praxis@ approach to education to other Christian-based and resource-dependent communities, whether in farming, timber or ranching localities. Additionally, future researchers could, perhaps, apply it to Non-Christian faith-based communities under certain circumstances. In the latter case, they could conduct research using principles from another faith to attempt to achieve the same results. Based on this case, any approach designed to foster change in another community=s faith worldview for the benefit of their environment, economy, and relations with environmentalists would need to take into account at least three components: (1) the culture=s worldview, faith commitments and ethical principles related to environmental and economic stewardship and neighborliness; (2) the institutional authorities of the culture=s faith; and (3) the standards of authority for the culture=s faith. In addition, an outside researcher undertaking faith-based stewardship should share all or most of the core convictions of the community=s faith worldview. Finally, action research and a Ashared-praxis@ approach to education provide an excellent framework and process for empowering faith-based communities to institute change.

**Table 1: Factors Influencing Acceptance or Rejection of Worldview Change**

1. **Basic Premises of Source and Receptor worldviews.** If the basic premises on which the worldview of the receptor is based are similar to those of the advocate, the potential for acceptance, or at least understanding, is increased.®
2. **Attitude of Receptor Toward Their Own Culture.** If, even in spite of similar worldviews, such a recommendation were to come to the members of a social group whose attitude toward their own culture was so positive that they believed they had no need of suggestions from outside, the likelihood is that even good ideas would be rejected.®
3. **Attitude of Receptor Toward Source Culture.** If a group despises the source [of information or innovator], the likelihood of acceptance of ideas from that source is diminished. No matter how persuasively such ideas may be communicate.®
4. **Openness to New Ideas.** Because of their worldviews, certain groups are more open to cross-culturally communicated ideas than others.®
5. **Pace of Present Change.** A culture that is changing rapidly tends to readily accept recommendations for further change, even if recommenders are outsiders.®
6. **Tradition of Borrowing.** If there is a tradition of borrowing [ideas] in society, the potential for acceptance is increased. If, however, the tradition is one of rejection, the potential for acceptance is decreased.®
7. **Morale.** Intensive impact of westernization is producing widespread cultural disruption. The effect is frequently greater or lesser demoralization on the part of receptor culture.
8. **Self Sufficiency.** A . . . demoralization constitutes a serious morale problem resulting in questioning of self-sufficiency of the [worldview] underpinnings of the culture. . . . When the old values are called into question, [people] will bend in an effort to discover new values and to integrate them into a new, more satisfying worldview.®
9. **Security.** Before the stage of cultural demoralization is reached, however, there may be an almost opposite attitude toward [paradigm] change. If a group feels threatened rather than secure in the face of intensive outside influences toward change, it may be less, rather than more, receptive to the advocacy of change.®
10. **Flexibility.** A Such cultures tend to develop a highly resistant rather than an adaptive attitude toward new ideas.®
11. **Advocate.** A With regard to persons who advocate a given idea, much depends upon the prestige assigned to them by the potential receptor group. The worldview of a group will lead it to expect worthy ideas from certain types of persons and not from others. If a group expects to accept innovative ideas only from those who have demonstrated their abilities from within their cultural context, it is unlikely that a person who has not acquired such credentials will be taken seriously.®
12. **Relation of Idea to Felt Need.** A All worldviews have within them areas of inconsistency and/or inadequacy that are to a greater or lesser degree a part of the consciousness of the society. A . . . advocates should seek to discover the questions concerning reality that the people of the society regard as beyond their ability to answer. Then, they attempt to communicate so that hearers perceive a relationship between that communication and questions left unanswered or poorly answered by their present perspectives.®
13. **Fit of Idea.** A . . . an idea is more likely to gain acceptance if it is congruent with the receptor culture=s present frame of reference than if it is discontinuous with it. If the new can be built upon or grafted into the old rather than being introduced as unconnected or even in competition with it, the likelihood of acceptance is increased. . . . The crucial issue is not the dedication of the advocate but whether or not the recommended changes in worldview can be fitted into the receptor=s conceptual framework without completely remaking it.®

Source: Quotes from Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 1979, 366-370. Printed with permission from Orbis Press.

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