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Factors Influencing Donation Decisions to Environmental Nongovernmental Organizations

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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MS, University of Denver, 2008

BS, Regis University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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Abstract

While philanthropic studies have been conducted for centuries, little information exists regarding factors that impel donors to make financial donations to environmental nongovernmental organizations (ENGOs). The phenomena surrounding human motivation have been studied via numerous lenses providing information focused on various domains of interest e.g., poverty alleviation, provisioning of educational opportunity, disease eradication, disaster relief, etc. The theoretical framework for this study was Self-Determination Theory (SDT). This study focused specifically on U.S. citizens and the motivational factors that impelled citizens to make monetary contributions to ENGOs. Ten participants ages 18 and over who had donated to an ENGO in the past year were interviewed virtually via Zoom. Results indicated the importance of being informed about how the ENGOs were spending their donations was paramount to the donors. This also was the dominant sentiment expressed by the participants, as they decided whether they would continue their support for the ENGO(s). The donors wanted to know about the ENGO's practices (that is, how, and where their money was being spent) and what the ENGOs will strive to accomplish currently and in the future. Recommendations include recruiting more participants to provide a more robust and thorough examination and to garner support from ENGOs. Positive social change implications include that by better understanding donor decision-making, ENGOs can develop or revise current policies to better attract and retain donors interested in environmental concerns.

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my Father, Jehovah, and his precious son, Jesus Christ. Being human, my faith waned several times as I encountered what seemed to be, at the time of occurrence, insurmountable encumbrances. Once I finished the coursework requirements for my degree, I felt a sense of exaltation and accomplishment. Unfortunately, I was visited by a series of illnesses that not only threatened to prevent me from acquiring my degree but also threatened my mental acuity physical mobility, and my life. In retrospect, I knew that to overcome these maladies, I must maintain my faith and call upon my creator to bestow upon me a preternatural strength to complete my journey. I have survived three bouts of cancer, numerous rounds of chemotherapy, sepsis (which nearly stole my life), a stem cell transplant, divorce, and many personal tragedies. I am so grateful (a gross understatement) to the Lord for preserving and guiding me throughout my life and my time here at Walden University. I also dedicate my dissertation to my mother, who always expressed her delight in the sheer joy I would exhibit by reading, writing, and obtaining knowledge. I also dedicate my dissertation to my best friend, whom I have known for over half a century, my siblings (some of whom are no longer here), and my daughters...all of whom have always been my biggest cheerleaders!

My Thanks to you all!

Acknowledgments

Were I to fully and adequately acknowledge the individuals who helped me reach this point in my ceaseless, meandering quest to slake my unquenchable lust to…*know!* It would require a tome filled with the names of those who have loved, supported, and believed in me all my days.

I wish to thank my Chairs, Doctors Lori Demeter and Kathleen Schulin, Dr. George Kieh, and my advisor, Ms. Cat Heck; they believed in me when my belief in myself waned.

I want to thank my lifelong friend, Robert Earl Watson, and my siblings, especially Henry Jr., and the numerous educators I was blessed with throughout my journey.

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To My Creator, Jehovah. God has spared my life countless times…Thank You Daddy!!!!!!!!!

Amen, Amen, and Amen!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Traditionally, altruism via monetary philanthropic bequests is a topic that has been studied through various lenses (e.g., psychological, financial, sociological, etc.). There is a dearth of research that examines why certain individuals choose to improve the welfare of human beings via monetary philanthropy. In the United States, there is a correlative paucity of literature specific to environmental philanthropy (Greenspan et al., 2012). Moreover, the American Association for the Study of Higher Education contended such research is currently in a nascent phase as most studies on this topic have occurred within the last three decades (Drezner, 2011).

A study conducted by Betsill et al. (2021) found that research about the governance provided by foundations that support environmental causes is deficient and that the types of studies conducted must be expanded to include research about governance, foundation/grantee relationships, and how foundations (private and corporate) build synergistic relationships between stakeholders. While this study discusses the dearth of research on corporations and foundations and their roles in environmental and climate change issues, extrapolation can be made and applied to the scantiness of research about the role(s) of environmental nongovernmental organizations (ENGOs) and private citizen environmental philanthropy in the United States.

There is also a need to increase research in the assorted types of environmental research being conducted (e.g., carbon-neutral energy, environmental degradation, habitat restoration, and protection of endangered species) and an increase in partnership and cooperation between the sectors (Michelson, 2021). A more recent study illustrates the

need to refine and focus the messaging on targeting potential donors: Freeling et al. (2022) discovered that while ENGOs are enhancing their fundraising messaging, much remains to be done.

Many public policy administrators face issues when devising sound environmental public policy. One such issue is the continual challenge of providing adequate public services, which looms large during times of economic uncertainty and recurrent economic crises (Mitchell et al., 2015). The following are but a few examples (and potential solutions) of the issues governmental bodies encounter as they strive to create policy and promulgate laws that will counter the negative effects of human-caused climate change. Anthropogenic (i.e., human-caused) environmental damages and mass extinction of innumerable species have been thrust to the fore of our collective consciousness as our very existence is now threatened by the unfettered use and depletion of irreplaceable natural resources (Noyes & Lema, 2015). Mitchell et al. (2015) cited resource dependencies (especially during times of economic duress), shared beliefs, and common goals and purpose as reasons why public policymakers and ENGOs are increasingly joining forces to address national and international environmental concerns. Interestingly, Bush and Hadden (2019) found an opposing trend and concluded that international nongovernmental organizations (INGOS) creation and participation in governmental-led migration to renewable energy use (and other national and international environmental programs) has waned because of the intense competition for finite dollars among not-for-profit groups. They also cite a lack of cooperation and collaboration

between such entities, and that the "density" (i.e., sheer numbers) of INGOs dissuades new entrants from forming (pp. 1133–1134).

The United States and governments abroad increasingly rely on alternate revenue streams and expertise from organizations external to said governments (e.g., public–private partnerships, civil society organizations, ENGOs, etc.) to mitigate the negative effects of the "alterations" humans have wrought upon the natural environment (Carboni & Milward, 2012). London et al. (2013) described California's AB 32 legislation and the diverse perspectives and conflicts experienced when devising and implementing climate change remediation policy and statutes. Contentiousness surrounding issues of environmental justice, racialization, and inclusion, and collaboration between environmental regulators, vulnerable and underrepresented groups, and other stakeholders are some of the topics explored.

Mitchell et al. (2015) found a recurring theme: regardless of the level of management, local, state, and transnational administrators found strong linkages between collaboration and performance. A study examining practices that positively affect the adoption of community climate change policy found that extensive outreach and engagement by policymakers of business, civic, educational, and other stakeholders early in planning processes improved implementation and outcomes (Pitt & Bassett, 2014).

As more is discovered about the reasons why individuals donate money to environmental efforts, the knowledge could be applied in a manner that improves the health and quality of life of millions. Policymakers, researchers, administrators, politicians, and other stakeholders will have at their disposal invaluable information that

can be used to increase intra/inter-organizational collaboration and effectiveness. Additionally, the suasiveness of ENGO funding campaigns and the resulting increase in financial support could ultimately be used to improve the health of the physical world in which we reside. In the remainder of the chapter, I discuss the background, the problem this study addressed, the purpose, theoretical foundation, nature of the study and assumptions, scope and limitations, significance of the study, and several other factors that are germane to and that form the nucleus of this research effort.

Background of the Study

The scope of this study was bound by phenomena surrounding the philanthropic motivations and behaviors of private citizens of the United States who provide monetary support to ENGOs. While considerable research has been conducted on the practice of philanthropy, there is a decided gap in the literature regarding motivational variables that affect individuals' decision-making processes when they make monetary donations to environmental causes (Greenspan et al., 2012). This study explored various factors specific and germane to philanthropy (e.g., personal values, political orientation, sociopsychological, socioeconomic, and governmental policy) via the lens of qualitative ethnographical research. Ethnography is regarded as a good fit for this type of study. Ethnographical research consists of engaging a group of individuals that share culture (that is, they experience and attach meaning to a phenomenon). The researcher attains data from this distinct group via several data collection techniques, such as interviews, audio recordings, observations, and the researcher's own reflexivity to develop an understanding of the research participants.

Creswell (2007) determined that ethnographical research entails querying, data compilation, and analysis of "the meaning of the behavior, the language, and the interaction among members of the culture-sharing group" (p. 69). Coelho and De Lima (2021) offered that ethnographical researchers use reflexivity to practice introspection as they wend their way through the research process to add transparency and rigor to their research (p. 327). Ethnographical methodologies are used in this study to tease out the motives underlying the reasons U.S. citizens donate money to ENGOs. Precedent exists where ethnographical, research-based advocacy programs have been used by the Environmental Protection Agency (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Divergent political viewpoints and philosophies, federal versus state tax structures, and other issues have hindered if and how much current or potential philanthropic contributors are willing to donate to their favorite charitable causes (Cerny & McKinnon, 2010). Bennett (2003) found that while many philanthropists are united in their desire and willingness to make monetary donations to ENGOs, there are distinct factors that differentiate donors (e.g., demographics—age, income, psychographic, gender, etc.) Bachke et al. (2014) found that other variables (e.g., gender, income, geographical locale, etc.) influence willingness to donate to philanthropic causes and that such differences must be better understood and leveraged in a manner that increases donor participation and nongovernmental organization (NGO) effectiveness. The increasing need for reliance on nontraditional revenue streams and expertise is of great import to environmental public policymakers as they are charged to do more with less. There is also an international push towards further democratization and involvement of marginalized groups, amassment of expertise and

resources, and broadening participation in environmental policymaking (Dombrowski, 2010).

Several questions arise. Do the variables that influence philanthropy in general also affect the decision-making processes of ecophilanthropists? Are there common threads or themes that identify and connect these distinct "stakeholders of environmental concerns"? Also, are private citizens who have decided to dedicate considerable amounts of their fortunes to NGOs, also supportive of environmentally oriented programs and projects? In the United States, several extremely wealthy individuals have joined a growing number of philanthropists who are contributing at least half of their wealth to various philanthropic endeavors via The Giving Pledge, a multigenerational philanthropic foundation (Schmitz & McCollim, 2021). This and similar efforts are admirable and should alleviate many of the problems that beset modern civilization. It is hoped that findings from this study can be applied in a manner that will impel all individuals interested in the preservation of the earth's incredible diversity of life and human civilization to donate to environmental causes. It is suggested that the combined donations of like-minded citizens ("the power of many") interested in reversing and preventing further degradation of the environment would dwarf the contributions of governments and the wealthy. NGOs and other private entities are also identified as more efficient than governments in distributing aid, leveraging donor expertise, and avoidance of practices that reduce program effectiveness (e.g., graft, corruption, inflated overhead, etc.; Desai & Kharas, 2008, pp. 158-159). A particularly troubling practice of the Trump administration was planning to reduce or replace the EPA budget and statutes, actions

that were projected to seriously curtail the agency's ability to ensure the safety of our nation's air, water, and natural resources (Greshko, 2017). Policy changes are indicative of the normal, recurrent "changing of the guard" in Washington. Those who are averse to the enactment of stringent environmental policy (historically and traditionally the Republican Party) are emplaced in positions whereby they can change public policy and promulgate statutes that curtail or exclude many programs they deem to be "non-critical" budgetary expenditures, such as the EPA, art, and cultural programs, etc. The Trump administration proposed to slash 2.6 billion dollars and 3200 employees from the EPA headcount (Wolfgang, 2017).

These practices are particularly harmful to the abovementioned and similar agencies and programs, especially during times of economic malaise. Regardless of the dubious logic behind the political spoils programs, the outcomes of such fiscal teeter-tottering encumber the ability of the EPA to continue to devise and implement sound environmental policies and programs. Ongoing budgetary wrangling, revenue uncertainty, and implementation of crises management strategies increase the need for supplementation of the EPA's mission and goals by local governments, states, and other supportive entities and private citizens (Rai, 2020, p. 449). This study and similar research efforts are required to further understand individual monetary contributors to ENGOs. As mentioned, such individuals have become major stakeholders in the quest to stem the tide of environmental degradation. Many local, national and international governments have formed partnerships under the auspices of "grand challenge" initiatives to tackle problems that they find are too complex, costly or potentially fraught with

potential for hoarding and corruption (Hayter & Link, 2020). Among the numerous problems being addressed by such programs, amelioration of the effects of climate change is listed as one of the numerous targets. The next sections further explore issues that may impel private citizens to monetarily support ENGOs.

Problem Statement

Each year millions of dollars are donated to charitable efforts by U.S. citizens (Blackbaud, 2014). However, little is known as to why some philanthropists decide to tackle the problem of anthropogenic climate change by donating money to ENGOs. Globally and here in the United States a broad and diverse grouping of individuals, scientists, government officials, business executives, and others, recognize the imminent dangers posed by a rapidly changing environment. In the banking sector, in addition to the traditional roles they perform, banking management executives are tasked with examining, understanding, and mitigating disasters that may occur and negatively affect the bottom line of their respective institutions by utilizing environmental, social, and governance initiatives (Sarraf, 2021). The psychological impacts to individuals and risk assessment of climate change weather-related events were used in a study by Guillard et al. (2021), who found that an individual's perception and subsequent reaction to climate catastrophic events is tied to the closeness of the occurrence(s) both temporal and proximity (geographic) wise.

By adding to the research and literature on this topic, the findings can be leveraged in a manner that will yield positive social change in the United States. The anticipated social change would be achieved via an increase in the share of charitable

dollars that can be accessed and brought to bear on the climate change crisis that currently threatens civilization and all life forms currently inhabiting our planet.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study explored the reasons individuals reported as to why they make monetary donations to ENGOs. Donors to ENGOs, also known as "eco philanthropists," are a select group of private citizens who actively participate in the resolution of environmental problems via monetary donations (Philanthropy News Digest, 2021). In the United States, there are approximately 1.5. million NGOs (U.S. Department of State, 2021). In the climate change arena, ENGOs and their donors have become increasingly important actors in climate change research, project implementation, support, and maintenance of government-sponsored programs (Jones, 2012). Numerous educators and researchers have found that as policymakers are faced with increasingly complex environmental changes, ENGOs are eminently positioned to provide critical data and expertise to policymakers so that they can make better-informed decisions (Böhmelt, 2013). This study delved into the experiences, feelings, observations, and activities of those who donate to ENGOs. The information derived from this study may also provide policymakers, politicians, ENGO administrators, and current and potential donors with information on this specific group of stakeholders who are often directly or indirectly involved in devising and implementing sound environmental policy.

Research Questions

RQ1: What factor(s) may influence a philanthropist's monetary support to ENGOs?

RQ2: What factors influence to which ENGOs you choose to donate?

RQ3: What factors influence a philanthropist's intent to continue to support an ENGO(s) in the next calendar year and beyond?

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for this qualitative study was self-determination theory (SDT). The SDT theory, first proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), focuses on motivational psychology where motivations for an individual's behavior are said to manifest on a continuum or range or "gradations of motivation." The motivating elements range from extrinsically imposed reasons to act (or respond to situations) in a certain way, to fully melding the reasons with behavior(s) congruent with one's personally held desires, values, and beliefs (Vandenabeele, 2007). SDT holds that individuals driven by intrinsic motivations exhibit increased "willing behaviors, creativity, and understanding." SDT posits that all individuals are influenced by their *locus of control*, which is one's orientation or mindset towards challenges, opportunities, or events that evoke feelings of distress or well-being (Center for Self Determination Theory, n.d.) To wit, a person possessing an internally focused locus of control will perceive occurrences in their lives as instances (driven by self-actualization) where they believe if they expend enough energy (or exercise discipline) they will eventually gain control of a situation and attain the desired outcome(s). Conversely, an externally focused person would attribute favorable outcomes to "luck" or blame negative outcomes on the actions of others or circumstances beyond their span of control or influence. Evidence exists that there are correlations between the amount or intensity of effort, or lack thereof (in this study, the

amount, and frequency of monetary donation) and the locus of control (Center for Self Determination Theory, Intrinsic motivation, n.d.)

The novel approach of pairing SDT and ethnography as the vehicles of inquiry for this study is expected to yield a broader understanding of what and why this "special breed" of philanthropist does what she (or he) does—what impels them to specifically donate money to environmental causes? SDT theory and its relevance to environmental philanthropy are more intimately discussed in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative methodology via an applied ethnographical inquiry was used for this research. All forms of research inquiry (quantitative and qualitative) commence with a desire to understand phenomena. Qualitative methodologies are well-suited to aid researchers in determining the complexities, thoughts, feelings, and motivations that impel individuals and groups to behave in certain ways (Yin, 2016). Qualitative research also allows the researcher to investigate and record intangibles (i.e., information from subjects that are not empirically based, e.g., thoughts, feelings, emotions, etc.) and in-depth understanding of phenomena as experienced by a smaller number of study participants (Patton, 2002).

Ethnography was the chosen approach as it goes beyond empiricism to delve further into the meanings participants attach to phenomena. Ethnographic observation and data collection and analysis support the robust collection of data from information-rich research subjects, which will result in a constellate, and fuller understanding of the

thoughts, feelings, and lived experiences of research participants (U.S. Department of the Interior, n.d.).

The population for this study included 10 adult (aged 18 and over) participants who have made monetary contributions to at least one of six ENGOs within the past calendar year. These six ENGOs are a diverse representation of the manifold environmental/climate change problems and ENGOs that are involved in the war against further destruction of the natural environment. I had initially planned to contact and gain approval to conduct my research project from gatekeepers of each entity. The ENGOs I contacted were as follows:

- **Alliance to End Plastic Waste**: The Alliance to End Plastic Waste is a non-profit organization that coordinates and collaborates with companies, policymakers, communities, NGOs, and other stakeholders to rid the planet of plastic waste (Alliance to End Plastic Waste, n.d.).
- **Center for Biological Diversity**: This ENGO targets the sustainability of wildlife populations. The Center for Biological Diversity works to sustain wildlife populations and the biosphere, via use of numerous means (e.g., legal processes, media campaigns, scientific and research projects, etc.; Center for Biological Diversity, n.d.).
- **Defenders of Wildlife**: This ENGO focuses on preserving and protecting imperiled North American wildlife species, that is, plants and animals and the habitats in which they reside (Defenders of Wildlife, 2022).
- **Environmental Defense Fund**: The Environmental Defense Fund strives to

ameliorate the effects of climate change, support the transition to a green energy economy, protect ecosystems, preserve ocean communities and the waters they depend on, and human health by supporting improvements in air and water quality (Environmental Defense Fund, 2022).

- **Sierra Club**: The Sierra Club mission statement espouses its aspirations to educate and recruit people to protect and restore environmentally threatened places and healthily built (human) environments (Sierra Club, n.d.).
- **The Pew Charitable Trusts**: The Pew Charitable Trusts is an amalgamation of NGOs and individuals that strive to address multiple environmental issues, such as overfishing, habitat loss, and improvements in infrastructure to protect prone flood-prone areas (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2022).

Purposive qualitative sampling was used as this method allows for deep, rich mining of the participant's thoughts, feelings, and observations versus the breadth of understanding afforded by quantitative methodologies (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Upon agreement by the respondents to participate, I conducted 45- to 60-minute interviews, recorded via the Zoom virtual meeting platform. Respondents were notified that the interviews would be recorded and secured to ensure privacy and that anonymity would be maximized. The data were only used for data collection and verification of responses to the study questions. NVivo software (Version 6.0.1.0) provided the means whereby data compilation and analysis was performed. NVivo software was considered the best choice for analyzing the data I compiled throughout this research effort. NVivo provides real time transcription of audio discussions; that helped immensely whilst I

multitasked during the interviewing sessions. NVivo also automatically categorized the responses of my research participants as the software is programmed to sort responses based on the same series of questions. Said questions are those I had posed to each of the study participants during their respective interviews (McNiff, 2022).

Definitions

The following definitions are provided to lend clarity to aspects of this dissertation with the assumption that various concepts and terminologies may be arcane or currently not in common usage.

- *Amotivation*: Lack of interest in an activity in which one is involved. Cursory, perfunctory, and unenthusiastic performance are behaviors often exhibited by those whose efforts are driven by nonintrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).
- *Anthropogenic*: Of, relating to, or resulting from the influence of human beings on nature (Merriam Webster, n.d.).
- *Civil society organizations*: Much akin to NGOs, civil society organizations act as conduits for volunteer groups that seek to engage with and relay information to local, national, and international organizations. Such organizations (e.g., the United Nations) are also charged with devising policy and deployment of various programs and projects (Anheier, 2018).
- *Ecophilanthropy*: Philanthropic donations made to environmentally focused entities by individuals who seek to ameliorate or reverse anthropogenically caused environmental harms (Jones, 2012; Llana, 2017).

- *Environmental nongovernmental organization (ENGO)*: An NGO that focuses on environmental issues (Business Dictionary, 2017).
- *Environmentally responsible behaviors (ERBs)*: Behaviors that reflect environmental conscientiousness e.g., recycling, avoidance of overconsumption of non-renewable resources, etc. (Mobley, 2016).
- *International nongovernmental organization (INGO)*: "An organization which is independent of government involvement and extends the concept of a non-governmental organization (NGO) to an international scope. … Examples of NGO mandates are environmental preservation, human rights promotions, or the advancement of women" ("International Nongovernmental Organization," 2022).
- *Nongovernmental organization (NGO)*: A private sector, voluntary (and usually non-profit and non-sectarian) organization that contributes to, or participates in, projects, education, training, or other humanitarian, progressive, or watchdog activities. Some of them are accredited by the United Nations, and some collect donations for distribution among disadvantaged or distressed people (Business Dictionary, 2017).
- *Philanthrocapitalism*: Philanthrocapitalism encompasses not just the application of modern business techniques to giving but also the effort by a new generation of entrepreneurial philanthropists and business leaders to drive social and environmental progress by changing how business and government operate (Bishop, 2013)

- *Philanthrocapitalists*: Wealthy individuals who prefer to address problems that plague humanity (e.g., conservation, environmental degradation remediation, human healthcare, etc.) by leveraging the power of their fortunes. Where traditional capitalism focuses on maximizing (often relatively immediate) returns to investors, philanthrocapitalists fund various initiatives that will show measurable, tangible, sustainable, and socially responsible results (Bishop, 2006).
- *Public-private partnership*: Public-private partnerships are a mechanism whereby governments procure and implement public infrastructure and/or services using the resources and expertise of the private sector. Where governments are facing aging or a lack of critical infrastructure and require more efficient services, a partnership with the private sector can help foster new solutions and increase financial support (World Bank Group, 2020).
- *Socio-psychological:* The discipline examines social and psychological variables on attitudes, paradigms, behaviors, etc. It can be defined as "efforts to explain environmental concern as a function of social structure has revealed some weak but reliable associations. Stronger associations have been found between environmental concern and social-psychological variables including attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews" (Dietz et al., 1989, p. 450).

The following section discusses the assumptions I made during the pre-deployment phase of this research project.

Assumptions

A common adage states that "a person's perspective is their reality," meaning that reality is subjective, regardless of contrary evidence or beliefs held by another person(s). This study was an ethnographical design that reflects the broad culture-sharing behaviors of a select group of individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The common experience they share is the phenomenon of being compelled to donate money to the ENGO(s) of their choice.

This was an iterative process as well. It was critical that during the coding and analysis process, participant responses to the research questions were perused as many times as it was necessary to transcribe and fully reflect the participants' intended meanings correctly.

I anticipated that the participants would be truthful and forthcoming about their proclivity (or lack thereof) to donate money to ENGOs. In many circles, it is considered gauche to discuss one's finances; conversely, for some, it may be acceptable. I was aware that while I assumed the responses to the research questions would be straightforward, the possibility existed that some participants might provide responses that were outliers or extreme exceptions to most of the responses of other participants. From an axiological perspective, I assumed that upon occurrence, I must maintain my reflexivity, that is, an awareness of my values, feelings, and thoughts on the phenomenon of anthropogenically induced climate change and be prepared to understand and properly critique the stance of others on this subject (Walden University, 2022).

I did not know if the intransigence of the political environment in the United States and increased incidents of catastrophic climate-change-related events (see Background of the Study) would skew participant responses; for example, an increased "sense of urgency" could have resulted in an inflated representation of donor willingness to increase their amount of giving. Schwaller et al. (2020) indicated that the frequency of major climate events could skew the responses of the study participants, as immediacy or proximity (or lack thereof) of the event may affect participant responses in a manner that increases (or decreases) their donations of money to ENGOs. I also assumed that there would be discernable differences and correlations in the motivational factors affecting the study participant's donation amount(s) based on age, gender, socioeconomic status, paradigmatic stance, or other demographic characteristics. This assumption was based on a seminal study by researcher Bennett (2003), who established correlations between study participants' age, income, level of education, materialistic bent, and empathetic orientation. The following section examines the research scope and delimitations, participant selection process, transferability, and potential issues and solutions regarding the study design.

Scope and Delimitations

The selection of the research population was restricted to individuals aged 18 and over who currently donate money to ENGOs. The strategy was to obtain data about why individuals donate money to ENGOs, what factors (if there are any) affect their willingness to give, and how much. The boundaries of the study were delimited by purposive sampling, whereby extremely select criteria were used to determine which

research participants would be included in this study. The reason I chose purposive sampling was that this method supports the selection of participants who possess specific attributes, knowledge, skill sets, and experience(s) that are germane and critical to the accumulation of data (Etikan & Alkassim, 2016). Corporate, governmental, and other "non-private" donors were excluded as they are not private citizen ecophilanthropists, the targeted demographic of this research project. Grounded theory was considered an approach to exploring the phenomenon of ecophilanthropy as it would support "theory-building" about the phenomenon based on the experiences and "actions, interactions, and social processes of the people" (Creswell, 2008, p. 63). I decided to use ethnographical inquiry via interviews and researcher observations. This strategy supported me in recording the lived experiences, thoughts, observations, and feelings of the study participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The generalizability of the findings was impossible as this study was conducted with a small participant group from a highly selective population, namely, individuals who donate money to ENGOs.

Limitations

There existed several limitations related to design, methodological weaknesses, and biases that could have affected the validity of this study. The first was the lack of generalizability of qualitative research, which is an oft-debated topic and is determined to be problematic when researchers seek to extend or project the results of their research toward populations other than the specific research group being studied (Leung, 2015). The respondent group investigated in this study is small, so the applicability of findings to a larger, more diverse population is expected to be extremely limited. This limited

generalizability is expected to be addressed in future iterations of my research via qualitative, grounded theory, mixed-method, or quantitative research efforts. A second limitation was the potential for researcher bias. I admittedly have many long-held biases regarding anthropogenic climate change and the unprecedented assault humankind is wreaking upon our planet. To guard against the potential negative effects of such prejudices and biases and to avoid any hint of my myopic preconceptions about this research effort, I shared some of my findings with several colleagues and laypersons. I intended to have these "devil's advocates" act as guardrails against the imposition of my preconceived notions on research data compilation, analysis, and write-up.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study, beyond further piquing the interest of academics, governmental actors, ENGO employees, and other stakeholders who may have an interest in climate change mitigation is embodied in the following sections.

Significance to Practice

The results of this study may yield insights, provide information, and increase understanding as to why United States citizens donate monetarily to ENGOs. The significance of this project is that it will provide information to donors, governments, and ENGOs that can be used to understand donor intent and increase understanding and cooperation between stakeholders more fully. There is a study that is illustrative of what occurs without understanding and cooperation between stakeholders.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) strives towards the inclusion of non-state actors (e.g., NGOs) as they are involved in USAID-type programs

at a granular level and have interactions with local populaces and donors. Researchers have found that while USAID gives the bulk of funding for forest restoration projects in Bangladesh to NGOs (95%), this practice often circumnavigates governmental policies and creates conflict between state and non-state actors, and crippled cooperation between stakeholders and the sustainability and efficiency of the efforts (Rahman et al., 2021). The agency is increasingly researching, deploying, and maintaining international aid efforts by forming coalitions with non-state actors to improve. While not the specific goals of this study, it is anticipated that participant responses to this research effort may also provide valuable insights into these additional parameters of private citizen philanthropy.

The data derived from this study may also provide policymakers, governmental officials, and other stakeholders with information and opportunities to build or strengthen coalitions and expand partnerships with ENGOs. As more is known about ecophilanthropists and what impels them to donate to environmental causes, the data can be used to improve funding and recruitment campaigns, thereby bolstering ENGO financial support. As ENGOs increase their financial footing, their abilities to provide expertise, research data, and project implementation dollars will also improve—all of which can be used to target (and hopefully reverse) the negative effects of climate change, which is expected to increasingly imperil the lives of millions in the United States and globally (Hersher, 2022).

Significance to Theory

As discussed previously, a theory that describes the reasons why individuals donate to NGOs in general and specifically to ENGOs is deficient, non-existent, or undifferentiated. While the dearth of such research might encumber the efforts of fundraisers to effectively recruit and retain donors, the latter category (undifferentiated) may be the most problematic. To ignore the shared and unique characteristics of environmental activists who act upon their environmental concerns via their monetary contributions is to miss out on opportunities to further engage and more deeply and meaningfully involve these critical actors in the philanthropic community. This study may expand the discussion and further illuminate the how and why, and the motivations that influence the decision-making processes of monetary contributors to ENGOs. Furthermore, this study may also provide information about how ENGOs can more efficaciously solicit aid and strategically leverage the considerable financial support of current and potential donors.

Significance to Social Change

The findings of this study may contribute to positive social changes by broadening our understanding of the decision-making processes of individuals who make financial contributions to ENGOs. As mentioned above, a comprehensive, more intimate understanding of the motivating factors that affect the decision-making processes of ecophilanthropists can be used to increase and strengthen relationships between ENGOs, their respective donors, and other collaborators. It is anticipated that ENGOs will be able to deploy more programs because of increased access to the largesse of their benefactors.

Additionally, ENGOs are expected to increase contributions to environmentally friendly programs, providing a safer, cleaner, healthier, and more stable natural environment for current and future generations.

The United States (and the world) citizenry, collectively, possesses a financial potential that far outstrips that of many governments. This vast untapped resource, if harnessed, would unleash the "power of the dollar" towards the goals of effecting positive environmental and social changes. Another facet of the social change implications of this research project is the way ENGOs solicit donations. The findings would provide insights into potential future improvements in organizational efficiencies as donors expand their roles as catalytic agents of change. Activities conducted externally or in tandem with local, national, and international governmental efforts would improve living conditions for the citizenry of the United States and potentially millions worldwide, an objective that is congruent with Walden University's mission of effecting positive social change.

Summary

This chapter established a substrate where I provided substantial support and focus for my thought processes, as I formulated and further defined and refined this research project. I established that there is a paucity, a deficit of research, and corresponding data about factors i.e., motivators that impel United States citizens to donate to ENGOs. That is not to say that extensive research has not been conducted in the arena of philanthropic endeavors. However, to date, most studies have failed to differentiate between philanthropy in other domains and the reason(s) why individual

contributors, who are citizens of the United States, give financial support to ENGOs. The introduction, background, and problem sections provide the substratum of this research project. The attendant sections articulate the purpose, theoretical foundation, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations of my research project. Finally, the social significance of this research effort is explained in a manner that provides insights into how citizens of the United States would benefit from the exploration of the phenomena surrounding those who donate monetarily to ENGOs.

The next chapter, Literature Review, further examines the current state of philanthropic research and the exiguousness of research and corresponding literature surrounding ecophilanthropy. The theoretical framework and research gaps are also explored.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There is limited literature that has examined why certain individuals donate money to ENGOs. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the reasons for doing so by assessing factors for donating money to similar areas of philanthropy and then evaluating differences between those philanthropic areas and those served by ENGOs. As such, Chapter 2 details the literature reviewed for the current study. It includes (a) the literature search strategy, (b) the theoretical foundation, (c) the literature review, (d) and a summary.

Literature Review Strategy

The main portion of this literature search was executed by accessing Walden University's online library. The databases and search engines employed were the following: Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, EBSCO (Discovery Service), Education Source, Google Scholar, Google Public Data Directory, GreenFile, Sage Journals, Science Direct, Taylor and Francis Online, and Thoreau. I used the following key search terms and combinations of search terms to explore the current literature: *altruism (self-determination theory and altruism), amotivation, charity, donors to charity (charities), environmental behaviors, environmental philanthropy, environmental philanthropy in the United States, environmental giving, ENGOs, Nongovernmental organization involvement or participation or engagement or inclusion, NGO donors, philanthropic donors in the United States, philanthropy, private philanthropy, psychology and motivation, and motivation research, and risk and the environment.* The scope of the database search was limited to peer-reviewed articles,

journals, and contemporary articles and websites germane to this study. Apart from foundational, seminal research and literature upon which environmental and general philanthropic practices are founded, all research and literature encompass the years 2019–2024. To address the dearth of literature that specifically examines ecophilanthropy, the search was broadened to include the history and psychological underpinnings of altruistic and charitable motivators and behaviors. I also included relevant information and results about philanthropic practices in domains outside of individual private-citizen philanthropy (e.g., corporate donors and foundation donors). This tack resulted in an enormous number of publications which were then narrowed and winnowed to include only those most relevant to the study topic.

Theoretical Foundation

Theories describing human motivation are quite varied; a common thread is an unrelenting quest to satisfy basic needs. SDT was the theoretical framework for this study. To thoroughly examine SDT, in the following sections, I first explore Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs because it is the theoretical underpinning of SDT. I then continue with a thorough explanation of SDT, how it has been used in past research, and why it applies to my study.

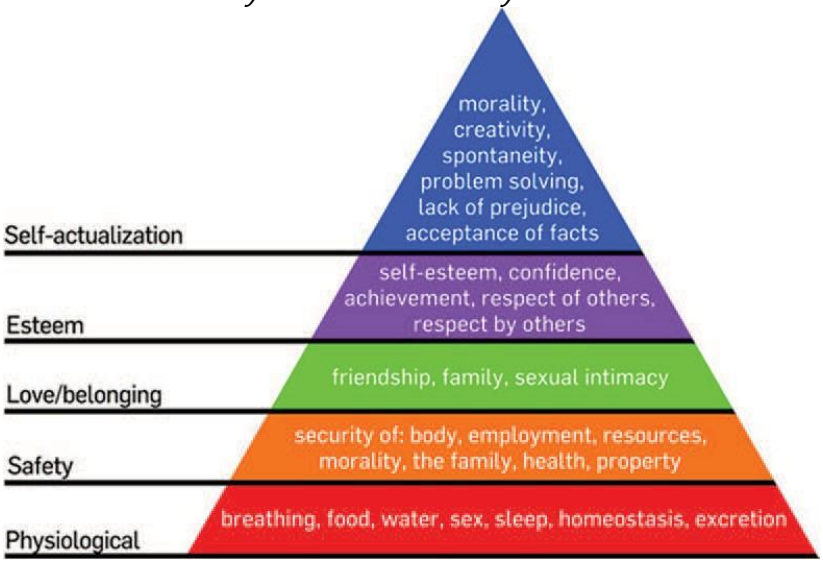
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1943) posited that human behavior is driven by seeking fulfillment of several basic needs (i.e., food, water, shelter, sex, breathing, sleep, homeostasis, excretion, etc.). Maslow devised a hierarchical system of said needs, which must be fulfilled before an individual will be predisposed towards or exhibit behavior(s) beyond

those essential to survival. Figure 1 is a pyramidical representation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Figure 1

Maslow's Hierarchy Visualized as a Pyramid



Note. From "Replacing Maslow's Needs Hierarchy with an Account Based on Stage and Value," by W. J. Harrigan and M. L. Commons, 2015, *Behavioral Development Bulletin*, *20*(1), p. 25 (https://doi.org/10.1037/h0101036). Copyright 2015 by American Psychological Association.

While linear progression through each level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and aspirational behaviors tied to motivational factors need not occur, each of the stages is dependent on three basic components of human "wellness"—autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Harrigan & Commons, 2015). Maslow's motivation theory has contributed to the creation of several motivation theories, one of which is the cornerstone of this research project—SDT. SDT, upon which much of Harrigan and Commons' research is founded, focuses on environmental factors that either nurture or stultify wellness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Harrigan and Commons found that individuals reared in environments where basic needs are met and where they set up and maintain personal and social

relationships are more inclined to be involved in activities, extraneous to and beyond those essential to their survival. These intrinsic impulsions are determined to be the highest level of human motivation, where the individual exhibits motivation and behaviors that denote interest, enjoyment, and personal satisfaction.

Conversely, individuals who exist in environments bereft of nurturing, coaching, social and personal relationships, positive reinforcement, and autonomy are less likely to achieve a state of optimal wellness. Consequently, the chances that such people will become well-rounded, optimally functioning human beings are dramatically reduced, as they are inclined to engage in pursuits solely to attain superficial goals or to please others (SDT, 2021). Individuals pursuing goals that are primarily motivated by such extrinsic factors are often plagued by amotivation; they derive less pleasure from their pursuits and are less likely to adopt and sustain attitudes and behaviors which are supportive of their well-being. The perceived locus of causality in such individuals (discussed in the following sections) is external and incongruous with the individual's intent and desires. The incompatibility of personal needs and externally imposed controls and influences results in a diminishment of interest, competence, and effort (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The following section provides an expansive look at the basic principles of SDT.

SDT

SDT is a meta-theory of human motivation; it is made up of several sub-theories and is the theoretical foundation of this study. Deci and Ryan (2000) posited that humans possess an innate desire, a motivation, to acquire, achieve and accomplish. Moreover, humans ultimately exhibit behaviors reflective of their decisions to reject or integrate—

into their respective personalities—extrinsic stimuli or influences. This positive orientation can be nurtured by *motivational factors*, such as supportive relationships, competence, accomplishment, or attainment of goals, all of which fulfill basic psychological needs. Conversely, *amotivational conditions* (i.e., environments devoid of nurturing and supportive motivational factors) would result in psychological malaise and non-integration or adoption of positive paradigms. Cursory interest and subpar performance and behaviors are also some of the possible negative outcomes of institutional or extrinsic programmatic interventions (SDT, 2020). Self-determination becomes manifest (i.e., intrinsic) when individuals embrace and choose to conduct themselves in ways congruent with the adoptive concept, in this instance pro-environmental behaviors (i.e., environmental philanthropy).

The foundational aspect of this study utilized the fundamental tenet of SDT, which posits there are basic needs that must be met so that an individual attains an optimal state of psychological equilibrium; namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness (SDT, 2020). Personal autonomy reflects a person's feelings of self-actualization, their ability to independently (without the overt influence of external factors) attain or achieve that which they desire. Competence is the feeling that one can do so with the skills and knowledge they possess or have acquired, and relatedness is a sense of community; attained by sharing and cooperating with like-minded groups or individuals (SDT, 2020). It is assumed that individuals who reach such a state are more likely to become involved in positive behaviors, including pro-environmental activities.

While nominal research has been conducted on the motivational and amotivational aspects of environmental philanthropy, a study conducted by Darner (2012) provides further insights. The researcher found that a pro-environmental behavior program yielded outcomes that indicate students' pro-environmental behaviors were improved and sustained by curricula founded on SDT principles. While little evidence exists of SDT research that focuses specifically on ecophilanthropy, SDT has been used to explore motivation in several disciplines, e.g., education, sports and exercise, psychology, civic and corporate arenas, and environmental sustainability (SDT, 2020). Researchers indicate that opportunities also exist for studying motivation(s) behind "green building" initiatives in the construction field. Where SDT is used as a lens to explore eco-friendly construction methods, data indicates there is a dearth and need for more research about eco-friendly architecture and construction practices (Olanipekun et al., 2017). In the arena of human health and the environment, SDT has also been used to explore correlations between human health and the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, to increase and sustain health maintenance improvements in older adults (Garcia Bengoechea et al., 2021). The existence of such research validates the use of SDT to examine those who practice pro-environmentalism via monetary donations to ENGOs. In the following sections, I examine the theoretical pillars upon which SDT is founded.

Five SDT Mini-Theories

SDT is a metatheory comprised of the following five sub-theories, or "mini-theories," which contribute to the overarching SDT of human intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory. Cognitive evaluation theory describes an exhibition of certain behaviors or pursuits related to intrinsic motivation. Autonomy and competence are paramount factors; a social context whereby the chosen behavior(s) are valued and encouraged is also important in nurturing intrinsic motivation. Cognitive evaluation theory is a lifelong experience; most humans engage in certain activities for the experience and sheer enjoyment of learning and gaining aptitude in their chosen pursuits (Moss, 2016).

Organismic Integration Theory. Organismic integration theory is founded on extrinsic intervention(s) and an individual's receptivity or resistance to external motivation. Adopting or incorporating the desired behavior(s) is enhanced if autonomy, competence, and interpersonal relationships nurture such behavior(s). Environments that conduce and support such traits, e.g., positive coaching or teaching interactions are an integral part of organismic integration theory (Hinkle Smith, 2018).

Causality Orientations Theory. Causality orientations theory examines the variety of ways people react to extrinsic factors or interventions. The three behavioral reactions are (a) autonomy, where the individual values the behavior or activity solely for the experience, (b) control—striving for rewards (e.g., personal gain or recognition), or (c) impersonal participation (e.g., non-motivation) often resulting in frustration and

failure to fully embrace said behavior(s). The latter often leads to amotivation, that is frustration and failure to gain competence and continuance of the behavior(s) (Hagger & Hamilton, 2021).

Basic Psychological Needs Theory. Three basic psychological needs—autonomy, relatedness, and competence are also the basis of basic psychological needs theory. Cross-cultural and cross-developmental studies indicate that environments where these needs are met and integrated into the psyche result in wellness and an optimally functioning being (Vansteenkiste & Soenens, 2020).

Goal Contents Theory. This mini theory posits that goals are predicated on intrinsic versus extrinsic motivational factors. Intrinsic motivations contribute to wellness and full integration (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) of the self. Conversely, extrinsic motivations impel individuals towards anticipated (extrinsic) rewards and recognition. Such a mindset is usually superfluous and counters the wellness of the individual (SDT's Five Mini-Theories, 2020).

SDT and its Relationship to Ecophilanthropic Motivation

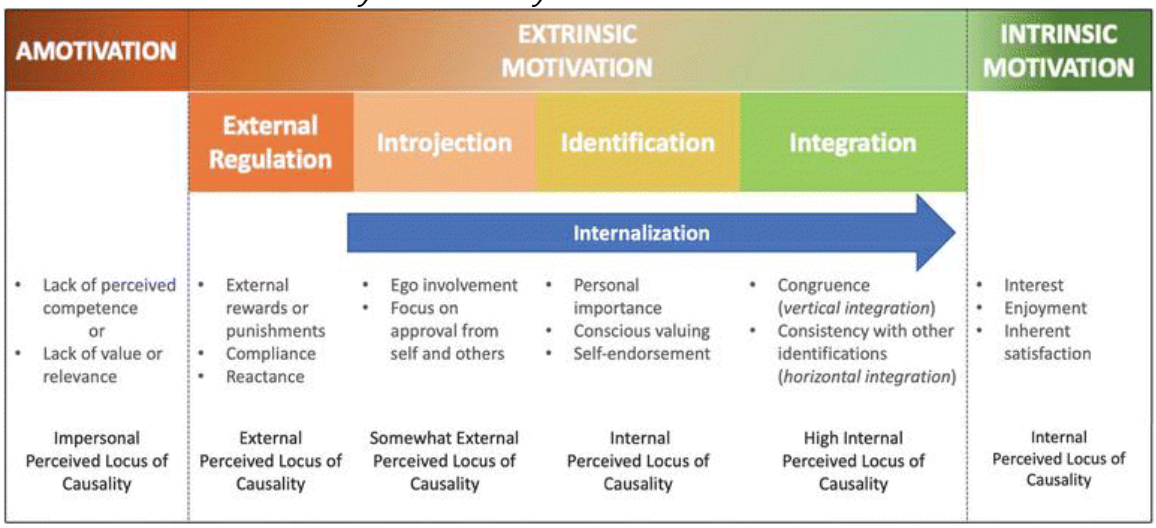
SDT provides a framework whereby motivations that fuel pro-environmental behaviors can be schematized to determine why certain philanthropists monetarily support ENGOs. The premises of SDT discussed in this study are: (a) basic human needs are universal, (b) said needs must be satisfied, and (c) once basic needs are met or fulfilled, the individual may develop an inclination towards actualization. Actualization denotes aspirational pursuits and the attainment of goals and desires, which are not essential to the individual's continued existence.

One of the critical elements of actualization is that the individual embraces extrinsic influences in a manner that results in an internalization of norms and values, which they incorporate into their respective psyches. Ultimately, the person decides to adopt (or reject) such values and engage in certain behaviors of their own volition (Howard, 2020). The first premise, basic needs, are essential to the continued existence of all humans and other species; namely sustenance (food and water) and shelter, safety, etc. Once these needs are met, humans may involve themselves in activities in which they are interested and from which they derive pleasure and fulfillment. This is an innate need, necessary for wellness and optimization of psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Other aspects of internalization, as shown in Figure 2, are behavioral change and actualization, the concept of the locus of causality, where external (extrinsic) influences or regulatory agents influence the person's behavior.

To wit, when a student fails or refuses to study, the external (extrinsic) regulatory agent(s) are low grades, disdain from parents and teachers, and the possibility the person may flunk the class, or in extreme instances fail to advance academically and attain a well-paying job. Conversely, an individual who recognizes and embraces the potentially positive outcomes of scholastic achievement will accept the extrinsic regulations in a manner that results in internal, intrinsic motivation. Individuals who are intrinsically motivated exhibit behaviors that are autonomous and congruent with an internal locus of control (i.e., "I want to do this" vs. "I have to do this").

Figure 2

Self-Determination Theory's Taxonomy of Motivations



Note. Adapted from Kothe et al. (2019).Kothe EJ, Ling M, North M, Klas A, Mullan BA, Novoradovskaya L. Protection motivation theory and pro-environmental behavior: A systematic mapping review. Aust J Psychol. 2019; 71:411–432.

What is largely unknown is how extrinsic and intrinsic motivation influences people who donate money to ENGOs. However, it is helpful to revisit SDT fundamentals, which will further elucidate the theoretical concepts and explore their relationship to ecophilanthropic donors.

An individual may feel the need or desire to conform to societal norms, e.g., avoidance of ostracization, gaining acceptance or praise from or by others, pursuing fame, acquisition of goods far beyond what is necessary to survive, etc. These are but a few examples of individual behavior modification(s) via extrinsic (i.e., externally imposed) factors. These extrinsic factors elicit responses from the individual that may not be congruent with their personally held beliefs, values, and desires. When this occurs, the individual may experience amotivation—perfunctorily performing tasks or involving

themselves in activities and acquiescing to authoritative expectations, whilst deriving no psychological fulfillment. Malaise and failure to sustain or complete the activity or task with quality, are often outcomes of amotivation. Individuals that single-mindedly respond to external loci of control, often find the acquisition of that which they pursued, to be anticlimactic and psychologically unfulfilling (King & Datu, 2017; SDT: Theory, n.d.).

Assuming basic needs have been met, an individual enters a state of optimal "psychological wellness" where their interior world, their sense of well-being, is nurtured by the abovementioned factors—autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Once this state of psychological equilibrium is attained, the individual experiences a sense of control over their environment, increased motivation, and positive outcomes. Interestingly, Deci and Ryan (2000) found that need satisfaction is not always the reason why individuals become involved in certain activities; they may do so for sheer novelty or desire to accomplish or reach a goal.

SDT Summary

This study utilized SDT as a theoretical framework. SDT is a construct by which phenomena surrounding the motives that impel people to financially donate to ENGOs can be explored. SDT and the five mini-theories of which it is comprised provided the theoretical foundation for this study. SDT explores the critical factors behind human motivation, i.e., why we do, what we do when we do "it." Contextually, philanthropic behavior stems from a desire(s) to want to do something for some "thing" or someone or to address a situation and subsequently "doing it." SDT is relevant to this research effort, as human behaviors, many of which SDT examines, e.g., altruism, hedonism, self-

esteem, rewards, recognition, etc. are various incarnations of human motivation and actions. These behaviors connote basic desires to protect, improve, support, or provide succor to something or someone besides oneself (Amos & Allred, 2015). It is assumed that ecophilanthropic behaviors stem from the same motivations. This basic tenet guided the exploration of phenomena surrounding monetary ecophilanthropy.

Additionally, several alternative theoretical perspectives on human motivation are synopsized, providing a more holistic overview of human motivation, i.e., "why we do what we do". Motivation theory is revisited in-depth to discern how basic the principles espoused by SDT—competence, relatedness, and autonomy, interplay with the motivations and decisions people make when they decide to monetarily donate to ENGOs.

Literature Review

Alternative Motivation Theories

The forenamed SDT mini theories are those associated with and contributing to SDT; however, they are but a few of the constellations of theories that strive to explore and explain human motivation (Ryan et al., 2019). The following alternative motivation theories provide a more expansive view of research conducted on human motivation.

Identity-Based Motivation Theory (IBMT)

Identity-based motivation theory posits that motivation is contextual and one's social class and culture are determinants of an individual's worldview and what they should aspire to achieve (Fisher et al., 2017). Those occupying the upper tiers of the societal and socioeconomic hierarchy are perceived (and perceive themselves) as more

competent and deserving of their status than those less fortunate. These individuals also have greater access to resources, enhancing their ability to involve themselves in loftier pursuits (Newman & Fernandes, 2016). Cultural norms also come into play here as certain groups are classified as "lower class." Resultantly, these individuals occupy the bottom rungs of the social hierarchy because they are perceived (and believe) they are deficient in ability and character This state of malaise is captured in the following quote "…possibly draining people of their will to climb…lulling people into lives of complacency" (Fisher et al., 2017, p. 17).

Olson et al. (2016) offer another perspective, predicated on the IBMT concepts of self-control, free will, and negative or positive attributions. The researchers conducted several experiments to determine how consumer choices, made by individuals occupying various levels of socioeconomic strata are perceived. For example, donors to a food bank are less likely to or will reduce their monetary contributions to an NGO if the soliciting literature states that monies will be used to purchase organic foods. Donors infer disdain about the purchase and distribution of more expensive organic foods. They surmise the charity is making bad choices, i.e., why distribute organic foods when generic will do? The researchers find this antipathy is directed toward the charities and not recipients, whom they refuse to blame just because they are less well-off (p. 891). The researchers also conducted several other experiments that indicate that donor values and political ideologies also have as much influence on donor motivations and contributions to environmental initiatives (see Partisan, Polarization, and Changes in Philanthropic Practices section).

This dissertation may provide insight into how the ethical, moral, and political orientations, etc. of donors affect their perceptions of the beneficiary organization(s) they support, and how these variables might affect donor charitable practices. However, this study does not specifically address the inclinations of donors along the socioeconomic spectrum; this is another area of research in need of further examination. One study finds that based on the percentage of gross household income, lower-income households in the United States donate to charities at rates that match or in some instances exceed the donations of middle and upper-class households (Charity Roundtable, 2020). Baldwin and Lammers (2016) find that an individual's beliefs and feelings towards the prototypical environmentalist directly affect their pro-environmental behaviors. They find direct correlations between the study participant's positive feelings about environmentalists and their willingness to donate money to charities. Participants were given several choices where they could donate funds to various charities, i.e., cancer research, children and childhood education, homeless animals and animal rights, and environmental research and preservation—the latter category (environmental research) received the most donations (p. 137). IBMT is another area in need of further study, as the implications are obvious for ENGOs seeking to enhance inclusiveness and expansion of citizen monetary donations to ENGOs.

Protection Motivation Theory (PMT)

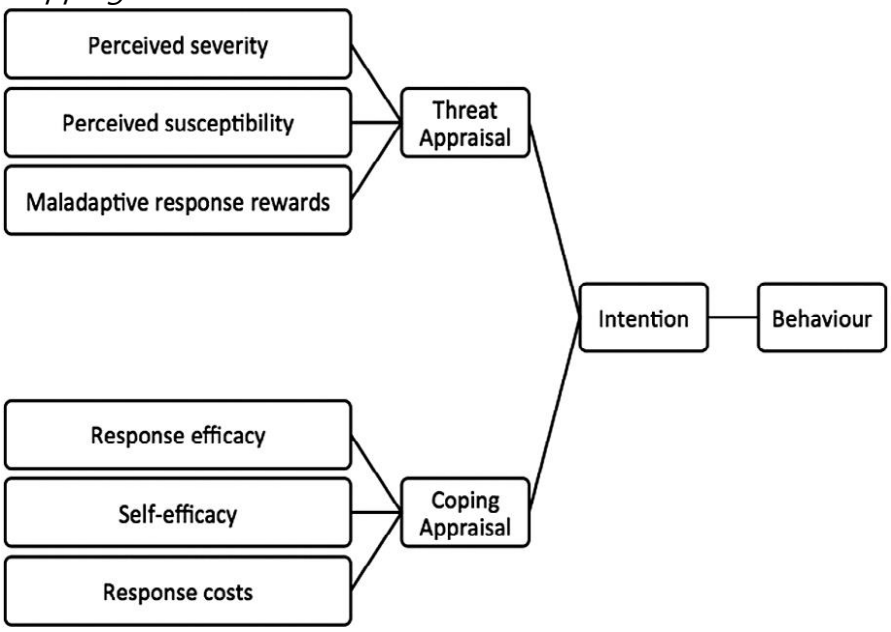
Incessant mining and use of fossil fuels, fouling of oceans, waterways, and air, and the alteration and commodification of the natural environment are but a few of the consequences of ecological degradation (Strong, 2016). To ameliorate and reverse the

degradative effects of anthropogenic environmental damages, the motivations behind such maladaptive behaviors must be better understood. Moreover, attitudinal, and ultimately behavioral change(s) are needed to combat the degradative effects of modern civilization on the biosphere. PMT has wide applicability and has been used to describe how humans perceive and assess environmental threats and concoct and enact coping mechanisms to deal with said threats (Schwaller et al., 2020). It is helpful to briefly describe some of the finer points of this theory, and its implications for ENGOs and those who monetarily support them.

Bockarjova and Steg (2014) assert theirs is the first study to use PMT to empirically investigate and describe how humans perceive and react to slow-onset ecological threats (p.285). The researchers employ PMT as depicted in Figure 3 to shed light on how attitudes, motivation, and risk perception affect environmental decision-making.

Figure 3

Protection Motivation Theory and Pro-Environmental Behavior: A Systematic Mapping Review



Note. Adapted from Kothe et al. 2019).Kothe EJ, Ling M, North M, Klas A, Mullan BA, Novoradovskaya L. Protection motivation theory and pro-environmental behavior: A systematic mapping review. Aust J Psychol. 2019; 71:411–432.

Slow onset threats are defined as anthropogenically induced events, e.g., climate change, air, and noise pollution, soil erosion, ocean acidification, etc. While extreme events are increasing in frequency, such threats are not perceived to be particularly menacing, as they are relatively imperceptible or seem to pose no immediate threat. Such threats lack the element of immediacy, i.e., the risk of occurrence is adjudged to be relatively low or will probably be experienced by others in another locale or at some time in the distant future. Therefore, they are considered to have little or no personal consequences (Chu & Yang, 2020; Rogers et al., 2017). Acute risks or threats are those that are imminent or likely to occur, i.e., flooding, increased wildfires, drought, etc.

(Bockarjova & Steg, 2014). The perceived severity of current or prospective threats are determinants of individual responses to potential ecological damages. The variables that motivate individuals to respond to or ignore certain stimuli and situations are innumerable. Evidence exists that individuals who reside near areas undergoing environmental degradation and who perceive the threats as imminent are more likely to embrace adaptive, pro-environmental behaviors (Mobley, 2016). Motivation theory provides a lens whereby human behaviors, in response to environmental harms, can be more thoroughly examined and understood. The preceding provides but a glimpse of some of the other factors that might affect monetary donations to ENGOs.

Relationships Motivation Theory (RMT)

Relationships and relatedness are factors integral to the overall well-being of the individual. Personal and romantic relationships are given great import, as they fulfill a basic need for human interaction(s). Once fulfilled and maintained, relationships contribute to autonomy, relatedness, and feelings of competence. Intrinsic motivation is enhanced when relationships and relatedness are manifest, as these factors support individual well-being (SDT's Five Mini-Theories, 2020).

Social Motivation Theory (SMT)

Social Motivation Theory offers another perspective. Successful social movements are usually catalyzed by events that evoke fear, anger, and frustration. The recent Black Lives Matter (and antecedent Ferguson, Missouri conflict) and Occupy Wall Street movements, and the Three Mile Island nuclear plant incident are examples of how the citizenry, which shares interests or faces common threats, coalesce and integrate their

resources into action and formidable networks (McAdam, 2017). To date, the climate change movement has yielded a tepid response. Despite the burgeoning number of pro-environmental entities, efforts to create policy and statute implementation remain relatively ineffective because of bureaucratic ossification and lack of ENGO cohesiveness. Efforts to mobilize and create a sense of urgency are oft hobbled by special interest groups (primarily "big oil") via lobbyists and politicians, who are dependent on monied interests for campaign funding. Politicians obfuscate and fail to acknowledge the public's priorities despite overwhelming empirical evidence of human-caused environmental damage (p. 197).

In the following sections, the tradition and history, motivations, and praxis of philanthropy in the U.S. are examined. The current political climate in the United States, tax laws, advocacy, statute, policy implementation, and societal influences are also discussed as they are found to affect the proclivity of philanthropists to donate to charities. By doing so, a point of reference is established from which the phenomenon of ecophilanthropy can be examined, compared, and more thoroughly understood.

The following sections present philanthropic practices in the United States from traditional, historical, and current perspectives. The latter is examined with a focus on monetary ecophilanthropic endeavors.

Philanthropy in the United States: Traditional and Historical Practices

Philanthropy has long been used to bring about change that mirrors the wishes, intent, and motives of benefactors. Altruism, hedonism, an increase in social standing, tax incentives, and a slew of other reasons have impelled individuals to contribute to causes

in which they are interested (Amos & Allred, 2015). In the United States, the practice of philanthropy has traditionally been used to bring about positive change in the lives of those less fortunate, by providing food, shelter, disaster relief, increased educational opportunity, and other beneficent supports (Kohl-Arenas, 2015). Johnson (2016) cites similar distributions of philanthropic monies. However, she finds that grantees are often chosen based on decisions made by board members, rather than the benefactors' desires or beneficiary needs (p. 79).

Examples abound of entrepreneurs who donate(d) vast sums to charities, foundations, etc. to change the physical and cultural landscape of America. The 19th century witnessed the rise of private citizens who accumulated vast personal fortunes, by which they provided succor to the disadvantaged and elevated the sensibilities of the general populace. Getty, Ford, Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, etc. are but some of the persons of renown who gained legendary status through such beneficence (Mandler & Cesarani, 2017; Wimpee, 2018).

Museums, libraries, parks and orphanages, and colleges and universities are but a few of the cultural and educational beneficiaries of such largesse. The midpoint of the 20th century to the present heralded a burgeoning interest and support for eco-centric concerns. Resultantly, activism, advocacy, volunteerism, and philanthropic support for environmentally focused entities have increased (Tortell, 2020). Crews (2019) finds that not-for-profit environmental entities are more adaptive and eminently poised to address environmental concerns than their governmental counterparts. More information is also needed about the types of ENGO project proposals and deployments throughout the

nation, e.g., air and water remediation, protection of various species, etc., and a renewed focus on oft-overlooked taxa, e.g., amphibians and invertebrates (Skikne et al., 2021).

As humankind increases its negative effects on the natural environment, environmentalism has become a major interest for many citizens. A related trend has developed that deserves more investigation. Researcher Dalton (2015) finds that of the above-mentioned pro-environmental activities, advocacy and conservation has become the preferred method(s) of addressing environmental concerns. The researcher notes that globally, political activism, personal expenditures, and confrontational techniques have declined in advanced and developing nations, while efforts to change policy via group participation indicate evolving strategies congruent with the rise and influence of NGOs (pp.541-542). Dalton's findings are questionable (see next section), especially regarding private citizen monetary support of ENGOs, as such donations have increased in the United States.

Who Gives? Age, Gender, and Other Characteristics and Their Effects on Environmental Charity

Previous research indicates that several characteristics may correlate to whether or not individuals provide monetary support to environmental charities. These include age, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, geographic locale, personal experiences, marital status, and education.

Age

The existing gap in research and knowledge about motivations that impel people to make monetary donations to ENGOs has yet to be addressed with any specificity.

However, there are a plethora of related studies that informed and guided this research. Various characteristics, e.g., chronological age, gender, socioeconomic status, and race are examined via research, to gain insight(s) about similarities or differences in ecophilanthropic practices (e.g., monetary donations and volunteerism) between and within groups (Bachke et al., 2014).

A study focusing on "age differences" and workplace attitudes and values towards environmental sustainability issues, culminates in mixed results. Performing quantitative meta-analyses, the researchers present a pastiche of age-related differences in environmental motivations, values, and behaviors (Wiernik et al., 2013). For instance:

- Older individuals, recognizing their time on this plane may be less than their younger counterparts, tend to be more "environmentally conscientious" as a positive reaction to their reduced "time horizons."
- Older individuals engage in environmentally friendly activities because of societal pressures or habitual tendencies. They are also less likely to refrain from participating in environmentally degradative activities; they also exhibit "green behaviors" when they believe they will derive personal benefit.
- Older individuals are more likely to engage in activities that reduce finite resources; they may seek emotional satisfaction from said activities, whilst disregarding their negative effects on the environment.

The study indicates older individuals are more inclined to exhibit eco-friendly behaviors and perform activities that protect the environment than their younger counterparts. Conversely, younger individuals are more amenable to altering their

behaviors when exposed to information about how humans negatively affect the planet (p. 828).

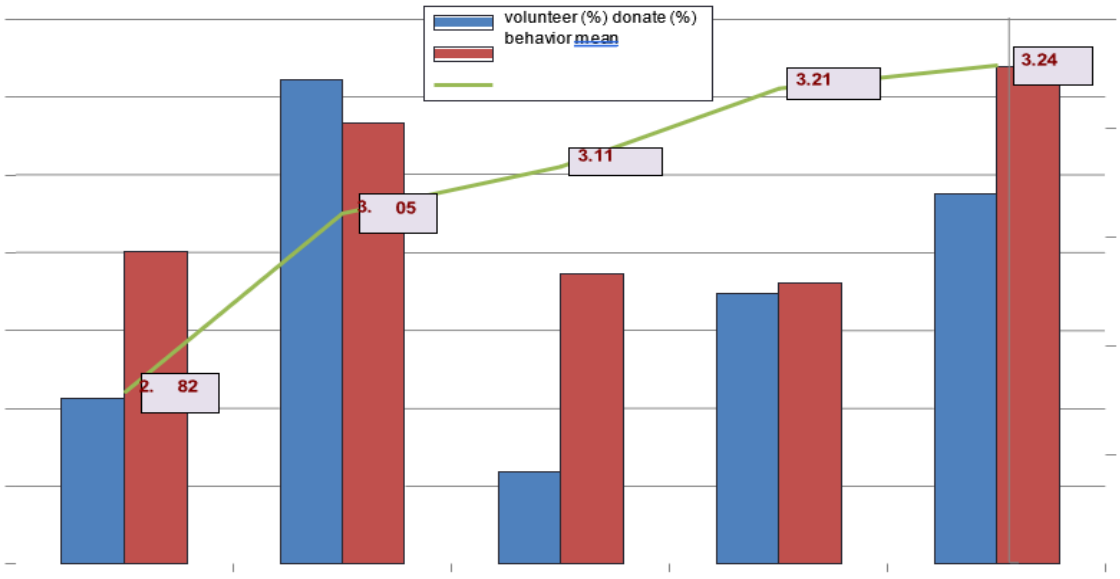
Age-related positivity bias is also an influence on charitable giving. Bjalkebring et al. (2016) describe positivity bias, motivation, and charitable giving in older adults. Older adults display a preference for positive remembrances and imagery and derive a greater "warm glow" from giving to charity than their younger counterparts. While both age groups experience psychological satisfaction from engaging in charitable acts, older participants experience greater emotional satisfaction than youthful participants (p.5). When solicitations for charitable funding are presented positively, "seasoned individuals" show a greater proclivity to donate. Alternately, older participants exhibit no marked increases in donation amounts in response to appeals that describe potentially negative outcomes. However, older participants do respond to both negative and positive solicitations for charitable funding. The heightened emotional satisfaction derived from charitable giving inclines them to respond favorably, regardless of the type of messaging.

In the United States, college students who traditionally are younger, i.e., ages 18 to 22, exhibit higher tendencies to volunteer and donate to ENGOs than their counterparts in four other countries, as shown in Figure 4— Canada, Germany, Israel, and South Korea. Despite shared traits, i.e., higher educational attainment and awareness and concern about environmental issues, U.S. students generally donated more time and money than their international peer group (Katz-Gerro et al., 2015). While inconclusive, this difference is attributed to the long-standing traditions of philanthropy in the U.S. Comparatively, ENGOs in the United States are also well-established, having been in

existence longer and having a more extensive presence on college campuses (p. 1504). It is suggested that future research efforts may consider approaching environmental philanthropy more holistically, to capture the multifarious age-related factors that may influence environmental philanthropic decision-making.

Figure 4

Donation Differences Between Countries



Gender

Gender is also cited as a defining factor in pro-environmental behaviors. Xiao and McCright (2012) find that generally, women have stronger environmental attitudes and values than men. Moreover, women are more likely to exhibit private, pro-environmental behaviors, e.g., recycling, turning off lights and appliances when leaving a room, etc. however, they find no major differences between genders, in environmental public participation activities, or more succinctly their intent to engage in such activities. The

researchers describe differences in their "biographical availability" as the reason most women are more involved in private, pro-environmental behaviors. Women are more likely to be primary caregivers, homemakers, rearing children, and other activities that constrain their ability to become involved in activities away from home.

Consequently, their ability to engage in more visible, public, pro-environmental behaviors is dramatically reduced (p. 258). This hypothesis has not been thoroughly researched; the effects of these and other factors on the environmentally charitable attitudes and practices of individuals are largely unknown. It is the express purpose of this research project to fill in some of the gaps of knowledge and thereby contribute to the body of literature; providing information that can be used to support further research and initiate and reverse the negative effects of the anthropogenically-induced changes to the biosphere.

Socioeconomic Status

For purposes of this study, socioeconomic status is identified as a factor that affects philanthropic activity and pro-environmental giving. Individuals in the higher income brackets tend to donate to charity at higher amounts than their less well-off counterparts however their largesse is limited to about 2-3% of their annual incomes; lower-income individuals and families are found to donate a larger percentage of their incomes to charity, (Philanthropy Roundtable, n.d.). Many "supra-wealthy" individuals have decided to bequeath or donate the bulk of their wealth to philanthropic organizations. Of note are Sea of Change Foundation creators Nat Klein and his wife Laura Baxter-Simons who are described as two of the environmental movement's largest

contributors. The couple and others of their ilk donate large sums of their wealth to ENGOs, CSOs, and other organizations that focus on environmental protection and remediation efforts. The Sea Change Foundation distributes huge sums to several ENGOs; in the fiscal year 2018, the foundation donated $500 million to environmental nonprofits and has pledged to donate 50-75 million dollars annually to these entities (Influence Watch, n.d.).

Ethnicity, Race, and Culture

Ethnicity, Race, and culture are identified as important factors that determine how and where philanthropic dollars are spent. While most individuals occupying the lower echelons of the economic strata (many of whom are minorities and the elderly) do not donate to charities, those that do so donate a disproportionately higher amount (compared to wealthier citizens) to philanthropic endeavors. These "martyr-donors" contribute to their churches, community-centered support organizations, etc. and many do so at great personal sacrifice as they are oft the elderly living on fixed incomes and individuals whose meager incomes are on the lower strata of the economic ladder (Drezner, 2011). A relatively paltry amount of research has been conducted about the motivations that drive the philanthropic behaviors of minorities, and diverse cultures that are donors to institutions of higher learning. This is an area in need of further scrutiny as the data derived can inform methodologies to solicit aid and inclusiveness and effectiveness of organizations involved in environmentalism.

It is advised that future research efforts are more inclusive of the abovementioned groups as to date most studies have been conducted by white males; the current state may

provide a myopic perception of philanthropic practices (Drezner, 2011). One might extrapolate that other fields of philanthropic endeavor would also benefit from an expansion of the "guest list" of philanthropic motivation research to include more minorities, women, LGBT, etc.

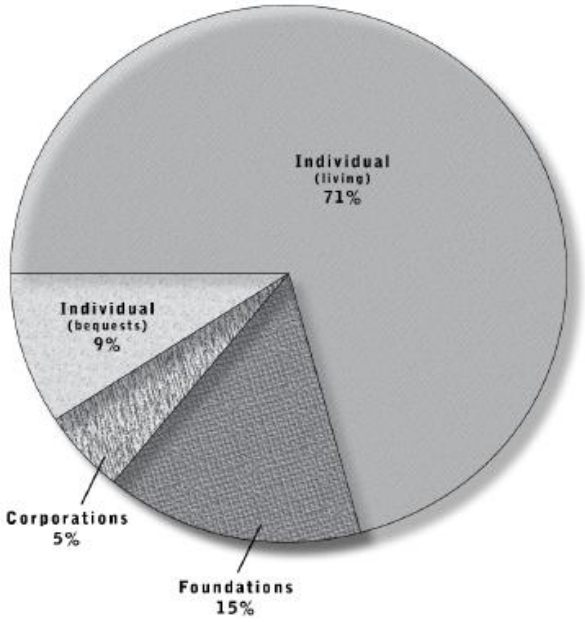
The Rise of the Individual Contributor

Citizens of the United States have long been lauded for their willingness to provide succor to those in need. Between the years 1954 to 2016, Americans increasingly donated to a wide array of domestic and foreign causes, e.g., disaster relief, health, educational improvement, etc. Statistics indicated by Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8 show that an aggregate of $390.05 billion (about $1,200 per person in the US) was donated to charity in the calendar year 2016 (approximately $1,200 per capita). Of this amount, $281.86 billion (about $870 per person in the US), shown in Figure 6, was donated by private citizens. While the U.S. government, wealthy individuals, foundations, and similar groups receive much acclaim for their charitable acts, data indicates that it is the average citizen who provides the bulk of America's giving to those in need.

This trend shows no signs of abating as private citizen charitable contributions in the year ending in 2019 exceeded that of corporations and foundations (Giving USA, 2020). Donations to ENGOs and animal rights entities amounted to 14.6 billion dollars (about $45 per person in the US); an increase of 11.3% and an annual increase for 6 consecutive years (Giving USA, 2020).

Figure 5

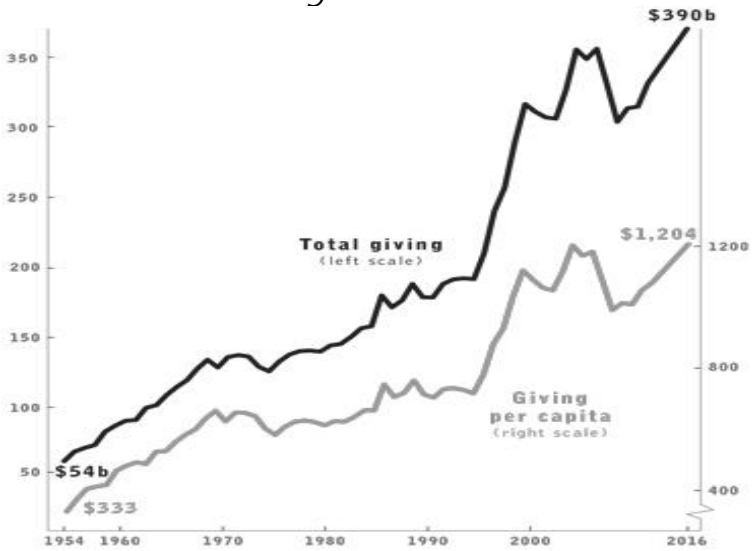
Sources of U.S. Charitable Giving



Note. Source: Giving USA.

Figure 6

Real Rise in U.S. Giving

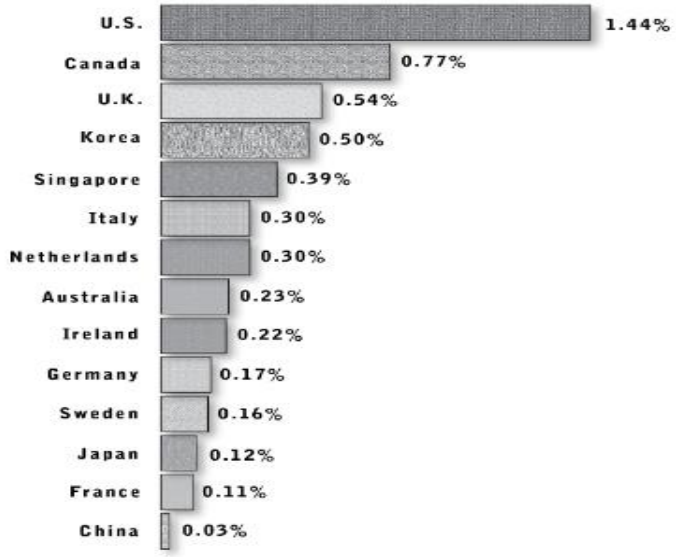


Note. Source: Giving USA; CPI inflation adjustment to 2016 dollars.

United States citizens also are most beneficent when compared to other nations; of 15 nations surveyed the United States surpassed its nearest competitor, Canada by almost double (1.44% versus 0.77%) regarding percentages of GDP donated to charity.

Figure 7

Giving Levels by Country (Annual Private Philanthropy as a % of GDP)



Note. Giving Levels by Country (annual private philanthropy as a % of GDP) Source: Philanthropy Roundtable (2020)

In the United States, inclinations to donate to charity and participate in eco-friendly/outdoor pursuits are found to be influenced by gender, geographic locale, age, race, socioeconomic demographics, and other donor characteristics (Osili et al., 2019; U.S. Department of the Interior, n.d.). The volatile nature of economic and societal issues, e.g., the COVID pandemic, racial justice issues, and enactment of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA), etc. are found to affect monetary philanthropic donations negatively, especially among middle and lower-class donors (Rooney et al., 2020). Another consideration is the reluctance of some individuals, institutions, and nations to embrace measures that may negatively impinge upon their livelihoods, profit margins, or

domestic GDP, respectively. This is of increased importance, especially during economic downturns or proposed climate-oriented legislation that could result in job losses (McAdam, 2017). Of interest to the current study is how these and other elements affect the propensity of U.S. citizens to monetarily donate to ecophilanthropic charities. This question is further explored in the next section.

Geographic Locales and Personal Experiences

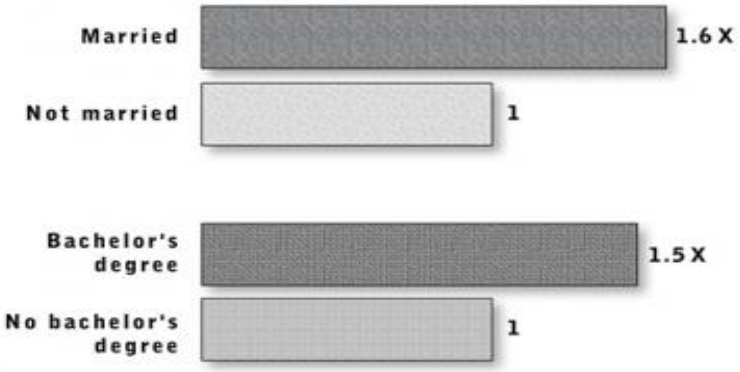
How one perceives and experiences the effects of anthropogenic changes to the environment influences values, behaviors, and motivations to support (or ignore) climate change and environmentalism. Mobley (2016) finds that perceptions, observations, and exposure to environmental degradation and climate change-related events influence ERBs (environmentally responsible behaviors) (p. 1151). In the U.S. (and globally) the recurrent and increased incidence of wildfires, sea encroachment, drought, and other extreme weather events, diminution of potable water sources and air pollution, etc. are found to affect how one might perceive and react to environmental concerns. Those residing in stable climes are less likely to experience and be concerned about climate change. Alternately, individuals and families who live in areas ravaged by the abovementioned effects of environmental degradation display a proclivity towards a "pro-environmental mindset," exhibiting behaviors more conducive to the attainment and maintenance of an ecologically balanced environment. While environmental stressors are not found to be a precondition of pro-environmental behaviors (PEBs), individuals respond by employing psychological coping mechanisms (adaptive and maladaptive behaviors) to alleviate said stressors by becoming involved in PEBs (Helm et al., 2018).

Marital Status and Education

Marital status and educational attainment are found to be reliable predictors of environmentalism and support of environmentally oriented organizations. Married individuals whose only demographic difference from their peer group is their marital status donate to charitable causes 1.6 times more than their unmarried counterparts, as shown in Figure 8. During the calendar year 2007, married individuals gave 62% more to charity than single persons (Philanthropy Roundtable, n.d.). Educational attainment is also a barometer of the proclivity (or lack thereof) to donate to charity. College graduates donate 1.5 times more to charities than those who have not attained a college degree.

Figure 8

Influence of Marriage and Education on Likelihood of Charitable Giving



Note: Source 2012 regression analysis done by Giving USA.

As ENGOs and their supporters continue to address climate change issues, certain trends affecting solicitation of funding, donations, and donor retention and, the success and continued viability of ENGOs have arisen. They are discussed in the following section.

Best Practices in Attracting/Gaining Support from Ecophilanthropists

The effective use of solicitation, funding, and donor retention methodologies are primary concerns for any non-profit organization. While a "one size fits all" approach is not possible or advisable for the diverse populations and interests served by non-profits, several "best practices" are offered here as standards of targeted, effective engagement of current and potential donors.

Johnson (2016) noted that community representation on NGO boards contributes to decisions about where dollars are dispensed. NGO boards comprised of larger numbers of community representatives are more efficient at fundraising. Boards with higher representation from the communities they serve raised $288.00 for every solicitation dollar spent versus the $39.00 raised by their traditional counterparts, whose boards are populated by individuals with no real community connection(s) to the grantees they serve. Moreover, the funding amounts environmental grantees receive from NGOs are larger comprising higher percentages of community board members 11.83% versus the 8.31% of traditional boards (p.87-88). ENGOs seeking to increase donation amounts and donor participation might consider these trends when determining board selectees.

Carlsson et al. (2017) conducted an experiment where individuals decided the amounts, they and their cohorts would donate to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The authors conclude that most participants anticipated and imposed constraints on the donation amounts of others. They placed these constraints because they believed there were baseline amounts that must be donated to achieve the ENGO's objectives; such guidelines were rejected by most participants. The effects of such constraints were

reduced contributions from the imposer versus their fellow donors. Donors also reduced their contribution amounts believing they were mirroring the behaviors of the other donors (p. 85). Judicious use or cessation of solicitation techniques that dictate mandatory contribution amounts and an increase of messaging that welcomes any donations, (regardless of the organization's current financial situation) would benefit an NGO's fundraising efforts. Lima (2016) offered another perspective, exploring linkages between marketing tactics and their relation to motivation. He describes an inverted Maslow's needs/motivation pyramid where the factors defining and guiding the human experience are spirituality and creativity, characteristics that elevate humankind in comparison to other life forms (p.346). Regardless of whence, one believes transcendent behaviors arise, organizations would benefit from acknowledging and cultivating the varied motivations, desires, and behaviors of benefactors.

The following section examines the current sociopolitical climate in the United States and its effects on philanthropic practices. It is followed by a discussion of ENGO initiatives and best practices.

Partisanship, Polarization, and Philanthrocapitalism: Effects on Philanthropic Practices

Support for charitable causes in all its variations, e.g., cash donations, volunteerism, foundations, etc. is a widely practiced and much-esteemed activity (Drezner, 2011; Bennett, 2013). Competition for charitable dollars in America is intense (Sneddon et al., 2020). Hyper-factionalized political dogma affects many areas of American life, including the practice of philanthropy (Guber et al., 2021). In a

quantitative study (data derived from congressional minutes between the years 1996-2015). Guber et al. (2021) found that there are notable differences between the two major political parties in the frequency and verbiage used to discuss climate change and policy. The researchers found that while Republicans discuss climate change less frequently than Democrats, Republicans when they do broach the subject, display a proclivity towards using anecdotal terms and evidence versus empiricism and hard scientific facts submitted by their Democrat counterparts (pp. 546-548). Support of eco-friendly NGOs is also affected by the interests and desires of donors, whose donations are oft influenced by the persuasive siren song of the political party they are members of or affiliated with (Schmitt, 2015, p. 551). Another area warranting further research is the rise of philanthrocapitalism. Many "supra-wealthy" individuals strive to effect change in environmental efforts by influencing the promulgation of laws and devising policy. These wealthy individuals (and families) do so by the dispensation of their considerable wealth towards political races and policy think tanks and NGOs whose missions and practices reflect their values and beliefs; they wield unprecedented political and social power (Bishop & Green, 2015). This is evidenced by several luminaries, such as Warren Buffet, Bill and Melinda Gates, and several other wealthy individuals who have pledged to donate much of their respective fortunes to charitable causes (Ponciano, 2021).

Representative of the "uber-wealthy" who are donating portions of their wealth to programs and projects targeting environmental degradation issues is the Bezos Earth Fund, established in 2020 by entrepreneur Jeff Bezos. Bezos has committed $73.7 million to climate change mitigation efforts in poor and minority communities (Philanthropy

News Digest, 2021). Many have questioned the wisdom of allowing a plutocratic approach toward addressing societal ails. Regardless, the influence of wealthy donors and foundations has increased exponentially (Goss, 2016). The efforts of philanthrocapitalists are accompanied by citizens of modest means who also donate to charitable causes. Charitable contributions from individuals in the calendar year 2020 rose nearly 5.1% from the previous year (a total of $471.44 Billion), outstripping contributions from corporations, which grew by 4% (a total of $16.88 Billion) (Giving USA, 2021). Moreover, environmental and animal rights groups were among the types of charities experiencing the highest increase in contributions, an increase of 11.6% over 2019 dollars donated and a 3% total of all donations to charity (Giving USA, 2021). This trend shows no signs of lessening, as governmental institutions are unable (because of budgetary constraints) or unwilling, because of extreme partisanship and efforts of business interest lobbyists, to resolve problems ordinarily ceded to the government (Goss, 2016; Lee et al., 2015; Schmitt, 2015). The abandonment of democratic principles of negotiation has resulted in political gridlock, paralyzing the efforts of our nation's statute and policymakers. To counter legislative impasse, as the U. S. Senate and House of Representatives continue to underperform, Presidential fiat is increasingly used, along with the efforts of local and state governments, to devise and implement sound environmental laws and policies (Thomas, 2014; Tzoumis et al., 2015). Illustrative of the negative effects of political intransigence and partisanship on the charitable habits of U.S. citizens, an Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center study, projects the recently passed income tax reduction plan "would reduce charitable giving in 2018 by

between about 4.0 and 6.5 percent, or between $12.3 billion (about $38 per person in the US) and $19.7 billion (about $61 per person in the US)" (Tax Policy Center, 2018). Researchers Abramson and Salamon (2016) concurred:

> The projected drop in giving results from tax rate reductions that would increase the effective "price" of giving; a rise in the standard deduction that would lead to fewer taxpayers itemizing their charitable contributions and taking advantage of the tax break for giving; and a cap on itemized deductions – $100,000 for individuals and $200,000 for joint filers – that would also reduce incentives to give. (p.567)

The ominous implications of this legislation suggest that ENGOs and other not-for-profit entities should implement measures that will convince individuals to give, despite the disincentives of the newly emplaced tax plan.

ENGO Participation in Initiatives and Coalitions Formed to Effect Environmental Policy Changes in the United States

Globally, as cash-strapped governments are forced to rely upon alternate revenue streams, they struggle to cope with climate change and the threat(s) it poses to their respective populations (Bishop, 2013.; Kareiva, 2011). In the United States, many citizens, municipalities, and businesses have decided to proactively engage and support public and private eco-friendly entities and programs (Lyakhov & Gliedt, 2017). ENGOs have gained prominence as sources of expertise and monetary support and are eminently situated and qualified to support environmental initiatives. Stephens (2019), describes an "energy democracy", where communities are forming coalitions and networks to address

environmental justice issues, access to clean air, water, etc. However, receptivity to ENGO participation in pro-environmental programs, policy formulation, and enactment remains mixed, indicating increased opportunities for engagement by civil society organizations (CSOs) (Gemmill & Bamidele-Izu, 2002). The increase in opportunities is illustrated by the fact that many municipalities and businesses throughout the United States are collaborating with various stakeholders to implement green infrastructure (GI) initiatives. As mentioned, the deployment of these projects and programs is often impeded by budgetary constraints; the lack of funding has impelled governmental policymakers to seek external sources to provide supplemental funding support and expertise for their respective initiatives (Zuniga et al., 2020). An increase in political polarization has also caused many private citizens and non-profit groups to push their pro-environmental agendas via advocacy. Recent efforts to pass and implement climate change legislation bore fruit through such tactics. One of the primary reasons this strategy has been effective is that private foundations are legally restricted from lobbying efforts, while NGOs face no such constraints (Fuller & McCauley, 2016; Schmitt, 2015).

Summary

Why do certain individuals decide to address the effects of anthropogenically-induced climate change by donating money to ENGOs? The scant literature on this topic indicates this phenomenon is relatively unexplored, as there is a paucity of research that specifically examines private citizen monetary donations to ENGOs (Greenspan et al., 2012). This chapter provides an overview of philanthropy in the United States and the historical and current praxis that are used to support the myriad needs and interests of

donors and beneficiaries. Most germane to this study is the reason(s) why anthropogenic climate change has captured the interest and imagination of the citizenry. More succinctly, why do some individuals decide to lessen the effects of human-caused environmental degradation, by supporting charities that are striving to staunch the seemingly inexorable obliteration of the natural environment? This study intends to caulk the gap of information, by contributing to the body of knowledge and presenting data that can be used to increase the understanding of United States citizens who support ENGOs via monetary donations. The following chapter explains the research method (design and rationale), the role of the researcher, the methodology employed, participant selection, instrumentation, data analysis plan, and issues of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, confirmability, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This qualitative study explored the reasons individuals report as to why they make monetary donations to ENGOs. ENGOs and donors who support them are critical players in climate change amelioration and reversal initiatives and research. ENGOs also assist with the implementation support and maintenance of government-sponsored programs (Böhmelt, 2013). Despite their importance, motivating factors that compel ecophilanthropists to support ENGOs via their largesse is an area of research long ignored by researchers. In the following sections, the rationale for using a qualitative research design and ethnographical tradition for this study, and ways to examine and describe the shared characteristics of this distinct group of individuals are discussed. I then define the researcher's role in this study via the establishment of roles, boundaries, actions, and interactions with participants that served as guiding principles throughout the study. Methodology, including sampling strategies, procedures for recruitment, data collection, and data analysis are also presented. I conclude with ethical concerns and how they were addressed.

Research Design and Rationale

The research design of this study was predicated on the following questions:

RQ1: What factor(s) may influence a philanthropist's monetary support to ENGOs?

RQ2: What factors influence the amount of a philanthropist's annual financial contributions to ENGOs?

RQ3: What factors influence a philanthropist's intent to continue to support an ENGO(s) for the next calendar year and beyond?

In the United States, philanthropy is a practice that has been long used to address societal ails. In the current era, philanthropy by average citizens has burgeoned. Philanthropy provides mechanisms whereby corporations, foundations, and private citizens can provide support for causes in which they are interested. What has been hitherto unexplained is what the motivating factors are that compel individuals to donate to ENGOs. To provide further insight into this phenomenon, I used an ethnographical research design that includes participant characteristics that mirror those used in similar studies. These characteristics include age, socioeconomic status, gender, education, geographic locale, and the overarching donor characteristic—that a study participant currently donates money to the ENGO(s) of their choice. Some of the donor characteristics, such as age, education, and socioeconomic status, are but a snapshot of the research participant's status as their current state may be fluid. However, for this study, donor attributes were determined to be static, as the study would conclude before any major changes in these categories occurred in their lives.

My rationale for choosing the ethnographical tradition for the research approach was that ethnography afforded me the ability to interface with my research participants in ways that yielded intimate, unfiltered, and direct responses to my research questions. My research questions appearance-wise seemed to be queries that could be answered straightforwardly. I anticipated that my research participants would reply in expansive ways that would shed light on the nuances surrounding the phenomena of why they

donate money to ENGOs. My request that the participants bring an artifact to the virtual interview sessions was done with the strategy of impelling the study participants to provide rich, deep, meaningful, information that was initiated by their reflection(s) on why they chose to bring their respective artifacts to the interviewing sessions and why and how the artifact(s) represent their motivation(s) to donate money to the ENGO(s) of their choice.

Role of the Researcher

I conducted the study as the sole observer. There were no ethical considerations regarding power differentials, as I have no personal or professional ties to any of the study participants or ENGOs they support. Nor did I anticipate any concerns regarding issues of power among the participants, as each was interviewed in private one-on-one sessions. There were however several issues (ethical, logistical, etc.) that I addressed proactively.

Resource constraints (both time and money) were a concern when this research project was deployed. University guidelines regarding completion of doctoral programs loomed large as a potential encumbrance to completing this study. I conducted interviews with 20 participants virtually using Zoom. Audio recordings were employed to collect participant responses to the research questions. The inquiries were limited to the research questions; however, some extraneous information (when offered) was collected, analyzed, coded, and where applicable, included in the study findings and interpretation sections. Ethnographic studies are ordinarily conducted with the researcher being an intimate player, interacting with study participants in a manner that allows for proximity

and in-depth collection of participant interactional occurrences, characteristics, and behaviors (Patton, 2002). Hallett and Barber (2014) championed a redefinition of what constitutes the "field" in fieldwork and ethnographic study. The researchers found the ubiquitous presence and usage of the internet via email, blogs, social media sites, and so forth mandate that the "cybersphere" be included as a habitat where culture-sharing individuals can be studied via an ethnographic research design (pp. 309-313). Although I concur with the findings, my reservations persisted about solely employing electronic means to interact with and collect data from the research participants.

Reflexivity in ethnographic research denotes a sense of self-awareness about the researcher's potential effect on the collection, interpretation, and presentation of data (Creswell, 2007). An awareness of my role as the researcher throughout the study and acknowledgment of my potential influence on research outcomes and interpretations of data was critical. I employed reflexivity to increase the rigor and quality of this study by continuously examining the potential effects of my subjectivity on my data collection and interpretation (Darawsheh, 2014). I admittedly have many long-held biases regarding anthropogenic damages wrought upon the natural environment. To guard against the potential skewing effect of such biases on my research, I engaged and shared (thereby avoiding any hint of ethical malfeasance) some of my findings with several colleagues and laypersons. I had these "devil's advocates" act as compasses to prevent me from imposing my preconceived notions on my research data compilation, analysis, and write-up.

I recognized that the use of a remote interviewing strategy could be encumbered by a lack of spontaneity that is usually present in face-to-face interviews. When reticence was encountered, I further engaged the participants with open-ended querying that compelled them to expand upon and clarify their responses to the research questions. This strategy increased stakeholder involvement, and for me, as a researcher, opportunities to establish rapport with my study participants and to observe nonverbal cues that would be missed were the study conducted solely by an electronically distributed questionnaire (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). This was a critical aspect of this study, as ethnographic research is usually conducted more intimately, with the researcher(s) physically interacting with study participants. When my initial request for study participants resulted in fewer replies than anticipated, I expanded my participant search to include ENGOs outside of the original search parameters. I also strove to coordinate with ENGO gatekeepers outside of the original search parameters to gain access to a broader list of potential participants. Participants who completed participation in the study were debriefed about the study and informed of possible opportunities to participate in future research efforts. The following Methodology section describes how this study was conducted and how it will advance knowledge in the discipline.

Methodology

Qualitative methodologies, such as case study, ethnographical, and phenomenological, are used to support the researcher in describing and capturing the unique personal attributes and lived experiences of the research participants. Observation, recording, and analysis of these intangibles are not usually the goals of researchers who

employ quantitative research methodologies. Qualitative studies allow for much latitude as to whether the researcher will predetermine the study design and methods or allow it to form during the study's deployment. The researcher may also tailor the study design as they deem necessary to support their efforts to understand the research participants more fully by observing and recording various nuances, such as nonverbal communication, reticence, and other intangibles (Yin, 2016).

Ethnographic research is deemed an integral facet of modern change efforts in various disciplines (e.g., environmental degradation, education, poverty, etc.) and has been used, for example, to broaden and increase understanding of how communities in Alaska are coping with climate change (Carothers et al., 2014). The use of ethnography to delve into the hitherto unknown (i.e., what impels donors to contribute money to environmental NGOs) will elucidate the phenomenon, thereby facilitating the support of projects, programs, and people focused on the existential threat of climate change. Inductive querying and analysis coupled with the researcher's reflexivity yield credible information representing participant motivations, desires, and values (Patton, 2002).

Participant Selection Logic

The sampling strategy I used in this study was purposive sampling of participants who are members of several ENGOs located in the United States. Variations of purposive sampling are used in several disciplines to gain in-depth information about the shared experiences and perspectives of ethnographically distinct groups (Martin et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). My inclusion criteria were straightforward in that each participant had to be 18 years of age and older, and they had to have made a monetary donation to an

ENGO within the past calendar year. The use of a theory-based, purposive sampling strategy allows for the selection and in-depth querying of an ethnographically distinct set of research participants (Patton, 2002).

Purposeful sampling was used to select study participants who possessed unique characteristics that are the focal point of this research effort. The shared values, behaviors, and beliefs of ecophilanthropists further defined the parameters that informed the sampling processes. Purposeful sampling is used by qualitative researchers to collect data from respondents whose homogeneity will yield information about their unique attributes, thereby giving the researcher data that is germane and specific to a group of individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2013).

Instrumentation

Several techniques and tools were used to collect data that was analyzed in this research project. One such instrument was the research questionnaire (see Appendix) comprising five questions posed to the respondents during individual interviewing sessions. Despite the straightforwardness of the five questions, I was aware of the possibility that cultural differences among my participants (e.g., native language, age, country of origin, race, ethnicity, gender, etc.) could affect how my study participants perceived and responded to the research questions. A study of the questionnaire evaluation system—Question Appraisal Systems (QAS)—was conducted to assess the effectiveness of my questionnaire. The QAS was developed to recognize and lessen the potentially negative effects of questionnaires that have been worded in a way that could result in skewed answers from respondents. The authors of the study suggested several

ways, which I adopted, to prevent misunderstandings or response errors, including avoidance of vague or lengthy questions and the use of idioms that may not be thoroughly or properly understood by those whose first language is not English (Dean et al., 2007). My questionnaire was void of idioms and superfluousness, and the questions of this study were direct and to the point. All instruments and data used in my study are password-protected and stored in a physical location accessible only by me. The participants were informed that the interview sessions were being recorded and that the data would be secured. I also used archival data, media releases, and so forth, as they pertained to the respective ENGOs, and that are germane to the study to verify and support information derived from the study participants, thereby increasing the validity of the collected data.

Data Collection

The target population of this study was *ecophilanthropists,* that is, individuals who are members of and have donated money to an ENGO during the last calendar year. Recruitment was conducted via Facebook and LinkedIn. I posted a recruitment flyer on Facebook and those who felt they met the criteria contacted me via email. Subsequently, I contacted the prospective study participants, and I verified that each met the inclusion criteria.

I first decided to interview 10 participants with the caveat that interviews would be continued if saturation were yet not achieved. Saturation is a critical element to ensure that rigor has been applied to the data collection and analysis processes. It is achieved when the researcher finds no more insights can be derived from the study participants

(Daher, 2023). While there are numerous perspectives surrounding qualitative sample size, most have only suggested the number of participants that should be included and concur there are no optimal sample sizes (Patton, 2002). At 10 participants, I was confident saturation was achieved as responses were repeated and no new data arose.

Hennink and Kaiser (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of saturation in several studies and found that a general lack of transparency exists regarding the size of samples used to achieve saturation. The researchers also found that a common assertion among researchers, that a sample size could be too small, is not borne out by their study. The researchers concluded that much is dependent on the homogeneity of the research group, the type of study being conducted (e.g., grounded theory, case study, etc.) and that saturation can be achieved with a relatively small sample size.

Sim et al. (2018) argued that sample size should not be determined a priori and to explore themes by predetermining the number of study participants necessary to do so makes no sense. The study's authors concluded that determining the proper sample size is a recursive process that can be done while the study is being conducted. They found that eventually enough data will be compiled to allow for an understanding of the phenomena being studied and that efforts to predetermine the sufficient population size to attain said data are a waste of time and effort.

I conducted one virtual interview session per participant as I strove to achieve data saturation while, as stated, generalizability was not practical nor one of the primary goals of this study. Interviews lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and were conducted

virtually via the Zoom online conference platform. All interviews were audio-recorded via Zoom and subsequently transcribed via NVivo qualitative analysis software.

Data Analysis

There is a distinction between quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis; as quantitative research deals primarily with the manipulation of variables, causal hypotheses, making inferences about relationships between variables, and determining the generalizability of the study outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Broadly speaking, qualitative research entails the collection and analysis of data that describes the motives, emotions, paradigmatic orientation (worldview), and so forth of study participants to formulate a theory about the motives behind individual or group behaviors (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, n.d.).

As mentioned, NVivo software was used to mine information that is reflective of the respondents' thoughts, feelings, and perspectives about their giving to ENGOs. This allowed for the thematic development of information. NVivo software is designed specifically for qualitative researchers who seek to aggregate, sort, categorize, manage, and analyze their qualitative research data (Walden University, 2022). NVivo provides various features (e.g., project and code creation and memo taking and analysis tools), all of which were invaluable in supporting my efforts to fully capture and analyze the data provided by the study participants.

Participants were initially assigned pseudonyms, such as Participant 1, Participant 2, and so forth, to maximize confidentiality. After some reflection, I changed each pseudonym to reflect this project's primary subject: environmental donors (ED1, ED2,

etc.); see the Data Analysis Section in Chapter 4. All data will be stored on a password-protected drive in a locked cabinet for 5 years; after that time, it will be destroyed.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I established the credibility of this research effort by using several data collection techniques, e.g., audio recordings, and transcriptions, and by using the theoretical lens of SDT. Obtaining truth in the "telling" and interpretation of responses of participants and the researcher is paramount to establishing validity in qualitative research. There exists an "embeddedness of meanings" within the truth, and the researcher must strive to tease out and obtain an accurate reflection of meaning by recognizing themselves as a component of interactive dialogue. Moreover, reflexivity (in this effort obtained by journaling and introspective reflection), and other praxis of validity e.g., story-telling, reviewing to ensure accuracy, and the establishment of norms of how the respondents and researcher interacted with each other were used to apply rigor to the process of ensuring validity to the research process (Dennis, 2018).

Transferability

While transferability was not a goal of this study, I knew that it was important to provide data that could be used as a launch point or compass whereby other researchers can use this study's findings in similar research projects. Transferability is contextual; if similarity exists between research projects, e.g., setting(s), research questions, etc., transferability is more easily attained (Tuval-Mashiach, 2021). Interviewing was

conducted virtually, and the proceedings were audio recorded. The latter strategy was used to optimize transcription accuracy.

Dependability

Transparency is a critical element in establishing the dependability of qualitative research efforts. The use of audit trails, where I describe that the data are derived primarily from the respondent's answers to my questions, how I coded said data and a description of my reflexivity are how the dependability of this study was established another method that I used to increase the validity of data and analysis of the data in this research effort was triangulation, as discussed in the Credibility section above.

Confirmability

It is not the goal of the researcher to convince readers of the accuracy of the conclusions they arrived at by conducting their study. Researchers should present conflicting data be transparent about their personally held beliefs and biases about the study topic(s) and discuss how they established the credibility of their findings. Adhering to the standards of transparency and rigor allows the reader to draw conclusions based on the data presented by the researcher. Confirmability is established when those who peruse the study understand how the data was compiled and analyzed, and believe, with an elevated level of certainty, that the findings and conclusions presented to them are credible (Ellis, 2018).

Another strategy that I used to attain confirmability included introspectively using my reflexivity to determine if I allowed my biases and proclivities to affect my study in any way that would unduly influence data compilation, analysis, and write-up of the

study results. I also requested that my chair, cohorts, and friends serve as sounding boards, and I conducted my study with total transparency to further establish the confirmability of my study.

Ethical Procedures

It is adjudged that ethical concerns were minimal for this study. However, there was a possibility that unforeseen events could have occurred that would require proactive and preventative measures that were to be implemented to guarantee that Walden University's ethical standards were properly implemented during and after the deployment of my research project. The research participants received all instructions, and their questions were answered with clarity. All participants were treated with respect and courtesy per Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethical standards, I gained an IRB approval number from the IRB board—01-26-23-0184360.

This study asked questions about a subject that some individuals may have been sensitive about—their proclivity to donate money to ENGOs. To assuage any concerns about information regarding their donation(s), documents were distributed that outlined data collection procedures, and I, the sole researcher provided documentation that outlined how the data will be protected and stored, and the length of time the data will be held (see the treatment of data below). Upon occasion, participants may have decided to abbreviate or end their participation in the study. Participants were informed that they may end their participation in the study of their own volition at any time. If this had happened, I would have distributed a research exit letter, thanking them for their participation and they would receive the $50 stipend for their time.

Unfortunately, several prospective participants were found to have misrepresented their donor status, i.e., they were not ENGO donors. I arrived at this conclusion after extensive querying of the interviewees' current ENGO status per the determination of inclusion criteria. The participants who did not qualify for the study were told they would be excluded due to not meeting the eligibility criteria.

Treatment of Data

Confidentiality and anonymity are of supreme importance; to ensure these standards are adhered to, all data will be stored for five years. Data are stored on a password-protected computer and a backup peripheral device, each of which will be stored in a locked cabinet. Only the researcher, participants, Walden University, and the respective ENGOs of each participant will have access to the data, upon request. The participant's identities were protected using a pseudonym during the data collection and analysis. Participants' names remained anonymous via such coding, and only the ENGO(s) they funded were identified.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the various elements of the research methodology that I used whilst conducting this research effort. The research design and rationale, i.e., the qualitative methodology of ethnography and the theoretical framework (SDT), were discussed to give an expansive overview of the stanchions of my study. I also explained the population—ecophilanthropists, that donate money to a diverse group of ENGOs. Also examined in this study are the methods I used to recruit such individuals. I discussed the data analysis plan where I explained how I analyzed data for my study with the

NVivo data coding and analysis software and how I recursively discussed the participant's responses to the research questions, thereby attaining a more thorough and true understanding of each participant's meaning(s) attached to their respective responses. I then discussed how I addressed issues of trustworthiness, i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I conclude this section with examples of guidelines of procedures and of various documents that were sent to ENGO gatekeepers and study participants; all of which I followed assiduously during and after the deployment of my research project. The next chapter examines how the study was conducted and the results that were derived from this research effort.

Chapter 4: Results

This qualitative study explored why individuals report they make monetary donations to ENGOs. Donors to ENGOs, also known as "ecophilanthropists," are a select group of private citizens who actively participate in the resolution of environmental problems via monetary donations (Jones, 2012). In the United States, there are approximately 1.5. million NGOs (U.S. Department of State, 2021). In the climate change arena, ENGOs and their donors have become increasingly important actors in climate change research, project implementation, support, and maintenance of government-sponsored programs (Jones, 2012). Numerous educators and researchers have found that as policymakers face increasingly complex environmental challenges, ENGOs are eminently positioned to provide critical data and expertise to policymakers, so that they can make better-informed decisions about environmental degradation remediation policy tactics and strategies (Böhmelt, 2013). This study dove into the experiences, feelings, observations, and activities of those who donate to ENGOs. This study may provide policymakers, politicians, and ENGO administrators with more data about current and potential ENGO donors. The information derived from this specific group of stakeholders also sheds light on the motivating factors that impel this select group of individuals, who are often directly or indirectly involved in devising and implementing sound environmental policy, to donate to environmental causes.

Three research questions served as the basis for this research project. Data derived from study participants were compiled via Zoom and subsequent analysis was performed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. The research setting, demographic

characteristics of the study participants, data collection processes, and procedures were also examined. Subsequently, issues regarding trustworthiness (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) were also examined at length and provided a succinct and comprehensive road map of how the study was conducted and the analysis that was performed to arrive at the conclusions presented here. The research questions that were addressed in this study were as follows:

RQ1: What factor(s) may influence a philanthropist's monetary support to ENGOs?

RQ2: What factors influence which ENGOs you choose to donate to?

RQ3: What factors influence a philanthropist's intent to continue to support an ENGO(s) in the next calendar year and beyond?

Research Setting

This study was conducted with 10 participants whose responses to the project recruitment material indicated that they donated money to an ENGO within the last calendar year. The interviews were conducted virtually from my home office via Zoom, with supplementary phone calls or emails to address technological concerns, clarify stipend payment procedures, and follow up with queries (when necessary) to ensure that the data I compiled were accurate.

Demographics

Despite the small sample size, the participant characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, geographic locale (state and city), and work and educational background) convey a diverse, much-varied mixture of American ENGO donors. Table 1 provides a visual

depiction of the participant characteristics. The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 59 years. The biological genders of the participants were six males and four females. The types and levels of educational attainment of the participants were much varied—a high school diploma, several bachelor's degrees, secondary level certification, and one individual who possesses several post-secondary degrees.

It was not the intent of this study to conflate the constructs of ethnicity and race. Each is a mélange of numerous elements that are commonly used by various entities (e.g., governments, businesses, individuals, etc.) and society at large to categorize and define who or what a person "is." It is outside the purview of this study to discuss the multifarious "parts" of a person's race and ethnicity. However, these characteristics were only used in this study as descriptive representations of the study participants. The ethnicity/race of individuals who participated in this study were Asian American, African American (and Afro-Latino), Caucasian, and Caucasian-Latino. While most of the study participants hail from the country's eastern section, all of them reside in cities located throughout the nation. I discovered no discernable donation patterns that can be linked to the race/ethnicity of the participants, I believe this along with other donor characteristics (e.g., age, geographic locale, etc.) are worthy of further scrutiny in future studies.

The jobs held by the participants during the study were financial analyst, English teacher, data analyst, several college/university students, telecommunications engineer, customer service representative, web designer, and landscape architect.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Data

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Geographic locale	Education level
ED1	30	Male	African American	New York	Bachelor
ED2	51	Female	Latino/Caucasian	Boston	Bachelor
ED3	42	Male	Caucasian	New York	Master
ED4	22	Male	African American	New York	Bachelor
ED5	41	Male	Caucasian	Pennsylvania	Bachelor
ED6	35	Male	Asian American	Phoenix	Certificate
ED7	29	Male	Latino/Black	San Francisco	Bachelor
ED8	19	Female	Caucasian	Illinois	Bachelor
ED9	59	Female	Caucasian	Georgia	High school
ED10	52	Female	Caucasian	Illinois	BA, JD, LLM

Data Collection

All 10 virtual interviews were conducted via Zoom from my home office. The locations the participants chose to call into their respective sessions were where they felt most comfortable and convenient for them. The locations the participants chose were quite diverse (e.g., living rooms, bedrooms, home offices, kitchens, etc.). Each participant was interviewed once; the length of the interviews varied from 27 minutes to 55 minutes. The variability in the duration of the interviews reflected the expansiveness (or lack thereof) of the participant's responses to each of the interview questions. Some interviewees were quite verbose, while others were taciturn, necessitating continuous follow-up querying so I could gain a more thorough understanding of the respondent's answers and intent when they answered the research questions. The study data were stored on notepads, a laptop (in a secure location), and a peripheral storage device, the latter two of which are password-protected. All data recording devices and materials are

stored in a secure location and will remain there for 5 years, at which time all data will be destroyed as per IRB regulations.

Initially, twenty-three individuals were considered as participants in this research effort. The final number of individuals interviewed and whose data were used for this study was reduced to 10. As previously mentioned, several individuals were not considered for inclusion in the study. After follow-up phone calls and emails, I determined that some respondents did not meet the criterion of being current (within the past calendar year) ENGO donors. Other respondents did not attend their scheduled interview sessions. This failure to attend the scheduled interviews was despite my numerous attempts to accommodate them by rescheduling their respective sessions.

Pseudonyms were used to obscure the identity of the participants; each participant is identified as ED1 (ENGO Donor 1), ED2 (ENGO Donor 2), and so forth. This lent a feature of particularity to the type of participants involved in my study. The data were aggregated and uploaded into the NVivo 12 qualitative data analysis application.

Data Analysis

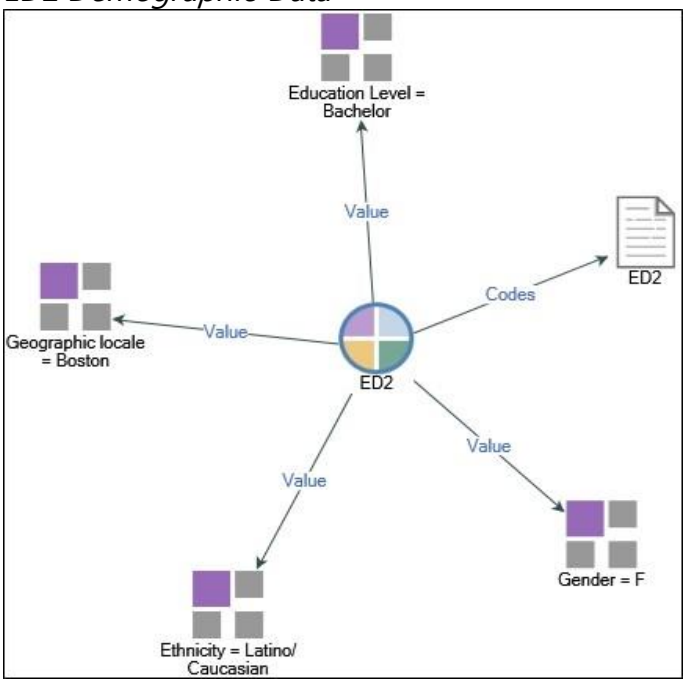
Data analysis was performed after I concealed each participant's identity through the use of the abovementioned alphanumeric pseudonyms. Categorization of each participant, based on their respective demographic characteristics, was done via code units that are reflective of specific characteristics of each participant: ethnicity/race, age, educational/work background, gender, and geographic locale (i.e., current place of residence). Demographic data were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet and uploaded into the NVivo data analysis software. NVivo provided the functionality to display each

participant's demographic data and their respective responses to the research questions. Subsequently, the data were converted into maps that provided a visual representation of how the participants responded to each research question. Figures 9, 10, and 11 are graphic depictions of three of the study participants, ED2, ED6, and ED9, respectively. These figures appear here as examples of the NVivo maps demographic data. I recursively perused my data to try to discover patterns and recurring instances of participant responses that were dominant (numerically). Subsequently, I developed themes and subthemes based on the participant responses.

The themes were an aggregate of the participant responses to the study questions. This strategy supported my ability to understand the thoughts, feelings, and observations of the participants more fully. While each theme had several responses from the participants, only the dominant responses appeared here. Note that there were several shared thoughts, feelings, and observations, as indicated by the lines that connect participant's responses and each theme.

Figure 9

ED2 Demographic Data

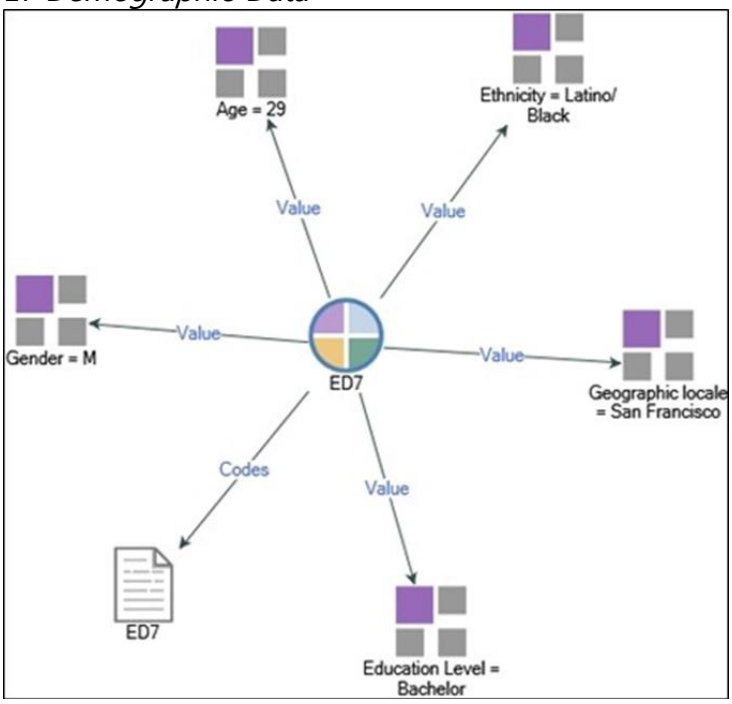


Note: Demographic data derived from NVivo data analysis software.

The demographic data that I gathered from participant ED2 show the level of educational attainment, gender, ethnicity/race, and the region of the country where this participant currently resides. In Figure 9, the page icon labeled "ED2" is the transcribed, audio recording of our interview session used to construct the figure and this individual's unique attributes that I used to devise and provide a 360-degree (within the parameters of this study) explanation of their environmental advocacy.

Figure 10

E7 Demographic Data

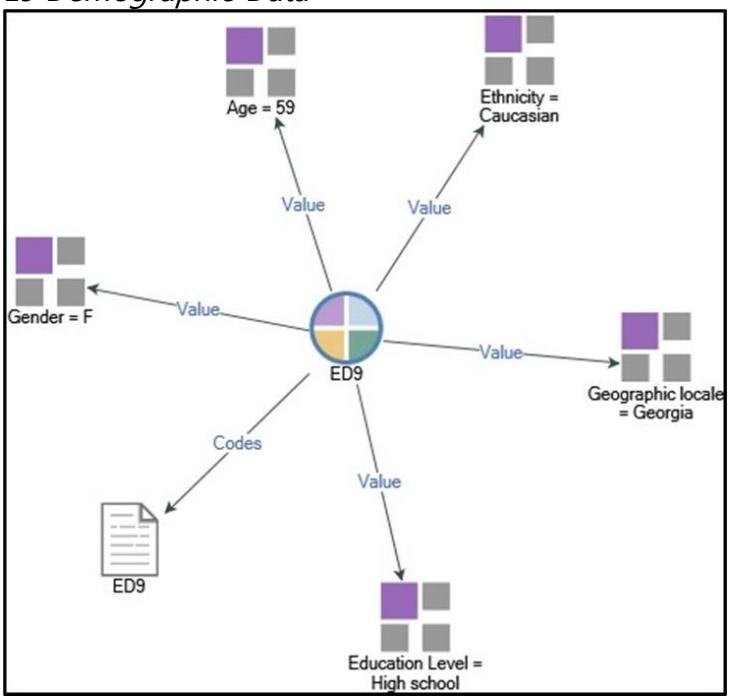


Note: Demographic data derived from NVivo data analysis software.

Participant ED7 hails from San Francisco, is a young black man, 29 years of age, and has attained a bachelor's degree. Once again, the icon in Figure 10 labeled "ED7," and the attendant values depicted here represent the audio recording data and his attributes, which informed my quest to understand why he chose to donate money to an ENGO.

Figure 11

E9 Demographic Data



Note: Demographic data derived from NVivo data analysis software.

Participant ED9 is a resident of the state of Georgia. As with the other study participants, her unique attributes and her audio transcript are shown in Figure 11. While there were 10 study participants, I chose to display only the demographic features of 3 study participants in this dissertation. This was done to present salient concepts and information about how the study was conducted with economy and specificity and avoidance of redundancy. The responses to the three research questions are discussed in the Results section of this study.

There were several discrepant cases where the utterances of the participants were not in direct response to the themes or questions posed to them; despite my efforts to have the participants answer the questions as succinctly as possible. As mentioned in the Data Collection section above, some participants may have misrepresented their ENGO

donor status. One donated to a nonprofit entity that could be loosely classified as an ENGO, but per the participant's responses, the ENGO was focused more on anthropogenic concerns versus an ENGO that is more expansive and eco-centric, and that targets environmental maladies versus anthropogenically focused concerns. These cases are included in the analysis, as it cannot be proven with certainty that the participants were not legitimate ENGO donors. The discrepant cases will be discussed further in the Results, Limitations of the Study, and Recommendations sections of this study.

To discern how the study participants perceived their advocacy and what factors influenced their decisions about donating to ENGOs, I also used the NVivo data analysis tool to conduct word frequency queries. Such queries provide a visual representation (i.e., a "word cloud;" see Figure 12) of the verbiage the participants used to describe their environmental philanthropy, thereby allowing me to discern the importance of various aspects of their philanthropy. Words that are prominently displayed (as indicated by the larger font size) depict the trending or dominant viewpoints participants mentioned as they described their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and so forth about their philanthropy, whilst answering each of the three study questions. The word cloud suggested that knowing, seeing, feeling, thinking, good, and right are some of the dominant or more frequently stated words that study participants used to describe their interests and the reasons for their environmental advocacy via cash donations. One common thread among donors was a desire to perform a valuable service through their philanthropic efforts. It was also apparent that the participants felt strongly that ENGOs must provide easily accessible data about how and where their donation dollars were being spent.

Figure 12

Word Cloud

Note: Reproduced from NVivo "Word Cloud "results of participant's responses to study questions.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Several strategies were adopted to increase the credibility of this study's findings. Triangulation was performed by use of several data sources, e.g., audio recordings of the participant responses, the use of artifacts brought to the interview sessions by each participant, word maps, and when appropriate or necessary, follow-up phone calls to clarify their responses. The participants were told to bring an artifact that represented the reason(s) for their advocacy. The intent was to elicit responses that went beyond the mere cerebral, thereby prompting each participant to engage in reflection and introspection regarding the reason(s) they choose to monetarily support ENGOs. Each member was

queried extensively about the ENGO(s) they supported, although, as previously stated, it cannot be established with certainty the veracity of the participant's claims that they fully meet the criteria of this study i.e., that they are current ENGO members and have donated to ENGO(s) within the past calendar year. Reflexivity was employed daily as I wended my way through the data; indulging in introspection, identifying, and striving to avoid any undue influence of my biases on the study. My original intent was to interview 30 – 40 participants. Because of time constraints and unforeseen difficulties in getting the targeted number of interviewees, this was not possible for this iteration of my research. As discussed previously, saturation can be achieved with a small sample size (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

As mentioned in Chapter 3, another strategy I employed whilst I devised my project was to consider if and how each component aligned with or fell outside the theoretical construct framework of SDT and how doing so would establish and increase the credibility of this study. This strategy will be discussed further in the Interpretation section of Chapter 5.

Transferability

Transferability was not the goal of this study. As discussed in Chapter 3, all interviews were audio recorded and conducted remotely. It is anticipated that future research will benefit from using the same or similar techniques and devices or in-person interviews. Transferability is increased by duplication of the conditions and interview instruments, etc. used in the initial study (Tuval-Mashiach, 2021). This effort was the first iteration of what is intended to be several studies. I intend to continue to examine,

through the lens of SDT, what motivates environmental advocates to donate money to ENGOs.

Dependability

Dependability was established by creating an audit trail consisting of participant responses to the research questions and any extraneous information offered regarding their advocacy. Data coding was done via NVivo, and all information converted to NVivo appears in the Results section. Triangulation was also established by the use of the data sources previously discussed and comparisons made between the participants, based on their attributes (similarities and differences) and their respective donation practices. This strategy resulted in a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the motive(s) that drive their philanthropy towards environmental nonprofit group(s).

Confirmability

It is expected that the rigor, transparency, and presentation of data derived from this study's participants will establish its confirmability. The perusal of this study by my Chair and other faculty members and my commitment to using my reflexivity whilst conducting and penning this study will also increase the reader's belief in the credibility of my findings.

Results

While I conducted analysis, several themes emerged that indicated what factors were important to each participant as they ruminated about and eventually made decisions as to which ENGO(s) they donated to and whether each of them would continue to donate to the recipients of their largesse, that is their respective ENGO(s).

Table 2 shows 14 themes that emerged from the participant's responses to the three research questions. RQ1 yielded five themes, RQ2, five themes, and RQ3, yielded three themes, respectively. I assembled the participant responses and devised a sentence for each theme which represented the overarching sentiment(s) the participants expressed (observations, feelings, etc.) as they responded to each research question. The themes supported my strivings to delve more deeply, to understand more thoroughly what the participants thought and felt about the reasonings, and the motivations, behind their philanthropy. NVivo software was used to compile and sort their responses into distinct categories (themes), linked to the research questions. I was able to further categorize and cluster the responses based on their shared characteristics (Adu, 2023).

Table 2

Themes for Research Questions

Themes—Research Questions 1, 2 & 3	Files	References	Created on	Created by
RQ1 Why did you decide to donate money to an ENGO(s).	8	9	7/11/2023 5:29 PM	FAC
Theme: How informed is the donor about what and how well the ENGO is doing.	2	2	7/25/2023 2:27 PM	FAC
Theme: Altruistic bent, a desire to do good for others.	3	3	7/25/2023 2:28 PM	FAC
Theme: Concern about the survivability of humankind.	2	2	7/25/2023 2:29 PM	FAC
RQ2 Why did you decide to donate money to a specific ENGO(s).	9	9	7/11/2023 7:38 PM	FAC
Theme: Being well-informed about the activities the RNGO is involved in.	2	2	7/25/2023 2:45 PM	FAC
Theme: Derives satisfaction from improving the lives of others.	2	2	7/25/2023 2:46 PM	FAC
Theme: Decision to donate is influenced by friends, colleagues, family members, etc.	3	3	7/25/2023 2:46 PM	FAC
RQ3: What are the determinants if you decide to continue to give your money to an ENGO(s).	9	9	7/11/2023 7:40 PM	FAC
Theme: Discovering need(s) and having the means to help drive the donor's intent to continue donating.	1	1	7/25/2023 2:58 PM	FAC
Theme: The donor wants transparency and tangible results.	3	3	7/25/2023 2:56 PM	FAC
Theme: The donor's decision as to whether they will donate in the future is driven by their personal financial state	4	4	7/25/2023 2:57 PM	FAC

NVivo generated Themes based on study participant responses.

I then condensed my themes from 14 to nine themes (three, for RQ1, three for RQ2, and three for RQ3, respectively), the dominant (numerically) of which appear in Table 2. The following excerpts are derived from the participant's responses to the three research questions. NVivo was used to analyze and "weight" the responses of the participants to each research question. This strategy allowed me to determine if the responses indicated that the study participants expressed a dominant sentiment. The dominance was indicated by how frequently the response occurred Adu (2023).

I then divided each of the research questions into clusters, that is statements that captured the sentiment(s) that described the reasons the research participants stated were factors that influenced their decision-making and their philanthropic endeavor(s). I then took each cluster and refined them to represent the study participant's environmentally focused giving more succinctly. Once again, I further distilled and reduced the statements of my participants; the "end product" was three statements to each of the three research questions. I perused and revised these three statements (connected to each of the three research questions) until I had a statement for each research question that accurately captured the full intent of my study participant's thoughts and feelings about their philanthropy.

The participant's responses to RQ1 spanned the gamut from a desire to protect the environment to their thoughts and feelings about how well the recipients of the donor's largesse (the ENGOs) informed them about what is being done currently or what the ENGO(s) are planning to do with the donations they received. Three of the original five RQ1 themes represented a desire to provide succor or improve things for others. The dominant sentiment expressed by the recipients was one of altruism, as several respondents indicated that they want to improve the natural environment for others. Two participants noted that they were financially stable and that their stability allowed them to engage in activities that would benefit someone other than themselves. Two participant responses to RQ2, which asked what influenced their decisions regarding which ENGO(s) they donated to indicated family, friends, colleagues, etc., were major influences on their decision-making processes. The environmental problems the

ENGO(s) were tackling played an important role in their decision-making. RQ3 elicited responses that indicated that their personal financial state would dictate whether they would continue to support an ENGO. Each research question (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3) and their correlative themes and several comments (verbatim) are representative of the sentiments of the research participants; they are shown below:

RQ1: What Factor(s) May Influence a Philanthropist's Monetary Support to ENGOs?

Theme: A Desire to Preserve and Improve the Environment

ED1 responded,

> I have always liked nature. I've always liked the natural order of things, how things operate in the world. And I mean from that interest. I didn't always support. But my friends and especially one friend of mine, … he told me that there was an opportunity that I could get to reach out to these ecological happenings, these manmade ecological problems that were going on … so, my support, whether volunteering my time or some monetary support, that will make things better.

Theme: Concern About the Survivability of Humankind

ED4 expressed,

> Not like, you know, cause like the climate is kind of bad like it's outrageous because I've seen the ecosystem is going bad, like the bees and stuff like that. I think, dive into these little bits of technology to make everything better.

Theme: How Informed Is the Donor About What and How Well the ENGO Is Doing

ED6 stated,

> I like to know where my money is going, and I like to know how it's being used. With the Nature Conservancy, you're able to see how your money is used. What animals or plants or the ocean. Whatever it may be for your state. It shows you directly what they're using the money for to conserve. And that's really big to me because I think when people donate money, usually they're just given kind of like a general answer, oh, this is what we're spending your money on. And a lot of times I don't think, at least for me, I don't see like a lot of results, like direct results from it. So, you're able to go on their website and it shows you what they're doing in your state or in another state around the country. So that's like the biggest factor for me to see how my money is being spent.

Generally, the sentiment expressed by the respondents was that there was a desire to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic climate change and reverse the damages humankind has wrought on the planet. These responses indicated that the participants were interested in involving themselves in activities that are beyond what is necessary to sustain themselves. These comments are evidence of two of the components of SDT: intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2018, p. 14) and relatedness (i.e., a need and desire for interaction with others, Deci & Ryan, 2018, p. 160)—which are basic tenets of SDT. I explore this element of environmental philanthropy further in chapter 5.

RQ2: What Influences Which ENGOs you Choose to Donate to?

Here I found that the responses to RQ2 indicated that the participant's choice(s) of which ENGO(s) they decided to give their money to was influenced by various factors, e.g., being well-informed about the ENGO's efforts, a desire to improve the natural environment, and, the influence of family, friends, and colleagues, etc. Per the data, I found that no overwhelmingly dominant factor influenced the decision-making process of the donors. However, the influence of family, friends, and colleagues was the reason mentioned the most by the respondents (three responses) as being an influential factor (see Figure 10), followed by being well-informed and the satisfaction derived from improving the lives of others, which were also mentioned as major influences (two responses each). These responses indicated the importance of information the ENGO(s) presented to current and potential donors via various forms of media, word of mouth, donor recruitment campaigns, etc. As mentioned, I also employed the use of an NVivo word cloud (see Figure 12) to illustrate the importance the participants felt about being well informed about the activities of the ENGOs. The words (and synonyms) that were uttered by the participants during the interview sessions, e.g., know, information, influence, donate, donations, etc. are displayed with larger fonts and higher frequency. The predominance of certain words in the "cloud" indicated the conceptual significance the participants attached to the words and the associated actions they represent. This further demonstrates the importance of information about the ENGO's activities as a key factor that influenced the donor's ecophilanthropic decision-making processes.

Theme: Being Well-Informed About the Activities the ENGO is Involved in

ED1 explained,

> I like information that we do reach out to people regularly telling them the progress, any progress has been made. Maybe you know how much you've done, how much we've done as people participate actively, that the communities are getting better, and people are pursuing, they appreciate us, we're helping them. … So, I don't know if I can call it customer service, but like the support you get from using or from getting in touch with visiting those and volunteering your time and your money.

Theme: Decision to Donate Is Influenced by Friends, Colleagues, Family Members, Etc.

ED7 explained,

> I have a colleague at work. He is like a volunteer for this ENGO. So it's like all the committee that works for the state of California, he's one of them. We did mean like we had this one-on-one conversation where he told me about some of the things, they have been doing … it was just inspiring. So, he explained the mission and vision of that particular group The visibility I had, and I know that definitely these things are happening around us. So, I was motivated to donate my best financial donation.

Similarly, ED9 expressed,

> Well, talking to friends about these organizations. And seeing what they've accomplished going to different sites where they've. done their work so that I can

> see what they've done. And then events that I've gone to meet the people in the organization and talk with them, ask questions about that. Definitely, some of the factors of why I chose these particular organizations".

RQ3: What Factors Influence a Philanthropist's Intent to Continue to Support an ENGO(S) in the Next Calendar Year and Beyond?

Four of the 10 participants indicated that their personal financial state was the most influential factor governing their intent to continue to support an ENGO. Transparency by the ENGO with all stakeholders was also mentioned as a major concern when they made decisions about continued support of an ENGO. Despite identifying their personal finances as a major factor affecting their ability and subsequent intent to continue donating to an ENGO, I got the sense that these 10 individuals are passionate and committed to environmental concerns. The characteristics that led me to this belief are not easily discerned by numerical data but are most evident in the responses given by the participants to all three of the research questions.

Theme: The Donor Does Not Intend to Increase or Decrease Their Donation(s)

ED5 said,

> Well, I mean, you know, one thing that we probably won't see in our lifetime is the return on investment when it comes to what we're expecting to get out of our donations. But I'm sure that we'll see agencies come and go and that's true for environmental conservancy groups. It's also true it'll be true for the health organizations and, you know, trying to find the cure for cancer and things like that as well. It'll be interesting to see. You know when I retire. What sort of, who's

still left standing and who still does who I think is deserving of my funds at that time. And to see how maybe my perspective on things has changed, maybe I will have some more favorites than I have right now.

Theme: The Donor Wants Transparency and Tangible Results

ED1— And you have somebody who wants to support the cause and has put anything down, whatever it may be, you need to know what's going on. And it's the results and the feedback you get from that program that, I mean, you can't change any part of the world tonight.

ED3— This year and beyond, when I don't have to travel so far away to enjoy that, to enjoy the water, because the water right in the Long Island sound where I live, it's just so filthy and polluted. And in 20 years, it's changed overnight. And so as far as your intent as to whether you're going to donate, I would be more likely to donate.

ED4— I guess, mismanagement when I get bad information from them, like when I get information on the organization like bad management or like I believe they are supposed to like be transparent on what they are doing. So, I'm watching out for what they are doing. … that's why always check the news. Yeah, it motivates me when they share information on what they did and how they did it.

ED6— Usually it's like a small donation of $100. And I guess what influences, that is just the amount of money I have from work. What I am able to, like, set aside for things that are important to me. So yeah, it's just a one time a year payment that I send them. I would continue as long as they're transparent with what they're doing.

Theme: The Donor's Decision as to Whether They Will Donate in the Future Is Driven by Their Personal Financial State

ED2— "Yeah, I'd stop, if things got bad. Then I'd stop completely, If Things got better, I would stay the same. I can't save the world".

ED7— Yeah, definitely. Me getting a promotion and a raise in my income would make me donate more because it's something I love. It's something I appreciate them doing. So, I would definitely donate even if things got worse and bad and I would still donate something tangible. One thing is that I don't settle for the minimum, so I at least try to give something up from the smallest, something above the minimum.

ED9— I don't think it's a recession, but I think inflation has, you know, definitely taken a bite out of people's budget. So, they have to really. plan a budget so that they can accomplish all the things they want to accomplish.

Summary

Ten participants who were ages 18 and over and had contributed to an ENGO in the past year were interviewed virtually via Zoom. My analysis of the data indicated that the importance of being informed about how the ENGOs were spending their donations, was of paramount importance and was the dominant sentiment expressed by the 10 study participants, as they decided whether they would continue their support for the ENGO (s). The donors wanted to know about the ENGO's practices, how, and where their money was being spent, and what the ENGOs will strive to accomplish currently and in the future. This was a recurrent concern expressed by most of the study participants.

Chapter 5 will encapsulate the interpretation of my findings, I then discuss the limitations, recommendations, implications, and conclusions of my study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This qualitative, ethnographical study was conducted with the express purpose of finding out why individuals residing in the United States donate money to ENGOs. The theoretical foundation of this study was SDT. Proponents of SDT have posited that once an individual's primary needs (e.g., food, shelter, potable water, etc.) are met, individuals then aspire to engage in, to involve themselves in activities that go beyond ensuring their own needs and desires and continued existence. According to SDT, individuals are motivated by factors (intrinsic or extrinsic) that compel them to involve themselves in certain activities that fulfill their needs for experiencing positive, supportive relationships, attaining competence in a chosen endeavor, and a sense of accomplishment, upon achieving their goals. This study was conducted to determine whether any SDT principles were evident in the activities and reasons given by individual American philanthropists as to why they chose to donate their money to nonprofit organizations. More specifically, why do these philanthropists decide to support ENGOs? While there are thousands of nonprofit organizations they could choose to support, why do certain philanthropists donate their monies to organizations that are striving to repair, restore, and remediate human-caused environmental damage wrought upon our planet?

Interpretation of the Findings

I shall preface the following findings of my study by stating that while not what I had anticipated, the findings are quite illuminative. I had anticipated (and desired) that a clear indication of SDT principles would be confirmed by the data provided by my participants. This is not to say that elements of SDT are not present; quite the contrary, as

you will find, there is a confirmation of the sway of SDT throughout the interpretation section of my study.

The study participants' motivations and behaviors indicated the presence of several components of SDT. Each of the participants indicated that elements vital to the continuance of their existence had been satisfied or fulfilled. As the participants were freed from the acquisition of their basic needs and had attained a state of "wellness," the philanthropists sought to involve themselves in altruistic activities. I found that the participants were concerned about and sought ways to effect positive changes in others' lives. This characteristic was indicative of autonomy and actualization, two of the key components of basic psychological needs theory (BPNT), one of the sub-theories of SDT.

Comparison of Results to Past Literature

When I compared the participants' responses to my research questions with past literature, which I reviewed in Chapter 2, I did find evidence of several SDT and alternative motivation theories.

Research Question 1

The participant responses to RQ1 "What factors may influence a philanthropist's monetary support to ENGOs?" indicate that the study participants felt it was important that they improve others' situation. Statements made by these individuals strongly support assertions made in past research efforts by researchers Amos and Allred (2015) who found philanthropists discover a need and decide to address said need by donating money, volunteering, and so forth. Also, SDT founders, Deci and Ryan (2000) found that some individuals involve themselves in pursuits in which they gain fulfillment and

satisfaction. Identity-based motivation theory (Fisher et al., 2017), one of the alternative motivation theories discussed in Chapter 2, describes the paradigmatic orientation of individuals who are freed from the burdens of acquiring and maintaining the basic bulwarks of survival, namely food, shelter, and physical security. Resultantly, they are compelled to become involved in activities they deem more befitting their station in life. Contextually, the participants in this study are involved in efforts to improve the lot of others via their donation of monies to ENGOs. There is also evidence of PMT (protection motivation theory), an alternative motivation theory discussed in the literature review. Evidence exists of the use of PMT in the environmental philanthropic decision-making of some of the study participants. Research by Schwaller et al. (2020) indicate that individuals use PMT to assess environmental threats and devise ways to address such threats.

Research Question 2

When responding to RQ2, "What influences which ENGOs you choose to donate to?" I found (as mentioned in Chapter 4) that besides deriving satisfaction from improving the lives of others (an altruistic SDT factor), some participants (ED3, ED4, ED5, ED7, ED8, ED9, and ED10) mentioned that the influence of family, friends, and colleagues was also influential on the decisions they made about which ENGOs they donated their money to. This jibes with past research that also found that the influence of family, friends and colleagues is a strong indicator of relatedness, an SDT factor where the individual attains a sense of sharing, cooperating, and mutuality of purpose when interacting with others who share the same goals (SDT, 2020). Relatedness is also

experiencing a sense of community, attained by sharing and cooperating with like-minded groups or individuals (SDT, 2020). Relatedness is the state attained by individuals where they derive a sense of belonging, that is, a synergistic relationship with another individual or group pursuing the same or similar goals (SDT, 2020). I also found that when the participants explained how they decided where they would spend their philanthropic dollars, they described the import of involving themselves in activities that somewhat assuaged their concerns about the destruction of the natural environment, and gave them satisfaction, from doing something positive for humans, animals, and the environment. Such responses are strong indicators of the influence of SDT principles on the philanthropic decision-making of my study participants. My findings add to and enhance the past literature surrounding SDT and relatedness and the influence of each characteristic on the motivational factors of philanthropy at large and, more specifically, the influence of SDT and relatedness on the motivations of those who donate money to ENGOs.

Research Question 3

When responding to RQ3, "What factors influence a philanthropist's intent to continue to support an ENGO(s) in the next calendar year and beyond?" all participants stated that their personal financial situations were the primary determinant factor. The participants stated that transparency (about how the ENGOs spent their donations) and their personal financial situations were the primary factors they considered when they decided whether they would continue to support the ENGOs to which they currently donated. These responses indicate that the participants felt that they had to be

economically secure before they could donate, or continue to donate, to ENGOs. This makes sense as it indicates that the basic premise of SDT is influencing their philanthropic decisions and is foundational to their giving. All participants mentioned that their individual needs (physiological, psychological, etc.) must be satisfied before they are inclined to become involved in activities beyond those of self. This aligns with the findings of Harrigan and Commons (2015) mentioned in the literature review.

Comparison of Results to SDT

I did find several instances where the ecophilanthropic motives of the participants did not align with the SDT theorem or alternative motivation theories that I mentioned in the literature review. Concerns expressed by the participants about the reliability of how their donations were being used by the entities they chose to support were universal. For instance, the word cloud (see Figure 12) indicated that "knowing," "money," "see," and "right" were some of the words the participants used whilst discussing their donations. When responding to RQ3 (What factors influence a philanthropist's intent to continue to support an ENGO(s) in the next calendar year and beyond?), the participants stated that transparency (about how the ENGOs spent their donations) and their financial situations were the primary determining factors, when they considered whether they would continue to support the ENGOs to which they currently donated.

I found the former sentiments (concerns about transparency and how their money was being spent) ran counter to the overarching STD principles. The participants all indicated they were able to donate to causes that interest them because their primary needs have been met. This sentiment does reflect an alignment with SDT principles and

motivational factors; however, concerns about where and how their respective donations were being used and concerns about excessive overhead and any hint of malfeasance by the entities they financially support were expressed as primary concerns by most of the study participants. These factors run counter to or are not aligned with basic STD principles. However, concerns about how their monies were being spent makes sense, logically in that they did not want to be duped by individual or organizational malfeasance.

Limitations of the Study

The sample size was limited to 10 participants. While Hennink and Kaiser (2022) found that reaching saturation is not dependent on a specific sample size, the results of this study cannot be generalized. I eventually recruited participants via Facebook; this pool may not present a well-rounded representation of the population versus a participant pool comprised of individuals that I could have recruited with cooperation from ENGO(s).

In addition, there were several discrepant cases where the answers of the participants were not in direct response to the themes or questions posed to them, despite my efforts to have the participants answer the questions as succinctly as possible. As I mentioned in the data collection section, some participants may have misrepresented their ENGO donor status. One donated to a nonprofit entity that could be loosely classified as an ENGO, but per the participant's answers, the ENGO they supported was focused more on anthropogenic concerns versus an ENGO that is more holistic and expansive in targeted environment remedial efforts. These cases are included in the analysis, as it

cannot be proven with certainty that the participants in question were not legitimate ENGO donors.

I also suspect that several poseurs may have infiltrated my study. I chose to exclude their data and interview responses. I did so to increase the confirmability and dependability of my findings. I am satisfied with my efforts to maintain my reflexivity and to diminish the undue influence of my biases on the compilation of data and the interpretation and presentation of my study.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations I offer for those who are interested in continuing research in the philanthropic motivations and attendant practices of individuals residing in America who donate to ENGOs. The strength of examining such individuals via the lens of qualitative research is that the use of qualitative research methodologies affords the researcher the flexibility and opportunity to tailor recruitment strategies. Researchers may also refine the interviewing processes, the types of individuals recruited for the study and a slew of other participant attributes to fit the study purpose and design (Barona, 2023). I also found that I could examine the motives, feelings, observations, and other characteristics of the study participants more thoroughly via qualitative research methodologies. To this end, I would suggest that future efforts in this vein utilize, as I did, the requirement that all participants bring an artifact representative of their ecophilanthropy to their respective interview sessions. It elicits descriptive and sometimes emotional responses from the participants; this certainly added to my understanding of why they chose to give their monies to ENGOs. I would also

recruit and use more participants. While generalizability and saturation were not the goals of this study, a larger number of participants would result in a more robust and thorough examination of the ecophilanthropic phenomenon. Another recommendation (as I alluded to in the Data Collection section of this study) is regarding my difficulties in trying to gain support and establish a rapport and working agreement (or an agreement to distribute my recruitment material amongst current members) with any of the ENGOs that I contacted. This problem severely encumbered my recruitment effort. I would suggest that future researchers proactively strive to establish partnership agreements with prospective ENGO participants as early in the study process as possible. Gaining support from the ENGOs would ensure that the study participants are truly ENGO donors. Also, accessing the expertise of gatekeepers (who would be an invaluable asset) could provide the researcher with "insider" information that they would not ordinarily be privy to. My final recommendation is that, if possible, the interviews be conducted face to face. This tack, I feel, would allow for more intimate and detailed conversations between the researcher and the interviewees, as the researcher would be able to capture nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions and animation (or lack thereof), and other forms of human communication, thereby increasing the understanding of this phenomenon.

Implications

Implications for Positive Social Change

In my estimation, many opportunities exist for social change via this and similar studies. At the individual (or familial level), those who are involved in activities that are related to the natural versus the "built environment" derive benefits from experiencing

the splendor of the great outdoors. A study conducted by Ewart and Ewart (2022) found that individuals engaged in outdoor activities derived psychological and physical benefits from spending time experiencing nature. It is not extreme to extrapolate that those who are ecophilanthropists or are "outdoors types" (or conversely, those who are currently not spending much time outdoors), if exposed to the work that ENGOs are performing or are interacting with like-minded individuals, would be more inclined to spend time in the natural environment, thereby receiving the benefits.

Consumers, especially the younger segment of the population, are increasingly aware of the effect that their activities and lifestyles are having on the environment. Consequentially, many support "green consumption" and are likely to purchase goods that are environmentally sustainably produced and marketed to appeal to the "green consumer" (Rizomyliotis, et al., 2021). This trend is likely to persist and expand as climate change events increase the awareness of all consumers of the criticality of societal, individual, governmental, and corporate shared responsibility to become better stewards of the earth.

Implications for Practice

Researchers who choose to leverage the data from this study will benefit from avoiding the pitfalls I encountered as I strove to recruit participants for my study. The ability to work in concert with ENGO representatives (gatekeepers) would give the researchers access to individuals who unquestionably are legitimate current ENGO members. Access to legitimate ENGO members would also increase the credibility of the researchers' findings.

Theoretical Implications

This study indicates that Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) and the SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) are present and did have a substantial influence on the decision–making processes of the study participants. Each of the participants stated that they were comfortable in their lives. Each indicated that they had reached a station in life where their basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, and interpersonal ties and relationships, all of which contribute to their wellness, were being met and that consequentially, they felt a desire, a motivation, to aspire, to become involved in something that was beyond the mere attainment of their basic needs. In this instance, it was the desire to become ecophilanthropists. Resultantly, they decided to donate their monies to environmentally oriented nonprofit organizations. The National Center for Charitable Statistics indicates that there are approximately 1.8 million nonprofit organizations in existence in the United States (Nonprofit Trends and Impacts, 2021).

The apparent question is this: Why do ecophilanthropists decide to donate money to ENGOs? Moreover, with so many options available, how do they decide to donate to ENGOs? These questions are rife with possibilities for future research efforts.

Conclusions

As noted by Hyneman and Shore (2013),

> Stewardship calls us to exercise godly dominion in using creation for the sake of human welfare and needs in areas such as farming, fishing, mining, energy generation, engineering, construction, trade, and medicine. As we provide for

> human welfare and needs, we are also commanded to care for the earth and all its creatures. (p. 21)

There are several findings of this study that I believe will be helpful to those interested in furthering the understanding of the motivations behind ecologically oriented philanthropy. There is no "one size fits all" approach to soliciting financial aid from this segment of the philanthropic ecosystem. The past literature and the findings of this study indicate that while there is an overarching motivation and desire to "save the planet", those who support ENGOs are also motivated by a multiplicity of reasons, e.g., preserving their own lives and lifestyles, preserving the ecosphere for those who will follow long after their demise, and a sense of commitment and purpose that fulfills their need to protect and support their fellow beings—human and other.

Another observation: I remain flummoxed and concerned by the intransigence and non-cooperativeness of all the ENGOs that I contacted. I shall not hazard a guess as to why I could not establish a relationship with any gatekeeper I had contacted. As I mentioned previously, I would suggest that future researchers establish a relationship with the ENGOs they plan to study. I feel that access to gatekeepers and leaders in those organizations would result in a participant group that can be verified by the ENGO(s) and provide access to data that I was not privy to—all of which will improve and support the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of their research effort(s).

There is also a distinct possibility that once such studies are conducted, the data if accessed by various ENGOs, would support ENGO efforts to hone and improve their recruitment campaigns and donor retention.

This concludes Chapter 5 where I discussed the purpose and nature of this study. I summarized my key findings, and presented an analysis and interpretation of my findings, by using the SDT theorem and alternate motivation theories as a backdrop. I also provided recommendations for methodological strategies for future research efforts of this sort and the potential for societal change of this and similar research projects.

As I conceived and wrote the 1st draft of this dissertation, it occurred to me that if every one of our planet's eight billion inhabitants (or at least those who are able) would contribute one dollar annually, towards efforts to ameliorate the effects of anthropogenic climate change; the amount of money would dwarf the amount of money currently contributed by corporations, governments and the "uber-wealthy". This type of funding would not only greatly address the needs of 3rd tier and island nations disproportionately experiencing the effects of our rapidly warming planet; it would also increase a sense of common purpose and ownership and elevate the collective consciousness and how we, as a species, conduct our lives. Hopefully, in a way that will result in a more equitable distribution of resources and a healthier ecosphere for all living things.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. What factor(s) may influence your monetary support to ENGOs?
2. What influences to which ENGOs you choose to donate?
3. What factors influence the amount of your annual financial contributions to ENGOs?
4. What factors influence your intent, i.e., whether you will continue to support this ENGO(s) the next calendar year and beyond?
5. What is the significance of the artifact you are sharing with me today in relation to your environmental activism?
6. Are there any other considerations or factors that have or will affect your donation(s)?