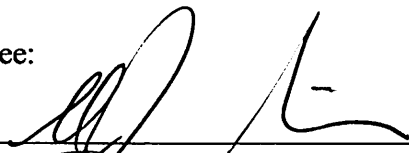


CLIMATE CONFLICT: POSITIONS AND FRAMES MOTIVATING
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

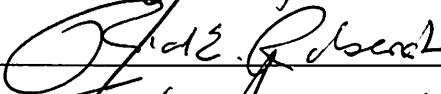
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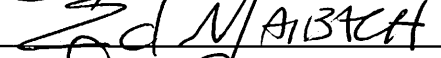
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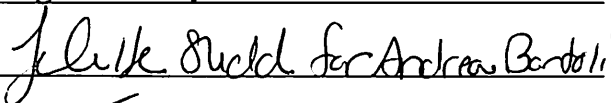
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Spring Semester 2013
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Climate Conflict:
Positions and Frames Motivating Stakeholder Engagement

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and my community. Thank you for raising me to care about social, economic and environmental justice, and thank you for teaching me to leave the world in a better condition than I found it.

I dedicate this dissertation to the Great Spirit and to the Earth. I hope we learn how to take care of her before it's too late.

I dedicate this to the many authors and activists who have inspired me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

CLIMATE CONFLICT: POSITIONS AND FRAMES MOTIVATING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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George Mason University, 2013

Dissertation Director: Dr. Solon Simmons

Researchers and practitioners in the field of conflict analysis and resolution have realized the important contribution environmental conflict plays in the ever-evolving field of conflict theory and conflict practice. Simultaneously, conflict researchers trained in positioning theory, identity theory, discourse and narrative analysis, are similarly exploring new ground in the field of communicative practice – and what this means for conflict practitioners now venturing into the fields of media and policy – in order to analyze how parties and stakeholders to a conflict will position and reposition their identities via publicly-stated frames and narratives.

This research is rooted in conflict theory and positioned at the nexus of all three theoretical frontiers: environmental conflict and communicative practice as manifested in media and policy spheres. This research examines the intractability of one particular environmental conflict, that of climate change, and explores how intractable positions and frames have been employed between the parties and stakeholders to the conflict,

leading to greater intractability and an inability of the conflict stakeholders to ultimately address and resolve the environmental conflict at hand. This research seeks to understand why one party to the conflict – the public and its role in the civil sphere – has been involved in analyzing, and consequently believing in, the existence of this environmental conflict but absent from the conflict resolution process. This research also seeks to understand why two other key stakeholders – Mainstream Media and Members of the US Congress – similarly believe in the existence of climate change but fail to act on that belief and work to resolve this environmental conflict.

Using conflict theory contributions from studies in communicative action, structuration theory and the dialectic of control, among others, this research explores the severed linkages between stakeholders' attitudinal positions vis-à-vis environmental conflict and stakeholders' behavioral trends vis-à-vis environmental conflict. The research concludes by suggesting policy prescriptions for stakeholders to reposition the environmental conflict in a way that meets the underlying needs of the stakeholders involved, while building a bridge between the attitudinal and behavioral gaps that currently exist.

This qualitative research effort is based on interviews with key informants in Media and among Members of the US Congress who have participated in and been responsible for shaping and positioning environmental conflict narratives on climate change in the public and civil sphere. Additionally, the research effort employs content analysis of data on public opinion, media reporting and congressional legislation and website content. The main research questions stemming from the original dissertation

proposal are these: What are the positions motivating Congressional and Media engagement on this issue? What new narratives will enable increased Congressional and Media stakeholder engagement? What is required for these new narratives to emerge?

In the conflict analysis and resolution field, there is scant literature addressing this nexus of environmental conflict, media and policy. Most of the literature comes more recently from the field of environmental sociology and emerges primarily within the last twenty to thirty years. This research, consequently, adds new data to the ever-emerging field of environmental conflict analysis and conflict resolution and adds to existing conflict research on the importance of positions, frames and narratives in enabling stakeholders to engage in conflict management, transformation and resolution. It does so by addressing the power brokers shaping these climate-related conflict narratives, positioning this environmental conflict in the civil sphere, and highlighting the role and responsibility of the elite informants and the public in utilizing these conflict narratives.

This research, in sum, finds a disparity between climate attitudes and climate behavior. For all three stakeholders –the public, the Media, and Members of the US Congress – the attitude and belief in anthropogenic climate change is quite strong, while behavior consistent with this belief, whether personally or professionally, is quite weak. This disparity, however, is not as pervasive when analyzing other security threats on par with climate change, like terrorism. Theoretical analysis of this discrepancy, within civil, economic and political spheres, illuminates possible cause for why the belief-behavior gap exists and what new positions and frames are necessary to close this gap.

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION TO CLIMATE CONFLICT:
POSITIONS AND FRAMES MOTIVATING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Environmental climate change may well provide the conflict field with a supra-conflict, a conflict to end interstate, intrastate and civil conflicts. Additionally, in the interim, environmental climate-related conflict has the capacity to exacerbate and escalate existing resource-related conflicts, like water scarcity or food scarcity-related conflicts. Either way, the potential for catastrophic natural disasters is real and its impact will be devastating and global. Climate change, and the attendant environmental conflict it generates, has the potential to know no political boundary, no ethnic or racial boundary, and no creed or religious boundary. Yet, despite the prevalence of strong attitudes and beliefs among stakeholders interviewed for this dissertation, that climate change is real and is happening now, there is little evidence of behavior that is consistent with these attitudes and aimed at resolving or transforming this environmental conflict.

This gap between stakeholder *attitudes* and stakeholder *behaviors* is what motivates this dissertation's research. The gap is confounding: The science behind climate change – i.e. that the planet is slowly warming due to a rise in greenhouse gases – is well documented by the majority of the scientific community (Collins et al. 2008). The anthropomorphic nature of it – that is, that humans are partially responsible for the warming of the planet – is also well documented (Collins et al. 2008). While there is

rigorous debate over the percentage of anthropogenic responsibility, there is consensus that it is at least partially anthropomorphically influenced. The ways to stop environmental climate change – through capped emissions, energy efficiency, renewable energy and conservation – are also sufficiently documented and supported. Yet, what remains clearly absent, with particular salience in the United States, is the will among stakeholders at all levels of society, as this dissertation will elucidate, to prevent climate change by all civic means possible.

US Climate Change Attitudes and Behaviors

While the United States accounts for only five percent of the world's population, at well over 300 million people, its carbon and energy footprint is exponentially larger, accounting for 25 percent of global energy use (Jacobson and Delucchi 2009). The US dominates the carbon charts as one of the world's single largest emitters. Americans on average contribute a carbon footprint of 22 tons per person per year (Vaughan 2009). Despite the sizeable contribution by Americans to global warming, and thus the concomitant culpability for threats to human and environmental security resulting from climate change, the willingness of individual citizens to reduce their carbon footprint – a key measure in preventing climate change – has been negligible. This dissertation, thus, looks at elite leaders and opinion-shapers and policy-makers in America's capital of Washington DC, and how they have shaped, received, transformed and been motivated, or unmotivated, by positions and frames concerning this environmental conflict and the intractability between conflict stakeholders that are party to this conflict.

In 2006 and 2007, there was a brief but fleeting moment of US Congressional bipartisanship in Washington DC over the issue of climate change. According to Robert Brulle, Jason Carmichael and Craig Jenkins' published piece in the *Climatic Change Journal*: "During this period...Republican anti-environmental voting decreased and Democratic statements in favor of action on climate change increased. Prominent Republican Senators such as John McCain were openly advocating for climate change legislation and working with Democratic Senators to pass it. Congressman Newt Gingrich appeared in commercials with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to support government action to address change. Clearly, partisanship over the issue of climate change declined in 2006 and 2007. Taken together, these elite cues worked to increase concern about this topic" (Brulle et al. 2012, 15).

That brief interlude of elite cues and Congressional bipartisanship, however, ended quickly. "Beginning in 2008, the level of Republican anti-environmental voting increased progressively, reaching the highest level ever recorded in 2010" (Brulle et al. 2012, 16). Notes *Washington Post* columnist and reporter Ezra Klein, "Supporting a system in which total carbon emissions would be capped and permits traded as a way of moving toward clean energy using the power of the market pricing could have put you on either the left or right between 2000 and 2008. After 2009, it put you squarely on the left" (Klein 2012).

Moreover, all attempts in the 110th US Congress by Republicans, Independents, and Democrats to pass legislation that would do two important things to prevent climate change, by creating a greenhouse gas emissions reduction agenda and requiring utilities

to source a percentage of their energy portfolio from renewable energy sources, were rebuffed. Even in the 111th US Congress, similar recalcitrance was evident as the US Congress rebuffed President Barack Obama's attempts to set the stage for a carbon cap-and-trade mechanism within the President's annual budget. In response, in April 2009, President Obama commissioned the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate greenhouse gas emissions after EPA was granted authority to do so by the Supreme Court in 2007 (Greenhouse 2007). In the 111th US Congress, at the peak of Congressional conversation on the topic of climate change, the US House of Representatives did pass a weak climate bill called the *American Clean Energy and Security Act*. However, this climate bill ultimately failed to pass the US Senate.

In the 112th Congress, climate legislation was completely dead. In February 2012, one of Washington's leading environmental reporters asserted the following: "Legislation to fight global warming has disappeared from Washington's policy agenda" (Eilperin 2012). Why Members of Congress failed to forge a formidable climate bill, and why past legislative and congressional rebuffs were so ubiquitous, could be predicated, in part, upon Members of Congress not feeling secure in the knowledge that their constituents would support them, the premise upon which many political decisions are made. The 2012 presidential campaign trail and primary debates were a good example of this election-centric consideration: climate change was hardly mentioned at all, and if it was mentioned it was quickly rebuffed.

Any previous climate-friendly statements by past presidential candidates – like the bipartisan, pro-climate change advocacy advertisement by Republican presidential

candidate Newt Gingrich, in partnership with former House Speaker and Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi (Koch 2011), and the recognition by former candidate Mitt Romney that climate change is occurring (Harris 2011) – have already been denounced, recalled or rescinded. Even President Barack Obama omitted “climate change” from his presidential lexicon in his first term. In the President’s 2010 State of the Union (SOTU), “climate change” was mentioned only twice. In the President’s 2011 SOTU address it was not mentioned at all and in the 2012 SOTU address, it was mentioned only once, and only to recognize that “The differences in this [House of Representatives] chamber may be too deep right now to pass a comprehensive plan to fight climate change” (WhiteHouse.Gov 2012). In the 2013 SOTU address, it was finally mentioned.

Despite the aforementioned lack of Congressional and Presidential leadership, a majority of American attitudes are concerned about climate change – a majority that could provide Members of the US Congress and the US President with sufficient support. A Gallup poll showed that 51 percent of the American public worried a “great deal” or a “fair amount” about the issue of climate change (Brulle et al. 2012, 2). More convincingly, polling done by Yale University and George Mason University on “Climate Change in the American Mind: Americans’ Global Warming Beliefs and Attitudes in November 2011” (Leiserowitz et al. 2011e) showed that an increasingly solid majority of Americans – 63 percent – think that global warming is happening. Those numbers have increased even further in more recent 2012 polling.

These American attitudes vis-à-vis climate change are relatively consistent over time, irrespective of who is in charge of Congressional policymaking and US presidential

campaigns. When the American public was polled in May 2011 by Yale University and George Mason University, a similarly solid 64 percent thought that climate change was happening (Leiserowitz et al. 2011b). These figures are up slightly from June 2010, which found American attitudes at 61 percent, and up from January 2010, which polled at 57 percent, but down slightly from November 2008, which polled at 71 percent (Leiserowitz et al. 2011e).

Not only do American attitudes strongly recognize the existence of climate change but also they strongly support Congressional action to do something about it. In a related study by Yale-GMU titled “Public Support for Climate and Energy Policies in November 2011” (Leiserowitz et al. 2011f) an impressive 66 percent of America supported a large or medium scale effort to reduce global warming even if it had large or moderate economic costs. In this same survey, another 62 percent supported protecting the environment even if it reduced economic growth, and 54 percent believed environmental protection improves economic growth and provides new jobs. An even more surprising number of Americans – 60 percent – “strongly support” or “somewhat support” a carbon tax (provided all revenues would be returned to taxpayers by reducing their federal income tax), a number unheard of in an American media that primarily promulgates, disputationally, the belief that a carbon tax is a non-starter with the American public.

These findings bode well for conflict practitioners interested in preventing climate change because it means that there is a majority of public stakeholders willing to engage and willing to transform the conflict by supporting action to prevent climate change.

Attitudes alone, however, are insufficient. This majority is not engaged politically to help Members of the US Congress feel empowered to prevent climate change. Look at Yale-GMU's study on "Americans' Actions to Conserve Energy, Reduce Waste and Limit Global Warming in November 2011" (Leiserowitz et al. 2011d). When asked how many times, over the past 12 months, Americans wrote letters, emailed, or phone government officials about global warming, 87 percent said "never". A similarly significant number, at 89 percent, in the related 2010 study by Yale-GMU (Leiserowitz et al. 2010) also had never posted a comment online in response to a news story or blog about global warming. In the 2011 study, again, a similarly significant and high number – 81 percent – had never volunteered with or donated to an organization working to reduce global warming. Significant numbers had never "rewarded," at 55 percent, or "boycotted," at 62 percent, companies based upon their global warming position and products (Leiserowitz et al. 2011d).

Even America's young generation of millennials – often considered to be more environmentally conscious than older generations – are less active than their elders were when they were young. This inactivity was confirmed by a 2012 study by the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, as reported by the *Washington Post*, which showed a steady decline in personal action to save the environment, citing that millennials were "least likely to say they had made an effort to conserve electricity and fuel" and "less likely to write a letter to their member of Congress or to try to change things on a global level" (Irvine 2012).

Based on these data, two questions arise. The first relates to the civic engagement of constituents; that is, why are constituents, whose attitudes recognize the existence of climate change, not more engaged in influencing their Members of US Congress to take action in the prevention of global warming? The other question relates to the Members of the US Congress and members of the Media; that is, do these influential stakeholders accurately represent their constituents' opinions, and what are these elite stakeholders' attitudinal and behavioral relationships to the concept of climate change?

The second of these two questions will be the primary study of this dissertation research, although the first question will also be given theoretical treatment and analysis. Given that Members of the US Congress and the Media are influential groups who represent and shape, in different ways, constituent opinion, the research outlined in this dissertation aims to uncover Congressional and Media attitudes, behaviors, and context vis-à-vis climate change prevention.

Research Assumptions and Structure of Dissertation

Researchers and practitioners in the field of conflict analysis and resolution have realized the important contribution environmental conflict plays in the ever-evolving field of conflict theory. Conflict researchers trained in positioning theory, identity theory, discourse and narrative analysis are similarly exploring new ground in the field of communicative practice – and what this means for conflict practitioners who are now venturing into the fields of media and policy – in order to analyze how parties to a conflict will position and reposition their identities via public frames and narratives.

This research, rooted in conflict theory and positioned at the nexus of all three theoretical frontiers, examines the intractability of one particular environmental conflict – that of climate change – and explores how intractable positions, frames, and their attendant narratives, have been employed between the parties in conflict, leading to greater intractability and an inability of the conflict stakeholders to ultimately address and resolve the environmental conflict at hand.

This research seeks to understand why one party to the conflict – the public and its role in the civil sphere – has been involved in analyzing, and consequently believing in, the existence of this environmental conflict but absent from the conflict resolution process. This research also seeks to understand why two other key stakeholders – the Media and Members of the US Congress – similarly believe in the existence of climate change but fail to act on that belief and work to resolve this environmental conflict. Using conflict theory contributions from studies in communicative action, structuration theory and the dialectic of control, among others, this research explores the severed linkages between stakeholders’ attitudinal positions vis-à-vis environmental conflict and stakeholders’ behavioral trends vis-à-vis environmental conflict. The research concludes by suggesting policy prescriptions to reposition the environmental conflict in a way that meets the needs of the stakeholders involved, while building a bridge between the attitudinal and behavioral gaps that currently exist.

The main research questions from the original dissertation proposal are these: What are the key positions motivating Congressional and Media engagement on this

conflict? What new narratives will enable increased Congressional and Media stakeholder engagement? What is required for these new narratives to emerge?

The research examines how these influential and elite stakeholders first learned about the concept of climate change, what were their attitudes toward the concept, how they engaged based on their attitudes vis-à-vis climate change, and what obstacles or struggles they faced. The narratives elicited and data gathered in the interview process gives this research a representative understanding of influential attitudes, behaviors and contexts vis-à-vis climate change and highlights what existing or new narratives may be useful in preventing climate change.

This qualitative research, consequently, adds valuable new data to the ever-emerging field of environmental conflict analysis and conflict resolution by addressing the power brokers shaping these climate-related narratives, positioning this environmental conflict in the civil sphere and highlighting the role and responsibility of the elite informants and the public in utilizing these conflict narratives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the conflict analysis and resolution field, there is scant literature addressing this nexus of environmental conflict, media and policy. Most of the literature comes more recently from the field of environmental and traditional sociology and emerges primarily within the last twenty to thirty years. The literature review chapter will be organized into three categories: first looking at the history of climate change narratives and climate change positions; second at recent social movements, as manifested in media and policy spheres

in response to climate change; and third at current attitudinal and behavioral findings regarding the public's response to climate change.

The first section explores the literature on the history of climate response, the rise and fall of climate change as a social problem (Ungar 1992), and how the public conquered their fear of climate through various discourses and positions (Hulme 2007). The second section explores “social capital, collective action and adaptation to climate change” (Adger 2003), the ecological issue-attention cycle (Downs 1972), and the “mass media representations of anthropogenic climate change science” and how it has moved from “convergence to contention” (Boykoff 2007). The third section explores current public opinion, discrepancies between attitude and behavior vis-à-vis the environmental conflict and what contexts are necessary – e.g. egalitarian versus individualistic – for increased stakeholder engagement in resolving this environmental conflict.

Chapter 3: Positioning Climate Conflict

Working within conflict theories on positioning, metaphors, and frames, this chapter looks at how the story of climate change has been narrated over the years. When the concept of impending climate change hit the mainstream news-waves most explicitly and most saliently in the 1990s, environmental stakeholders primarily positioned it as an environmental issue. But in recent years, these positions and frames have changed. No longer is the concept of climate change conceptualized solely as an environmental issue that requires action by environmental stakeholders.

Climate change is now a religious issue, an economic issue, a security issue, a social issue – and more. Many of these new positions and frames, however, are dependent upon the use of an “*other*” and an “*us-versus-them*” paradigm. This arguably creates more conflict in the process and marginalizes and disempowers other stakeholders from getting involved in the prevention of global warming.

This research, consequently, also looks at how religious, economic, security, and social positions emerged in response to the environmental-only frame. It examines how an “*us-versus-them*” paradigm promulgated a negative association or connotation with the *other* in the discursive positioning by the environmental, security, and social/health sectors as they engaged in the prevention of global warming.

Chapter 4: Research Methods:

Media and Congressional Attitudes, Behaviors and Context

This chapter works off the premise that studying elite political perspectives is critical for understanding influence on attitudes and behaviors. According to the aforementioned paper published in 2012 for the *Climatic Change Journal* by Brulle et al., politicians affect the way that Americans view climate change more than almost anything else. In “Shifting Public Opinion on Climate Change: an empirical assessment of factors influencing concern over climate change in the US, 2002-2010,” the authors assert that “the most important factor in influencing public opinion on climate change...is the elite partisan battle over the issue” (Brulle et al. 2012, 17).

The qualitative research methodology chapter, consequently, entails elicitive interviews with influential stakeholders. The first interviews take place with Members of the US Congress and the second set of interviews occur with key mainstream Media representatives primarily in Washington DC (with additional locations including other media hubs in London, San Francisco, Boston, Atlanta and New York). These two influential stakeholder groups – Members of the US Congress and members of the mainstream Media – hold the keys to understanding the recent climate change gridlock in America, both as national policymakers and national storytellers, respectively.

Among Members of the US Congress, the interviews occurred with key stakeholders on relevant Congressional committees as well as key Congressional stakeholders representing climate-impacted states (both coastal and resource-rich states). Among the members of the Media, the interviews took place with both editors and environmental reporters at mainstream outlets like the *Financial Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Economist*, *Bloomberg*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *AFP*, *Washington Times*, and Congressionally-oriented newspapers like *Roll Call*, *The Hill*, *Politico*, and *Huffington Post*, as well as producers and reporters at television and radio stations like Fox, CNN and NPR.

Lastly, a note about the interviews with the Members of the US Congress: I had originally set out to interview an equal number of Republicans and Democrats serving in the US Congress. However, it quickly became clear that Republicans did not want to be interviewed, despite the fact that the interviews were explicitly off-the-record, confidential and not-for-attribution.

Dozens of Republican offices declined the opportunity to be interviewed. I tried approaching the same offices multiple times over the period of two years, mindful of the fact that perhaps political dynamics and current policy were impacting the Congressperson's willingness to be interviewed. The same trend continued, however, and these offices – even the more centrist or moderate Republicans who have publically acknowledged the existence of climate change – continued to decline the opportunity to interview.

I continued this effort with so-called Blue Dog Democrats – i.e. centrist Democrats who voted against the House climate legislation, specifically the *American Clean Energy and Security Act* – who have, historically, been against climate change legislation and have publically disavowed the existence of climate change. Similar trends occurred and even the Blue Dog Democrats declined the opportunity to be interviewed.

These trends were confirmed by a *National Journal* story published in late 2011 (Davenport 2011). That year, the *National Journal* reached out to all Republican Senators and Representatives to survey these GOP Members of Congress on their views on climate change. According to the *National Journal*, “most [Republicans] rebuffed repeated inquiries,” and “some flatly refused to answer questions when approached in person, and their offices declined to respond to repeated phone calls and email requests,” (Davenport 2011). In light of the fact that it was the *National Journal* – a major, well-respected Washington media outlet – reaching out to Members of Congress, the response by Republicans in the US Congress is both surprising and unsurprising.

It is surprising because most offices will respond to media requests of this nature. Even the most controversial of media requests elicits some kind of response from Congressional staff lest the Member of Congress be referenced in the media report as being “unresponsive” or “failed to return calls,” emails, etc. For most Congressional offices, these examples above regarding unresponsiveness would be considered a less favorable impression to make in public media than an ambiguous statement that walks a fine gray political line.

Yet the *National Journal*'s observations of Republican declines are ultimately unsurprising because I encountered the exact same response when approaching GOP offices on the very same topic. Despite my obstacles in obtaining equal number of Republican and Democratic Members of the US Congress, I was still able to interview Republican Members of Congress, who, off the record, were candid about their increasing beliefs in the existence of anthropogenic climate change, data which will be expounded upon further in this dissertation.

Chapter 5: Understanding Why Media and Congressional Engagement on Climate Change is Limited

What becomes clear in the previous Chapter Four is that key informant Media and Congressional attitudes, according to this research data, are generally in favor of addressing climate change. Media attitudes and Congressional attitudes are generally in consensus regarding the fact the climate change exists and that this environmental conflict should be addressed and ultimately managed, transformed or resolved. However,

contrasting the strong attitudes and beliefs found in the data is the existence of behaviors that do not represent nor are consistent with key informant attitudes and beliefs. Thus, this chapter delves into the possible theoretical underpinnings explaining the lack of personal and professional engagement in this environmental conflict by the Media and Members of the US Congress. The chapter looks at range of conflict theories, from communicative action, structuration theory and dialectic of control, to works on the civil sphere and the dialectic of enlightenment.

Chapter 6: New Narratives:

Positioning Climate as Threat to US Democracy and Way of Life

This chapter focuses on developing new narratives to position the environmental conflict as a threat to a particular form of American identity, US democracy and American way of life. It first explores, through extensive content analysis, three case studies that serve as parallels and “lessons learned” in the development of any new narrative to tackle climate change. The three case studies, and their concomitant content analysis, all focus on traditional armed terrorism and its threat to American identity, US democracy and the American way of life.

The chapter’s first case study’s content analysis will look at mainstream media’s response to, and coverage of, the terrorism threat to aforementioned American ideals. The second case study’s content analysis will look at Congressional response to this threat, and the third case study’s content analysis will look at the public constituent response to the terrorism threat. The purpose of all three case studies is to examine how media, policy

and the public's responses to a similarly intractable conflict – i.e. terrorism – may serve as an example for developing equally compelling narratives that can motivate an increase in stakeholder engagement on the intractable issue of climate change.

The latter section of this chapter, then, postulates, based on findings from the three previous case studies' content analysis, ways to develop a new narrative. The new narrative would position environmental climate change as a form of terrorism, which poses a threat, equal in severity to the threat posed by traditional human-armed terrorism, to American identity, US democracy and the American way of life. This part of the chapter suggests how to position the narrative, frame the threat, and create binary positions for engagement.

Chapter 7: Requirements for New Narratives to Emerge

Based on the research data from interviews with key Media and Congressional informants, there are clear and explicit findings and recommendations as to what is needed and what is required for new narratives to emerge that will help liberate and motivate further stakeholder engagement by all stakeholders – be they in the media, in policy or in the public sphere – to resolve this environmental conflict.

This chapter looks specifically at five primary sections of required activity: media behavior, congressional behavior, egalitarian contexts, communication, and constituent outreach. These are not arbitrarily designated. Rather, they stem straight from the research data with key informants, as they themselves articulated obstacles that prevented their attitudes from taking behavioral shape.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: Climate as Conflict: Next Steps for Conflict Practitioners

This final chapter provides a composite picture of the road ahead for conflict practitioners who are keen to engage environmental conflict issues, like climate change, and involve key conflict stakeholders – be they media, policymakers, or public constituents – in the proactive analysis and resolution of these increasingly emerging environmental conflicts.

The conflict field has, historically, adapted fluidly and farsightedly, to emerging conflict concepts and fields of study. Environmental conflicts are no different as an emerging field that will require the conflict field's theoretical and practical skills. This concluding chapter, thus, integrates the previous chapters' findings into a synthesized whole and positions the conflict community at the fore in transforming the attitudes and behaviors of key stakeholders involved in the most salient of environmental conflicts, that of climate change.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will cover three key areas related to this dissertation's environmental conflict research and data analysis. First, the literature review will examine the history of climate response: specifically, the rise and fall of climate change as a social problem (Ungar 1992); the "conquering of climate and the discourses of fear and their dissolution" (Hulme 2008); and a case study "comparing the marketability of the ozone hole and global warming" (Ungar 1998).

Second, the literature review will cover social movements: specifically, "social capital, collective action and adaptation to climate change" (Adger 2003); the issue attention cycle of ecology (Downs 1972); and "US mass media representations of anthropogenic climate change science" (Boykoff 2007). Thirdly, and lastly, the literature review will explore attitudinal and behavioral findings related to climate change and environmental conflict: specifically, how the American public is relating to the issue of climate change as manifested by their attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.

In this researcher's scan of literature on the topic of climate change, on the social response to climate change, and on the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors by elite stakeholders and influencers, it became apparent that this dissertation research is advancing new inquiries on: the relationship between climate change stakeholders, specifically between Members of the US Congress, members of the mainstream Media

and members of the public; the existing narratives that have influenced, however effectively or ineffectively, the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors by all three stakeholders (i.e. Congress, Media, the public) on the environmental conflict; and the requirements for new, and perhaps more effective, narratives to emerge that will enable stakeholders to more proactively prevent, manage, transform and resolve this environmental conflict.

History of Climate Response

Research on the history of societal responses to climate change has been developed largely in the last twenty to thirty years. Since the public's response to climate change is relatively recent, the research field on this particular aspect is still relatively underdeveloped. However, there is some solid analysis worth exploring that will give insight into what has happened previously and how successful or unsuccessful it has been in generating narratives that motivated Congressional policymakers, the mainstream Media and the public into action. Specifically, this section looks at the published literature on 1) the rise and fall of climate change as a social problem (Ungar 1992), 2) the "conquering of climate, discourses of fear and their dissolution" (Hulme 2007), and 3) a case study that "compares the marketability of the ozone hole and global warming" (Ungar 1998).

The Rise and Fall of Climate Change as a Social Problem (Ungar 1992)

In Sheldon Ungar's work on the "Rise and [Relative] Decline of Global Warming as a Social Problem" (Ungar 1992), Ungar begins by noting that: "scientists' claims about

global warming failed to attract much public attention until the extraordinary heat and drought of the summer of 1988 created a social scare” (Ungar 1992, 483). A “social scare,” suggests Ungar, is an event that unleashes the public’s fears and foments demand in the political arena, attaining “celebrity” status among social problems (Ungar 1992, 493). A social scare can also be compared with a “moral panic” (Cohen 1972; Ben-Yehuda 1986).

For environmental claims like climate change, then, to be effective in commanding public attention and ultimately stimulating public action, they require dramatic real world events. With the case of climate change, examples could include record heat levels, devastating droughts, and more frequent hurricanes. However, the attention is not sustainable if the event diminishes in severity. In fact, and perhaps unsurprisingly, suggests Ungar, there is a positive correlation between the intensity of public attention to the climate and the intensity of the dramatic environmental event. When the intensity of the latter is greater, so too is the intensity of the former.

The work of environmental claims making is not as simple as described above, however, and is much more complex than the mere rise and fall of a dramatic event. Accompanying the rise and fall of the social problem is the rate at which groups with power consider the claim legitimate and the social problem real. In response to this predicament, Joseph Schneider in his work on social problems theory (Schneider 1985) urges a focus on how these power groups’ activities affect the viability of claims and definitions. Working off of Schneider’s assessment, this dissertation research focused on interviews with persons of influence and groups with power – e.g. Members of the US

Congress and members of the Media – to observe how effective these groups have been in making the environmental claim of climate change a legitimate one.

Furthermore, Phillip Lowe and Jane Goyder in their book on *Environmental Groups in Politics* (Lowe and Goyder 1983) note that attention to the environment is episodic and follows the issue-attention cycle, which will be explained in the next section on social movements. They suggest that public attention to environmental claims is not merely in response to dramatic events or powerful group persuasion, but, additionally, include “sustained periods of economic expansion, which magnify growth’s environmental impact; relative prosperity, which provides leeway for environmental regulation; a sense of social limits to growth; and the alarm dramatic events create” (Lowe and Goyder 1983, 32; Ungar 1992, 485). This work by Lowe and Goyder is useful in understanding how the US financial crisis, which started in 2008 but really became apparent in the markets and in US domestic policymaking in the subsequent years of 2009-2011, undermined public attention to climate-related claims.

Returning to Ungar and why he thinks, “that efforts to create concerted public interest about global warming failed is not surprising” (Ungar 1992, 489). It is because, says Ungar, “Global warming is not founded on everyday experience, has no immediate effects, and is not readily observable” (Ungar 1992, 489). To these points, let us take a look at the immediacy, visibility and transience of the threat of climate change to understand the difficulty of turning this threat into an ‘Hungarian social scare’.

On the immediacy of a climate change threat, when it comes to environmental claims making, global warming has a particularly uphill battle in generating sufficient

public attention and public action. Why, because climate change and its potential negative impacts do not yet appear to pose an immediate threat. The threat associated with climate change is distant, postponed, remote, and nascent. With other anthropogenic threats, like an oil spill or air pollution, the claims are much easier to make. This is a hindrance for climate change because, as Ungar notes, the “transformation of a latent dread into a social scare is a problematic process,” because people generally avoid thinking about threats until they are “forcibly pressed upon them” (Ungar 1992, 486).

On the visibility of a climate change threat, while other visible anthropogenic threats like an oil spill or air pollution allow the public to witness the problem and witness the entity responsible for the problem, with climate change, not only is the threat difficult to observe as “greenhouse gas sources are so diffuse that a folk devil is virtually impossible to identify,” (Ungar 1992, 489), but the entity responsible for the threat is not external but rather within every individual, and their lifestyles, making any attempt to address the responsible party much more difficult.

On the transience of a climate change threat, the existence of global warming has been consistently criticized by references to the weather. Under an accelerated global warming scenario, it is assumed that the weather will get hotter because the globe is warming. This is where climate critics and climate skeptics will cite a recent cold season as proof that climate change is not happening and conveniently disregard recent record-breaking heat levels, droughts, and increasingly unpredictable and more frequent natural disasters.

Consequently, due to the aforementioned immediacy, visibility and transience limitations, Ungar describes how difficult it is for climate change to remain a sustained social scare: “The greenhouse effect is not a good candidate for enduring attention in public arenas. Besides the transience of weather is the related problem of how to sustain a sense of dramatic crisis over uncertain future predictions not tied to a fearful folk devil. Once the heat dissipated, more intermittent and less emotional intense coverage replaced the critical mass of attention given the greenhouse effect. Effectively, the issue-attention cycle expired” (Ungar 1992, 495).

For these reasons, it becomes very difficult for climate change to sustain a social scare and constitute an environmental claim that has an immediate threat capable of become a social problem that garners public action. The next section delves into how societies have responded to previous variations on an environmental conflict theme and how they have elected to manage, transform or resolve the conflict using, and later conquering, fear-based discourses and narratives.

“Conquering of Climate: Discourses of Fear and Their Dissolution” (Hulme 2008)

This section’s research on the historical response to climate change centers less on Ungar’s analysis on what constitutes a social problem, social scare and claims making, and more on the relationship between humans and nature and the discourse of fear.

In their collective writings on climate history and human action, Jan Golinski (Golinski 2007) and Roderick McIntosh (McIntosh et al. 2000) talk about climate being bound up in notions of identity, personal or national, and in social memory. Climate

events are historical markers by which humans catalogue and chronicle their memory (Harley 2003; Orlove 2003). In “The Conquering of Climate: Discourses of Fear and Their Dissolution,” says Mike Hulme, “Human cultures have always been capable of constructing narratives of fear around their direct or vicarious experience of ‘strange’, unknown or portended climates: The history of humanity is characterized by an endemic anxiety” (Hulme 2008, 6).

While John Dryzek’s work on the politics of earth and its concomitant environmental discourses (Dryzek 1997) elaborates four dominant environmental discourses in the modern era – survivalism, sustainability, environmental problem-solving and green radicalism – Hulme takes a longer view with three discourses selected from, respectively, “the pre-modern, modern and post-modern eras: climate as judgment (a fear of unknown causes), climate as pathology (a fear of unknown places) and climate as catastrophe (a fear of unknown futures)” (Hulme 2008, 7).

In Hulme’s work on “climate as judgment,” a pre-modern-era fear, he explores how the fear of unknown climatic causes dissolved. According to Hulme, climate was conquered through Enlightenment rationality and through the adoption of naturalistic explanations of weather. Additionally, “professionalization of meteorology as a science and the emergence of the first daily weather forecasts (Anderson 2005) weakened the theological narrative of fear and judgment around the existence of climate (Jankovic 2006)” (Hulme 2008, 8).

In Hulme’s work on “climate as pathology,” a modern-era fear, he explores how the fear of unknown climatic places dissolved. The collapse of the Imperial Project and

the increase of technology and mobility of the twentieth century, says Hulme, conquered the white northerners' proclivity to use tropical climates as conduits for racial ideology and pretexts for moral and social superiority.

In sum, these two pre-modern-era and modern-era climate-related fears were conquered through the rationalization of the causes of weather extremes and through acclimatization to tropical climates. The result of which, suggests Hulme, "Unknown causes became known; unknown places were made safe" (Hulme 2008, 11).

In Hulme's work on "climate as catastrophe," a post-modern-era fear, he explores how the fear of unknown climatic futures will be dissolved. In fact, Hulme wonders how humans will conquer the contemporary discourse of fear about future climate change or if they will remain perpetually under the shadow of climate catastrophe. Hulme suggests that the fear will be defused with "new cultural movements and new hierarchies of power changing the discourse of fear about unknown climatic futures" (Hulme 2008, 13).

Hulme also notes that new opportunities have arisen and new narratives have emerged in the last ten years. Since September 11, 2001, suggests Hulme, the discursive frameworks of fear and catastrophe have expanded substantially. The so-called war on terror, for example, provided a danger on par with the danger of climate change (Hulme 2008, 11). Hulme suggests that climate comparisons could be made and inferences could be drawn from the war on terror. Linguistic and metaphorical references could be borrowed from the war on terror and used in tackling the features of unknown climatic futures. This dissertation research will explore this more fully in later chapters.

The global war on terror, for example, used alarmist language, which is religious and normative in nature, and imminent and irreversible. Capturing the parallels, Hulme cited Stephen Hawking, who said, “Terror only kills hundreds or thousands of people. Global warming could kill millions. We should have a war on global warming rather than the war on terror” (Associated Press 2007). What both the global war on terror and the fear of unknown climatic futures tap into is “a deeper and non-negotiable human anxiety about the future” (Hulme 2008, 13). Since science is not in the practice of offering certain futures, with certain ranges and certain knowledge, the relative uncertainty of science plays upon the human psyche’s propensity to fear the future.

Maxwell Boykoff, in a *Washington Post* column, captures American policymakers’ mindfulness of the human psyche’s propensity to fear the future and suggests that policymakers have worked to undermine the fear associated with climate change. “There is power in how language is deployed, and people setting policy agendas know this well,” which is why, says Boykoff, “in 2002, Republican political strategist Frank Luntz issued a widely cited memo advising that the Bush Administration should shift its rhetoric on the climate” (Boykoff 2012). In the memo, Luntz suggested that it is “time for us to start talking about climate change instead of global warming...climate change is less frightening than global warming” (Boykoff 2012).

According to Boykoff, however, this agenda was not pushed solely by Republicans in power but also by environmental organizations that may have unwittingly assumed they were empowering the public through this narrative shift. In 2009, the nonprofit EcoAmerica issued a report recommending a rebranding of terms “climate

change” and “global warming,” replacing them, instead, with phrases like “our deteriorating atmosphere” (Boykoff 2012). Unwittingly, perhaps, the environmental organization EcoAmerica was disabling, not enabling, the public’s and the constituents’ will to counter climate change through the pacification of the narrative. In contrast, it is likely that Frank Luntz fully recognized that the pacification of the narrative by the Republican president at the time, US President George W. Bush, and by the entire Republican Party would lead to a laissez faire attitude and, concomitantly, a lackadaisical policy agenda in preventing, transforming or resolving this environmental conflict.

There is a precedent, however, for active public engagement in stopping a climate catastrophe with unknown climatic futures. The next section’s case study examines how American policymakers, and the American public, were successful in creating, identifying, and responding to an unknown climatic future that spelled catastrophe for the country. This case study details the ease with which the public prevailed in responding to a previous environmental conflict, that of ozone depletion, contrasted by the propensity of American policymakers and the American public to respond similarly to a future climate-related conflict.

Case Study: “Comparing the Marketability of the Ozone Hole and Global Warming” (Ungar 1998)

This case study applies the theoretical frameworks from aforementioned sections on social problems, social scares, claims making, and the fear of unknown climactic futures. In comparing societal response to two dramatic environmental claims – one of ozone

depletion and one of impending climate change – Ungar evaluates which one of the two claims was more effective in sustaining public attention (Ungar 1998). The lessons illuminated here in this section will be utilized later in determining the way forward in creating new narratives.

Before delving into the comparison between ozone and climate, it is important to look at the cultural context upon which these claims were made. According to Stephen Hilgartner and Charles Bosk, in their work on the rise and fall of social problems, they suggest that “some problems may be easier to relate to deep mythic themes, and thus they provide better material to ponder collectively” (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988, 64). Moreover, Anders Hansen, in his work on media and the social construction of the environment, “admits that cultural givens serve to privilege some issues and not others” (Ungar 1998, 510). Notes Hansen, “Not all environmental issues or problems engage with, or benefit from, a culturally deep-seated imagery of symbolic richness...and they are disadvantaged by this in competition for elaboration in media and other meaning-creating fora” (Hansen 1991, 453).

The ozone, which fits in quite nicely with American cultural contexts (which this dissertation will discuss later), comes with some comparable characteristics between ozone depletion and climate change. For example as Ungar points out, the likenesses between ozone holes and climate change can be enumerated in the following way:

“Both social problems are portrayed as global environmental threats pertaining to the atmosphere. Both are claimed to result from anthropogenic emissions. Both are invisible as such, and can only be detected through assembling scientific

research and claims. Both are slow-onset problems whose main predicated risk is in the future (Wilkins and Patterson 1990). As well, both portend, potentially apocalyptic outcomes. Finally, the two problems intersect, since CFCs are a potent greenhouse gas” (Ungar 1998, 516).

Given the similarities between these two social problems, why did climate change ultimately fare so poorly in comparison to ozone regarding its ability to activate the public? Apparently, “rhetorical strategies did the trick” (Ungar 1998, 519). According to John Hannigan, author of *Environmental Sociology: A Social Constructionist Perspective*, the “ozone hole was an exaggeration or metaphor and satellite pictures were doctored and colored to make them more graphic” (Hannigan 1995, 45).

Additionally, suggests Ungar, the ozone threat could be “rendered into a simple, neat, foreshortened and tightly coupled schematic as a result of its Hollywood affinities. Stated succinctly, ozone loss leads to the increased bombardment of the earth by lethal rays. The idea of rays penetrating a shield meshes nicely with abiding and resonant cultural motifs. These Hollywood affinities range from the shields on the Starship Enterprise to Star Wars (the movies and the Strategic Defense Initiative) through a multitude of video games and children’s television shows. The penetration model, in other words, is simple and deeply ingrained. Overall, it seems that the Hollywood affinities with ozone depletion are so simple, lucid and tangible that they come closest to being regarded as an ontological reality. Altogether, then, ozone depletion seemingly fulfilled the conditions for a hot crisis. With global warming, a future orientation, the

absence of a ready-made lay model to encapsulate the scientific model, and the high cost argument effectively precluded such a crisis” (Ungar 1998, 523).

What other challenges plagued climate change but failed to afflict the ozone hole problem? According to Ungar, “the problem of selling global warming through the weather depends on a mix of observable conditions, fortuitous events and timing, and social, political and media practices” (Ungar 1998, 522). While the list is long regarding challenges facing climate change, in comparison to ozone depletion, there are three challenges particularly worth mentioning.

First, scientists have a tendency to define climate change as a future-oriented problem, one that has substantial consequences in 2050, 2100, and beyond, although this trend is changing slightly with scientists suggesting climate change effects are already being felt. Ungar notes that this creates a “discursive liability,” (Ungar 1998, 512) since most American policymakers and the public are focused on the immediacy of now and unwilling to make sacrifices for future generations. Selling a future-oriented problem, therefore, becomes extremely problematic and difficult.

Second, the American lifestyle, and the high levels of energy consumption required to support it, is directly implicated by climate change. As Ungar notes, climate change is “social articulated through the fossil fuel economy,” (Ungar 1998, 519) whereas the ozone threat was connected primarily with secondary chemicals and only a handful of societal processes (e.g. refrigerators, spray cans, etc.), thus implicating fewer human activities as a result.

Third, the narrative trajectory of climate change was not predisposed to an immediate and urgent sense of climate crisis that would allow it to be taken seriously within the policy community – a community that is predicated on and oriented around short-term thinking and short-term crises, the way that the ozone crisis did. Ungar talks about a “hot crisis” which creates “moral panic” (Ungar 1998, 510), good examples of which can be found in the global response to potential pandemics (e.g. Asian flu, etc.), or essentially anything that can give rise to an imminent sense of personal threat. According to Ungar, “the trajectory of ozone depletion as it manifested itself in the atmosphere of the mid-1980s in Northern industrial nations afforded a sustained sense of a hot crisis” (Ungar 1998, 513).

In this dissertation’s data below, an environmental reporter who has been covering the environment for over thirty years confirmed these comparisons regarding the marketability of the ozone in the following assessment: “We got the Montreal Protocol [an agreement which banned ozone-depleting chemicals] for two reasons: One, because NASA finally came up with a visual that showed the picture of what the hole looked like and you could monitor it week to week and see how the hole was getting bigger and smaller. It was something we could see and it was immediate and it was there. The second thing that changed it was Ronald Reagan’s skin cancer. He had a couple of lesions on his nose and someone in a Cabinet meeting made a direct connection between skin cancer and UV radiation. So they said to the public, remember those pictures with the ozone hole? You’re going to have a lot more people getting skin

cancer. And so the general public, right then, saw the threat. They saw the immediate threat to their family, and they saw the threat to the world.”¹

The importance of this ozone hole metaphor cannot be overstated, particularly in reference to its ability to generate new attitudes and behaviors, a key lesson that will be explored in later sections regarding the development of new narratives to counter climate change. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their book *Philosophy of the Flesh*, “metaphor allows conventional imagery from sensorimotor domains to be used for domains of subjective experience” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 45).

Furthermore, “metaphors are part of the cognitive unconscious,” which are acquired “automatically and unconsciously via the normal process of neural learning,” and which “provide subjective experience with extremely rich inferential structure, imagery, and qualitative feel, when the networks for subjective experience and the sensorimotor networks neutrally connected to them are coactivated” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 56-59). This dissertation will delve into the relevant application of metaphors in later chapters.

This ends the section on the history of climate change as articulated in the published research by environmental sociologists primarily. How American policymakers and the American public have organized and mobilized – effectively or ineffectively – in response to climate change is the subject and focus of the next section.

¹ Interviews: MM: PR-6

Social Movements

Within the research literature, as witnessed in the section immediately above, the history of societal response to climate change is relatively newly documented. The section above examined, from a historical perspective, the attempts (failed or otherwise) to position climate change as a social problem. The focus, therefore, was on climate as the problem. This section, instead, will look at the social characteristics of climate change responses. First, we will look at literature on “social capital, collective action, and adaptation to climate change” (Adger 2003). Second, we will study the ups and downs with ecology (Downs 1972), also known as the issue attention cycle, and how this literature will be valuable to understanding and motivating stakeholder response to climate change. Third, we will drill down on the US “mass media representation of anthropogenic climate change science” (Boykoff 2007), which will set the pretext nicely for this dissertation’s research interviews with the Media.

“Social Capital, Collective Action, and Adaptation to Climate Change”

(Adger 2003)

In his research, Neil Adger is hopeful about societies’ ability and capacity to adapt to climate change (Adger 2003). The key to doing so, says Adger, in “Social Capital, Collective Action, and Adaptation to Climate Change,” is societies’ willingness to act collectively. This is where social capital comes in. Without it, the society has a slim chance of operating collectively to combat and counter climate change. Says Adger, “Social capital describes relationships of trust, reciprocity, and exchange; the evolution of

common rules; and the role of networks. Social capital captures the nature of social relations and uses it to explain outcomes in society. It gives a role to civil society and collective action for both instrumental and democratic reasons and seeks to explain differential spatial patterns of societal interaction. It has long been recognized that social capital is central to the lived experience of coping with risk. Social capital, in enhancing security and reducing risk directly or through interactions with the state, market, and other parts of society, is likely to be a key element in any strategy for adapting to climatic hazards” (Adger 2003, 391).

Interestingly, when it comes to the US, wherein this dissertation’s research takes place, social capital, particularly of the kind measured by trust, reciprocity, etc., is quite difficult to find. It turns out, looking at the research by economists Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett in their book *The Spirit Level: Why Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009), that the greater the income inequality in society, the greater the distrust and the lesser the reciprocity, all of which equates to less social capital.

According to these authors, the US, which has the highest income inequality in the rich world as measured by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, also has the highest rates of social and health problems, including the highest distrust among society, the lowest social mobility, the highest drug addiction and mental illness, the highest incarceration and homicide rates, the highest obesity and teenage pregnancy rates and the highest infant mortality rates – all of which undermines social capital and social trust (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, 20).

These findings by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, consequently, have profound impacts on America's ability to harness social capital for the greater good of society. If social movements and collective action depend on high amounts of social capital, then it becomes quite clear how and why the US public and its policymakers struggle to act collectively on climate change, especially when the problem of climate change is predicated upon the current generation looking out not only for the existing society but for the generations to come after it.

Neil Adger also talks about reducing and responding to risk, which is another way of talking about resilience and society's ability to withstand climate shocks and environmental conflicts. While the US, since September 11, 2001, has invested heavily in *responding* to the terrorism risk abroad, it has not focused as concertedly on *reducing* the terrorism risk abroad or ensuring domestic resilience to the risk. A recent report by the international research think-tank Institute for Economics and Peace, titled the "Structures of Peace" (Institute for Economics and Peace 2011), looks at the societal structures that increase a society's resilience and, consequently, a society's ability to respond to natural or human-made shocks.

Extrapolating from 300 data sets – e.g. World Bank, Economist Intelligence Unit, UN data sets – the eight structures of peace include, somewhat self-evidently, a well-functioning government, sound business environment, equitable distribution of resources, acceptance of the rights of others, good relations with neighbors, free flow of information, high levels of education and low levels of corruption.

If a society ensures that these eight structures are maturely and sufficiently developed, the IEP report suggests, then a society's resilience is high and its ability to respond to and rehabilitate from shocks to the system is also high. Examine the US through this eight-factor or eight-pillar lens and three areas of concern become quite apparent. The US suffers from serious inequitable distribution of resources with the highest rates of income inequality since America's Great Depression. According to the Congressional Budget Office (Congressional Budget Office 2011), the Census Bureau (Census 2011), the United Nations Human Development Report (United Nations 2011) and the *Spirit Level* (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009), the US has the highest rates on income inequality in the rich world and some of the highest poverty and inequality rates in America's recent history. Furthermore, the US has some of the lowest levels of education, which can help ameliorate inequality, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Programme on International Student Assessment (Associated Press 2011). And in terms of a well functioning government, the US is suffering from the lowest approval ratings in history; with historic lows of public approval at 9 percent (Schieffer 2011), thanks, in part, to partisan gridlock.

These issues are becoming even more apparent as the US continues to recover from the recession, struggle with a growing debt and deficit problem, and deal with a US Congress that gets stuck in political deadlock ever more frequently. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult for social capital to be harnessed in order to spur collective action in response to climate change. Beyond the need for sufficient social

capital as a prerequisite for collective action, there is the relevance of timing and the attention span stakeholders give to a particular conflict, as the next section will explicate.

“Up and Down with Ecology: The Issue-Attention Cycle” (Downs 1972)

Despite these downward trends in America’s economic policy – from growing inequality to growing debt – there is a tendency, says Anthony Downs in “Up and Down with Ecology – The Issue-Attention Cycle,” for American policymakers to claim that every problem can be solved provided it is injected with a little American ingenuity and innovation. This outlook, suggests Downs, “is rooted in the great American tradition of optimistically viewing most obstacles to social progress as external to the structure of society itself. The implication is that every obstacle can be eliminated and every problem solved without any fundamental reordering of society itself, if only we devote sufficient effort to it. In the optimistic American tradition, a technological solution is initially assumed to be possible in the case of nearly every problem” (Downs 1972, 39).

If true, this is particularly problematic for climate change because society will 1) see climate change as external to the structure of society despite it being quite the opposite and inherently internal; 2) think that it can combat climate change without fundamentally reordering society, an ultimately untenable notion; and 3) believe that a technological solution will solve the problem through some kind of geo-engineering effort.

This last point is particularly salient within the American context as scientists and engineers spend monies on the research and development of geo-engineered tools that

will assist society in climate change adaptation but not climate change prevention. In other words, the focus of research and development funds is often on agricultural products (e.g. genetically modified seeds, etc.) that require little water, which will be a likely reality in future climate change-stricken environments, or mirrors that can reflect the sun's rays back into the galaxy before they ever enter the earth's atmosphere. This American can-do spirit is present in this dissertation's interviews with Members of the US Congress who think that this country will be able to *adapt* to climate change realities.

These "innovation" and "ingenuity" narratives by American policymakers, however, are not the only obstacles to a long-term sustained attention to climate change. While climate change hit a peak in public attention to the issue in 2009 – exemplified, in part, by the final emergence of an *American Clean Energy and Security Act* climate bill passing a very politically divided House of Representatives – it soon dropped from policymakers' attention.

Why? Certainly the recession's economic issues dominated the domestic policy, but Anthony Downs also argues that the American public is accustomed to consuming news as entertainment and that in order for the American public to remain interested, the news about climate change must remain dramatic and exciting. Cites Downs, "As soon as the media realize that their emphasis on this problem is threatening many people and boring even more, they will shift their focus to some new problem" (Downs 1972, 42).

Media, for example, are likely to be interested in capturing the more vivid visuals associated with environmental pollution, but even that interest, notes Downs, will likely wane. Claims Downs, "the greater the apparent threat from visible forms of pollution and

the more vividly this can be dramatized, the more public support environmental improvement will receive and the longer it will sustain public interest. Ironically, the cause of ecologists would therefore benefit from an environmental disaster like killer smog that would choke thousands to death in a few days. Yet even the most powerful symbols lose their impact if they are constantly repeated” (Downs 1972, 46-47). This is an important lesson for a later chapter on what is required for new narratives to emerge and the recurrence of the call for more disaster-related visuals by interviewees and key informants involved in this dissertation research.

Lastly, a society’s ability to keep attention to an issue sustained and prioritized is dependent upon the society’s ability to blame the issue or ill on another human or a public enemy. This explains, in part, why the global war on terrorism has had little trouble sustaining public attention. Why? Because the terrorism can always be blamed on an outside human enemy – be it a country fostering it, a religion fostering it, or an ideology fostering it. Climate change, however, is different because no outside human source, or public enemy, is fully responsible, although some prefer to pin culpability on developing countries for climate change or on industry within developed countries.

In contrast to terrorism, the entire American public is ostensibly responsible for climate change. It is a problem that is integrated intimately into our lifestyle choices, our energy system, our diets, our clothing, all of it. Concludes Downs: “Gathering support for attacking any problem is always easier if its ills can be blamed on a small number of public enemies” (Downs 1972, 47).

This section thus illuminates the deficits and shortcomings that accompany the sustaining of a social problem. What role media has to play, as narrators and storytellers of climate change in exacerbating or accelerating these deficits and complicating this environmental conflict's ability to be communicated clearly to the public, is the focus of the next section.

“From Convergence to Contention: US Mass Media Representations of Anthropogenic Climate Change Science” (Boykoff 2007)

Maxwell Boykoff articulates best why it is critical, when evaluating climate change narratives as this dissertation's research intends to do, to understand mass media representations of the issue (Boykoff 2007). In “From Convergence to Contention: United States mass media representations of anthropogenic climate change science,” Boykoff explains why appropriate framing is so important and how framing can exacerbate a conflict situation:

“US mass media coverage of anthropogenic climate change signifies key frames derived through complex and non-linear relationships between scientists, policy actors and the public that is often mediated by journalists' news stories. Thus, through framing – constructed through processes of power and scale – media coverage of anthropogenic climate change can depict an arena of great confusion and intense conflict rather than scientific consensus.” (Boykoff 2007, 478)

When it comes to coverage of climate change in the US, the American public has indeed witnessed media coverage that depicts an arena of great confusion and conflict, rather

than scientific consensus, the reasons for which will be explained further in this dissertation's research analysis.

Maxwell Boykoff notes that more science and more scientific data can actually lead to more complicated policy making because it offers up more data and information to choose from and different interpretations of that science. This may seem counterintuitive and it actually diverges from what some key informants, in the interview data, suggest is required and necessary – e.g. more scientific data – for a more effective public communications approach to climate change.

The opening up to the public of the “disputatious nature of scientific inquiry” (Rayner 2006, 6), a practice which happens frequently in the US but less frequently in the European Union, without a solid understanding of the overwhelming areas of consensus among scientists, has a tendency to undermine public confidence in science. Rayner explains:

“From one point of view, public exposure to scientific disagreement is a good thing. We know that science is not capable of delivering the kinds of final authority that is often ascribed to it. Opening up to the public the conditional, and even disputatious nature of scientific inquiry, in principle, may be a way of counteracting society's currently excessive reliance on technical assessment and the displacement of explicit values-based arguments from public life. However, when this occurs without the benefit of a clear understanding of the importance of the substantial areas where scientists do agree, the effect can undermine public confidence” (Rayner 2006, 6).

The mainstream media in America tend to exploit this trend by focusing on and featuring the disputatious element, rather than the consensus. As this dissertation's research will show, the media tends to favor a "if it bleeds it leads" approach, feature both sides of the story equally, and place opposing views together in a story or during an interview, again equally – a tactic that leaves the viewer, reader and consumer of media in doubt as to what is the scientific consensus if both sides are presented with equal merit and weight.

Media is not the only industry with a vested interest in generating contention and disbelief in the scientific consensus. The fossil-fuel-based carbon industry is also interested, notes Maxwell Boykoff:

"In the case of anthropogenic climate change, the stakes within and between carbon-based industry and society are high. Therefore, the science-practice interface becomes a particularly strategic discursive battlefield, and one particularly important for intervention through approaches in geography" (Burgess 2005; Boykoff 2007, 478).

This discursive battlefield, then, is why a discourse analysis of climate change – especially within the policy and media communities – is so critical, because that is where the battle is taking place.

In his work on framing, Robert Entman notes that media and policymaking communities have the power to frame the issue of climate change and to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition" (Entman 1993, 52). Framings, continues Maxwell Boykoff, construct the meaning guiding a particular discourse and

shape the interviews of news. Therefore it is particularly worrisome, thinks Boykoff, that “media depictions consistently framed discussions of anthropogenic climate science as contentious, despite the aforementioned consensus” (Boykoff 2007, 481). The discursive battlefield is made worse by several climate-related challenges, which Boykoff enumerates below:

1. “First is the coherence and cohesion of a group of dissenters – called climate contrarians – that have utilized media attention to challenge findings regarding the presence of anthropogenic climate change, coupled with insufficient responses from the managerial scientific community” (Boykoff 2007, 482).
2. “Second are the challenges in dealing with uncertainty in translations between society and policy as well as the public via mass media. Scientists have a tendency to speak in cautious language when describing their research findings, and have a propensity to discuss implications of their research in terms of probabilities. For journalists and policy actors, these issues of caution, probability and uncertainty are all difficult to translate smoothly into crisp, unequivocal commentary often valued in communications and decision-making” (Boykoff 2007, 482).
3. “Mass media have effectively amplified uncertainty through coverage of climate contrarians’ counter claims regarding anthropogenic climate change, without providing context that these claims have been marginalized in the climate science community” (Dunwoody 1999; Boykoff 2007, 483).

4. “Tight deadlines can lead to stories that rely on just one source of information, and they can limit the ability of journalists to both comprehend and communicate complex climate science” (Weingart et al. 2000; Boykoff 2007, 483).

5. “Economic considerations have led to decreased mass media budgets for investigative journalism (McChesney 1999). This trend has served to affect communications of scientific information when complex scientific material is simplified in media reports” (Anderson 1997; Boykoff 2007, 483).

Boykoff shows above how easily the public can be confused by the media’s amplification of complex claims and counter-claims. This is particularly problematic for climate change given the complexity of the science, the ambiguity of clear options for countering climate change, and the existence of myriad spectrums of belief.

In sum, notes Maarten Hajer in *The Politics of Environmental Discourse* (Hajer 1995), “mass media play an important role in the theatre of discursive structuration” (Boykoff 2007, 484). In the US, mass media has chosen to discursively structure a “departure from the convergence of views in science over time regarding anthropogenic climate change” (Boykoff 2007, 484), which has only propelled the conflict. Given media’s ability to confuse and complicate a scientific consensus, what is the public expected to think about this environmental conflict? The next section delves into American public opinion, using recent research into American attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, by Yale and George Mason Universities and their respective centers for climate change communication.

Public Opinion

Now that this chapter has looked at the literature regarding historical responses to climate change and the literature regarding social capital and social movements previously associated with climate change, we can examine current public opinion, attitudes and behaviors vis-à-vis climate change. Besides the media, as elucidated in the previous section, who else is impacting the American public perception on climate change?

According to Brulle et al., it is the following:

“While media coverage exerts an important influence, this coverage is itself largely a function of elite cues and economic factors. Weather extremes have no effect on aggregate public opinion. Promulgation of scientific information to the public on climate change has a minimal effect. This implication would seem to be that information-based science advocacy has had only a minor effect on public concern, while political mobilization by elites and advocacy groups is critical in influencing climate change concern” (Brulle et al. 2012, 1).

This is interesting because it augments the previous section’s assessment regarding media’s impact and, additionally, places responsibility on elite political cues and other economic factors. Allowing for multiple sources of public influence, it is time to explore Americans’ feelings about climate change specifically. This is where the work of Yale University and George Mason University will be helpful, beginning with attitudes towards climate change.

Despite the previous section’s notes about media’s propensity to inflate the disputatious elements of scientific inquiry – and thus the intimation by the media that the

verdict is still out when it comes to climate change – a majority of America still believes climate change is happening. In November 2011, according to the report on “Americans’ Global Warming Beliefs and Attitudes” by Yale and George Mason University (Leiserowitz et al. 2011e) a solid 63 percent of the public agreed that global warming is happening. In May 2011, that number was one percentage point higher at 64 percent, according to the Yale-GMU poll on the same topic (Leiserowitz et al. 2011b).

Three years prior, in 2008, the public was polling at 71 percent, according to Yale-GMU. The subsequent decline was likely a result of a range of factors, from the economic crisis, climategate, policymakers’ inability to reconcile a climate bill in Congress, abnormal weather patterns (e.g. extremely cold winters) and general media attention to the issue – all of which undermines public confidence and trust. A Gallup 2011 poll backs up Yale-GMU data trends, recording that it found that a majority of the American public, at 51 percent, worried “a great deal” or “a fair amount” about the issue of climate change (Brulle et al. 2012, 2).

It is worth examining these factors more closely to understand why there was a drop in public opinion between 2008 and 2011. First, in terms of the economic crisis, starting in 2007-2008, when climate change, and public attention to it, was more prevalent in the media, unemployment was hovering at 6 percent and the foreclosure crisis and the crash of the financial markets had not yet begun. By 2010 and 2011, however, unemployment skyrocketed to over 10 percent and the crash of the housing and financial markets was felt all across America, making anything as distant and remote as a climate change fall far down the rungs of priority for the public.

Second, climate critics and skeptics seized an opportunity around the “climategate”² scandal to take out of context, misinterpret and undermine trust in climate science, irrespective of the fact that the climategate email scandal did not in any way represent an erosion of consensus among climate scientists and climate data. The majority of the climate forecasting by climate scientists was still solidly backed by an international scientific consensus (Plumer 2011).

Third, in terms of policymaking, while there were initial intimations that the administration of first-term President Barack Obama would enact climate legislation, a reality not likely under the previous administration of President George W. Bush, the realities in the US Congress quickly became clear: the Senate would not be able to pass the House’s climate-focused *American Clean Energy and Security Act*, despite how weak the climate bill was and despite the fact that climate change had risen, albeit briefly, to the near top of voters’ agendas.

Fourth, in terms of abnormal weather, during these few years between 2008 and 2011 – the years in which a decrease in climate change belief occurred – there were record cold snaps and snowfalls throughout the east coast. This advanced climate skeptics’ perspective that global warming could not be happening given the levels of winter cold experienced.

² Excerpted from Yale-GMU’s paper on “Climategate, Public Opinion, and the Loss of Trust”: “On November 19, 2009, more than 1,000 confidential emails from the Climatic Research Unit at the University of East Anglia were posted to the Internet. A few of these emails were subsequently cited by climate change critics as evidence that British and American scientist had changed their results to make global warming appear worse than it is, suppressed global warming research they disagreed with, and conspired to delete communications relevant to freedom of information requests. Dubbed ‘Climategate’ by the media, the scandal generated considerable press attention across the United States and around the world, with articles and editorials published in major newspapers and scientific journals, and stories broadcast on major television and radio networks” (Leiserowitz et al. 2010).

Lastly, in terms of media attention to the issue, given that most Americans only learn about climate change through the media, it becomes particularly important what the media decides to do in terms of agenda setting. Based on the paper by Yale University and George Mason University titled “Climategate, Public Opinion and the Loss of Trust” (Leiserowitz et al. 2010) media reporting on climate change hit its peak in 2007 (due in part to Kyoto protocol ratification prevailing in the news) then began to decline in 2008 and 2009.

Now, with the few exceptions of specialized print reporting by a few remaining environmental reporters who have not been fired due to media’s financial constraints and staff cutbacks, there is less climate reporting in mainstream media, a dynamic to be further explicated by the dissertation interview data.

Per the previous section’s analysis regarding media’s professional proclivity to represent contentious perspectives equally and play upon the disputatious nature of scientific inquiry, it is worth noting – based again on the November 2011 survey by Yale-GMU on “Americans’ Global Warming Beliefs and Attitudes” (Leiserowitz et al. 2011e) – that 60 percent of the American public agreed with one of the following answers: 1) most scientists think global warming is not happening, for which 3 percent voted, 2) that there is a lot of disagreement among scientists about whether or not global warming is happening, for which 39 percent voted, or 3) that they didn’t know enough to say, for which 18 percent voted.

The takeaway from this survey is that there is a sizable number of Americans with some serious doubt regarding the veracity of climate scientists and their science, a reality exacerbated by media's reporting of both sides equally.

This doubt was confirmed in my interviews with the Media who expressed similar doubt about scientific consensus. This also explains why, according to same November 2011 study by Yale-GMU, that 73 percent of the American public says they need a little, some or a lot more information about climate change, thus confirming the literature's findings on media's ability to sow doubt in the American mind by not representing the climate science consensus. Additionally, it is worth noting, because it confirms the previous section's concerns about climate change's ability to serve up a social scare, that when asked in the same November 2011 survey by Yale-GMU if global warming "will hurt you personally," a total of 70 percent of Americans said it would only hurt them a little, not at all, or didn't know. The far-off nature of this environmental conflict claim makes the urgency of climate change all the more difficult to muster, as noted by these poll data.

These numbers can help explain why the majority of America is not active in preventing climate change – not as a shopper, not as a constituent keen on influencing policymakers, and not as a participant in the media. (There was one positive trend: egalitarian sections of American society are more active in preventing climate change than individualistic sections, a dynamic to be explored later.)

When Americans were polled in 2010, in the Yale-GMU survey "Americans' Actions to Conserve Energy, Reduce Waste, and Limit Global Warming" (Leiserowitz et

al. 2010) about their social, economic and political advocacy efforts vis-à-vis climate change, the level of activity was shockingly low, despite a majority belief that climate change is happening. For example, on a consumer level, the majority of Americans were not rewarding or punishing companies based upon the company's commitment, or lack thereof, to reducing climate change. When asked if they reward companies taking steps to reduce global warming by buying their products, 67 percent of Americans said they have never done this in the last 12 months. Similarly, when asked if they punish companies that are opposing steps to reduce global warming by not buying their products, an even greater 71 percent of Americans said they never did this in the last 12 months.

Beyond consumer habits, similar trends were apparent in the community, the media, and the political lives of Americans as well. Eighty-four percent of Americans did not volunteer with, or donate money to, an organization working to reduce global warming in the 12 months prior to being surveyed. Eighty-nine percent of Americans did not post a comment online in response to a news story or blog about global warming in the 12 months prior to being surveyed. And 89 percent of Americans had not written letters, emailed or phoned government officials about global warming – a reality that is reiterated in this dissertation's research interviews with Members of the US Congress who cite that they are simply not hearing from their constituents on this matter.

By November 2011, over one-and-a-half years after the aforementioned study, these advocacy numbers had not changed that significantly, although there was some small improvement. In Yale-GMU's "Americans' Actions to Conserve Energy, Reduce Waste and Limit Global Warming in November 2011" (Leiserowitz et al. 2011d) 55

percent of Americans had never rewarded companies that are taking steps to reduce global warming by buying their products, and 62 percent had never punished companies that are opposing steps to reduce global warming by not buying their products – an improvement, in terms of increased climate advocacy, of roughly ten percentage points on both activity fronts since the 2010 polling by Yale and George Mason Universities.

However, when it comes to supporting nonprofit organizational efforts or contacting elected officials, very little change was found between 2010 and 2011 polling by Yale and GMU. In late 2011, eighty-one percent of Americans had never volunteered or donated money to an organization working to reduce global warming (a three percentage point difference from the 2010 score of 84 percent). And 87 percent had never written letters, emailed or phone government officials about global warming (a two percentage point difference from the 89 percent score in 2010). Interestingly, in May 2011, this number was actually higher, at 90 percent of America who had never contacted their government officials about global warming.

This lack of behavior among Americans highlights a contradiction between attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Despite some of the damage done to belief intensity due to climategate and the subsequent loss of trust in climate science (see Leiserowitz et al. 2010), if a majority of Americans still believe that climate change is happening, why are behaviors so far afield from the attitudes? The ABC Triangle is helpful in visualizing and mapping the contradictory attitudes, behaviors and context vis-à-vis climate change:

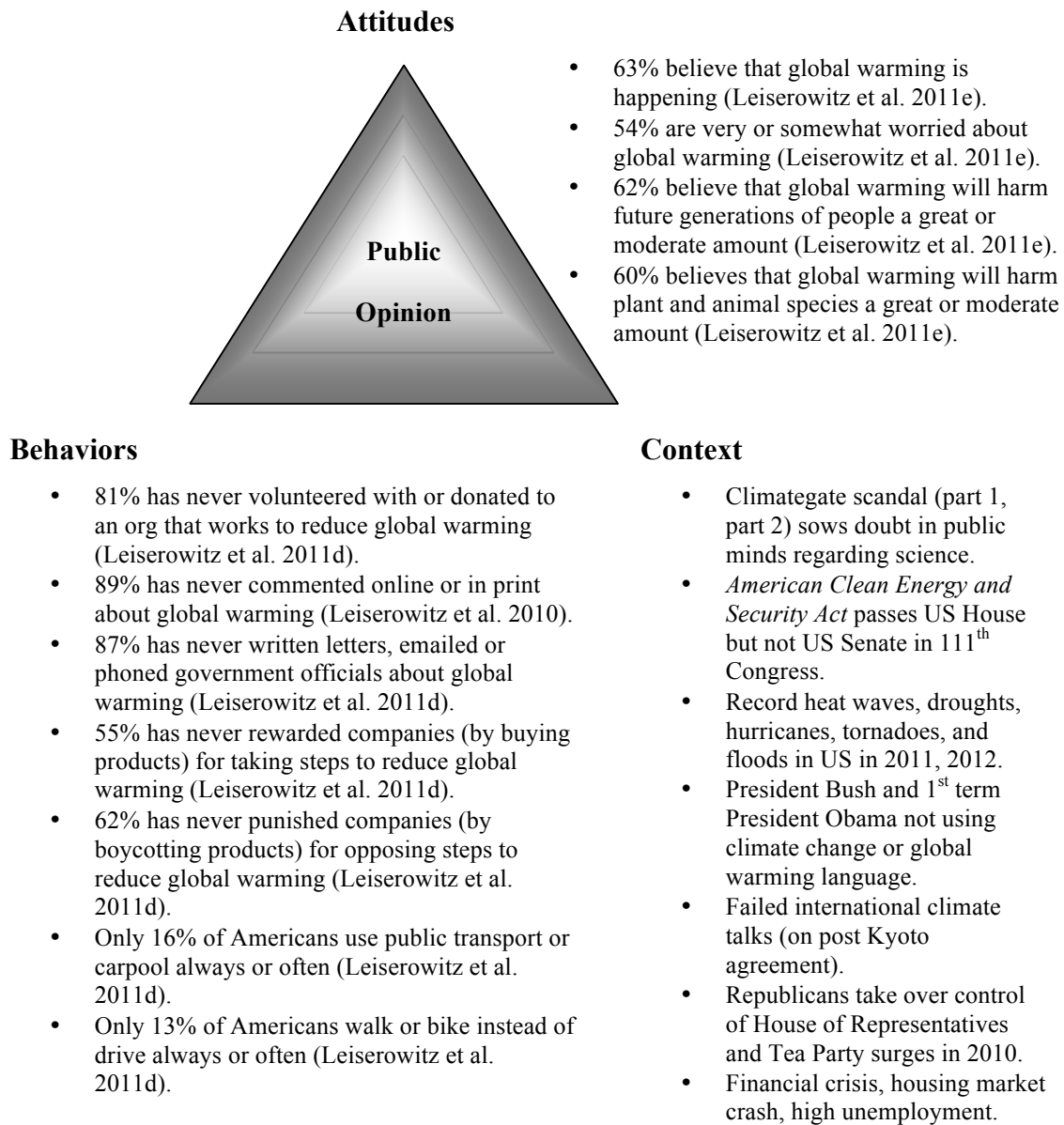


Figure 1: Public Opinion: Attitudes, Behaviors, and Context (ABC Triangle³)

Since “climategate” first broke the news in late 2009, “American efforts to enact climate policy at the national level have been undermined by a confluence of events—

³ Adapted from the ABC Triangle found in Simon Fisher et al., *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action* (New York: Zed Books, 2000) 25.

from the emergence of the Tea Party movement, to a new Republican majority in the US House of Representatives in the 112th Congress, and the 2012 US Presidential election campaign—which have created a political movement that denies the reality of anthropogenic global warming and its potential impacts, rejects climate legislation, and aims to weaken environmental regulations and the agencies that enforce them” (Maibach et al. 2012).

Prior to “climategate,” while aggressive emissions-reducing cap-and-trade legislation was never politically palpable (e.g. a watered-down *American Clean Energy and Security Act* passed the US House but not the US Senate), the email scandal heralded a watershed moment for Republicans who wanted to further “sow doubts in the American public’s mind. The ground was already fertile: Americans tended to view even established facts about climate change as uncertain and open to debate” (Maibach et al. 2012), and American media tended to represent both perspectives of a news story and the disputatious nature of scientific inquiry, which intentionally intimated an equality between climate scientists and climate skeptics vis-à-vis evidence and legitimacy.

“Republican-controlled state governments, led by Texas and Virginia (Fahrenthold 2010) and supported by similar petitions from the US Chamber of Commerce (Bravender 2010), cited climategate in a challenge to EPA’s December 2009 Endangerment Finding, a finding which determined that climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions endangers human health and welfare and requires regulation under the *Clean Air Act*. The Virginia Tea Party followed suit (Roanoke Tea Party 2009), stating that climategate confirmed that cap-and-trade legislation was a political

non-starter, while the Texas Tea Party called climategate a ‘disgraceful scientific chronicle,’ adding that climate scientists failed in proving that carbon dioxide causes warming and climate change” (Maibach et al. 2012). Incidentally, the Tea Party’s anti-big government philosophy complemented well the more mainstream Republican anti-climate-regulation thinking. Republican Texas Governor, and former Republican presidential candidate, Rick Perry tapped into this sentiment when suing the Environmental Protection Agency for its decision to regulate greenhouse gas emissions (Price 2010), saying he was “defending Texas against federal overreach, citing ‘climategate’ as evidence that regulation was unwarranted” (Maibach et al. 2012).

As I, and others, expounded in this coauthored *WIREs* journal opinion article “The legacy of climategate: undermining or revitalizing climate science and policy”? (Maibach et al. 2012), these events became the foundation for two emerging trends. First, anti-environmentalism soon spread throughout Republican presidential candidacies, with “Newt Gingrich calling for the elimination of the Environmental Protection Agency (Cillizza 2011), Michelle Bachmann pledging to have the Agency’s doors locked and lights turned off (Broder 2011) and mainstream Republicans calling the Agency a job-killer (Lochhead 2011)” (Maibach et al. 2012). Second, anti-federalism and deficit reduction agendas in the 112th Republican-controlled House of Representatives witnessed cuts across the board (Hook et al. 2011), including planned cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency (Walsh 2011) and other conservation, energy efficiency and environmental protection programs. Two years later, as US Congressman Darrell Issa tried to prevent EPA from controlling greenhouse gas emissions from

vehicles (Eilperin 2011), “climategate” appears to have contributed to an increasing anti-environmentalism and anti-regulation fervor in the Republican Party, at the state and federal levels and among 2012 presidential candidates.

Going forward, whether or not the Republican Party’s conservation bloc or the general public will support these more extreme measures remains to be seen. Either way, at the political level at least, the climate science community’s ability to impact policymakers and policymakers has undoubtedly been shaken.

Conclusion

In summary, this literature review illuminates two critical findings. The first has to do with the problem of climate change. There is a scientific consensus that climate change is a problem. There is little consensus, however, among American policymakers and the American public, that this problem is a top priority or that it needs to be addressed immediately. Climate change, as a problem, has not evolved to the level of a social scare or moral panic, with an attendant flight corridor. That this environmental conflict has failed to achieve this status is due, in part, to the amorphous and distant nature of climate change. It has no visible ozone hole, for example. As a result, the issue attention cycle came to a close in recent years, and public awareness of this issue drew nigh, with little mention of it by policymakers or by the media.

The second key finding from the literature review is that while a majority of the American public tends to believe the climate change is happening, they are generally not doing anything about it to advocate for its prevention. Large majorities have not

contacted their elected officials, purchased or boycotted products based on a company's climate change position, contacted or written the media about their concerns, or supported an nonprofit organization that is advocating for the prevention of global warming.

It is within this context, that we now look at recent narratives and frames that have tried to keep this environmental conflict high on the public profile and motivate the public to act on the issue of climate change. The next chapter on positioning theory examines all the various positions and frames used in recent years to motivate subsections of society. But as this chapter and subsequent chapters will note, this marginalized approach to positioning and framing climate change, is inherently flawed.

CHAPTER 3: POSITIONING CLIMATE CONFLICT

When climate change was introduced into the international political arena as a conflict requiring the proactive commitment of all nations to avert impending crisis it was framed primarily as an environmental issue. Much of the messaging associated with the signing, in 1997, of the Kyoto Protocol – an agreement benchmarking greenhouse gas emissions reduction – was that the environment was in immediate peril and that humans must act now to prevent further damage. The Kyoto mandate was so controversial, however, that it failed to enter into force until 2005, eight years after it was originally signed. Heavy-emitting countries, like the US, refused to ratify it. In the US, where the US Congress protested Kyoto, the agreement was framed as a detriment to US jobs and the economy. While the environment was certainly important, cried Congress, it could not usurp the rights and needs of Americans.

In fact, in the 105th Congress, the Byrd-Hagel Resolution in the U.S. Senate (S. Res. 98), sponsored by Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) and Senator Chuck Hagel (R-NE), was passed by the Senate by a vote of 95-0 and resolved that it was the sense of the Senate that “the United States should not be a signatory to any protocol to, or other agreement regarding, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of 1992, at negotiations in Kyoto in December 1997, or thereafter, which...(B) would result in serious harm to the economy of the United States” and that “(2) any such protocol or

other agreement which would require the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification should be accompanied by a detailed explanation of any legislation or regulatory actions that may be required to implement the protocol or other agreement and should also be accompanied by an analysis of the detailed financial costs and other impacts on the economy of the United States which would be incurred by the implementation of the protocol or other agreement” (US Senate Resolution 1997).

In recent years, however, this narrative has changed. No longer is climate change conceptualized solely as an environmental issue or position. Global warming is now a religious issue, an economic issue, a security issue and a social issue. For some Christians in the US, climate change has been contextualized as an issue under the purview of the biblical call for sound stewardship over the earth. For the business community in the US, some best practices to avert climate change – like energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives – have been trumpeted as financial cash cows, providing new money, new business and new jobs, during a time of economic downturn and recession.

For some US security and military analysts, Members of the US Congress, and the administrations of President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama, global warming prevention activities were bolstered by the newfound desire to achieve energy security and energy independence. Given the high price of petroleum, the volatility of the oil market, and escalating conflicts in oil-rich nations, the paradigmatic shift towards energy independence and energy security empowered US officials to proactively prevent

climate change through energy efficiency and renewable energy investments – in the sole effort, of course, to reduce dependence on foreign oil.

For the public health advocates and humanitarians who recognized that climate change would wreak havoc not only on poor populations in developing countries, through disease and environmental disaster, but also on US coastal populations like New Orleans (e.g. Hurricane Katrina), climate change prevention became a social issue. It was about saving the humans (as opposed to the polar bears). Additionally, concerns by public health advocates in the US regarding greenhouse gas emissions' impact on the health of the American public have become more mainstream in recent years.

The transition that the climate change prevention movement experienced in merely a few years, going from primarily an environmental issue to other positions, or frames, through which stakeholders could engage, fostered an enormous boost in participation by additional stakeholders. This is significant not only for climate change prevention but it also bodes well for other related conflicts that may require the full and active participation by all stakeholders and parties to this conflict.

Positioning Theory

Positioning theory can help explain the emergence of religious, economic, security and social frames and how or why they were developed in contrast to the environmental frame, which was initially erected to address climate change and motivate stakeholder engagement. Positioning theory attempts to explicate social phenomena “located in a time/space grid,” and evaluate “conversations and other close-order symbolic exchanges,

institutional practices and the use of societal rhetorics; all forms of discursive practice” (Harre and Langenhove 1999, 15).

The central concept guiding positioning theory is the proposition that individuals assign themselves “fluid parts or roles...in the discursive construction of personal stories,” and that these positions are metaphorical concepts “through reference to which a person’s moral and personal attributes are compendiously collected” (Harre and Langenhove 1999, 17). Furthermore, positioning theory focuses on “understanding how psychological phenomena are produced in discourse,” and suggests that life is composed of discourse-related “episodes that constitute the basic elements of both our biographies and of the social world” (Harre and Langenhove, 5).

Familiar to the conflict analysis and resolution community, positioning theory is also related to the concept of a worldview, which Gary Palmer notes “refers to the fundamental cognitive orientation of a society, a subgroup, or even an individual,” (Palmer 1996, 113) and includes “fundamental existential and normative postulates and themes,” (Palmer 1996, 114) and which Jayne Docherty cites is “a concept that attempts to articulate the consequences of human activities that are individual as well as collective, psychological as well as social” (Docherty 2001, 50).

George Lakoff’s theoretical approach, alternatively, packages the concepts of worldviews and positioning, instead, as frames, which are the “mental structures that shape the way we see the world” (Lakoff 2004, preface). Frames, according to Lakoff, are activated by language and are part of the “cognitive unconscious – structures in our

brains that we cannot consciously access, but know by their consequences: the way we reason and what counts as common sense” (Lakoff 2004, preface).

Understood from any of these perspectives – positioning theory, worldview or frames – the environmental narrative was failing to resonate, or connect, with many diverse stakeholders in the US. The need, thus, for new positions, worldviews and frames, with new metaphors, was necessary in order to effectively connect and improve upon the communicability of the climate change concept via a new language.

The Role of Metaphors in Positioning

Critical in the conceptualizing and operationalizing of the discursive positioning process is the use of metaphor. Language and framing is all about metaphor. Benjamin Whorf observed that metaphors assist the individual, engaged in an act of positioning, with “concepts of time, space and matter...conditioned by the structure of particular languages,” and that in metaphors there are “traceable affinities between (a) cultural and behavioral norms, and (b) large-scale linguistic patterns” (Shotter 2002, 105). Relevant to this, and in a later chapter, I will continue to discuss the use of Hollywood “affinities” and their effect on public belief and behavior vis-à-vis environmental conflict engagement.

The metaphor may also serve as the linkage between a Palmer and Docherty understanding of worldview and the Harre and Langenhove understanding of positioning. In support of this thinking, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, authors of *Metaphors We Live By*, note that conceptual metaphors “ground abstract concepts through cross-domain

mappings using aspects of our embodied experience,” and “establish the inferential structures within philosophies” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 543). What Lakoff and Johnson are saying is that the mapping of the embodied experience is the act of positioning, while the structures within philosophies are the actual worldviews. The authors continue by saying that metaphors are inherent and pervasive within worldviews and positioning, both of which are subjectively constructed: “Conceptual metaphor is pervasive in both thought and language. It is hard to think of a common subjective experience that is not conventionally conceptualized in terms of metaphor” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 45). Moreover, metaphors “can function to help an audience make connections between a speaker’s otherwise seemingly unconnected utterances and give intelligible linguistic form to otherwise merely sensed feelings or tendencies shared between speakers and their audiences” (Shotter 2002, 6). The importance of these connections in communication should not be underestimated, says Whorf:

“Connection is important from a linguistic standpoint because it is bound up with the communication of ideas. One of the necessary criteria of a connection is that it be intelligible to others, and therefore the individuality of the subject cannot enter to the extent that it does in free association, while a correspondingly greater part is played by the stock of conceptions common to people. The very existence of such a common stock of conceptions, possibly possessing a yet unstudied arrangement of its own, does not yet seem to be greatly appreciated; yet to me it seems to be a necessary concomitant of the communicability of ideas by language” (Waterman 1957, 205).

This last point by Whorf, regarding a metaphor's connection capacity, is particularly crucial to this dissertation's analysis of how the leaderships of each of the four sectors – religious, economic, security and social – were able to mobilize their corresponding communities through the metaphoric usage of a common stock of conceptions with which these constituents could associate. Apparently, the environmental frame failed to resonate, or connect, with many diverse stakeholders. The need, thus, for new frames with new metaphors was necessary in order to effectively connect, and improve upon, the communicability of the climate change concept through new language. The following section analyzes the frames undergirding each sector's positioning, and concomitant metaphor utilization, which ultimately enabled their communities to begin work to prevent climate change and substantially alter the previously intractable, environmental-only narrative.

Positions on Climate: Environmental, Religious, Economic, Security, and Social

Environmental Positioning: Earth First

In the 1990s, intractable conflicts between environmentalists and the local fishing, hunting, mining and logging communities were common.⁴ The environmentalist was frequently perceived to place priority primarily, if not solely, on the environment, often at the perceived expense of local communities. Anti-old-growth-logging environmentalists

⁴ My environmental policy work in the Pacific Northwest in the 1990s at the height of some of the environmental conflicts between loggers, fishing industry and environmentalists can give testament to this but so can Terre Satterfield's work in *Anatomy of a Conflict: Identity, Knowledge, and Emotion in Old-Growth Forests* published by University of British Columbia Press in 2002.

in the Pacific Northwest, for example, were long derided as being primarily responsible for the destruction of local economies and jobs, which were dependent on the logging industry. Consequently, when climate change prevention was proposed by environmentalists, the historical precedent perceived by non-environmentalists surfaced – that is, that climate change prevention would, like anti-logging initiatives had in times past, take priority over the economic needs of working Americans.

The worldview of the environmentalist is inherently eco-centric or bio-centric. The eco-centrism argument, according to Stan Rowe, is “grounded in the belief that compared to the undoubted importance of the human part, the whole ecosphere is even more significant and consequential. The ‘environment’ that anthropocentrism misperceives as materials designed to be used exclusively by humans, to serve the needs of humanity, is in the profoundest sense humanity’s source and support: its ingenious, inventive life-giving matrix. Eco-centrism goes beyond biocentrism with its fixation on organisms, for in the eco-centric view people are inseparable from the inorganic/organic nature that encapsulates them” (Rowe 1994).

Another way of referring to this, in shorthand, would be to say that eco-centrism is an earth-first approach. Bio-centrism – developed in contrast to anthropocentrism, which is a belief system that considers human beings the central focus of existence – believes that humans are on equal terms with all other species. According to Paul Taylor, an early proponent of bio-centrism:

“This community consists of a system of interdependence between all members, both physically, and in terms of relationships with other species. Every organism

is a ‘teleological center of life’ that is, each organism has a purpose and a reason for being, which is inherently ‘good’ or ‘valuable’. Humans are not inherently superior to other species” (Taylor 1986, 99).

Based on these eco-centric or bio-centric worldviews, then, environmentalists frequently attempted to communicatively reposition the public’s focus and shift attention away from an anthropocentric perspective towards an earth-first, eco-centric approach or a bio-centric approach.

These eco-centric and bio-centric worldviews surfaced in the text of the Kyoto Protocol, which positioned the culpability on humans for overheating the planet. The terms “anthropomorphic” and “anthropogenic emissions” appeared frequently in Kyoto Protocol documents (United Nations 1997). More substantively, Kyoto directed all of its mandates towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions with little explicit or stated attention paid to the socio-economic impacts of these measures and policies.

This earth-first approach, which put the needs of humans in direct competition with the environment, did not make much headway among non-environmentalist communities, nor did it make much headway with American policymakers, which is one of the reasons why the US Congress never ratified the protocol. It became very difficult for non-environmentalist constituencies to get involved until alternative worldviews, four of which are highlighted below, constructed viable positions and frames through which multiple stakeholders could engage in climate change prevention.

Religious Positioning: Creation Care

In response to the obstacles identified above, and in brilliant metaphoric usage, the evangelical Christian community in the United States, which historically had not been publically and politically active environmentalists, began using the term “creation care” (Evangelical Environmental Network 2012) within the context of climate change conversations. The Church formalized the concept. As an example, the Creation Care Network was created in 2006 (Mennonite Creation Care Network 2012), to encourage the Church to, in their words:

- “Claim its biblical and theological foundation for the care of God’s Creation;
- Discover the ties that link all created beings to each other and to God;
- Confess the harm we have caused the natural world and our neighbors;
- Act faithfully to restore the earth” (Mennonite Creation Care Network 2012).

This positioning, utilizing first the “creation” metaphor and second, the “caretaker” metaphor, tapped into the Christian worldview of environmental stewardship, as articulated by biblical text. In the words of the evangelical leaders who were most active in averting climate change, “That’s why we call what we do creation-care, because from a biblical perspective the environment is actually a part of God's creation - of which humanity is also a part” (Evangelical Environmental Network 2012).

In a historic move for the evangelical church, 86 evangelical leaders created the Evangelical Climate Initiative, which called upon then-President George W. Bush to take immediate action on climate change. The list of signatories featured the following heavyweights: “Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Community Church and author of the

blockbuster book, *The Purpose Driven Life*; Duane Litfin, president of Wheaton College David Neff, editor of *Christianity Today*; and Todd Bassett, national commander of the Salvation Army” (Hagerty 2006). Reinforcing the notion that the aforementioned environmental-only frame was ineffective in mobilizing non-environmentalist constituencies, the evangelical leaders admitted that, “For most of us, until recently, this has not been treated as a pressing issue or major priority” (Goodstein 2006).

The use of discursive positioning and metaphors was explicit in the press release offered by the 86 leaders, titled “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action” (Blunt 2008). Quoting from their statement, issued at the National Press Club in Washington DC, “Christians must care about climate change, because we love God the Creator and Jesus our Lord, through whom and for whom the creation was made. This is God’s world, and any damage that we do to God’s world is an offense against God himself” (Blunt 2008).

The new position proffered by Christian leadership was that climate change was an offence to God himself, since God created the universe, and that evangelicals were thus called to action. This highly effective frame, through which Christians could position themselves vis-à-vis climate change, equipped a vibrant and proactive constituency with the freedom to be involved in the prevention of global warming. Now it was safe for Christians to take action, due to the very specific following position: since *creation* (the biblical metaphor) was at risk, and since God was the creator (the Christian worldview), then it was incumbent upon the good Christian to heed the call (the biblical metaphor of responding to one’s calling) and take action to prevent this environmental

conflict. The about-face was instigated almost entirely by the provision of a new, religious frame.

Economic Positioning: Going Green to Save Green

The business community, while perhaps pursuing a more pragmatic and less philosophical approach than the religious sector, was no less capable of providing a position, or frame, within which the private sector could be empowered to take action on climate change prevention. Prior to the mainstreaming of the concept of climate change, the debate over whether or not business should put “profits over people” surfaced violently in the 1990s during protests against the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund (Chomsky 1999). Concerns about sweatshop labor conditions in developing countries, genetically modified food crops, and over-subsidized exports that undermined foreign markets, were commonplace among activists. While there was some protest over business-led environmental degradation, the debate centered principally on an anthropocentric perspective: people versus profits.

The potential for climate change fundamentally altered this dichotomous dynamic, introducing the concept of a triple-bottom line (Savitz 2006), which suggested that sustainable business models are good for people, profits and the planet. By going green, businesses could engage in profit making – traditionally considered the most essential component of a business-based worldview – from energy efficiency and renewable energy investments, while positioning the business as doing what is responsible and right for the people and the planet.

That the “go green” metaphor was a double-entendre-in-the-making was not lost on the private sector. To be able to go green in the environmental sense, while going green in the financial sense (i.e. making money off of energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives), was exactly the kind of frame needed to engage the business community. Wal-Mart was perhaps the most unabashed about this moneymaking scheme. According to Matt Kistler, Wal-Mart’s senior vice-president for sustainability, “Being environmentally friendly is good for business and saves money” (Penchoff 2007). Companies like Toyota are now powerfully proving the benefits of more energy efficient business practices. Toyota’s low-emission, Hybrid Prius was one of the best-selling vehicles in the US (Valdes-Dapena 2006). Unlike a decade ago, it is now safe and financially smart for businesses to go green.

Activities to prevent climate change, then, whether lowering emissions, reducing energy consumption, or switching to renewable energies, were not about environmentalism per se, but rather about smart financial and business sense. For businesses struggling with the environmental rhetoric articulated previously, this new position allowed engagement under the pretext of financial reward, thus remaining consistent with the business worldview.

Security Positioning: Energy Security and Independence

What benefited Toyota was a powerful and proverbial “perfect storm” combining oil-market volatility, an unprecedented price of petroleum, and escalating violent conflict in some oil-rich states. This storm is what ultimately shifted the stance of US military

leaders, security analysts, the United States Congress and the administrations of President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama vis-à-vis climate change.

The fundamental worldview of these entities did not change – a worldview that prioritizes American security above the security of any foreign state. Their position on climate change – and the metaphors required to appropriately articulate their position – *did* change, however. Preventing this environmental conflict was less about the natural environment and much more about energy security and energy independence. The metaphors smartly tapped into American psychological phenomena that pertained to September 11, 2001 (i.e. security) and American value systems (i.e. independence).

Examining the language and frames used by President George W. Bush during this period, the metaphors that touch upon the concepts of energy security and energy independence are vivid and explicit. The President positioned the new frame by citing a serious threat to the nation's security, using the familiar images of terrorists (security) and freedoms (independence): (*Emphasis added below*)

“The *dependency* upon oil also puts us at the mercy of terrorists. If there's tight supply and demand, all it requires is one terrorist disruption of oil and that price goes even higher. It's in our interests to end our *dependency* on oil because it – that *dependency* – presents a challenge to our national *security*...Some countries we get oil from don't particularly like us. They don't like the form of government that we embrace. They don't believe in the same *freedoms* we believe in, and that's a problem from a national *security* perspective, for the United States and

any other nation that values its economic *sovereignty* and national *sovereignty*”
(Bush 2008).

The new campaign by some US military and security analysts, Members of the US Congress and the Administration of President George W. Bush was to reduce America’s reliance on foreign oil and, in response, to bolster sufficient domestic energy capacity.

This tack drew upon conceptual metaphors of American pride, ingenuity and innovation. Embroiled in a war in Iraq and facing an economic recession, the concepts of energy security and energy independence provided Americans with the hope that future Iraq wars could be avoided (due to a decreased reliance on the oil-rich Middle East) and that new American jobs could be generated (due to new domestic energy investment). Amidst this new positioning, it mattered little whether the US Congress and the Administration of President Bush cared about the environment, the new frame was a powerful one and one that enabled Congressional and Administration skeptics to get involved. Why, because the country’s security and independence was at stake.

It is not a coincidence that the *Energy Security and Independence Act of 2007* was the first Congressional bill passed in 32 years to increase Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency standards, from 27 miles per gallon to 35 miles per gallon (Shank 2007). The language and framing, noted above, which narrated and positioned the bill, made it possible for climate change skeptics in the George W. Bush Administration and non-environmentalist-oriented Members of the US Congress to support this position, while allowing their underlying worldview, that of American security and independence, to remain undisturbed.

Social Positioning and Public Health: Save the Humans

A portion of the American domestic attitudes that remained unaltered by environmentalism, religion, economics, or security, received a paradigmatic shift after Hurricane Katrina – a Category Five storm that brought devastation attributable to global warming to the shores of the US. Humanitarian disasters of this sort, along with increasing global drought, food shortages, disease, and flooding, equipped some of the remaining cadre of constituents with a conflict positioning and framing opportunity of the social, public health and humanitarian variety. Constituents could keep their anthropocentric worldview and advocate a position on climate change consistent with that worldview. This new frame fostered new climate change recruits.

According to a Zogby poll conducted one year after Hurricane Katrina, a majority of Americans were making the connection between the hurricane and climate change: “As Americans recover from this summer’s heat wave and mark the first anniversary next week of Hurricane Katrina, an overwhelming majority say they are more convinced that global warming is happening than they were two years ago, and they are also connecting intense weather events like hurricane Katrina and heat waves to global warming” (Zogby 2006).

Other polling backs up this Hurricane Katrina-related finding. In November 2011, according to the survey by Yale-GMU regarding “Americans’ Global Warming Beliefs and Attitudes” a majority of Americans – 57 percent – believed that global warming made Hurricane Irene worse, while 65 percent believed that global warming made the 2011 droughts in Texas and Oklahoma worse, and 67 percent believed that the

record high temperatures of 2011 were made worse by global warming (Leiserowitz et al. 2011e). We are now seeing some similar trends in 2012-2013 after Hurricane Sandy.

Furthermore, once the World Health Organization started tackling climate change prevention as part and parcel of their mandate, issuing reports regarding the societal and public health impacts associated with global warming, it became even easier for communities to support this public health-related frame. The Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Margaret Chan, began coining compelling language about “saving lives” in order to appeal to basic humanitarianism among the public. “There is a close and complex relationship between health, health security and our changing environment,” said Dr. Chan. “Limiting the impact of climate change is about saving lives and livelihoods, as much as it is about protecting the natural environment” (Chan 2007). Chan effectively emphasized the anthropocentric worldview, usurping a sole focus on the natural environment. Now, thanks to the new position-frame, concern over climate change was distillable down to basic humanitarian compassion for one’s neighbor, public health, and saving lives.

Additionally, given that the newly globalized world could now quickly transmit various bird flu and virus-related pandemic-level threats to North American shores, the public health frame was particularly salient. Since diseases and viruses often thrive in globally warming environments, the public could safely take action to prevent climate change under the rubric of virus-prevention and disease-prevention, not environmentalism per se. The metaphor was centered on public health, and it was, and continues to be, a particularly poignant one, cutting to the heart of any anthropocentric

worldview. Canada's former Health Minister Tony Clement encapsulated this concept best by urging the following:

“Canada must take immediate action on global warming to cope with the threat of new infectious diseases from abroad. There is an increasing threat of other infectious diseases. Dengue fever is another one that epidemiologists are worried about, right now, coming to our shores. With climate change, with warmer weather, those might have an impact on Canadians' health” (De Souza 2006).

This recognition of climate change's contribution to disease and virus growth, and the potential pandemic that could ensue, gave the remaining unconverted constituents a safe public health passage into the realm of climate change prevention work. The worldview remained anthropocentric and the position-frame was, simply, to save the humans from death by climate.

It is worth noting too how these shifting frames – e.g. environmental, religious, security, economic, and social/public health – show the mercurial nature of public opinion. According to Brulle et al., the public tends to respond “based on the most recent information that they have been presented on that issue,” and that “each major issue area can be characterized by a policy mood reflecting a general disposition toward government action” (Brulle et al. 2012, 3), something to keep in mind in later sections of this dissertation that discuss the creation of new narratives and new action to stimulate more comprehensive stakeholder engagement in the prevention of global warming.

Positioning the “Other”: Conflict Caused by Climate-Based Positioning

The majority of these positioning processes – specifically environmental, security and social/health – were dependent upon the use of an “*other*” and an “*us-versus-them*” paradigm. Using Bronwyn Davies’ work (Davies 1989) on discursive practices that construct and sustain an identifiable *other*, this section will examine how an *us-versus-them* paradigm, accompanied by a negative association or connotation with the *other*, was established within the discursive positioning set forth by the environmental, security, and social/health sectors as they engaged in climate change campaigning.⁵ While the act of vilifying a public enemy, or other, was not likely the explicit intent in any of the three cases below, it will become evident that vilification was a problematic consequence regardless. Davies notes four categories that are useful in categorizing and analyzing themes stemming from the discourse pertaining to “othering” (a word that I will take the liberty to use in verb form):

1. “*The categories* (and the cultural/social/political meanings that are attached to the those categories) that are available within any number of discourses;
2. *The emotional meaning* attached to each of those categories, which have developed as a result of personal experiences of being located as a member of each category or relation to someone in that category;

⁵ Economic positioning is exempted from this analysis on “othering” largely because it is not prevalent within the business community. This is unsurprising since “othering” does not serve the private sector, as it might marginalize potential clients, consumers and new business. Religious positioning is also exempted, as the call for environmental stewardship, found in many religions’ sacred scriptures, does not position an “other” against whom or against which environmental stewardship is motivated. Both, however, did create excluded out-groups as not all constituencies are religious, nor is greener business/buying affordable for all.

3. *The stories* through which those categories and emotions make sense; and
4. *The moral system* that links and legitimates the choices that have been made”

(Davies 1989, 229-241)

These four frameworks – categories, emotional meanings, stories and moral systems – will help dissect the discourse into identifiable streams through which the othering happens.

Environmental Positioning of the “Other”

Within the environmental community there are two major othering trends that are visible in the discourse: one connotes that humans are responsible for doing “bad” things to the environment (and thus the creation of normatively-laden binary positions, an approach will be explored further later), and the second suggests that those who fail to believe in the environmentalist are somehow outside the bounds of reason because they are failing to believe the science behind climate change. For example, examine how E.O. Wilson’s commentary below, regarding the current state of the environment, creates a public enemy out of humankind, especially those from industrialized nations. Excerpted from his seminal work *Consilience*:

“Humanity is...eating up the planet’s capital, including natural resources and biological diversity millions of years old. Unlike any species that lived before, it is also changing the world’s atmosphere and climate, lowering and polluting water tables, shrinking forests, and spreading deserts. Most of the stress originates directly and indirectly from a handful of industrialized countries. Their

formulas are eagerly being adopted by the rest of the world. Even if the industrialization of developing countries is only partly successful, the environmental aftershock will dwarf the population explosion that preceded it. Some will, of course, call this synopsis environmental alarmism. I earnestly wish that accusation were true. Unfortunately it is the reality-grounded opinion of the overwhelming majority of statured scientists who study the environment” (Wilson 1999, 306-307).

Extrapolating from Davies’ four previously mentioned categories we can determine what type of discursive positioning is occurring here within Wilson’s analysis of the current environment and those responsible for the degradation of it. The first story being told here by Wilson is that humans are behaving unlike any species that came before, are misbehaving and causing substantial environmental damage, and that industrialized nations primarily are to blame. Wilson categorizes humans outside the acceptable moral bounds of biological history by noting the unprecedented nature of human behavior. Moreover, the emotional meaning embedded in words and phrases like “eating up the planet’s capital,” “polluting water,” and “aftershock will dwarf,” identifies the human as culpable for deleterious actions on par with the disastrous nature of an earthquake or aftershock.

The second story being told by Wilson establishes the divide between *us* and *them*. By identifying an acceptable class, or category, of scientists who are morally sanctioned by society to solely proclaim that which is truth – in our case that climate change is real – and by further suggesting that those who fail to believe in the scientists

are somehow outside the bounds of reason, Wilson single-handedly creates an unconverted, and thus an unenlightened, other.

Wilson's discursive practice is not atypical of the environmental community, which tends to identify the "negative impact of human civilization on the natural environment, the biosphere, and the planet," (Hein 2009, 87) emphasizing the "bad" behavior of others. Other environmental writers have intoned that humankind should have moral respect for the environment and that it is unethical to harm it, suggesting that offenders are both immoral and unethical (Leopold 1966).

In response, communications expert George Lakoff has encouraged the environmental community to stop the vilification of the *other* within an *us-versus-them* paradigm and, rather, shift the climate change debate into something that is impacting all of society, using frames like security and health (coincidentally, the subjects of the next two sections). This point by Lakoff is also extremely important and relevant to later chapters in this dissertation regarding the development of new narratives. Says Lakoff:

"When environmental issues are cast in terms of health and security, which people already accept as vital and necessary, then the environment becomes important. It's a health issue – clean air and clean water have to do with childhood asthma and with dysentery. Energy that is renewable and sustainable and doesn't pollute – that is a crucial environmental issue, but it's not just environmentalism. A crash program to develop alternative energy is a health issue. It's a foreign policy issue. It's a Third World development issue. If we developed the

technology for alternative energy, we wouldn't be dependent on Middle East oil” (Butler 2006).

As already witnessed in Lakoff's examples of the “third world” and “Middle East oil,” there are positioning implications when using the security and health frames, as we will witness below. A different othering occurs, with unforeseen effects that have the capacity to shape non-climate-change-related domestic and foreign policies.

Security Positioning of the “Other”

The story being told by security and military experts, and consequently by climate change prevention practitioners who find this security frame particularly effective in motivating preventive action, is that the US must quickly transition off oil dependency – a fossil fuel largely responsible for greenhouse gas emissions and climate change – because it increases the national security risk since much of the world's oil is sourced in unstable or hostile regions or states. This section will analyze the early discursive positioning within Washington DC's policymaking community and how the language generated or exacerbated an *us-versus-them* frame.

The first text, below, excerpted from a US Senate Foreign Relations Committee testimony, sets the stage for how the US must engage the other. The “other,” in this case the Arab and Muslim worlds, which maintains control of a majority of the world's petroleum reserves, is contextualized within the frame of a battle or war, which, it is implied, the US must win in order to maintain and protect US national security:

“But the protection of U.S. national security, of which energy security is an element, really demands that the Bush administration launch a successful public relations battle in the rest of the Arab and Muslim world” (Olcott 2003).

The second text, below, excerpted from the National Security Task Force’s report on “Energy Security in the 21st Century” (Center for American Progress 2006) begins to identify the other (i.e. oil-rich states) as unstable and hostile. Moreover, this text further reifies the concept of a battle between “us” and “them” by using language that indicates that the other is “poised to control an increasing share” and that we are further “compromising...foreign policy objectives”:

“In the years to come, countries in the Middle East and other unstable regions are poised to control an increasing share of the world’s oil and natural gas markets. The United States will only continue to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars each minute on foreign oil, while at the same time compromising its foreign policy objectives by funding unstable or hostile regimes in oil rich regions that threaten its national security” (Center for American Progress 2006).

The third text, below, excerpted from the US Democratic Caucuses Senate Journal, elevates the discourse slightly by using terrorism to describe the sources of petroleum. The association produces an emotional reaction by immediately connecting oil-producing states, on which the US depends, with Saudi-originated terrorist events (e.g. September 11, 2001). Furthermore, the second paragraph below uses metaphoric frames that imply vulnerability and weakness - Achilles Heel and choke points – to tell the embattled story

that the US is in a dangerous stranglehold and that the other, i.e. hostile oil-rich nations, are at fault.

“America’s dependence on oil undermines our national security interests by funding terrorism and hostile nations, as well as limiting America’s strategic options. American oil dependence enriches countries such as Saudi Arabia, which harbor charities, nongovernmental organizations, mosques, and banks that have funded terrorist groups around the world” (Democratic Caucus Senate Journal 2008).

“The tankers, pipelines, and trucks required to import oil from foreign countries to the United States is the Achilles heel of U.S. transportation. A large fraction of the world’s traded oil already passes through a handful of strategic choke points, such as the Strait of Hormuz” (Democratic Caucus Senate Journal 2008).

The fourth and final text, below, comes from a report by the Council on Foreign Relations titled “National Security Consequences of US Oil Dependency” (Deutch and Schlesinger 2006). It categorizes oil-rich states as totalitarian, regressive and, most importantly, positions them as a cartel, which strikes a metaphoric, vivid and emotional response within the reader since preconditioned associations with cartel invoke the violent conception of a ruthless drug cartel operating above the law and flouting societal norms. The story articulated in the text below also implies that it is morally acceptable for the US to pursue its strategic interests and values, but absolutely inappropriate for oil-rich states to do so – a moral framing reifying a US-centric approach to world affairs.

“Major energy suppliers – from Russia to Iran to Venezuela – have been increasingly able and willing to use their energy resources to pursue their strategic and political objectives. The control over enormous oil revenues gives exporting countries the flexibility to adopt policies that oppose U.S. interests and values. Totalitarian governments that have control over those revenue flows can entrench their rule. Global dependence on oil is rapidly eroding U.S. power and influence because oil is a strategic commodity largely controlled by regressive governments and a cartel that raises prices and multiplies the rents that flow to oil producers” (Deutch and Schlesinger 2006).

In sum, the four security-related texts offered above can be interpreted within Davies’ four frames in the following way. The story presented by security analysts is that the US is faced with an epic battle against hostile and terrorist regimes, within which the other is a dangerous totalitarian and regressive cartel that will undermine US interests. In this battle between *us* versus *them*, the US is in the moral right, while the oil-rich other is inherently devious and plotting to further enhance their totalitarian rule. The emotional meaning laced throughout the texts reminds the reader of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and intentionally strikes a visceral chord by analogizing US oil dependency to the metaphoric and physical vulnerability of an Achilles heel or chokehold.

The dangerous effects of this discursive positioning, however, are that it further exacerbates the fragility of relations and diplomacy between the US and these increasingly vilified countries. The frame provided by US security analysts colors all

subsequent news reporting and policy prescriptions concerning countries like Iran, Venezuela, and Nigeria, and creates dangerous precedents and pretexts that often make military invasions of these public enemy states possible. Once the villainous identity of the other is created and positioned, it becomes very difficult to shake off, which is all too often the point of the exercise anyway.

Social Positioning of the “Other”

Discursive positioning of an “other” occurs frequently between the rich and poor world nations. Not long ago, frequently in use were the concepts of First World – which positively referred to rich nations, the majority of which were in the West – and Third World, which negatively referred to poor nations, the majority of which were in Africa, Asia and South America. In fact, these concepts are still used in common parlance.

These hierarchical value statements, offensive to many because they connoted a superiority of some and an inferiority of others, were later complemented by “developed” and “developing,” which are perhaps no less hierarchical and moralistic, despite their references to the industrialized versus non-industrialized status of a given country. As an alternative, some have suggested that “majority world” and “minority world,” referring merely to population size, be used instead. In light of the discursive difficulties in identifying geographical segments of global society, the frame erected by the health sector to proactively prevent climate change raises some concerns regarding the hierarchical and moralistic positioning nation-states in relationship to each other.

Additionally, in the texts below, excerpted from climate change reports and news analysis, the poor are being discursively positioned in a hierarchical fashion as incapable, inferior, or lacking the incentives, assets or skills enjoyed by the rich. In this first example below, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair invites the developing poor to heed the call and “join the rich” in dealing with climate, implying that the rich knows what is right and thus has the answer:

“Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair opened the conference on Saturday with an impassioned call for developing nations to join the rich world in steep binding cuts in emissions for the sake of the planet” (AFP 2008).

The following example, taken from a UK-based development nongovernmental report, is attempting to bring attention to how climate change will impact women in poor countries but in doing so, highlights gender gaps between industrialized and non-industrialized countries and normatively comments on the difference between working women in the industrialized world and women’s traditional role in the non-industrialized world:

“Women’s traditional role in the household means that they will bear the brunt of this climate-induced scarcity” (Olatunbosun 2010, 5).

The third example, from a US Senate Hearing, in an attempt to compassionately point out that poor countries are ill equipped and incapable of dealing with climate change, reinforces the hierarchy between the capable developed world and the incapable developing world. In using the word “least,” as part of the biblical reference pertaining to Jesus’s comment about helping the “least of these,” there is a subtle reinforcement of the “other” that is “less than”:

“Recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change make it clear that Earth’s climate is warming, largely due to humanity’s use of fossil fuels. This phenomenon is likely to lead to disastrous consequences for all of creation, and particularly for ‘the least of these’ (Matthew 25: 40, New International Version), people living in poverty, who are most vulnerable to rising sea levels, the spread of infectious disease, extending areas of drought, and other impacts of rising temperatures, many of which are already occurring” (US Senate Hearing 2007).

The fourth example tells the story of the haves and have-nots by implying that the rich countries have something that the poor countries do not have: a lifestyle worth keeping and a healthy business community worth protecting.

“Some rich nations did not want to sign on to anything that would threaten their lifestyles or increase the cost of doing business” (Elmer-DeWitt 1992).

The fifth and final example begins first by implicitly categorizing poor people within the same climate-affected category as ice caps and polar bears and ends by suggesting a band aid approach to climate readiness, which is a frequent response to poverty, that of helping the poor “cope” but not building capacity to enable self-sufficiency:

“Climate change...doesn’t just affect ice caps and polar bears. It impacts the poorest people. Many are campaigning for greater international assistance to help poor people cope with the consequences of climate change” (Rowling 2008).

Extrapolating out using Bronwyn Davies’ framework, the story being constructed here is that within the climate change movement, an *us-versus-them* dynamic exists between the

rich and the poor, the first and the third, the developed and the developing, and the industrialized and the non-industrialized worlds.

Positioning the “other” in this way is not new. What is new is that climate change gives new life and strength to this divide between us (the rich) versus them (the poor). Furthermore, in terms of climate change prevention, it categorizes the poor as incapable and ineffectual, needing assistance to help it cope, while categorizing the rich as the one with the answer to the problem and the one privileged enough to be desirous of protecting its lifestyles and its business. The moralistic and emotional overtones do not escape even this discursive positioning. Typical in humanitarian efforts is the plea to aid the helpless and impoverished and many climate change prevention practitioners are no different here in their use of this frame. They are equally culpable for presenting the direst of circumstances to play upon the sympathies of the rich. Consequently, the concept of the *other* remains intact and the *us-versus-them* divide remains strong.

In all three othering processes identified above – environmental, security, and social/public health – the side effects of motivating and mobilizing action vis-à-vis climate change are disconcerting and should not go undetected and unaddressed. If climate change is a global phenomenon, impacting the entirety of the earth’s populations, then no population can be exempted from the global fight against global warming. This will be a particularly important point for later chapters in this dissertation detailing what is required for developing new narratives.

Populations who are “othered” in the name of climate change prevention – be they Muslim/Arab populations in the Security othering, or Global South/developing

nations in the Health/Social othering – will be less inclined to join the fight in preventing climate change. There is a need, then, to find a climate change solution and response that does not dangerously “other” essential populations in the process. These are populations that must be included, not excluded, in the process of climate change prevention.

This section on othering offers some initial discourse analysis, using Bronwyn Davies’ work as a template, on the implications of environmental, security and social/health advocates’ positions. All three sectors, at varying levels, are generating or reifying an *other* and an *us-versus-them* paradigm. While their intentions may be noble – in other words, to prevent climate change and its harmful impacts on humankind – the impacts of their polemical approach may be causing more harm than good, both in terms of instigating and generating more conflict through the vilification process and by preventing key populations from engaging in the prevention of global warming.

Additionally, the two remaining sectors – that of religious and economic positioning – while perhaps not directly “othering” any constituency, failed to be all-inclusive and, instead, created out-groups. How? Not all constituencies found comfort in the religious frame due to the prevalence of atheism, agnosticism or other. Nor were all constituencies able to afford – either as business or consumer – to “go green” due to the fact that federal subsidies and investments have historically been in fossil fuels, not renewable, sustainable industries, thus making green behavior an issue dividing the “haves” and “have-nots”.

To return to this section’s main theme, that of positioning: Positioning is the “discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and

subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines,” (Davies and Harre 1990, 48) and manifests either interactively, “in which what one person says positions another,” or reflexively, ‘in which one positions oneself’ (Davies and Harre 1990, 48). In this section’s initial analysis on positioning, all four sectors – religious, economic, security and social – *reflexively* positioned themselves through affiliation with sector-specific approaches that were normatively acceptable, while *interactively* positioning themselves through a differentiation from environmentalism.

It was this critical capacity to discursively reposition and reframe each sector’s engagement in climate change prevention initiatives that allowed for new movement towards greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Had it not been for this reframing, the concept of climate change likely would have remained intractable, with little to no stakeholder engagement outside of the environmental community. This dissertation’s interviews with Members of the US Congress and Media representatives will use this previous section’s work on climate change positioning, framing and metaphors as the background for understanding what is required for new narratives and new, more comprehensive, stakeholder engagement.

Prevalence of Existing Positions in Research Data

How prevalent were these previous five frames – environmental, religious, security, social and economic – positioned in the interviews with Members of the US Congress and the members of the mainstream Media? And how frequently did the interviewees rely on an “other” to fortify these frames and positions? Let’s take a look.

By far, the most common frames/positions – when used to justify preventive action – were ones having to do with security or economic concerns and to a lesser extent environmental concerns. That these data point to a primary use of security and economic frames is hardly surprising because they are inherently nation-centric and appeal to a rational self-interest in national and economic security. Take, for example, one interviewee, who mentioned that the two most effective frames were “energy security” and “economics, even self-interest.”⁶ In the case of the former, related to energy security, the interviewee recommended that, “the more the argument can be advanced to alternatives sources of oil and fuel means less dependence on Middle East oil. I would hammer that home repeatedly.”⁷ In the case of the latter, related to economics, the interviewee continued, “Americans come to their conclusions based much more on economics, even self-interest, so on climate change, if there’s some kind of tangible economic benefit, that is a much better approach to it.”⁸

Another interviewee reiterated this economic-centric positioning: “Once climate change gets to the point where it’s either the cost of jobs, the cost of money, then you’ll see more coverage of it in the newspaper because our newspaper is focused solely on the money and the economy. We distinguished ourselves from the other [Hill] papers by focusing on business rather than lobbying because that’s where the money is.”⁹ Continuing along similar lines, said one media informant, “We write on what brings in

⁶ Interviews: MM: DM-9

⁷ Interviews: MM: DM-9

⁸ Interviews: MM: DM-9

⁹ Interviews: MM: WA-6.

cash flow, what brings in revenue, we write on issues that are involved with the economy, with money, because we assume that's what people want to read.”¹⁰

One Member of the US Congress acknowledged the need for an economic frame even if the environmental worldview was not evident: “Even if you don't believe the scientific consensus about destabilizing the world's climate, most people ought to agree we shouldn't waste any energy in the world for a host of economic reasons.”¹¹ Another Member of Congress added, “We need to hear the economic argument regarding what will happen to us if we don't do something. I think we don't hear enough about that. We need business folks.”¹²

The security-centric positioning was common among Members of the US Congress, many of whom comfortably created the public enemy “other” abroad. One Congressperson said, “We're sending hundreds of billions of dollars a year to the Mideast for our gluttonous dependency on fossil based fuels. We need to think outside the barrel. But beyond that, the mission of national security becomes all the more challenged because with climate change you've also got famine, you've got drought, you've got flooding, you've got less available land, less usable land, and then a weak people less able to defend themselves – so a breeding ground for terrorist activity. Our job is to say, we can create jobs if we [switch off fossil based fuels], we can reduce our dependency, we can enhance our energy security. Do we want our destiny controlled by unfriendly nations, unstable nations, or do we want to leave it in our hands where we grow cutting-

¹⁰ Interviews: MM: WA-6.

¹¹ Interviews: MC: EB-1.

¹² Interviews: MC: RG-4.

edge jobs that can grow a very strong economic power for the workers of this country in a better controlled destiny as energy consumers?”¹³ Another Member of the US Congress reiterated the security frame: “We are, in a very real sense, funding our enemy. We only have two percent of the world’s oil, we use 25 percent of the world’s oil, and we import two-thirds of what we use from people who don’t like us.”¹⁴

In contrast, one reporter noted that any attempts to use environmental/economic frames for justifying climate change prevention was “wishful thinking,” saying that, “all the talk by the Democrats about how we can create a green economy and create jobs...to a certain extent it is wishful thinking.”¹⁵ Similarly, another media interviewee noted that, “the whole thing boils down to lifestyle choices,” and that “that’s why politicians can’t get any traction. People becoming efficient means asking people to change their lifestyles because our lifestyles are affecting the environment and affecting people all around the world. We’re living in a way that’s not sustainable but it’s politically difficult to change lifestyles. All these private interests in maintaining people’s lifestyles are really hard to change.”¹⁶

Environmental frames were common as historical references for when interviewees first encountered the topic and were educated about the topic or were convinced that climate change was happening, but environmental positions were not the leading frame for necessarily justifying current or future preventive action. Responses

¹³ Interviews: MC: PT-4.

¹⁴ Interviews: MC: RB-1.

¹⁵ Interviews: MM: ST-5.

¹⁶ Interviews: MM-SQ-2.

like, “I first heard about the greenhouse effect when I was a child in the 1960s,”¹⁷ and “In the early 90s, I remember very simple diagrams with arrows and pictures that were very basic, with pollution and factories emitting all kinds of crap into the air, and it made sense to me that all the stuff just doesn’t go away,”¹⁸ and “I remember reading about it one summer and studying it in Environmental Studies [class], but I don’t think it really crystallized fully for me until the film *Inconvenient Truth*. I took it seriously, I believed it was real, I think it dramatically gave me a sense of how quickly it was happening and gave a different kind of urgency for me.”¹⁹

The environmental frame was the one that encountered the most doubt, especially by the media informants, who commonly criticized the doomsday claims and alarmist rhetoric emanating from the environmentalist advocacy camp. For example, one interviewee who is an editor at a prominent newspaper, and married to someone who worked on climate-related issues for President Barack Obama’s administration, noted, “I’m not convinced it’s necessarily as extreme as it sometimes suggests. I’d like to see more evidence of that one way or another.”²⁰ Even one environmental reporter who had been in the field covering the environment for over thirty years and was convinced that climate change was happening acknowledged, “Environmentalists have made lots of claims that did not pan out, that turned out to be alarmist, that turned out to be wrong.”²¹

Another experienced environmental reporter noted that our sense of climate is basically the weather we experience day in and day out, and said, referencing his sister’s

¹⁷ Interviews: MM: BC-1.

¹⁸ Interviews: MM: JB-2.

¹⁹ Interviews: MM: GK-1.

²⁰ Interviews: MM: DM-2.

²¹ Interviews: MM: PR-2.

comment during a hard winter, “I’ve got to tell you, it’s awfully hard to talk about global warming when I’m sitting here in the middle of a blizzard.”²² The skepticism among reporters was common; said one, “I think a healthy skepticism is important. Climate change is certainly one area where people have been off the wall for their activism.”²³

Interestingly, however, environmental frames were often called upon during the prescription phase of the interview when interviewees were asked what would make their work easier, going forward, in advocating for their point of view. Said one interviewee, in an answer to a question regarding what would make their work easier going forward: “Probably the visuals, because if you see a mountain that was once snow capped and then now it’s bare, or if you see a glacier melting, I think that’s more compelling.”²⁴ Another interviewee supported this thinking, saying that “Seeing the glaciers melt, polar bears being stranded, the food chain breaking down in places, both in the water and on land...it’s hard to dispute that something’s going on. You can talk about stuff going in cycles, but things are disappearing.”²⁵ Suggesting a preferred bias of environmental visuals over data, said one reporter, “Get images into the public’s eyes of pollution going into the air, images affect people more than data, or doctor so-and-so saying the earth is going to implode in 2040 or something.”²⁶

Less apparent in the interviewee data were social or religious positions and frames. One environmental reporter mentioned the social frame in reference to the marketability of the ozone campaign (in comparison to the marketability of the climate

²² Interviews: MM: PS-7.

²³ Interviews: MM: ST-3.

²⁴ Interviews: MM: DM-5.

²⁵ Interviews: MM: ET-2.

²⁶ Interviews: MM: JB-7.

campaign). Referencing the connection made between President Ronald Reagan's skin cancer and UV radiation, after which the public saw the immediate threat to their family and to the world, the reporter in my interview noted the embedded social, public health implications, "It was something we could see and it was immediate and it was there. Ronald Regan had skin cancer, I think he had a couple of legions on his nose, and he was in a Cabinet meeting once, and someone in the Cabinet meeting made a direct connection between skin cancer and UV radiation."²⁷ One Member of Congress critiqued the historical under-utilization of the religious frame by saying, "I think a lot of what the different faith communities have done on the environment is fine [but] this has to be sustained. It has to be day in and day out. That's what happened with tobacco and the campaign to quit smoking."²⁸

In sum, this was a preliminary look at how the positions and frames found within the data stemming from this dissertation's interviews with Members of the US Congress and members of mainstream Media overlaps with the previous analysis on positions and frames. The next chapter begins to look more closely at the data to better understand the attitudes, beliefs, and particularly the behaviors of key informants interviewed in the US Congress and in the Media.

²⁷ Interviews: MM: PR-6.

²⁸ Interviews: MC: BM-3.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODS: MEDIA AND CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES, BEHAVIORS AND CONTEXT

Data Collection

This research was largely qualitative, pursuing interviews with two key influential stakeholders: Members of the US Congress and members of the Media. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit narratives and frames around climate change – i.e. when did the Member or Media representative first learn about climate change as a concept, what were their beliefs and attitudes on the issue, how did the Member or Media representative engage, and what were/are the obstacles facing the Member or Media representative in the pursuit of their attitude and belief.

To explain further these three steps around learning, engaging and struggling, I invited the stakeholders and key informants to think generally about the following categories of conversation (the final approved questions by the Human Subjects Review Board can be found in the Appendix):

[Learning]: Regarding the key informant’s first exposure to the concept of climate change: When did you first hear about climate change and what did you think about the issue? What shaped your learning about climate change and what eventually confirmed your belief?

[Engaging]: Regarding the key informant's activities pursued after arriving at belief:

Once you decided upon your belief, what did you decide to do about it,

what actions did you take and how much of a priority was this for you?

How involved should your sector be on this issue and how responsible are

they for leadership? Who are some of the most effective representatives

advocating for your belief and why are they so effective?

[Struggling]: Regarding the key informant's struggles throughout this process: Have

you experienced any obstacles along the way that have kept you from

becoming more engaged or have hampered your work on this issue? What

are the most convincing arguments that contradict your belief and who is

making these arguments? What if anything would make your work easier

going forward, in advocating for your belief?

The interviews aimed to elicit frames and metaphors implicit in the Member of Congress

and Media stories. The data emerging from the 28 total interviews were analyzed to

determine key phrases and concepts and analyzed to determine what concomitant

positions and frames are guiding the learning process, the engagement process, and the

obstacles and struggles faced. To the extent that sampling bias was present in the data, it

was predicated on issues of access: Interviews were based on pre-existing media and

congressional contacts and limited for reasons stated earlier regarding declined

invitations.

The data in this study was confidential. The following applied for each key

informant: (1) their name was not be included on the interviews and other collected data;

(2) a code was be placed on the interview and other collected data; (3) through the use of an identification key, in order to create anonymity, I linked each interviewee with each data point; and (4) only I had access to the identification key. The coded interviews are footnoted throughout the dissertation. The interviews were audio-recorded and only I had access to the data, which was stored securely in a safe. The files were deleted after research was complete, as promised in the informed consent form (see appendix).

The ABC Triangle from conflict literature will be used to map out the attitudes, behaviors and context for each stakeholder group, the Members of the US Congress and mainstream Media representatives. This ABC Triangle is useful in categorizing dominant positions and frames among Members and the Media, and comparing factors recurrent throughout all three categories. The ABC Triangle also parallels nicely the Learning (attitudinal), Engaging (behavioral) and Struggling/Obstacles (contextual) categories articulated above.

Key Informant Interviews

The first group of influential stakeholder interviews involved Members of the US Congress, both Democrat and Republican, who served on relevant committees and caucuses and those not associated with a relevant climate-related committee. For example, I interviewed Members of the US Congress who served on the following climate-relevant committees: Natural Resources Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee, Energy and Commerce Committee, Appropriations Committee (and relevant subcommittees), Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Armed Services

Committee, Science, Space and Technology Committee, and the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition.

I felt strongly that this collection of Congressional informants would know best why a climate bill would succeed or not. These influencers and shapers of public opinion would be at the forefront of the debate over whether climate change was worthy of federal legislation.

In 2009, and throughout the 111th Congress, we witnessed the rise and fall of climate legislation, from a moment in congressional history where climate legislation looked very possible and feasible, to a moment just three years later where climate legislation was completely dead in the political water. Members of the US Congress were responsible, in part, for this rise and fall of climate change attention and interest in climate legislation, and thus were appropriate informants to give witness to and help explain why climate legislation failed to pass.

Interviews with the second group of influential stakeholders involved mainstream Media outlets, most located within Washington DC (but also in London, Boston, San Francisco, Atlanta and New York) and consisted of reporters and columnists, editors and producers, as well as political media representatives who are savvy on legislative and political issues within Washington DC.

The list of media representatives that I interviewed included but was not limited to media representatives from the *Economist*, *Financial Times*, *Washington Post*, *CNN*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Washington Times*, *FOX News*, *Bloomberg*, *NPR*, *Agence France Presse*, *Huffington Post*, *Roll Call*, *The Hill*, *Politico*, among others. First, an

overview of the prominent Media informant attitudes, behaviors and context before delving into descriptions in the data analysis section:

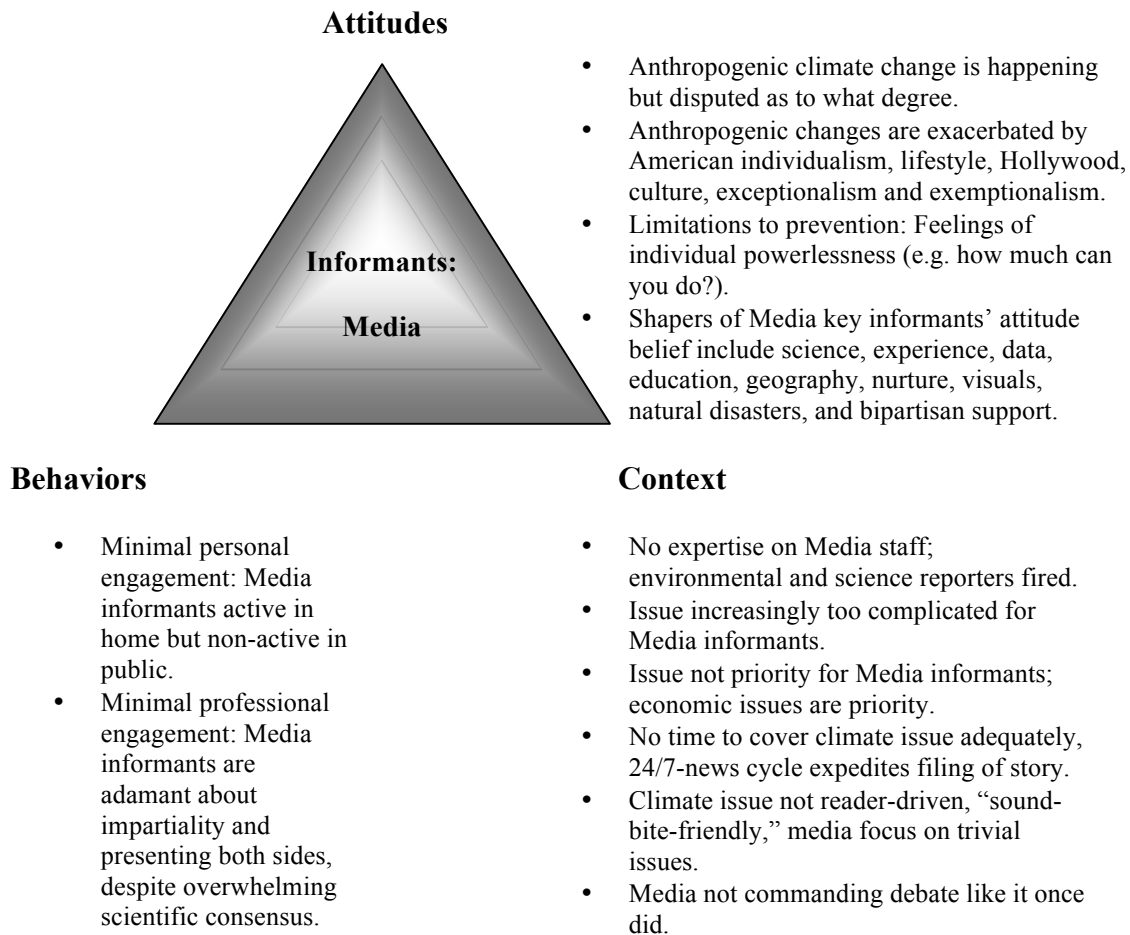


Figure 2: Media Informants: Attitudes, Behaviors, Context (ABC Triangle²⁹)

²⁹ Adapted from the ABC Triangle found in Simon Fisher, et al., *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action* (New York: Zed Books, 2000) 25.

Data Analysis: Media Key Informant Interviews

Media Attitudes

A range of environments shaped Media attitudes, according to the interviewees and the data elicited, including scientific data, personal life experience, school education, geography, visuals, natural disasters and bipartisan support. For most of the media informants, it was direct personal experience that shaped their beliefs and attitudes about climate change. Take a look at the following excerpts from the mainstream media informant interviews to get a sense of what made the strongest impressions on informant attitudes:

- “Being on the coast of Greenland and observing the fact that the glaciers seem to be melting faster...and the visible fact that the southern tip of Greenland is now much warmer.”³⁰
- “The empirical evidence of going to New York State in the mountains and being bitten alive, bitten to death by mosquitoes, which weren’t there five years ago, three years ago.”³¹
- “It jumped to my attention when Jim Hansen testified before Congress, when we had the horrible heat wave in the Midwest.”³²
- “I remember the California wildfires and remember when I read into that, it seemed more and more that climate change had to do with it.”³³

³⁰ Interviews: MM: BC-2.

³¹ Interviews: MM: BS-6.

³² Interviews: MM: PS-1.

³³ Interviews: MM: SQ-2.

- “I remember going to a science exhibition in Dublin and seeing a video presentation about how the greenhouse effect might work. I suppose the video graphics must’ve been quite effective. I’m not a very science minded person, but it was so simply and effectively presented.”³⁴

This exposure to nature, nurture, and a host of personal experiences developed more specific attitudinal themes toward climate change, of which the following were present among the majority of the data. Here are several thematic trends:

First, the majority of the media interviewees acknowledged that anthropogenic climate change is happening, though it was disputed among interviewees as to what degree it is happening and how severe it is or how severe it will be. Responses ranged from the very convinced: “there are thousands of newspapers that say all three things are true [that carbon dioxide is increasing in the atmosphere, the earth is warming, and the connection between CO₂ and global warming] so at this point the impetus is on the deniers to put up or shut up”³⁵; to the centrist: “It wasn’t unreasonable to connect the increasing frequency of weather events like Hurricane Katrina with rain forest destruction”³⁶; to the less convinced: “I am dubious about it because I think climate is going to change, it’s a natural process, population or no population, due to mother nature, and while part of climate change is manmade I don’t think it’s all manmade.”³⁷

Among many of the Media informants interviewed, there was an interesting combination of belief and healthy skepticism. The general reply from the Media is that

³⁴ Interviews: MM: BC-1.

³⁵ Interviews: MM: PR-3-4.

³⁶ Interviews: MM: BC-2.

³⁷ Interviews: MM: NS-1.

yes, climate change is happening. However, this belief was tempered by Media's proclivity and professional penchant to be skeptical. It was common for Media informants to assert their skepticism in the interviews. Take, for example, this quote by one of the Media informants, who takes great pains to assert their professional skepticism despite their belief in "common sense": "I'm not convinced that it's as catastrophic as it is sometimes said, but I think that common sense suggests that human activity, industrial output, smokestacks, are going to have a certain amount of environmental degradation. I think it is being a flat-earther to suggest that there's no human activity, but I'm not convinced it's as extreme as they sometimes suggest. I'd like to see some more evidence of that one way or another."³⁸

Second, a common theme among members of the Media was the recognition that climate change is exacerbated by American lifestyle. Said one media interviewee, "we're taking the planet and having our way with it,"³⁹ while another noted that "we're living in a way that's not sustainable,"⁴⁰ and another said, "look if you want me to do something, pass a law but I'm not going to do something based on personal conscience,"⁴¹ which explains another reporter's comment, "it's really hard to affect people's personal behavior, as I'm sure you know."⁴² One reporter offered an attempt at a more compassionate view, noting that, "when you're trying not to have your house foreclosed upon, you really don't care about the polar bears."⁴³

³⁸ Interviews: MM: DM-2.

³⁹ Interviews: MM: JA-9.

⁴⁰ Interviews: MM: SQ-2.

⁴¹ Interviews: MM: GR-2.

⁴² Interviews: MM: RD-3.

⁴³ Interviews: MM: PR-4.

Third, many in the mainstream Media cited limitations regarding their ability to prevent climate change. Feelings of individual powerlessness (e.g. how much can one person do?) were common. Exclaimed one prominent Media interviewee, “It’s quite difficult just to go about one’s work and fulfill one’s obligations, as a busy journalist, you’re incurring quite a large footprint,”⁴⁴ noting that climate-friendly lifestyle was beyond his reach: “I observe with admiration, friends and peers who have found ways of living in the wealthy North while reducing their footprints as much as possible.”⁴⁵ One interviewee was much more pessimistic, “This isn’t going to be solved by personal actions,”⁴⁶ and another said quite frankly, “this isn’t a priority for me.”⁴⁷

In light of these data, immediately above, pertaining to skepticism, it may come as little surprise that, despite strong Media belief that climate change is happening and that something should be done about it, Media informant behavior was weak in comparison. The next section documents behaviors in response to climate change on both personal and professional fronts.

Media Behaviors

On the behavioral front – both personally and professionally – there was minimal engagement by members of the Media. In terms of personal engagement in preventing climate change, while there were some examples of Media informant activity within the home, there was little to no activity outside the home. This finding is confirmed by Yale-

⁴⁴ Interviews: MM: BC-4.

⁴⁵ Interviews: MM: BC-4.

⁴⁶ Interviews: MM: GR-2.

⁴⁷ Interviews: MM: NS-1.

GMU, in their study on “Americans’ Actions to Conserve Energy, Reduce Waste, and Limit Global Warming in 2010,” specifically that there’s high activity within the home, but little activity outside the home (Leiserowitz et al. 2010).

One Media informant captured this dynamic and the inside-outside dualism by saying, “I have tried personally not to waste energy. We make sure the lights are always off when I’m not in rooms, things like that. We make sure our house is energy efficient, but beyond that I’m not eating tofu and bean sprouts instead of steak.”⁴⁸ Another reporter affirmed this middle-of-the-road thinking by saying, “Do I put the beer bottle in the recycling bin? I do it if I see it,”⁴⁹ but he noted that he doesn’t keep a recycling bin inside, which he readily acknowledges would make his own recycling more convenient.

Finally, for some, on the personal engagement front it’s a financial issue. Says one Media informant, “I would gladly get a hybrid [car], but they’re still rather on the expensive side. If they came down in price, I’d be all for it.”⁵⁰

In terms of professional engagement, there was similarly little activity by Media informants due to a combination of the following three reasons: first, an adamant protection of impartiality and a professional commitment to presenting both sides of the debate, despite the fact that they readily acknowledged overwhelming scientific consensus proving the existence of anthropogenic climate change; second, a recognition of the complicated nature of the issue, even among reporters assigned to cover climate

⁴⁸ Interviews: MM: PR-2.

⁴⁹ Interviews: MM: RD-3.

⁵⁰ Interviews: MM: DM-4.

change; and third, the mere fact that the new and changing priorities of the media industry had usurped any possible focus on this environmental conflict.

To the first, and perhaps most important, point about impartiality and presentation of both sides, the Media informants were adamant about this. While a few of the Media informants stated that they are with “the bulk of the scientists,”⁵¹ most declared something along the lines of the following, as one Media informant did: “As a journalist, I can’t get involved in it. In all candor, I can’t take any kind of activist position.”⁵² Said another, “The media has to present all the views,”⁵³ and another reaffirmed this by putting the onus on the audience, “People look to the media to be impartial, to present both sides.”⁵⁴ Many informants said it was not the role of the media to lead but to be fair and even and give “the other side their fair share,”⁵⁵ because “we’re trained to give each side an equal say.”⁵⁶

To the second point, about the complicated nature of the issue of climate change, said one Media informant (who covers the environment for a political Hill-oriented paper), “You’ve got to be a quick study. I think it would be easier for me to report if I understood it better because it really is complicated.”⁵⁷ Another Media informant (who writes on climate change for a global media wire service) backed up this claim by saying, “The issue is very complicated. After a while it gets very technical and I’m not a

⁵¹ Interviews: MM: PR-4.

⁵² Interviews: MM: DM-3.

⁵³ Interviews: MM: ET-7.

⁵⁴ Interviews: MM: GR-3.

⁵⁵ Interviews: MM: ST-5.

⁵⁶ Interviews: MM: RD-4.

⁵⁷ Interviews: MM: JB-9.

scientist. If somebody throws a bunch of figures at me, I can't argue back in any way.”⁵⁸ And due to limited resources, mainstream media companies have either fired their environmental reporters or do not have the resources to send reporters for environmental training for better understanding of climate science or scientific methods. Either way, it often leaves media representatives with little environmental or scientific knowledge to adequately write on the topic of climate change.

To the third point, about changing priorities of the media industry, given that the editors are often asking reporters to consider “the local angle”⁵⁹ and given that media is increasingly producing and promulgating a world of short media sound-bites and snippets, it makes it difficult for an issue like climate change to get traction within the press since its relevance is not always locally apparent and since it does not get translated well into sound bites, but rather requires a longer explanation. This raises the following question: Are media justified in the non-engagement both personally and professionally? To explore the answer, the next section looks at the contextual parameters and limitations of the media industry and its subsequent impact on Media informant behavior.

Media Context

The media context in which most of these informants operates makes it very difficult for the informants to cover climate change adequately, if at all. Some of these contextual realities were already covered in the previous two sections but the full list is worth enumerating. Increasingly, within the media industry, the following is true:

⁵⁸ Interviews: MM: ST-5.

⁵⁹ Interviews: MM: JB2-4.

There is little to no climate expertise on the media company's staff due to the downsizing of media outlets, a process wherein the environmental and science reporters are often the first fired, which leaves a media newsroom that is not knowledgeable enough to handle the issue and struggling to keep up with increasingly complicated scientific developments. There is little prioritization of climate change in the media due to it being superseded and usurped by current and prevailing economic concerns and issues of the day. There is little focus on climate change within the 24/7 news cycle due to the fact that media is "far too preoccupied with trivial stuff,"⁶⁰ said one Media informant, and due to the fact that this particular environmental conflict is not sound-bite friendly, not easily translatable, and does not fit well within the time pressures for an expedited filing of a news story. Additionally, noted one informant, the media does not command, and thus direct, the debate like it once did. Therefore, media's ability to shape the direction of the climate conversation is increasingly limited.

One informant captured some of these contextual trends correctly by saying, "It would be good if there were more people in the business of translating academic data into plain language for the reporters, as a lot of the scientific papers come out in jargon. We need more translators of this sort of information. We need more reporters who specialize in climate and unfortunately, given the climate in the news business, sometimes the environmental reporters are the first to get canned."⁶¹ This, in sum, captures the trends among Media informant attitudes, behavior and contexts – trends that will be relevant in later chapters when determining next steps for developing new, more actionable

⁶⁰ Interviews: MM: BS-3.

⁶¹ Interviews: MM: BS-6.

narratives. Switching to key informant interviews with Members of the US Congress, a summary of the prominent attitudes, behaviors and contexts of the Congressional informants is included in the ABC triangle below.

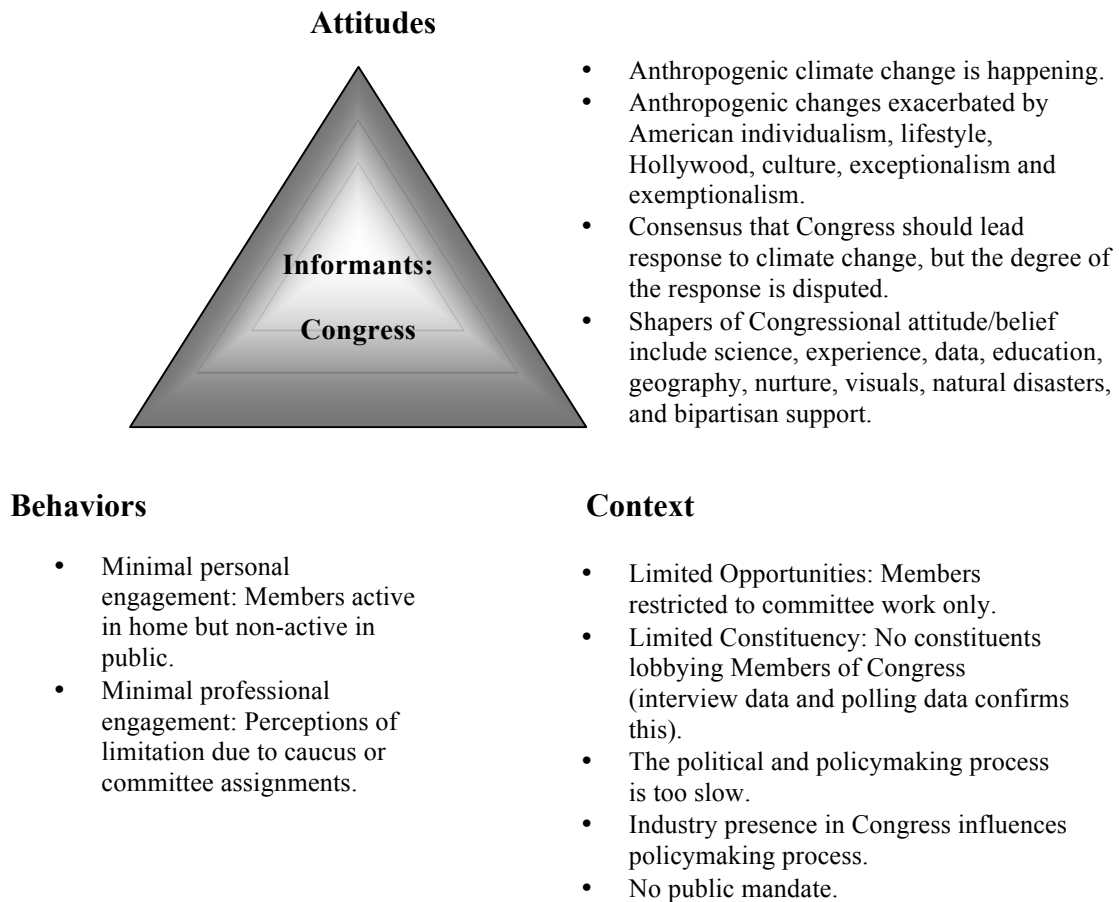


Figure 3: Congressional Informants: Attitudes, Behavior and Context (ABC⁶²)

⁶² Adapted from the ABC Triangle found in Simon Fisher et al., *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action* (New York: Zed Books, 2000) 25.

Data Analysis: Congressional Key Informant Interviews

Congressional Attitudes

Congressional Members' attitudes were shaped, not unlike the Media informants, by a range of environments and stimuli, which included science, life experience, data, education, geography, nurture, visuals, natural disasters and bipartisan support for climate action. For Members of the US Congress, similar to the Media informants, it was personal experience that made the biggest impression in shaping beliefs about climate change. The follow excerpts from the interviews give testament to the importance of personal experience:

- “We went to Africa in February. You would think that February in the northern hemisphere would be somewhat temperate but in fact it was 100 degrees every day. I don’t think anybody can seriously contend that climate change is anything other than real.”⁶³
- “We’ve been watching the snowpack disappear in the Northwest.”⁶⁴
- “In the biomes of Minnesota, they showed the creep that would take place and is taking place now with climate change, how we will start losing our hard wood forests and the prairies would start creeping in from the Dakotas. That was a real wake-up call for me.”⁶⁵
- “I took a trip to Alaska, up by the Arctic Ocean, and was able to see for myself the ice that used to be so secure and was now melting ice caps. You’ve got to see

⁶³ Interviews: MC: AG-2.

⁶⁴ Interviews: MC: EB-1.

⁶⁵ Interviews: MC: BM-1.

the changing migration patterns of caribou. You've got to see how it once was and how it is no longer happening.”⁶⁶

- “I look at everything from ice cores to evidence of rising tides, changes of weather, disappearance of glaciers; they all point towards global warming.”⁶⁷

These experiences and observations, and others like this in the data, led to several general findings and attitudinal themes among Members of the US Congress. Here are a few of the findings:

First, there was a general consensus among the Members that anthropogenic climate change is indeed happening. The consensus was bipartisan among the Congressional informants. The Republicans cited science as general proof that climate change was happening, even if their commitment was more lackadaisical. For example, one Republican Member of Congress noted that initially he “didn’t know much about [climate change],”⁶⁸ but that “scientists said that it was a problem, so I thought, well, this must be a problem.”⁶⁹ Not all Republicans, however, were so casual. One Republican Member of Congress was quite adamant about climate change saying, “The fact are absolutely incontrovertible. Absolutely.”⁷⁰

Contrast this with a Democrat Member of Congress, who was vehement about the existence of proof and keen to counter climate skeptics with this analogy: “If 99 out of 100 fire marshals said your house was going to burn down, which of the 100 would you listen to when it comes to fire safety and insurance? I don’t find the arguments by those

⁶⁶ Interviews: MC: GM-1.

⁶⁷ Interviews: MC: MH-2.

⁶⁸ Interviews: MC: TP-2.

⁶⁹ Interviews: MC: TP-2.

⁷⁰ Interviews: MC: RB-4.

in opposition quite compelling. There's nothing that undermines the scientific consensus."⁷¹

Second, in terms of what exacerbates anthropogenic climate change, Republicans were forthcoming about the causes. One Republican Member of the US Congress named the culture of American exceptionalism as one of the main obstacles to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, saying, "I think there are enough data. I think there are enough visuals. I guess a big problem is a cultural problem. We, as a nation, have prospered marvelously. American exceptionalism, Newt Gingrich was talking about it this morning in our caucus meeting, that we will never have problems in the future because we're so darn exceptional."⁷² Similarly, one Republican was critical of the notion among the Republican Party that American creativity and free market will solve the problem: "My colleagues say that we'll fix [the problem of climate change], that we're creative, innovative people. Most of my colleagues worship the market as if it were from God and that the market will fix it."⁷³

Lifestyle choices were a target for one Republican Member of Congress who noted, "We relish temperatures in our rooms in the summertime that we would bitterly complain about in the wintertime for being so cold. We do exactly the opposite of what we ought to be doing, what rational people ought to be doing."⁷⁴ The lack of belief in climate science and climate scientists was the target for another Member of Congress who suggested that, "We don't embrace science well enough as a policy area, as a

⁷¹ Interviews: MC: EB-3.

⁷² Interviews: MC: RB-6.

⁷³ Interviews: MC: RB-2.

⁷⁴ Interviews: MC: RB-3.

solution,”⁷⁵ which may explain why some Americans remain unmoved in their anthropogenic climate-change-causing activities and unmotivated to do anything to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Third, there was a general bipartisan consensus among Members of the US Congress that they have a responsibility to lead on climate change prevention, with some members sounding a more equivocal tone than others. On one end of the spectrum, some Members thought that the research question regarding responsibility was an arbitrary one, saying, “I think it’s quite artificial to assign a role to the government”⁷⁶ (a quote which came from a Democrat). Some Members of Congress punted responsibility to others in government saying, “I think that leadership first starts, on this issue, with the Executive Branch, because they can do a lot of things as a result of the Executive Order”⁷⁷ (this quote also came from a Democrat). Other Members of Congress were more cynical about global leadership saying, “If the US doesn’t take a leadership role on this, then who will? So we’ve got to take the lead I think,”⁷⁸ with other chiming in with similar comments, “If the US Congress doesn’t lead, the world won’t follow.”⁷⁹ (Interesting to note, then, that at the December 2011 Durban climate talks, no Members of Congress attended, which was a first in international climate talk history.)

Others were more pragmatic, “I think the private sector is looking for leadership,”⁸⁰ while others were more philosophical, “The primary role of government is

⁷⁵ Interviews: MC: RT-2.

⁷⁶ Interviews: MC: EN-2.

⁷⁷ Interviews: MC: GM-3.

⁷⁸ Interviews: MC: GM-2.

⁷⁹ Interviews: MC: JM-2.

⁸⁰ Interviews: MC: BM-2.

education.”⁸¹ And, lastly, many Members of the US Congress were much more explicit about the role Congress should play, “I think we need to set the tone, each of us as Members of the House and the Senate have a bully pulpit, we need to pull people along,”⁸² said one Member, while another Member said, “I think Congress needs to have a huge role, it’s been left to the private sector for too long,”⁸³ and a third Member concluded that “Congress should be as focused on this issue as they would be on the budget, it’s that important.”⁸⁴

Congressional Behaviors

Despite the strong belief in the data, however, among Members of the US Congress in the existence of anthropogenic climate change and the responsibility of Congress to do something about it, there was minimal engagement on the issue, either on the personal or professional front.

On the personal engagement front, some Members of Congress were quite honest about their inactivity, almost proudly so. One Democrat said, “Like any red-blooded American and resident of this great country of ours, my personal lifestyle probably hasn’t changed that much. We do the recycling, we drive a little less, that kind of stuff, which I think most people have done.”⁸⁵ Some Members of Congress, surprisingly and rather remarkably, thought that their impact as consumers on climate change is limited. Said one Member of Congress, “I think we’re so limited as consumers. Would I like to be

⁸¹ Interviews: MC: RB-3.

⁸² Interviews: MC: PT-2.

⁸³ Interviews: MC: RG-2.

⁸⁴ Interviews: MC: MH-2.

⁸⁵ Interviews: MC: RG-2.

greener? Yeah. But in my personal life, as a Member of Congress, it's kind of hard to be green.”⁸⁶ Another Member of Congress supported this thinking, saying, “I don't know how much individuals being frugal about what they consume is really going to be the big tipper.”⁸⁷

On the professional engagement front, the Members of Congress noted different constraints to engagement, but constraints nonetheless. One Member captured the perceived limitations succinctly, a perspective that was shared by many Members of Congress: “We have limited opportunities here [in Congress]. We are expected to do our committee work in areas relative to our committee.”⁸⁸ Another Member backed up this thinking by saying, “It's limiting in Congress, you can't focus on [climate] as much as you would like unless you're sitting on a committee of jurisdiction.”⁸⁹

Consequently, the Members of Congress who were most active were ones that sat on the (perceived to be) appropriate committees: “It became a priority for me since I was part of the Appropriations Committee that funds the Environmental Protection Agency,”⁹⁰ said one Member. Another Member of Congress recognized that he had to be creative to connect the dots in Congress: “What happens in Congress is that you focus on the committees on which you serve and since I serve on Foreign Affairs and Financial Services and since I chair the committee that deals with international monetary policy, I am able to connect some of these global [climate] issues to what we do.”⁹¹

⁸⁶ Interviews: MC: BM-2.

⁸⁷ Interviews: MC: RG-2.

⁸⁸ Interviews: MC: AG-3.

⁸⁹ Interviews: MC: GM-3.

⁹⁰ Interviews: MC: JM-1.

⁹¹ Interviews: MC: GM-3.

Other Members of Congress blamed it on the political process more generally: “I’ve been wanting to do some bills on doubling our energy efficiencies but the political process is too damn slow, too many parties to consider before we move forward.”⁹² While others attributed lack of engagement to public perception of congressional mandate, “I think people would misconstrue it if the Democrat from [city name redacted to protect anonymity], the first Democrat in 34 years, became a planetary crusader rather than do what we actually do, which is to make sure the district finally gets the attention it needs from the powers that be and that we get our fair share.”⁹³ This last Member’s comment is particularly problematic given the Member’s strong belief in the existence of climate change and the need to prevent it. For this Member to be so encumbered by the strictures of apparent short-term congressional district needs, while not recognizing climate change’s potential impact on that district (which is set in a region of the US that is particularly vulnerable to climate change), is concerning.

Congressional Context

The context for most Members of the US Congress is fraught with limited opportunities (which were already briefly alluded to in the previous section), limited constituencies lobbying for climate change legislation, a tediously slow and complex policymaking process (also alluded to previously), a lobbying industry presence on the Hill that influences the policymaking process and the perceived lack of a public mandate.

⁹² Interviews: MC: MH-1.

⁹³ Interviews: MC: AG-3.

In terms of limited opportunities, this was already briefly expounded upon in the previous section about congressional professional engagement, but most Members of the US Congress seem to perceive clear limitations to their engagement based upon congressional committee assignments. There did not seem to be any flexibility or room for leadership outside these parameters. This was consistent across all the data gleaned from the Congressional informants.

One of the most compelling limitations to professional engagement had to do with lack of constituent engagement, a reality that also manifests in the aforementioned data in the literature review regarding how frequently or infrequently the public contacts their elected official on the topic of climate change (see “Americans’ Actions,” Leiserowitz et al. 2011d). One Member captured constituent engagement, or lack thereof, by saying, “I think it would make the job easier in Congress if the silent majority would speak up. It’s a truism to say that all that has to happen for evil to succeed is for good men to do nothing, especially in the case of an issue as important as this one. The planet and life hangs in the balance. I think what the silent rational majority has to do is speak up.”⁹⁴

Typical comments from Members of the US Congress regarding constituency outreach impact included, “If I had to take a percentage reading it is probably 5 percent of the constituents who come in, talk about it,”⁹⁵ from one Member, and “I would not say I get a large conversation from my folks in my district in regards to global warming,”⁹⁶ from another Member. When constituents raise climate change as an issue, it’s often

⁹⁴ Interviews: MC: AG-4.

⁹⁵ Interviews: MC: MH-2.

⁹⁶ Interviews: MC: GM-2.

within the context of another issue, notes one Member of Congress who said, “They do ask about global warming, but it’s usually in the context of sustainable energy, renewable energy or research in that area.”⁹⁷ This last point is particularly interesting because the constituents may have been intent on trying to frame climate change within more politically palatable and salient topics like energy security without realizing that it, in fact, gave the Member of Congress the impression that it wasn’t the priority and, rather, that the other topics were the priority.

Other contextual limitations include a partisan atmosphere, which makes for cumbersome policymaking. One Member of Congress noted, “I’m extraordinarily disappointed that things have become so much about who has control of power rather than who can work together for the common good and create win-wins.”⁹⁸ Another blamed the process itself and the ability of persons to influence it, “We have a political process that is not designed to make significant policy adjustments and it tends to magnify the impact of individual interests and even individuals.”⁹⁹

All of these reasons – or perceived limitations on behalf of Members of the US Congress – make for a hobbled legislative body, fettered by boundaries, both real and perceived, that preclude more active action on climate change and environmental conflict. Why do these fetters exist and why are Members of the US Congress and members of the Media so inactive personally and professionally when it comes to their

⁹⁷ Interviews: MC: MH-2.

⁹⁸ Interviews: MC: BM-3.

⁹⁹ Interviews: MC: EB-1.

engagement on the issue of climate change? The next chapter delves into some theories that may help explain this lack of engagement.

CHAPTER 5: UNDERSTANDING WHY MEDIA AND CONGRESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE IS LIMITED

What becomes clear in Chapter Four is that key informant Media and Congressional attitudes, according to the research data, are generally in favor of addressing climate change. Media attitudes and Congressional attitudes are generally in consensus that climate change exists and that this environmental conflict should be prevented, managed, transformed or resolved. Contrasting the strong attitudes and beliefs found in the data are behaviors that are inconsistent with key informant beliefs. Thus, this chapter delves into the possible theoretical underpinnings explaining the lack of personal and professional engagement in preventing climate change by the Media and Members of the US Congress. The chapter looks at range of conflict theories - from communicative action, structuration theory and dialectic of control, to works on the *Civil Sphere* and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* - to analyze and better understand this lack of engagement.

Personal Engagement: Given strong attitude, why is informant behavior so weak?

For members of the Media and for Members of the US Congress, there was consistently strong belief that anthropogenic climate change is, in fact, happening. In the dissertation's interview data from key informants, it was not a debate as to whether or not climate change was happening and whether or not humans were impacting the climate. If

there were disputations, they centered on the degree to which human activity was responsible for all, some, or only part of global warming. Similarly, there was consistency among mainstream Media and Members of the US Congress regarding the lack of personal engagement in activities that could prevent climate change and global warming. In other words, both stakeholders –Media and Members of the US Congress – were minimally engaged in activities that could prevent climate change, despite the overwhelming belief by these same informants that climate change was, in fact, happening.

The primary question of this section, then, is to discover what theories can help us understand why - when belief is strong and evident in the data - behavior that would naturally act on that belief does not logically follow. Before delving into the theories, however, let's look at the data. The data from this dissertation is consistent with the data found in the 2010 polling by Yale University and George Mason University (2010 was more comprehensive in activity scope than subsequent 2011 polling), which shows how personal behaviors associated with climate change prevention contain some interesting trends. For example, the majority of activities engaged in by the public – as part of a desire to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – were private activities, ones that took place indoors. Conversely, the American public was least engaged on the climate change prevention front when it came to external and more publicly visible activities.

To explicate further, here's a breakdown of public versus private activities based on Yale-GMU polling. On the private activities, or ones that generally take place within the home, there was a high level of activity: 86 percent of Americans surveyed turned off

unnneeded lights, 73 percent turned off electronics, 53 percent recycled at home and lowered the thermostat in the winter, 49 percent conserved water, 48 percent raised the thermostat in the summer, and 46 percent reduced trash.

Contrast this with more publicly visible activities, or ones that took place outside the home: Only 18 percent walked or biked instead of driving, only 12 percent used public transport or carpooled, 67 percent had never rewarded green companies by buying their products, 71 percent had never punished non-green companies by boycotting their products, 84 percent had never contributed to an organization working to reduce global warming, 89 percent had never made a public media statement about global warming (e.g. blog, opinion piece, etc.), and 89 percent had never contacted their elected official about global warming (see “Americans’ Actions,” Leiserowitz et al. 2010).

There is a trend here, one that is reinforced by polling data from Yale and GMU and one that is reinforced by the data found by this dissertation’s research in interviewing the Media and Members of the US Congress – i.e. that personal engagement on the climate change prevention front is quite limited and when it does occur, it takes place primarily within the personal confines of the home and away from the public eye.

Two theories may be useful here in understanding the gap between informant attitude (i.e. that climate change is happening and it is caused by humans) and informant behavior (which, on the personal front, is quite limited). The first theory has to do with the idea that lifestyle consumption equals competence, which we will explore by looking at texts having to do with the culture industry, specifically the work of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (Horkheimer and Adorno

2002). The second theory has to do with the idea that lifestyle consumption equals, or equates to, equality. The work of the *Civil Sphere* by Jeffrey Alexander (Alexander 2006) will be useful here in exploring this theme further.

Both theories implicitly recognize that because “identity is a product of power relations, that fields of action are necessarily bound, for example, through processes of acculturation and identity formation, it becomes necessary to reject a view of power that presupposes the possibility of distinguishing free action from action shaped by the action of others. The ways people act – how they conduct themselves, think, feel, perceive, reason, what people value, how they define themselves in relation to communities to which they experience themselves as belonging – are, in significant part, the effect of social action” (Hayward 2000, 30). This will be a useful guide going forward in understanding the powerful dialectic in cultural and civil spheres.

Theory: Culture Industry

First, the idea that lifestyle consumption equals competence makes intuitive sense given what we know about people’s proclivity to buy big cars to exhibit individual power or prowess, big houses to exhibit accomplishment and success, and other big things.

American society is a culture in which supersized products and advertisements are pervasive, prevalent and prioritized. Moreover, the way American consumer culture operates is predicated on the latest gadget – be it a computer, phone, car, clothing, home, etc. – so the consumer is constantly being encouraged, either explicitly through advertising or implicitly through cultural norms, to acquire this latest gadget.

C. Wright Mills in his work on the *Power Elite* captures where this influence comes from: “The Media have not only filtered into our experience of external realities, they have also entered into our very experience of our own selves. They have provided us with new identities and new aspirations of what we should like to be, and what we should like to appear to be. They have provided, in the models of conduct they hold out to us, a new and larger and more flexible set of appraisals of our very selves. More than that: 1) the media tell the man in the mass who he is – they given him identity; 2) they tell him what he wants to be – they give him aspirations, 3) they tell him how to get that way – they give him technique, and 4) they tell him how to feel that he is that way even when he is not – they give him escape” (Mills 2000, 314).

Complementarily, note Horkheimer and Adorno in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, at a basic level, “Anyone who does not conform is condemned to an economic impotence which is prolonged in the intellectual powerlessness of the eccentric loner. Disconnected from the mainstream, he is easily convicted of inadequacy” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 106). This dynamic has serious implications for greener and lighter footprint lifestyle behaviors that are necessary in order to prevent this environmental conflict but which are not considered culturally acceptable in American society as of yet.

These pressures of conformity and feelings of inadequacy or impotency were evident in the dissertation interview data. One media informant noted, with some sardonic laughter as to imply that a greener and lighter climate footprint was completely

outside the realm of reason: “We make sure our house is energy efficient but beyond that I’m not eating tofu and bean sprouts instead of steak.”¹⁰⁰

The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* suggests that something far more comprehensive and complex is at work: “Industrial culture does something more. It inculcates the conditions on which implacable life is allowed to be lived at all” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 123). “Everyone must show that they identify wholeheartedly with the power which beats them” (Adorno 2002, 124). According to Horkheimer and Adorno, this is intentional because, “The more strongly the culture industry entrenches itself, the more it can do as it chooses with the needs of consumers – producing, controlling, disciplining them” (Adorno 2002, 115).

In a capitalist society, then, the ability to control consumer culture comes with an obvious profit motive and substantial financial reward. Greener climate-friendly lifestyles are usually leaner and lighter (which means you’re consuming less) or less developed and less subsidized (which means it is less convenient, less accessible and less affordable) – all of which combines to make greener consumption less mainstream, less acculturated, and thus, less acceptable.

This last point was evident in the data. Members of the Media and Members of the US Congress found personal engagement in green, climate-friendly activities to be often tedious, onerous, inconvenient, or expensive. Key informants were quick to offer a disclaimer or caveat by saying, “I do what I can,”¹⁰¹ while somewhat sheepishly recognizing that their personal engagement was minimal and mostly limited to household

¹⁰⁰ Interviews: MM: PR-2.

¹⁰¹ Interviews: MM: BS-3.

activities and limited to what was within the realm of practical and easy. One informant recognized the culture industry's influence, by noting, "It's politically difficult to change lifestyles and to see these private interests in maintaining people's lifestyles – it's really hard to change that."¹⁰²

The theories of Horkheimer, Adorno and Mills help to make sense of why this environmental conflict remains such an intractable issue and why the public is disinclined to pursue behaviors that could ultimately help prevent climate change from escalating. Jeffrey Alexander's work in *The Civil Sphere* is also useful in understanding this intractability when it comes to climate change. Alexander's theoretical lens complements the aforementioned analysis on competency by looking, similarly, at the concept of equality and how it is achieved and maintained by individuals operating within the civil sphere.

Theory: Civil Sphere

Lifestyle behavior and consumption has implications not only on public perceptions of competence but also of equality. One could argue that achieving feelings of competence is the necessary precursor to attaining some semblance of equality. This connection between consumption and equality has the potential to be insidious and enduring, inspiring individuals and entire cultures to compete with each other through consumption. This is becoming increasingly clear on a global scale as well, as developing countries attempt to catch up to Western/American consumption standards, as evidenced in the

¹⁰² Interviews: MM: SQ-4.

increasing numbers of shopping malls, corporate culture, prevalence of logos and brand identity, corporate advertisements in the global public sphere, in an attempt to attain a sense of equality through consumption.

This gives great incentives to markets, then, to manufacture and manipulate civil society, and create a consumer-based and consumption-based language for communication. Explains Jeffrey Alexander in *The Civil Sphere*:

“That the economic sphere facilitates the construction of a civil society in important ways is a historical and sociological fact that cannot be denied. When an economy is structured by markets this encourages behavior that is independent, rational, and self-controlled. By creating an enormous supply of cheap and widely available material media, mass production has the potential to lessen invidious status markets that separated rich and poor in more restricted economies. It becomes increasingly possible for masses of people to express their individuality, their autonomy, and their equality through consumption and, in so doing, to partake of the common symbolic inheritance of cultural life” (Alexander 2006, 206)

Increased consumption, therefore, allows the poorer classes to attain some sense of equality with the richer classes. This is why the “American Dream” is so critical as a concept in motivating consumer behavior – and why it’s such an effective motivator – because many Americans believe to be richer than they really are, or at least capable of ending up in a richer socio-economic class. This belief conflicts directly with extremely low rates of social mobility in America, which are some of the lowest in the rich world

according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2008). Arguably, it is the illusion of the American Dream that created the context for the housing market and foreclosure crisis. Despite low financial capacity, Americans wanted to attain high cultural standing by pursuing the American Dream, a dream that has often been symbolized by homeownership (Eichler 2011).

All of this is particularly poignant for America, which witnessed, in 2012, the highest rates of income inequality since the Great Depression and the highest rates of poverty since World War II (Guardian 2011). The majority of America – 90 percent of American households – is struggling to get by on roughly \$30,000 per year for a family of four (Gilson and Perot 2011). Now data shows that roughly half of America is living at poverty or low-income levels. Roughly 50 million classify as below poverty, which is defined as surviving on an annual household income of \$22,500 for a family of four. Another 100 million Americans classify as low-income, or \$45,000 in annual household income for a family of four (Bernstein 2011).

Ironically, one of the main reasons why Americans generally do not support public policy that would better serve their lower-income status and lower-income needs is because of the following: Not only do they consider themselves richer than they truly are, they also want someone to be positioned below them financially. Americans do not want to be the one struggling on the bottom tier or rung of the national financial ladder, a reality that makes social policy aimed at bettering the lot of the lower class difficult to pass (Economist 2011). A study called “Last Place Aversion: Evidence and

Redistributive Implications” by Ilyana Kuziemko, Ryan Buell, Taly Reich and Michael I. Norton (Kuziemko et al. 2011) found the following:

“People don’t like to be at the bottom. One paradoxical consequence of this “last-place aversion” is that some poor people may be vociferously opposed to the kinds of policies that would actually raise their own income a bit but that might also push those who are poorer than them into comparable or higher positions. This idea is backed up by survey data from America collected by Pew, a polling company: those who earned just a bit more than the minimum wage were the most resistant to increasing it. Poverty may be miserable. But being able to feel a bit better off than someone else makes it a bit more bearable” (Economist 2011).

This reality makes for difficult climate change prevention when behaviors that are responsible for escalating this environmental conflict are tied up in, and thus fettered by, these psychosocial and cultural norms.

To sum up these two theoretical queries on ‘consumption as competence’ and ‘consumption as equality,’ *The Civil Sphere* describes the following: “the material asymmetry inherent in economic life becomes translated into projections about civil competence and incompetence. Inside of this translated social language, it becomes much more difficult for actors without economic achievement or wealth to communicate effectively in the civil sphere, to receive full respect from its regulatory institutions and to interact with other, more economically advantaged people in a fully civil way. Of course, material power as such, power garnered only in the economic realm, can become an immediate and effective basis for making civil claims even without the benefit of

translation” (Alexander 2006, 207). The points here regarding communicating effectively in the civil sphere will be explored in later chapters that discuss communicative action.

The consumption of mainstream-sanctioned products, therefore, promulgated and promoted by the culture industry, becomes a way for society to communicate, achieve and exude competence, and ultimately garner respect, making a greener and leaner lifestyle all the less appealing for people to pursue. Until greener lifestyle choices become public and popular (a few behaviors may already be popular but they are primarily private activities, inside the home), civil society will continue to perceive public expressions of climate-friendly behavior to be expressions of incompetence and behaviors that undermine equality and respect for the individual consumer.

Professional Engagement: Given strong attitude, why is behavior so weak?

The aforementioned constraints on personal engagement create the context for understanding constraints on professional engagement but should have less of an effect when it comes to professional engagement. Why? Because it is entirely plausible to have an individual consumer who fails to personally engage in public activities that are green and climate friendly, due to the constraints mentioned in the previous section, but who wishes that Members of Congress would pursue climate-friendly legislation so that climate-friendly consumption is more possible, more mainstream and more capable of providing that individual consumer with feelings of competence and equality. This is not dissimilar to the private sector and private industry lobbying Congress to pursue climate-

change legislation so that it becomes easier – financially, politically, and, from a regulatory perspective, legally – to pursue industrial practices that are more predictable, more popular and ultimately greener.

Media Trends

The reasons behind why the mainstream Media informants, who were interviewed, failed to engage professionally has more to do with structural limitations and media trends than anything else. For example, in journalism circles, according to the key informants, media professionals are taught and trained to have no bias in their reporting and to report both sides equally. Thus, for the Media informants featured in this dissertation to engage professionally in writing about climate change in a way that reflects their attitudes or beliefs would be a breach of journalistic integrity, according to these informants. There are several additional noteworthy media trends that make it difficult for my Media informants to advocate for their beliefs on climate change.

One is that media companies and newsrooms increasingly have no money or time to train their reporters on the complexities of the climate change debate, nor do the Media informants have time to sufficiently train up on such a complicated issue. The downsizing that is happening at most media companies, and concomitant firing of environmental reporters due to cost-cutting measures, has made it difficult for media firms to adequately cover the issue. Lastly, climate change – or any other environmental conflict for that matter - is not the priority for most mainstream media right now; the budget and the

economy are the priorities, making it near impossible for my Media informants to write about it or prioritize it in terms of their professional engagement.

Congressional Trends

With Members of the US Congress, however, and with regard to their lack of professional engagement on the climate change prevention front, some theories on communicative action, structuration theory and the dialectic of control become relevant and worth exploring. For example, given that the majority of America believes anthropogenic climate change is happening, why did this majority not contact its elected officials? Eighty-seven percent, in fact, according to the November 2011 study by Yale-GMU, have never, in the survey's previous 12 months, contacted their elected official on the subject of global warming. If the majority of constituents would contact their elected officials, it may help Members of the US Congress feel sufficiently empowered to act on climate change and emboldened beyond any perceived limitations due to committee, caucus or industry influence. So why does the majority of constituents not engage? This is where the theoretical works of C. Wright Mills, Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens may be of use.

Theory: Communicative Action and Power

C. Wright Mills puts his finger on the problem of insufficient constituent outreach to Members of Congress in the following analysis: "The distance between the individual and the centers of power has become greater, and the individual has come to feel

powerless. Between political hope and political realization, there are the two parties and the federal bureaucracy, which, as a means of political action, often seem to cut the nerve of direct political interest. Indifference may thus be seen as an understandable response to a condition of powerlessness” (Mills 2002, 347). Consequently, the fact that 87 percent of Americans – the majority of whom believe anthropogenic climate change is happening – are not contacting their elected officials could be understood less as an indifference to the issue of environmental climate change and more as something attributable to a feeling of powerlessness more generally.

To reiterate a point from the last section, as emphasized by *The Civil Sphere*: markets manufacture civil society and the economic sphere creates and controls the social sphere. Economic practices within free market systems create and condition behavioral trends that are then similarly practiced within the political realm as well. The lack of a Habermasian lifeworld (which I will explain below) in economic systems, for example, can lead to a lack of Habermasian lifeworld in political systems as well. Habermas believes that economic systems and political systems must be supported or legitimated by validity claims that can only originate in the socio-cultural realm, or what he calls the lifeworld. If this legitimation fails to manifest in the lifeworld, a crisis erupts. According to Habermas, the lifeworld is “[T]he transcendental site where speaker and hearer meet, where they can reciprocally raise claims that their utterances fit the world (objective, social, subjective), and where they can criticize and confirm those validity claims, settle their disagreements, and arrive at agreements” (Habermas 1987, 126).

Consequently, the public's ability to speak and be heard, criticize and confirm, and arrive at shared agreements is significantly compromised in free market systems. Economic transactions in free market societies like America's are, for the most part and with few exceptions, anonymous and devoid of interactive and consensus-driven lifeworld characteristics. In general, the consumer or buyer does not interact with the producer or manufacturer. For example, a car owner does not meet the miner, the industry worker, or the carmaker; a suit-wearer does not meet the cotton farmer, the workshop employee, or the tailor; a meat-eater does not encounter the animal, the farmer, the hunter, or the meat processor.

Consider the implications of this lack of lifeworld interaction on carbon-intensive, climate change inducing, and environmental conflict-causing activities. Most Americans are not interfacing with the immediate effects of their carbon-intensive lifestyles. If they would, their carbon usage and carbon-intensives lifestyles might be better informed. The essence of a Habermasian lifeworld crisis is at play given the lack of interaction here. The crisis, then, results in an escalating environmental conflict and a public that is disinclined to do anything to ultimately prevent global warming.

Dissociating the American consumer from his/her capacity to be in this communicative action with the producer or manufacturer or end-use recipient of his/her carbon-intensive lifestyle has obvious implications for Habermas's theory on legitimation crisis (and incidentally, has obvious implications for greener lifestyles, especially if the consumer never has to deal with the conflict and waste associated with energy-intensive lifestyles). If the opportunity for shared consensus making does not arise between the

consumer and the producer and the end-use recipient, the economic system risks a Habermasian legitimation crisis. Similarly, the impacts of free markets on the principles of democracy - i.e. equality, participation, and accountability - are equally catastrophic. Because free markets preclude the opportunity for communicative action between manufacturer, buyer, and end-use recipient, consumers rely on corporations to manage supply and demand, and become distanced from the decision-making process and accountability mechanisms. Responsibility is abdicated.

This trend in the economic sphere sets a dangerous precedent for the political sphere. Consumers under the free market schema, who have abdicated their rights and responsibilities to corporations, become accustomed to a laissez-faire approach. Additionally, the disintegration of community and civic life is predicated on, and encouraged by, this new lack of accountability. When supply and demand was locally contained, accountability increased due to socio-economic interdependency. These accountability mechanisms, however, no longer reside in the consumer or the community. This shift in oversight disempowers the public by powerfully conditioning the impression that the public is unable to govern local economic systems of supply and demand.

All of this poses serious problems for constituents who believe that climate change is happening but are failing to communicate this to their Members of Congress or to any of their elected officials. Not only are these constituents failing to countenance the socio-environmental impacts of their energy-intensive lifestyles, they are replicating the dissociation, which is already commonplace in the economic sphere, in the political sphere as well.

Theory: Structuration Theory and the Dialectic of Control

Putting aside economic systems for a moment and looking solely at the political systems and how they are structured, C. Wright Mills' analysis is again useful in understanding lack of constituent – and consequently, Congressional – engagement in climate change prevention:

“Most political decisions of consequence have been moved from the local to state to federal establishment. The issues of politics, it is often said, are now so technical and intricate that the individual cannot be expected to understand them or be alert to their consequences. Participation is more possible, politics more engaging, when the issues to be settled are within the everyday experience of those to whom they are addressed” (Mills 2002, 347-348).

This is particularly true for constituents who feel that climate policy is too complicated to understand or for constituents who are not interacting with the daily everyday consequences of their climate change causing behavior. Not only is the political process highly esoteric, in terms of policy technicality and intricacy, climate policy is particularly alienating and particularly hard to understand because there is little communicative lifeworld in which to interact and experience the consequences of climate-impacting behavior.

But how does this explain the discrepancy between climate attitudes and climate behaviors – in other words, that the majority of the American public know that climate change is happening but are not contacting their elected officials to ask them to do something about it? Perhaps it is less about climate science and scientific esotericism –

because based on the polling we know that the constituent knows enough about climate change to know that it is happening and is able to witness and describe it – and more about structuration theory and the dialectic of control. To put it simply, does the constituent feel like their action or behavior will make any difference at all?

Extrapolating off Mills for a moment, one component of the explanation may lie in the creation of an interlocutor, a middle manager, to deal with constituent concerns so that the constituent voice has, in theory, stronger representation among elected officials and, in our case, Members of Congress. One middle manager is the nongovernmental organization (NGO), many of which are represented in Washington DC by over 15,000 registered lobbyists (Tett 2012). Many of these NGOs were created, ostensibly, to speak on behalf of constituents and advocate constituent concerns to the community at large, to locally elected officials, and to federal policymakers. But it may also be the case that the NGOs have made these same individual constituents less inclined, as a result, to contact their elected officials and policymakers.

In contemporary discourse, a vibrant and dynamic civil society – which is often quantified and qualified by the healthy existence of nongovernmental organizations – is considered to be an essential component of any democracy. Yet there is much debate on their value. Since “Alexis de Tocqueville argued that American civic associationalism facilitated a strong sense of democratic citizenship,” and “since Putnam published *Making Democracy Work*, his seminal work on the effect of civic associationalism in promoting better institutional performance, many other studies have confirmed the

deleterious effects of civil society in promoting democratic breakdown and malperformance” (Tusalem 2007, 361).

Political theorist John Dryzek argues for their existence, saying they are essential in discursive democracies and suggesting that “decoupling the deliberative and decisional moments of democracy, locating deliberation in engagement of discourses in the public sphere at a distance from the sovereign state,” is essential, but simultaneously warns that “public spheres can be segmented, the source of interethnic conflict, and prone to Sunstein’s ‘law of group polarization’ if individuals communicate only with likeminded others” (Dryzek 2005, 223). So while NGOs might offer an “associational culture, which can facilitate a network and web of social connectedness that enhances ever deeper levels of communitarianism and social integration,” (Tusalem 2007, 365) they can also polarize and divide constituents. But do they increase the democratic dialectic and, more specifically, civic engagement with elected officials? Other critics, who have weighed in over the last twenty years citing problems with components of civil society and the increasing prevalence of nongovernmental organizations, say no:

“For instance, Bermeo and Nord’s (2000) work advances the argument that...civil society’s excesses did not necessarily promote the longevity of democracy, because its many configurations did not play a convincing role in promoting a democratic political culture. Sydney Tarrow (1996) also puts forward the argument that civil society per se does not promote better governance. Rather, states that have a high level of organizational capacity (those that have institutionalized the rule of law and achieved high levels of legitimacy) are more

likely to foster polities that can have strong civil societies. In the end, strong state institutions matter more than civil society in promoting good governance”

(Encarnacion 2003; Tusalem 2007, 362-366).

In the United States alone, approximately 1.5 million nonprofit organizations exist, with a majority of these organizations sprouting within the last several decades (National Center for Charitable Statistics 2012). This boost in nongovernmental organizational activity reflects both an increase in the acceptance of lobbying practices (formal and informal, at all levels of government) and the subsequent desire for a greater number of special interest groups, and an increase in population growth – since US population doubled in the last fifty years (Census 2010) – and thus the need for greater representation of diverse constituencies. And yet, it is worth looking at how nongovernmental organizations may help increase citizen alienation from systems of governance. That the American public’s approval rating of the US Congress, as of December 2011, was at an all-time low at only 9 percent approval (Schieffer 2011) is emblematic of this civic alienation.

Extrapolating on this theory of civic alienation from systems of governance, and given the recent polling regarding all-time lows in terms of faith in Congress, U.S. citizens clearly feel increasingly underrepresented by, and alienated from, systems of federal governance and perhaps prefer to participate in easier-to-access nongovernmental organizations that afford them the feeling and experience of local governance and local participation. Even local government is trusted by constituents more than the distant federal government: A large majority (72 percent) of America says they have a great

deal or a fair amount of trust in their local government, while less than half (42 percent) says the same of the executive branch of the U.S. government (Gallup 2008).

Additionally, in more populous and geographically diffuse democracies like America's, where civic anonymity is more possible, nongovernmental organizations provide citizens with an identity and a community, albeit often a virtual one. Notes Tusalem, "Membership in organizations, such as labor unions, guilds, professional organizations, clubs, bowling leagues, bird watching clubs, and other organized groups promote a sense of community. A nation that has a strong sense of civic-mindedness and membership in such organizations should expect to have citizens that are tolerant of diversity, have a high level of mutual trust, and are more compromise seeking" (Tusalem 2007, 365). (And yet, the US, which has some of the highest rates of NGOs in the world, has some of the lowest rates of trust in the developed world, according to Wilkinson and Pickett 2009.)

Giddens' structuration theory and concept of personal agency is helpful here in understanding public participation in NGO structures. In structuration theory, which Giddens describes as the "dialectic of control," (Giddens 1986, 16) structure and agency are mutually interdependent, reflexive and influential – constantly transforming along a continuum of time and space. In America, therefore, it would make sense that nongovernmental organizations would be more popular due to their ability to offer this dialectic, especially because Americans feel that the political/governing "forces have an apparently inevitable look to them," and that there are "few options open to the actors in question" (Giddens 1986, 178). If, then, to stay on the Giddens track, "power is the

means of getting things done,” (Giddens 1986, 175) then it makes logical sense that a citizen, unable to exercise sufficient power to get things done within systems of governance, would turn to local nongovernmental organizations to exercise a realizable and tangible power. The nongovernmental organization most likely offers more tangible rewards for human or financial investment. There is a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction, and efficacy when one volunteers for a blood drive campaign or when one gives a \$35 donation to a local community center. A great example of this is the recent KONY 2012 campaign, which successfully invited millions of citizen activists to pay a small fee for a toolkit that enabled participation in a specific and short-term, goal-oriented 2012 campaign to capture Uganda’s Lord Resistance Army head Joseph Kony, a man responsible for crimes against humanity (Reiff 2012). This campaign’s success, according to campaign’s director, is predicated on American society’s desire to provide a real and tangible benefit for humanity (Stump 2012). Whereas federal systems of governance rarely offer that opportunity to citizens and when they do – through elections, votes or referendums – it is not as immediate or tangible since the bureaucratic nature of these systems of governance impede immediate and tangible results.

As long as NGOs are easier to access, easier to participate in, and more diversely representational of the American constituency, the more marginalized our democracy may become. There is little incentive to the constituent to become more politically active if the systems of governance do not reflect their sex, their race, or their age (this is a particular problem in the US where a majority white male Congress still does not accurately reflect the growing diversity of America), if the systems of governance do not

afford frequent opportunities for engagement and action and if the systems of governance are not accountable with their dollars. Nongovernmental organizations are able to help allay some of these concerns because they are individuated and tailored to meet a specific constituency. NGOs represent a specific citizen's sex, race and age, provide frequent opportunities for engagement and action, and at least appear more accountable due to federal requirements to be transparent with donated monies. Until the government can provide these aforementioned attributes with greater efficiency and efficacy, it may continue to be a less preferred option by the public, especially in contrast to more localized and specifically tailored representative groups and organizations.

NGOs also provide the constituent and individual the sense of power, and often "NGOs can act as an institutional alternative" (Tusalem 2007, 364). Hannah Arendt talks about how "power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say of somebody that he is 'in power' we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name. The moment the group, from which the power originated to begin with, disappears, 'his power' also vanishes" (Lukes 1986, 64).

The irony of American individuals joining NGOs like the climate-focused Natural Resources Defense Council, World Resources Institute and others to represent them in Washington DC among US policymakers is that while constituents might feel like they are gaining collective group power, it is worth positing that they are psychologically undermining their own individual power. Individual constituents are depending on the

NGO to take action on their behalf and thus less frequently engaging in genuine communicative action with the policymakers these individuals elected. This is especially the case as NGOs organize individual members online, where very little effective communicative action can take place. Online interaction by individual constituents is limited in its ability to foster “communicative action as the medium in which the intersubjectively shared life-world is formed. It is the ‘space of appearance’ in which actors enter, encounter one another, are seen and heard” (Lukes 1986, 78-79). Habermas’s ideal life-world is filled with the web of human relationships – a web that would hard-pressed to be found or created on the web-based Internet.

Two additional theorists can help explain why American constituencies feel alienated from systems of governance and have become docile bodies on the issue of environmental climate change as a result: 1) Michel Foucault’s theories of control of activity and organization of geneses, and 2) John Kenneth Galbraith’s theories on the historical shift from personality and property power to the more dominant organizational power. To begin, C. Wright Mills in *Power Elite* suggests that while “authority formally resides in the people, the power of initiation is in fact held by small circles of men. That is why the standard strategy of manipulation is to make it appear that the people, or at least a large group of them, really made the decision. That is why even when the authority is available, men with access to it may still prefer the secret, quieter ways of manipulation” (Mills 2000, 317). The three points below highlight how the illusion of robust civic engagement in America is actually masking a control of activity, an

organization of geneses, and an organizational power that ultimately does not empower or embolden the public on climate change prevention but rather undermines their power.

First, to better understand why constituents are inactive in communicating with elected officials on this particular environmental conflict, it is worth examining how effective one of the core components of constituent outreach – that of the act of voting – either encourages or discourages, in a Pavlovian sense, continued and even more robust constituent outreach. The mere fact that voting takes place on a specific day¹⁰³ (a mid-week workday, no less) within a scheduled and pre-determined timeline is exemplary of Foucault's control of activity. The rights and responsibilities of the people to govern are primarily allowed on a specific day in a specific year.

Although opportunities to influence systems of governance exist beyond the voting schedule, it is carefully regimented into specific and acceptable modes of communication, e.g. letter writing, phone calling or emailing. The impact of this control of activity is that *the people*, in whom supreme power is supposedly vested, feel limited in their ability to exercise supreme power and feel constrained by the limits of an infrequent voting system and formulaic and controlled communication patterns. Factor in the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision (Liptak 2010) that allows Super Political Action Committees unlimited financial access and prowess in the political process, and you emerge with a constituency feeling more impotent and cynical than ever before.

¹⁰³ November's Tuesday elections are a result of agrarian, religious and economic considerations. America's farmers were more likely to be able to vote in the autumn due to the harvest season. Tuesday allowed sufficient time after Sunday church to travel to the county seat to vote. Holding it on the second Tuesday of the month was an attempt by Congress to create distance from any ill feelings stemming from first-of-the-month accounting (of last month's expenses) and thus avoid any ill influence on the vote.

Second, the creation of public policy, political science, and international relations academic programs – and the policy wonk language that accompanies it – generated the notion among the American populace that only certain disciplines can and should govern. Here, economic class plays a role in reinforcing this trend: elites graduate from private universities with a solid reputation in public policy and international relations training, while lower-income classes graduate from public universities or community colleges that are assumed to have weaker faculties. Furthermore, the logistical organization of geneses – in this case, the political disciplines – is sanctioned within a specific place. The Capitol Building in Washington D.C. is, in essence, an enclosed, partitioned and functional site whereupon this pedagogy – i.e. governance – is exercised. As a result, the American public, feeling insecure with their apparent lack of knowledge on the subject matter (and this is particularly salient when it comes to climate change), surrender their rights and responsibilities to those with the appropriate academic training and concomitant familiarity with “Hill-speak” or policy wonk talk.

C. Wright Mills backs up this thinking: “In the democratic society of publics it was assumed that before public action would be taken, there would be rational discussion between individuals which would determine the action, and that, accordingly, the public opinion that resulted would be the infallible voice of reason. But this has been challenged not only 1) by the assumed need for experts to decide delicate and intricate issues, but 2) by the discovery – as by Freud – of the irrationality of the man in the street, and 3) by the discovery – as by Marx – of the socially conditioned nature of what was once assumed to be autonomous reason” (Mills 2000, 300-301).

Third, in larger societies, like America, individual engagement is all the more difficult, given the influence of organizational power. In smaller societies there is an increased likelihood that the voter knows the candidate and is persuaded by personality power, i.e. the quality of physique, mind, speech, moral certainty, or other personal trait. In smaller societies there is also an increased likelihood of the emergence of property power and a feudal system that provides the land-endowed with the “wherewithal to purchase submission” (Lukes 1986, 214). In large unwieldy societies, however, while personality and property power certainly still play a role, organizational power prevails (e.g. the emergence Super PACs in America).

Although personality power (e.g. Barack Obama’s and Bill Clinton’s charisma) and property power (e.g. President Bush family’s estate, oil) still impact how the United States is governed and who is elected, organizational power is still the most influential. Democratic and Republican parties and K Street’s respective lobbies – of which there are now 15,000 registered lobbyists with \$3.5 billion spent on them by private sector nongovernmental organizations (Tett 2012) – are now the organizational shapers of policy. And, thanks to *Citizens United*, this is an even more salient problem than before.

Consequently, Congress – an organizational power elected to represent the people – becomes more anonymous and seemingly impenetrable. It is safe to say there is little communicative action and lifeworld going on here. The organization takes on a life of its own, alien to the people that supposedly created it. Ask voters to describe the face of their U.S. Representative and most will find that they are unable to do so. This

organizational defacing and dehumanization of governance systems results in voter paralysis or, as Foucault aptly put it, docile bodies.

As long as democracy is characterized by an organizational power that appears immutable and faceless, voter turnout will continue to witness low numbers. In the US, voter turnout in the congressional elections of 2010 was 41.59 percent – far lower than the global average of 64 percent since 1945 (IDEA 2012) – and only trends towards a majority vote in the 60 percentile during presidential elections.

Table 1. US Voter turnout for Congressional elections since 1980 (IDEA 2012)

2010	41.59
2008	64.36
2006	47.52
2004	68.75
2002	45.31
2000	63.76
1998	51.55
1996	65.97
1994	57.64
1992	78.02
1990	56.03
1988	72.48
1986	54.89
1984	74.63
1982	61.1
1980	76.53

Compare these US voter participation rates above in Table 1 to countries much smaller in geography and population size. The top ten countries by average voter turnout for parliamentary (not presidential) elections – using data from 1945 include, in order:

- Italy (91 percent, pop. 61 million)
- Seychelles (91 percent, pop. 90,000)
- Angola (88 percent, pop. 18 million)
- Cambodia (88 percent, pop. 15 million)
- Austria (88 percent, pop. 8.2 million)
- Estonia (87 percent, 1.2 million)
- Germany (86 percent, pop. 81 million)
- Hungary (86 percent, pop. 9.9 million)
- Kyrgyzstan (86 percent, pop. 5.5 million)
- Latvia (85 percent, pop. 2.1 million) (IDEA 2012; CIA 2012).

It is worth noting that countries listed above with higher voter participation rates are countries that are significantly smaller than the US – in both geographic and population size – and thus perhaps offer constituents a higher likelihood for a dialectic interaction. It is important to recognize that other factors – geo-political, national elections mandates, post-conflict dynamics – are at play in determining voter turnout and that high voter participation cannot be solely attributed to the geographic or population size of a country. However, in countries with smaller geographies and populaces it might prove more manageable to construct a government by the people, in which power is vested in the people and exercised by them.

In larger countries, it may prove more difficult to manifest communicative action, a Habermasian lifeworld, and a democratic dialectic, leading to less exercise by the people, less participation by the people, and lower voter turnout. It is perhaps no surprise,

then, that Russia and India – two countries whose geographic and population sizes are some of the largest in the world but who both struggle with low voter turnout – also, like the US, have some of the highest NGO rates in the world at 300,000 and 3.3 million, respectively (Rodriguez 2008; Shukla 2010). Regardless, it is interesting to observe and certainly the subject for more study.

The aforementioned participation trends have made an impact on US Members of Congress's ability to pass climate change legislation. What was clear in the research data was that Members of Congress did not hear from their constituents on this issue – particularly when it was most critical, when legislation was being seriously discussed between 2009 and 2011 – and therefore were not empowered by the public to rise above industry influence and pass aggressive climate change legislation. If advocates of climate change legislation want to change this dynamic they must also examine the democratic structures in American society that impede or advance constituent engagement in the deliberations of Congress.

What we will see from the next section, however, is that despite NGO-related obstacles to active civic engagement in Congress, on the issue of terrorism civic engagement is more active than on climate, due in part to the nature of the threat (since terrorism strikes a more immediate chord as a life-and-death situation), but also due to Media's representation of the threat issue and active participation by Members of Congress on this threat issue, irrespective of committee and caucus impediments. This is critical to note for climate change advocates if they want Media's attention to the issue, Congressional attention to the issue, and constituents' active engagement on the issue.

They will need to adopt, create, and take on the severity of the threat, the life-and-death situational nature of the threat, and be able to communicate it with ‘social scare’ narratives, creating flight corridors that parallel the war on terrorism narratives and its concomitant threats to American democracy, culture, freedom, and exceptionalism.

**CHAPTER 6:
NEW NARRATIVE: POSITIONING CLIMATE CHANGE AS A THREAT
TO US DEMOCRACY AND WAY OF LIFE**

According to the polled American public, climate change is a threat that will rear its ugly head in 10 to 100 years from now. In the survey conducted in November 2011 by Yale University and George Mason University on “Americans’ Global Warming Beliefs and Attitudes” (Leiserowitz et al. 2011e), a majority of those surveyed saw climate change’s impacts, in terms of harming people, as an eventual but not immediate problem. Fifty-three percent said that global warming will harm people in the US between 10-100 years from now, with another 16 percent saying that global warming will never harm people in the US.

That’s a total of 69 percent of the American public feeling strongly that global warming does not pose an immediate threat to the American people and will not pose an immediate threat for another 10 years. Incidentally, the numbers from November 2011 are roughly the same for American attitudes regarding global warming’s ability to harm people around the world, not just the US. Fifty percent think global warming will start harming people around the world between 10 and 100 years from now, with 15 percent saying that it will never harm people around the world.

These November 2011 data from Yale-GMU become problematic for constituent engagement now, in this decade, especially if the majority of the American public does

not think that global warming is a threat now or that this environmental conflict will start harming people in America immediately. Contrast this with American attitudes and beliefs regarding terrorism and the potential for harm to the American people. In Gallup's poll of the American public and their perceived threats to US well-being, terrorism was ranked first, with 79 percent of the American public saying that it was an extremely serious or very serious threat to US well-being (Saad 2010).

Similar poll findings by Pew Research Center show that 80 percent of the American public said that "terrorism" should be a top priority for President Obama and for the 112th Congress (Pew 2010). The only two topic areas slightly surpassing terrorism were the economy and jobs at 83 percent and 81 percent, respectively. In a separate survey by the American Enterprise Institute in 2011, when polled as to whether or not the American public believed another terrorist attack would occur in the coming months (Exact Question: "How likely do you think it is that there will be another terrorist attack in the United States within the next few months?"), 69 percent said they thought a terrorist attack was either very or somewhat likely (Bowman and Rugg 2011). A similar poll on this topic in January 2011 by Pew found that "nearly identical percentages of Republicans (72 percent) and Democrats (71 percent) described defending the country from future terrorist attacks as a top priority for the President and Congress" (Leggiere 2012).

For a majority of Americans, the threat of terrorism is real, current, immediate and is associated publically in the media and civil spheres not only as a threat to one's personal life but also as a threat to American democracy and way of life. These threats

are constantly reinforced by the Media, Members of Congress and by other policymakers and opinion-shapers and influencers. And Democratic leaders have embraced it, with Barack Obama offering one of the bolder statements early in his career saying, “When we think of the major threats to our national security, the first to come to mind are nuclear proliferation, rogue states and global terrorism,” (Obama and Lugar 2005) and former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi saying (during her leadership as Speaker), “We must remain focused on the greatest threat to the security of the United States, the clear and present danger of terrorism” (Pelosi 2004).

What is interesting to note is that the risk of American death by terrorism and the cost of terrorism attacks is relatively small in comparison to the death toll and annual cost of climate-related disasters, the latter of which was projected to exceed \$50 billion in 2011 alone (NOAA 2011). These US climate-related costs for one year roughly double the single most devastating terrorist attack in the US in the last decade, that of September 11, 2001. The direct cost of the September 11 attack has been estimated at just over \$20 billion. Paul Krugman cites a property loss estimate by the Comptroller of the City of New York of \$21.8 billion, which he has said is about 0.2 percent of the GDP for a year (Krugman 2004). Similarly, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development estimated that the attack on September 11, 2001, cost the private sector \$14 billion and the federal government \$0.7 billion, while cleanup was estimated at \$11 billion (Smith 2008, 58).

The narrative discourse surrounding terrorism and its potential threat to American life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness has been effective in changing American public

behavior and public policy. If the Media and Members of the US Congress propagated a similar narrative discourse vis-à-vis environmental climate change, one wonders if the same effect, in terms of changed American behavior, would result. This is exactly what the next section's content analysis will explore: specifically, how Media's coverage of, and Congressional engagement on, the issue of terrorism unfairly biased the terrorism threat and ultimately compelled the American public constituency to engage the issue through active expressions of concern.

This content analysis will lead to a discussion on the necessary requirements for new narratives on this environmental conflict to emerge: specifically, media reporting that biases climate change data (instead of reporting both sides equally) in the same way they have biased terrorism and a willingness by Members of Congress to engage their roles and responsibilities as nontraditionally as they engaged the terrorism issue (i.e. outside the jurisdiction of caucus and committee).

Case Study and Content Analysis: Evaluating Media's Coverage of Terrorism Threat to US Democracy

When it comes to climate change, much of the data from the key Media informants was consistent on the issue of fair and balanced reporting of climate change. Irrespective of how much the Media informant believed climate change was happening (recall that the majority of Media informants believed it is happening) there was a strong commitment to reporting both sides equally and fairly, thus giving a distorted view of reality to the American public. If the American public was simply to base their climate belief and

behavior based on what American mainstream media was offering, they would be led to believe that the issue of climate change is yet undecided, has two equally weighty and balanced perspectives, and that the verdict is still out as to whether climate change is really happening, to what severity it is happening, and the required urgency to deal with the problem.

It was rather surprising, in fact, to interview key Media informants (whom I trusted and respected for their journalistic integrity and who believed that climate change is happening and that it's anthropogenic) say in the same breath that they are committed unequivocally to reporting both sides of the story equally and that the climate deniers and climate skeptics should be given the same airtime as the climate scientists. It is worth arguing that one would be hard pressed to find this commitment to equal airtime in the realm of terrorism reporting. In other words, it is questionable whether media gives or would give equal airtime to deniers/skeptics who challenge whether or not the terror threat is real, substantial, or of equal merit to other life risks that are more likely to imperil American lives and cost American treasury.

When it comes to the threat of terrorism, American media engages in quite a different professional practice that is in direct contrast to how informants state, in my interviews, that they are covering climate change. In fact, in my content analysis of previously published data, it becomes evident that media exacerbate and bias terrorism threats. Not only do media disproportionately represent terrorism in the news media, as shown by studies of American television channels ABC, CBS, and NBC, which found that America's three primary news stations broadcast more terrorism related stories than

stories on poverty, crime, unemployment, and discrimination combined (Nacos 2000, 176). But news media also disproportionately represent the threat of terrorism, as cited by the report “Terrorism and the Media” (European Commission 2008) which found that “the major US networks all compete fiercely for an increased market share of the audience and for the higher advertising revenue they can gain through exploiting the public’s insatiable interest in the coverage of major terrorist ‘pseudoevents’ (Wilkinson 2006, 150)” (European Commission 2008, 16). As an example of media’s propensity to exploit this bias, the report asserts, is “the difference in attention when the threat alert level is raised (much attention in the media) and when it is lowered (little attention in the media – if any at all) (Nacos et al. 2007, 110-113)” (European Commission 2008, 14).

Supporting this assertion, in the *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, the 2007 article titled “Post-9/11 Terrorism Threats, News Coverage, and Public Perceptions in the United States” found that “news magnified the administration’s terrorism alerts by reporting such announcements mostly in lead stories and very long segments, while downplaying the new lower alert levels or not covering such changes at all” (Nacos et al. 2007, 112).

The same article “found strong correlations between mass-mediated terror alerts and threat messages and the public’s evaluation of terrorism as the country’s major problem. It was not the total volume of threat news but rather the influence of particular sources that moved public opinion. Here, the President and administration officials apparently had the greatest effects on Americans’ collective assessment of terrorism as the nation’s top problem. Thus, media professionals’ reporting on terror alerts and threats

appeared especially influential on public concerns about major acts of anti-American terrorism occurring some time in the future” (Nacos et al. 2007, 124).

When terror threats are discussed in America, they are presumed to be real and pose severe consequences. Even with the terrorism-related threat assumed in Iraq with Saddam Hussein’s purported weapons of mass destruction, the mainstream media carried that story with little critical and discerning questioning or pushback. There was little to no debate about the veracity of the claims until after the invasion, when no weapons of mass destruction (WMD) were found. There was little pre-war reporting of both sides of the story equally, giving 50 percent of airtime to those who claimed Iraq had WMDs and 50 percent of airtime to those who claimed Iraq/Hussein had no WMDs. A similar practice continues with mainstream media reporting on terrorism threats related to specific countries –e.g. Iran, Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, North Korea – and to specific groups like Al Qaeda, the Taliban and Al Shabaab.

The mainstream media reports on these terror-related threats with little question and often tend to elevate the threat with subjective descriptions of these groups that enhance the terrorism threat narrative. For example, Somalia’s violent insurgent group al Shabaab, up until recently, had no al Qaeda connection. That dynamic, however, failed to stop mainstream media from reporting in the early 2000s that al Shabaab was an al Qaeda operative, a framing intimated by the US Defense Department. By associating al Shabaab with al Qaeda, the reader assumed a more dangerous threat narrative, given al Qaeda’s global and violent reach and, by association, drew parallels about the need for violent US reprisal against al Shabaab. This has led to renewed US air strike attacks on al

Shabaab. In this case the media did not question the Pentagon's assertion nor did they give equal airtime to those denying or skeptical of the Pentagon's assertion. The media, instead, seemed to implicitly endorse the terrorism discourse and narrative propagated by the Pentagon, creating a dangerous new frame through which American public consumers would perceive this particular news.

The unfortunate reality in mainstream media is that this happens all too often. And yet when it comes to reporting on an environmental conflict like climate change, there is a unique and anomalous commitment to reporting both sides of the story equally and fairly, when in fact the science on climate change is more veracious and credible than the science behind predicting terror threats and terror narratives. Yet, the takeaway for the public is that terrorism is a priority threat (irrespective of the actual lower likelihood of risk to life or property) and must be dealt with immediately and with all force available.

Never mind the fact that Americans face higher risk of death due to cardiac disease, cancer, gun violence or car accidents. Never mind the fact that climate change has already done more damage to American life and property in the US in 2011 (not even counting 2012 and the tens of billions of dollars in damage from Hurricane Sandy) than terrorism has done in the last ten years in the US. The propensity of mainstream media to bias terrorism reporting by encouraging the threat narrative without employing the full scrutiny they give to climate reporting (i.e. the fair and balanced reporting of both sides of a story), is a dangerous trend and one that not only undermines journalistic integrity

and principles but also leaves America ill-equipped for handling the climate-related threats that come with higher actual risk and higher associated death and destruction.

Case Study and Content Analysis: Evaluating Congressional Response to Terrorism Threat to US Democracy

What became clear in the research data is that Members of the US Congress who believe that climate change is happening and that it is anthropogenic in nature are encumbered and fettered by a perception that they can only engage the issue if their congressional committee allows them to do so. Members of Congress, whom I respect for their leadership, surprised me by saying that they cannot lead on the issue of climate change prevention due to Congressional limitations, whether it was constituent-related (with one outspoken activist Member of Congress saying that a Freshman, new to Congress, could not become the leader on this issue because he's expected to solely represent his constituents and their district-level needs), or committee-related, that unless a Member was involved in a related committee like Foreign Affairs, Natural Resources or Energy and Commerce, they were not able to advocate for climate change prevention.

The irony, however, in all this prevaricating is that Members of the US Congress exhibit little to no similar hesitancy when speaking, advocating or legislating on the issue of terrorism and its potential threat to America and the American public. For most Members of Congress, terrorism and the threat of terrorism is a priority for them and it is ubiquitous on their websites and in their speeches and their policymaking. Few Members of Congress, in fact, have exhibited timidity when it comes to discourse regarding

terrorism due to perceived limitations imposed by constituent outreach or committee/caucus jurisdiction. One way to get a sense of how a Member of Congress prioritizes their issue areas, beyond observing their committee or caucus assignments, is to do content analysis on how they've prioritized their "Issues" tab on their website. This is a standard approach for Members of Congress who want to convey to constituents their priorities during a particular congressional legislative session. This is exactly the content analysis I conducted, across House of Representatives' offices engaged in the study, in order to cross-reference key Congressional informants' publically professed prioritization of terrorism/national defense/security issues versus their commitment to climate change and global warming issues.

Take, for example, one Member of the US Congress, when interviewed for this dissertation implied an inability to engage effectively on climate change due to committee constraints, saying, "you can't focus as much as you would like [on climate change] unless you're sitting on a committee of jurisdiction."¹⁰⁴ This Member of Congress proceeded to punt climate responsibility to the US President by saying "leadership first starts, on this issue, in the Executive Branch because they can do a lot of things as a result of the Executive Order."¹⁰⁵ Note however, in the following press quote from this same Congressperson, their fight to secure local, domestic, district-level, anti-terror funding despite the fact that their committee assignments were non-germane (e.g. Foreign Affairs and Financial Services): "Securing anti-terror funding to protect our religious institutions is a must. I fought to secure \$19 million from Homeland Security in

¹⁰⁴ Interviews: MC: GM-3.

¹⁰⁵ Interviews: MC: GM-3.

the form of nonprofit security grants institutions that will greatly benefit synagogues and churches throughout [city name redacted to protect anonymity] and will support every application submitted from within my district.” This highlights how it is possible for a Member of Congress to fight for a cause outside his committee jurisdiction. Ever since the attacks on September 11, 2001 – but likely before that as well – terrorism-related work is a politically palpable fight for most Members of Congress.

A second example is from another Member of Congress who serves on the House Budget and Appropriations Committees, who was interviewed for this dissertation, and who has nothing whatsoever on his/her website regarding climate change or global warming but who does have a section on terrorism with the following excerpt (despite the fact that the focus has nothing to do with his/her committee of jurisdiction): “As a Member of Congress, Congressperson [name redacted] has a responsibility to defend the national security of the nation. There is no question that groups like al-Qaeda and its affiliates continue to pose a significant threat to the United States.”

A third example is from a Member of Congress, who serves on the House Budget Committee and the Science, Space and Technology Committee, and also has no mention on their Issues page about climate change (nothing in their environment section either), but has three main Issue sections devoted to “National Defense,” “Homeland Security,” and “Military Families”. In fact, the Congressperson’s National Defense Issue section is the first tab available to constituent users, showing the priority and emphasis given to this issue.

A more substantive and quantifiable way of doing content analysis on this same tendency by Members of Congress is to look at how many bills were introduced in a particular Congress on the issue of National Security or Defense, versus the issue of Climate Change and Global Warming. Analyzing legislative data through OpenCongress.org, which is one of the most comprehensive databases detailing Congressional engagement: In the 112th Congress there were 806 bills on the issue of “Armed Forces and National Security” and an additional 356 bills on the issue of “Terrorism” specifically (Open Congress 2012). Contrast this with only 97 bills on “Climate Change” and no bills whatsoever on “Global Warming” in the same 112th Congress, presenting a stark difference in terms of Congressional engagement on the issue of climate change and global warming versus terrorism and national security.

This content analysis begins to poke holes, then, in the claims by Members of Congress – as my key informant interviews exhibited – that they cannot advocate ardently or actively for climate change legislation due to expressed limitations based on congressional committee affiliation or fetters placed on them by their constituents. In fact, if the Members of the US Congress who believe in this particular environmental conflict, the anthropogenic nature of climate change, and its potential risks to American life and property, would simply engage the issue as actively as they have engaged terrorism and the threat of terrorism, we would likely see a much different Congress and a much more active policymaking approach to preventing global warming. This could simply begin with a section on Members’ websites that specifically addresses climate

change, akin to the sections on most Members' sites that specifically address terrorism and national security.

Case Study and Content Analysis: Evaluating Constituent Response to Terrorism Threat to US Democracy

Media's proclivity, as witnessed in a previous section, to report primarily one side of the terrorism threat analysis, instead of reporting both sides equally (as exemplified by their unequivocal commitment to reporting both sides of climate change debate), and Congressional Members' willingness to go above and beyond congressional committee jurisdiction in actively engaging on the terrorism threat, has a direct bearing on the American public's interest and involvement in the issue.

It is no surprise, then, that terrorism remains a top threat and top priority for constituents, since the influencers and elite shapers of opinion – e.g. Media and Members of the US Congress – are creating and reaffirming the threat paradigm for the public's consumption. Public polling on terrorism in January 2011 by Pew found that “nearly identical percentages of Republicans (72 percent) and Democrats (71 percent) described defending the country from future terrorist attacks as a top priority for the president and Congress” (Leggiere 2012). Keep in mind, based on previous overviews of multiple sources of data, that a majority of this same American public believes that climate change is happening and yet the American public is not afflicted by the same anxiety that characterizes public sentiment vis-à-vis terrorism. Again, this contradiction exists despite the fact that the increasing severity of natural disasters have, in the last ten years, done

more physical damage that any terrorism act has inflicted upon American lives and property (see previous section's numbers regarding costs stemming from damage done to US infrastructure by terrorism versus natural disasters).

The major difference between the two issues, then, is the level of engagement by the Media and Members of the US Congress and the inconsistencies in Media coverage and Congressional commitment to these different threats. Admittedly, and with some sympathy for their perspective, a single act of terrorism (e.g. the World Trade Center attack) can exact a more potent 'social scare' flight corridor and embed a more heightened anxiety on a public population than several slow-burning natural disasters (e.g. recent southwest fires, hurricanes, droughts) that wreak a different kind of havoc to societies and economies. However, the clear discrepancy between Media and Congressional engagement on one type of terrorism threat, and its concomitant narrative, with potential impacts to the American public, versus an equally if not more devastating climate-related threat, and its concomitant narrative, must be highlighted and ultimately addressed because it comes with important implications for constituent engagement.

Developing New Narratives: Climate Conflict Equals Terrorism Threat to US Democracy and Way of Life

As noted in a previous chapter on Positioning Theory, the narratives on climate change that have been used and exploited to advance elite and constituent engagement on the issue are largely confined to the following frames or positions: that climate change is an environmental issue (earth first), a religious issue (creation care), an economic issue

(going green to save green), a security issue (energy security and independence) and a social, public health and humanitarian issue (save the humans).

But climate change has yet to fully be framed as a terrorism threat, on par with the aforementioned terrorism threats largely associated with countries (e.g. Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, Yemen, etc.) or specific insurgent groups (e.g. al Qaeda, al Shabaab, Taliban, etc.). Using Jeffrey Alexander as our guide, in *The Civil Sphere* he notes that “throughout the history of civil societies, war has been a sacred obligation: to wage war against members of other territories has been simultaneously a national and civilizing task” (Alexander 2006, 197). Tapping into this historical propensity, then, for civilizing the populace through warfare and the use of a civilizing metalanguage, if this environmental conflict was reframed as a similar threat to US democracy and the American way of life and all that is associated with that – from American culture, to American freedom, to American independence – then perhaps this dissertation’s key informants – specifically members of the Media and Members of the US Congress – would be empowered to engage in a war on global warming or a campaign against climate terrorism as they engage the issue of a war on traditional, armed terrorism now.

In a 2012 column in the *Washington Post*, Charles Lane describes the American context in which such a war is plausibly constructed: “America is such a diverse and disputations country that war, actual or metaphorical, has been one of the few causes capable of bringing together its various factions, regions and races. That is why we had Lyndon Johnson’s war on poverty, Richard Nixon’s war on drugs and a series of presidents’ war on cancer. Even Jimmy Carter tried to convince us that saving energy

was the moral equivalent of war. These metaphors attempted to recast an abstract threat as a particular enemy, thereby rallying the country to a common effort” (Lane 2012). Constituents, consequently, would be empowered to be more active and engaged and their behaviors might better reflect their attitudes given the newfound leadership coming from influential and elite opinion-shapers in the Media and among Members of the US Congress.

In developing this new narrative, however, one must be careful that it does not fall into the same trap that the environmental and security narratives fell into: namely, the creation of “others” and excluded and marginalized out-groups. Jeffrey Alexander recommends a different approach: “Progressive incorporative movements aim to resolve the contradictions of civil society by more fully including out-groups and expanding the autonomy of the civil realms.” Alexander continues by saying, “such a descent to primitivism can be avoided only if excluded groups are incorporated in some manner and to some degree” (Alexander 2006, 417-418). This is critical to keep in mind as we develop and position the new narrative – in other words, that the creation of excluded out-groups is, to the extent possible, avoided.

The ground is fertile for this narrative. According to the previously cited November 2011 report by Yale University and George Mason University, titled “Public Support for Climate and Energy Policies,” when the public was asked who should be doing more/less to address global warming, 65 percent of the American public thought “citizens themselves” should be doing “much more” or “more” to address global warming (Leiserowitz et al. 2011f).

The only segment of society to out-perform citizens was “corporations and industry” at 67 percent. Congress, the President, and local officials all ranked lower in terms of who should be doing more to address global warming. In other words, the appetite for citizen action is there and ready to engage. So what must be done to develop this new narrative? The following sections delve further into what is needed to position the narrative and frame the threat.

Positioning the Narrative

Positioning the new narrative will not be easy. “When excluded national groups re-represent themselves as patriots, as people whose contributions to the nation’s security have been unfairly ignored, they are not only symbolically inserting themselves into the particulate of the nation but into its historical time” (Alexander 2006, 202). In order to do this, the new social movement against climate terrorism will need to “use communicative institutions to convince the public that history must be revised,” and will need to “use regulatory institutions to make this outmoded version of history legal” (Alexander 2006, 202). Let’s explore what that means.

First, it is worth looking back on the previous narratives and their shortcomings. The environmental narrative, or earth first, worked initially to raise the specter of climate change but ultimately failed to resonate with the broader general public because not all Americans consider themselves environmentalists nor did they want to be grouped within that category. That was particularly clear among this dissertation’s key mainstream Media informants who did not want to be associated with extreme environmentalists, or,

frankly, with environmentalists of any kind, because of the connotation that comes with it of being un-thoughtful, extreme or irrational. The religious narrative, or creation care, unsurprisingly, works quite well for some sections of religious society but ultimately fails in being a big enough tent for all Americans – e.g. agnostic, atheist, religious, nonreligious – to fit within the religious framework.

The economic narrative, or going green to save green, has maintained some of the richest resonance among the American public, particularly of late, as concepts regarding corporate environmental and social responsibility are on the rise and consumers are increasingly shopping for these types of products. However, recall the 2011 Yale University and George Mason University survey, which noted that despite the fact that a majority of America is recognizing that climate change is happening, the majority have not, in the last year from when the poll was taken, supported or boycotted a company based on its products or policies that prevent climate change. In fact, one key Media informant, who believes in anthropogenic climate change, stated quite vehemently that if he was expected to go green to prevent climate change, a law must be created rather than expecting his lifestyle choices to change.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, going green is often more expensive, due to its unsubsidized comparative disadvantage, further exacerbating the income inequality gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots”.

The security narrative, or energy security and energy independence, had the most visible traction in the US Congress where it was heavily relied upon to message climate change within the context of a volatile Middle East and bad relations with oil-rich and

¹⁰⁶ Interviews: MM: GR-2.

rogue nations. This narrative, however, has weak long-term efficacy largely because America is increasingly getting its fossil fuels from more friendly nations like Canada and therefore has not reduced its dependence on carbon-intensive fossil fuels but merely shifted their source.

The recent debate over and plans for the US-Canada Keystone XL pipeline is a good example of this, wherein the US will pipe Canada's tar sands oil from northern Canada all the way down to America's Gulf of Mexico. Tar sands oil is even more carbon-intensive than conventional oil, due to the deforestation that must first occur and because of the energy-intensive nature of extracting oil from the thick tar sands. Interestingly, the proponents of the Keystone XL pipeline use the specter of China potentially grabbing all the oil if the US fails to do so, as justification for US proceeding apace to extract tar sands oil. China is an easy "other" for the US. The same Chinese specter is also now used by the US Defense Department and Members of the US Congress to justify continued large-scale investments in heavy military equipment that, while largely irrelevant and unusable since the Cold War, may prove necessary in the event of a future US-China war.

Lastly, the social, public health and humanitarian narrative that emerges post-hurricane, post-wildfire, post-earthquake, post-drought or post-smog is usually temporary. As was visible with Hurricane Katrina (see earlier chapters that talk about Hurricane Katrina and social positioning), or more recently Hurricane Sandy, there was an immediate spike on the awareness radar in terms of attention to, and belief in, climate change. The public was making the connections and the climate-hurricane nexus was

apparent. Yet, again, these connections do not serve a long-term narrative agenda. According to Brulle et al., “weather extremes have no effect on aggregate public opinion,” (Brulle et al. 2012, 1) thus implying that the long-term effect of these narratives will have no sustainable or aggregate impact.

Another reason why this frame/narrative does not have sustainable long-term salience is because the American attention to natural disasters is short-lived and remains physically distant. Unless Americans are living in the Southwest near the fires, or in New Orleans near Hurricane Katrina, or in New York or Vermont near the recent flooding in 2011, or near an urban smog-intense environment, they are prone to forget about the disaster and move on, assuming a similar disaster is not imminent or likely to impact their environment.

It was remarkable, for example, how difficult it was for New York and Vermont Members of the US Congress to raise awareness in Washington DC regarding the historic and unprecedented flooding that took place in both states in 2011, which devastated economies, markets, farms, and infrastructures and cost hundreds of billions of dollars. It was surprising to witness the utter disinterest by other Members of the US Congress who were reticent to move emergency legislation forward to cover emergency costs in Vermont and New York during the height of the flooding.

The social frame, as mentioned earlier in the dissertation, also comes with problematic hierarchical narratives about the ‘rich versus poor’ worlds, the ‘first versus third’ worlds, and the ‘developed versus developing’ worlds. Having worked with the consortium of small island states advocating climate change prevention at the United

Nations, and having worked throughout Asia, the Middle East, Africa and South America, the frustration is palpable among these othered and excluded out-groups regarding this historical and hierarchical positioning and framing. The finger pointing towards these othered out-groups tends to originate within rich, developed, first world countries (despite the fact that rich developed nations are most responsible for historical carbon emissions and existing global warming) with the intimation that poor, developing, third world countries must sacrifice economic development opportunities in order to prevent climate change.

In sum, the fact that these five aforementioned narratives and positions all hold some value but fail to sustain a salient and compelling threat for the broad and diverse swath of the public shows how climate change has fallen short in its ability to position itself. This is why something more is needed and why a war on global warming or a campaign against climate terrorism may provide a broad enough appeal if messaged and framed correctly.

Perhaps one way to position the threat is to position it as a threat to local assets and call upon the public to protect these local assets from climate change. For example, in the May 2011 report by Yale-GMU regarding “Public Support for Climate and Energy Policies,” when asked how important it was for “your community to take steps to protect the following from global warming,” 81 percent thought it “extremely,” “very” or “somewhat” important to protect the public’s health, 80 percent for protecting the water supply, 79 percent for protecting agriculture, 75 percent for protecting the sewer system, and 74 percent for protecting public property (Leiserowitz et al. 2011c). Framed through

this lens, a war on global warming or a campaign against climate terrorism may achieve poignancy and resonance if perceived as a threat to the public goods and assets that more traditional, armed terrorism has also threatened in the past.

Framing the Threat

Before we jump into framing the threat, some context analysis is necessary to show how difficult it will be to frame any new threat given the continued weakening of climate-related narratives in the political sphere. Take for example the President of the United States Barack Obama's use of the terminology in his first-term State of the Union Addresses. In the President's 2010 address to the US Congress, he mentioned the words "climate change" only twice. In his 2011 address to both chambers of the US Congress he did not utter the words "climate change" at all. And in his 2012 State of the Union address to Congress, he mentioned "climate change" once, noting the obstacles and framing it the negative: "The differences in this [House of Representatives] chamber may be too deep right now to pass a comprehensive plan to fight climate change" (WhiteHouse.Gov 2012; Johnson 2012). Instead, what the President of the United States talked about is "energy" and "clean energy," words that were mentioned nearly two dozen times in the 2012 State of the Union Address.

The President's State of the Union addresses were emblematic of a broader narrative trend by the first-term Obama Administration, namely to replace any language referring to climate change with language that relates to "clean energy" and "energy independence". The move, according to Administration officials, was to make the

esoteric more understandable and accessible. At that time, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration head, Jane Lubchenco, told the press that the new terminology was “intended to make what’s happening more understandable and more accessible to non-technical audiences” (Boykoff 2012).

President Barack Obama’s first-term language – which often referred to greenhouse gas emissions as “carbon pollution” and “heat-trapping emissions” – was instituted early on in the Administration and by 2009, according to Maxwell Boykoff, professor in the Center for Science and Technology Policy Research at the University of Colorado at Boulder and the author of *Who Speaks for the Climate? Making Sense of Media Reporting on Climate Change* (Boykoff 2012), the changes were evident in statements by White House science adviser John Holdren, Energy Secretary Steven Chu, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration head Jane Lubchenco and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson.

These efforts belied opinions in the Democratic Party which was polling in 2011 in favor of climate policy, with 56 percent who thought global warming should be a “very high” or “high” priority for the President and Congress, according to Yale-GMU’s “Public Support for Climate and Energy Policies in May 2011” report. Despite Democratic support, the tone by first-term President Barack Obama was likely a conciliatory recognition of a tough reelection year and a recognition that the Republicans, who controlled the US House of Representatives and looked set to take over the US Senate, polled low on this issue with only 36 percent of Independents and 19 percent of Republicans saying that global warming should be a “very high” or “high” priority for the

President and Congress. Subsequent data from the November 2011 poll by Yale and George Mason Universities showed a decrease in importance for Democrats: only 47 percent thought it was a very high or high priority for the Democratic party. Yet an increasing number of Independents – at 43 percent – thought global warming should be a very high or high priority. But the Republican Party stayed the same at 19 percent (Leiserowitz et al. 2011f).

The President and his first-term Administration's tendency to soften the climate change rhetoric were reflected generally on Capitol Hill as well. A Brown University study documents and validates this claim (Draper 2012). As Brown University coauthor of the study, Graciela Kincaid, noted, "The phrases climate change and global warming have become all but taboo on Capitol Hill. These terms are stunningly absent from the political arena" (Draper 2012; Boykoff 2012). This trend was also reflected globally in media coverage around the world. Maxwell Boykoff and his colleague Maria Mansfield monitored 50 major newspapers in 20 countries and "documented that explicit mentions of climate change and global warming dropped by more than a third from 2010 to 2011" (Boykoff 2012).

These trends made for difficult terrain for the introduction of new narratives, which is why the first-term Obama Administration was sticking to clean energy instead of pushing climate change. However, clean energy narratives fall short in dealing with this environmental conflict. Notes Boykoff, "talking only about clean energy...omits critical biological and physical factors that contribute to the warming climate" and "doesn't call to mind the ways we use the land and how the environment is changing.

Where in the term is the notion of the climate pollution that results from clear-cutting Amazon rain forests? What about methane release in the Arctic, where global warming is exposing new areas of soil in the permafrost? Clean energy also neatly bypasses any idea that we might need to curb our consumption. If the energy is clean, after all, why worry about how much we're using – or how unequal the access to energy sources might be?" (Boykoff 2012)

The US President and his advisers also recognized that there was overwhelming support for the concept of clean energy. In Yale-GMU's November 2011 report on "Public Support for Climate and Energy Policies," 65 percent of the American public thought "clean energy" should be a "very high" or "high" priority for the President and Congress. Furthermore, according to the same report, majorities in the Democratic Party, Republican Party and among Independents, thought that clean energy should be a "very high" or "high" priority for the President and Congress at 76 percent, 51 percent and 73 percent, respectively (Leiserowitz et al. 2011f). Clearly the clean energy frame had resonance.

Yet most importantly, and as it relates to this narrative analysis, says Maxwell Boykoff, "calling climate change by another names creates limits of its own. The way we talk about the problem affects how we deal with it. And though some new wording may deflect political heat, it can't alter the fact that climate change or not, the climate is changing" (Boykoff 2012).

Indeed, the way we talk about a problem directly affects how we deal with that problem, which is why a new narrative is so essential. While some climate change

advocates are using the phrases “climate chaos” and “climate crisis,” since they think “climate change” is too value neutral, these framed threats are potentially less effectual than a climate terrorism threat because climate chaos and climate crisis are amorphous threats and have no specific enemy “other”. Nor is conquering the chaos/crisis an achievable goal since no clear responsible enemy exists.

Chaos and crisis also tap into the debilitating fear, as articulated in the literature review, surrounding “climate as catastrophe” (see Hulme) and how this latest iteration of human’s relationship to climate – and its concomitant discourses of fear – has yet to be transformed and ultimately conquered. A war on global warming or a campaign against climate terrorism, conversely, taps into previous US war ideology and narratives (and the social wars, such as the war on poverty and the war on drugs) that have some possibility of a ‘mission-accomplished’ end goal and a winnable objective. Thus, a new way of articulating and framing the threat must be outlined.

The foundation for this climate-cum-terrorism threat is already established. Prominent Republican, John Warner, who is the former secretary of the US Navy and a former US Senator, toured the country as senior advisor to the Pew Project on National Security, Energy and Climate, speaking at military bases, and profiling the national-security concerns of climate change, primarily in relationship to fossil fuel dependence and lessening the US dependence on foreign oil (Davenport 2011). This work is aligned with aforementioned descriptions of security positioning and framing and while it is effective in mobilizing broader and more bipartisan masses, it ultimately fails in changing the public’s behavior within the scope and size necessary. The “other” that gets

positioned in this equation is the oil-rich nation, and often that nation's people, from which the US is seeking non-reliance and independence. This security frame, thus, is often utilized to justify equally – if not more – energy intensive projects within North America, like tar sands oil from Canada and offshore drilling in protected US waters. Therefore, the security narrative that promotes energy security and energy independence falls short of changing behaviors sufficiently enough to prevent or reduce climate change and its impacts.

What is needed is something that compels Americans to be willing to change personal behavior on par with the behavioral change that accompanied the war against terrorism. Consider the myriad behavioral changes that accompanied various anti-terrorism campaigns, from increased public awareness and public willingness to “see something then say something” (Transportation Security Administration 2010) to public constraints around permissible travel items, like 3 ounce containers when flying on planes (TSA 2009). If the US government were equally restrictive and prescriptive when it came to climate-impacting behaviors, the American public would likely protest. Why, because the climate terrorism threat has yet to be framed in a way that mirrors the risk and danger associated with traditional armed terrorism.

Mike Hulme's work on “Conquering of Climate: Discourses of Fear and Their Dissolution” may have some clues here, suggesting that, “climate is frequently bound up in notions of personal or national identity” (Hulme 2008, 6). To recall from the literature review, Hulme looks at three discourses on climate, from pre-modern era where climate was judgment, to modern era where climate was pathology, to post-modern era where

climate is catastrophe. Hulme suggests that humans were able to conquer their fear of climate in pre-modern eras and modern eras but have failed to conquer their fear of climate as catastrophe in the post-modern era. However, in Hulme's work on climate as catastrophe, he suggests that fear will be defused with "new cultural movements and new hierarchies of power changing the discourse of fear about unknown climatic futures" (Hulme 2008, 13).

How do we create these new cultural movements then? Hulme suggests that new opportunities have arisen and new narratives have emerged in the last ten years. Since September 11, 2001, suggests Hulme, the discursive frameworks of fear and catastrophe have expanded substantially. The war on terror invoked a danger that has relevance to the dangers of climate change. Comparisons could be made and inferences could be drawn. Linguistic and metaphorical references, suggests Hulme, could be borrowed from the war on terror and used in tackling unknown climatic futures. The global war on terror campaign used alarmist language, which was religious and normative in nature, and language that implied imminence and irreversibility.

Capturing the parallels, Stephen Hawking noted, "Terror only kills hundreds or thousands of people. Global warming could kill millions. We should have a war on global warming rather than the war on terror" (Associated Press 2007). What both the global war on terror and the fear of unknown climatic futures tap into is "a deeper and non-negotiable human anxiety about the future" (Hulme 2008, 5). Since science is not in the practice of offering certain futures, with certain ranges and certain knowledge, the

relative uncertainty of science plays upon the human psyche's propensity to fear the future.

Hulme notes that society is already beginning to conquer the climate-as-catastrophe paradigm through geo-engineering, political engineering and social engineering (Hulme 2008, 12). Geo-engineering is already quite popular and well financed in the rich world: research and development on mirrors in space to reflect back the sun's rays in order to keep the planet cooler; cloud-creating devices that float in the ocean and stimulate cloud-formation as a way of cooling the climate; algae plants that can harness the extra carbon and transform it into usable energy; and myriad carbon capture and sequestration techniques increasingly entering the market.

Americans tend to believe that we can innovate our way out of any problem; this thinking is, after all, part and parcel of American idealism and exceptionalism. It is because of this belief and these principles that research and development for geo-engineering has been so successful, despite the clear lack of consensus in the US Congress for climate change prevention. In fact, one key Media informant who writes for a major global daily newspaper, supported the sole focus on geo-engineering, saying, "Are we perhaps wasting a huge amount of time on an issue that's not going to get us anywhere, and should we be thinking about other things like geo-engineering because it seems to be the political situation we're looking at,"¹⁰⁷ indicating a sort of desperate reliance on anything that is capable of getting some political traction at this point.

¹⁰⁷ Interviews: MM: GR-5.

Another key informant interviewed for this dissertation, this time a Member of the US Congress, showed why geo-engineering is so often relied upon to fix climate change, based on the belief that innovation and markets will fix the problem: “My colleagues say that we’ll fix [climate change], that we’re creative, innovative people. Most of my colleagues worship the market as if it were from God and that the market will fix it. When the price of oil goes up, for example, we’ll find alternatives, that’s just what we do and so we’ll fix that problem.”¹⁰⁸

Geo-political engineering, which “involves a systematic attempt to align the institutions of international science, environmental management, governance and diplomacy to find rational alliances of interest which can deliver a global climate regime” (Hulme 2008, 12) has had some successes but continues to face challenges. On the international science front, for example, the international scientific community has reached and published its consensus on climate change through the auspices of the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as well as other internationally recognized scientific bodies. However, when it comes to international institutions, international climate treaties, and international carbon trading schemes, while the world started out semi-successfully with the Kyoto Protocol, it has since failed to sustain that international engagement. More recent international meetings on climate, first in Durban, South Africa, in December 2011, and later in Doha in 2012, failed to forge any specific carbon reduction scheme (and failed to attract any Members of Congress, an unprecedented first), thus punting any specific carbon cuts until 2020 (Harvey and Vidal 2011).

¹⁰⁸ Interviews: MC: RB-2-3.

Hulme's concept of social engineering, in contrast, is an effort to create the necessary behavioral change to prevent climate change through the "purposeful manipulation of lifestyles and consumption habits" (Hulme 2008, 12). Hulme mentions several social marketing campaigns and calls for mass participation in global events (e.g. Live Earth, International Cities for Climate Protection Campaign, Stop Climate Chaos, etc.). Despite the fact that Hulme, citing James Fleming (2006b) and his work on global climate change and human agency, suggests that "it seems unlikely that any of these global mega-engineering projects will offer the salvation that is sought," (Hulme 2008, 12) this dissertation explores the underdeveloped territory of social engineering given that geo-engineering and geo-political engineering have received far greater attention, investment and activity than social engineering.

Why pursue social engineering? On Hulme's three responses to climate, this type of engineering has been given the least amount of consideration by the global policymaking community or even US policymakers. Granted, basic environmental awareness and environmental protection witnessed grassroots mobilization efforts throughout the 20th Century and now 21st Century and undoubtedly the private and public sectors have, over time, pursued environmental responsibility efforts (e.g. conservation, energy efficiency, preservation, etc.) to some degree. However, as it specifically relates to climate change, social engineering has seen the weakest investment.

Social engineering has one distinct benefit. Unlike geo-engineering and geo-political engineering, which are more technical, legal or legislative, social engineering efforts can be targeted in a highly personal way. As Hulme notes, "the contemporary

discourse of climate catastrophe may be tapping into a deeper and non-negotiable human anxiety about the future, an anxiety which is merely attaching itself at the current time to the portended climates of the future” (Hulme 2008, 13). This climate-related anxiety mirrors the anxiety surrounding the war on terrorism and provides useful impetus and motivation for changing behavior. In order to constructively channel this fear, Hulme suggests that, “new cultural movements and new hierarchies of power changing the discourse of fear about unknown climate futures” (Hulme 2008, 13) will be necessary.

One Member of Congress, interviewed for this research, identified the cultural impediments: “I think there are enough data. I think there are enough visuals. I guess a big problem is a cultural problem. We, as a nation, have prospered marvelously. American exceptionalism, Newt Gingrich was talking about it this morning. That we will never have problems in the future because we’re so darn exceptional.”¹⁰⁹

What is necessary, therefore, for a new cultural movement and new hierarchies of power to arise and successfully resonate with the public, having been developed specifically with social engineering in mind, are binary positions for engagement. Not unlike the war on terrorism, there must be values and norms associated with climate change. The “good” and the “bad” must be clearly defined, delineated and demarcated for the public. In doing so, it is worth drawing on past attempts to do this using other frames and positions, specifically by environmental and security advocates.

Environmentalists would frame as “bad” any fossil fuel industries that contributed to greenhouse gas emissions and actively obfuscated climate legislation through financial

¹⁰⁹ Interviews: MC: RB-5-6.

influence and campaign contributions, or individuals who failed to conserve, preserve or recycle. For environmentalists, these frames would compete with pre-existing “good” frames surrounding free markets, free enterprise, American industry, American manufacturing and American jobs. These frames ultimately failed to garner mass traction among the public. Similarly, any “evil” frame that environmentalists associated with individual human carbon consumption competed with “good” frames surrounding individual freedoms and individual rights. This also failed to motivate mass public action due to the dissonance and discord between competing binary frames.

Similarly, security advocates in the US would frame as bad or evil anyone or anything that got in the way of America’s energy security and energy independence. That means Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, Sudan, Libya, among many others, got reinforced as the “bad” in an effort to redirect behavior to “good” activities, which of late have included the Keystone XL pipeline between the US and Canada, a project that will ship tar sands oil from Alberta to the Gulf of Mexico. As already mentioned, the tar sands oil is much more energy-intensive and carbon-intensive than oil from the Middle East, but it is framed as a “good” exercise due to the mere fact that its patriotically and nationalistically framed as an “energy independence” and “energy security” exercise between the US and a friendly, non-hostile nation, i.e. Canada.

The idea of US offshore drilling has received the same binary narrative treatment. These binary approaches, however, ultimately fail in changing mass behavior or appealing to wide audiences because they are perceived as disingenuous by environmentalists, perceived as isolationist by internationalists and globalists who are

discomfited by US rhetoric toward oil-rich states, perceived as non-economical by economists, and perceived as non-scientific by scientists.

The “bad” other, therefore, cannot be a segment of the population that is too formidable to not be included, and thus excluded, in the climate change prevention effort (see previous mention of Jeffrey Alexander’s work on out-groups). The “good” must be a tent that is wide enough and big enough that the majority of cultural movements and hierarchies of power can fit underneath it. Any promulgation of “apocalyptic fears” (Ross 1991) that “global warming could kill millions” (Associated Press 2007), therefore, needs to position the “bad” not within public society but without public society (not unlike how the war on the ozone hole positioned the ozone hole as the non-human “other,” against which a war should be fought). Most, if not all, of the previous frames and threats mentioned within this dissertation have positioned the threat within human society, in one shape or another.

“Good” behavior, then, must refer to behavior that fights the good fight against climate terrorism, a threat that has the potential to directly undermine American way of life, exceptionalism, and democracy. Good behavior must also embrace previous chapter’s concepts about consumption equaling competence and equality. There must be climate-friendly ways in which consumption of a completely different sort can continue, allowing society to exhibit, and meet their needs for, competence and equality. Not unlike the Japanese government’s campaigns in 2011:

“The Japanese government, in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster and severe electricity shortage launched a “Warm Biz” Campaign today. It is asking

workers to wear sweaters and dress appropriately as the country continues to face the possibility of electric outages. During this past summer the government launched a similar “Super Cool Biz” campaign, encouraging and pushing employees to wear Hawaiian shirts, T-shirts and sandals to keep cool and save electricity” (Ambani 2011).

The appetite in the public sphere and within Hulme’s “new cultural movements” for this type of transformation is going to be largely dependent upon the political will and leadership, or Hulme’s “hierarchies of power”. In August 2011, a poll by Stanford University researchers found that 77 percent of respondents would vote for a candidate who said he/she believed that climate change was happening and caused by fossil fuels, whereas only 48 percent said they would vote for a candidate who disagrees with the premise climate change is anthropogenic (Davenport 2011).

While this data is encouraging, because it shows the American majority on board with the scientific consensus, it must be tempered by polling from Pew in 2011 among Republicans that shows that 75 percent of staunch conservatives and 63 percent of libertarians said there was no evidence of global warming (Rosenthal 2011). Leadership in the White House and in both halls of the US Congress will have a direct ability, in the coming years, to steer the American public in the direction of a new cultural movement, replete with “good” and “bad” norms and behavior that fights climate terrorism as adamantly and vigilantly as they fight traditional armed terrorism.

A campaign against climate terrorism would also be taking a play out of the ozone hole playbook, in terms of a war that resonates with the American public. Recall that in

the case of the ozone hole, the rhetorical strategies did the trick. According to Hannigan (Hannigan 1995), the ozone hole was an exaggeration or metaphor and satellite pictures were doctored and colored to make them more graphic. Additionally, recalls Ungar, the ozone threat could be “rendered into a simple, neat, foreshortened and tightly coupled schematic as a result of its Hollywood affinities. Stated succinctly, ozone loss leads to the increased bombardment of the earth by lethal rays. The idea of rays penetrating a shield meshes nicely with indigenous and resonant cultural motifs. These Hollywood affinities range from the shields on the Starship Enterprise to Star Wars (both the movies and the Strategic Defense Initiative) through a multitude of video games and children’s television shows” (Ungar 1998, 523).

The penetration model, in other words, is simple and deeply ingrained. “Overall, it seems that the Hollywood affinities with ozone depletion are so simple, lucid and tangible that they come close to being regarded as an ontological reality” (Ungar 1998, 524). So too will climate change have to take a lesson from these Hollywood affinities and create a theatrical war against global warming or a campaign against climate terrorism on par with the war against the ozone hole. The next section elucidates how to create the binary positions for engagement in this war on global warming.

Creating Binary Positions for Engagement

First, why are binary positions essential? “From the beginning of its appearance in human societies, civil society has been organized, insofar as it has been organized at all, around its own particular cultural codes. It has been able to broadcast its idealized image

of social relationships because it has been structured by certain kinds of communicative institutions, and departures from these relationships have been sanctioned and rewarded in more realistic terms by institutions of a regulatory kind. The binary structure of the discourse of civil society suggests, however, that even in the most ideal circumstances, this universalism will never be fully achieved” (Alexander 2006, 193-194). Why, because there will always be “those who have been excluded from civil society to be constructed as ‘foreigners’” (Alexander 2006, 197).

Much like the climate change debate recently went through a semantic metamorphosis to reach a wider audience – changing its moniker from ‘global warming’ to ‘climate change’ to appear more universal and value neutral – now it is time to consider the next step in positioning this environmental conflict. A war on global warming, to reference Stephen Hawking’s aforementioned quote, would position the world in traditional roles, which were readily assumed in the past for wars on drugs, poverty, terrorism and other ills that have threatened societies and economies. The world would be collectively positioned in the normative and moral right, against a danger deemed threatening enough to merit a war. Recall Charles Lane’s comments about America’s propensity for war making, specifically that “America is such a diverse and disputatious country that war, actual or metaphorical, has been one of the few causes capable of bringing together its various factions, regions or races,” and that war metaphors “recast an abstract threat as a particular enemy, thereby rallying the country to a common effort” (Lane 2012).

It would tap into what Jeffrey Alexander notes in *The Civil Sphere* (Alexander 2006, 197) as a nationalist agenda for understanding civility. In this dissertation's case, the uncivil behavior would be behavior that exacerbates climate change. A war on global warming or a campaign against climate terrorism would necessitate the creation of a frame that identifies non-green behavior "not only as uncivil, but as threatening national security" (Alexander 2006, 198).

In the last two decades greener consumption has become trendier and more socially acceptable – and thus more civil. The National Geographic's GreenDex shows that environmentally friendly behavior has increased among consumers in recent years. Corporate social responsibility and corporate environmental responsibility are now commonplace terminologies in the private sector (National Geographic 2011). For individual consumers, shopping at the environmentally-friendly Whole Foods supermarket is not only more feasible given the national prevalence of store locations but it is also now more culturally acceptable. However, despite the civilizing trends in the green consumption, there are still serious obstacles, as indicated by the Yale-GMU study on "Americans' Actions" (Leiserowitz et al. 2010), which showed that greener lifestyle and behavioral choices are still primarily relegated to indoor activities and not outdoor activities, which are more public and vulnerable to social scrutiny. In other words, the civilizing of green behavior still faces obstacles and barriers vis-à-vis socialized norms and morays that make green consumption socially acceptable.

Given that climate "problems now concern society itself, not just a particular institution...it is for this reason that they have the potential of creating a social crisis.

Collective action, then, can be understood as a struggle for position vis-à-vis the categorical antipathies of civil life: a struggle to represent others in negative and polluted categories and to re-present oneself in terms of the sacred. To move from a problem in a particular sphere of society to a problem in society as such requires that the leaders of social movements exercise creativity and imagination. This might be called the translation problem, and it is where cultural creativity and political competence both come equally into play” (Alexander 2006, 231). Alexander concludes by saying, “Successful translation allows movements that emerge as protests in one structural sector – in a particular subsystem, sphere of justice, or segmented community – to be taken up by the civil public” (Alexander 2006, 231).

What is needed, then, is a social movement, which Alexander describes as “social devices that construct translations between the discourse of civil society and the institution-specific processes of a more particularist type,” and continues by saying that social movements can only succeed “if they can employ the civil metalanguage to relate these practical problems to the symbolic center of society and its utopian premises” (Alexander 2006, 233).

That is the conundrum for the climate change prevention movement: how to create a civilizing metalanguage that propels the basics of consumption and lifestyle choices into a symbolic realm that connotes liberty, freedom and the protection of American democracy. To reference an earlier quote, it requires that the leaders of social movements exercise creativity and imagination.

Creative metaphors will be useful here based upon their ability to tap into the cognitive unconscious and the subjective experience. Recall the ozone hole case study that tapped into metaphors of Star Wars and Hollywood affinities to change American attitude and behavior in order to protect society from the sun's lasers from penetrating the ozone shield. Note Lakoff and Johnson in *Philosophy of the Flesh*: "Most people, most of the time, do not reason according to the rational-actor model, nor even according to the traditional philosophical ideal of rationality, as literal, formal, conscious, disembodied, and unemotional. Real human reason is embodied, mostly imaginative and metaphorical, largely unconscious, and emotionally engaged" (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 536).

Morality is also a powerful and influencing force in metaphor usage and Lakoff and Johnson are quite categorical about its ubiquity in all decision making: "Rationality almost always has a major moral dimension. The idea that human rationality is purely mechanical, disengaged, and separable from moral issues is a myth." Since human reason, Lakoff and Johnson continue, is "often about human well-being and about ends determined by human well-being," and since "morality concerns well-being and our conceptions of morality arise from our modes of well-being, morality enters into human reason most of the time...it not only affects the choice of ends, but also the kinds of reasoning done in achieving those ends" (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 536).

This is why climate change science likely continues to fail to transform American attitudes and behavior because it is predicated on the expectation of a rational response, when in fact the desire for consumption – and its rewards in feelings of competence and equality (see previous sections on the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *The Civil Sphere*) –

is largely unconscious and transcends any rational computation of climate science. The work by Lakoff and Johnson on metaphor, morality and rationality also indicates that in order for climate change to become a motivating factor in people's lives, any related communication must tap into that unconscious psyche using moralistic metaphors that imaginatively and emotionally engage the intended recipient.

An effective campaign against climate terrorism or a war against global warming, and its corresponding metaphors, then, would tap into several moralistic narratives. First it would suggest that a war/campaign must be waged on something bad, insidious or threatening. Second, it would suggest that something is in need of protection or salvation, in this case that would be human beings and their public assets. Third, it would tap into many religions' belief systems regarding apocalyptic end times wherein nature and humankind are pitted against each other. The next section examines what is required to develop these narratives.

In summary, it is worth noting that any effective campaign/war will be aided by first mobilizing, albeit separately and simultaneously, the previous positions/frames mentioned in this dissertation – environmental, religious, security, economic and social – as these constituencies will likely continue to find some resonance in their prescribed position or frame. However, the campaign/war will have to go further, creating a flight corridor that builds upon pre-existing positions.

It is also worth noting the “pros” and “cons” associated with a war on global warming. From a con perspective, a war is a violent metaphor, one that implies conquering. This is a frame that may have difficulty finding a home within the conflict

resolution community. Not all audiences may find this frame appealing, nor do we want to create unnecessary panic among the public or a fear of nature. Alternatively, a federal-grassroots campaign against global warming that frames morally repugnant behavior, like what America did with tobacco use, may provide sufficient positioning to motivate stakeholder engagement.

From a pro perspective, a war provides the opportunity for a sufficiently sustainable social scare and flight corridor that turns social anxiety into action. The war metaphor, by intimating aggressive forward-looking action, may also aid in allaying concerns that carbon reductions and climate regulations are constraining American freedoms. It is critical, however, throughout this process, to not generate so much anxiety that it turns the public's latent dread of unknown futures into inaction, fatalism and complacency. Additionally, there are precedents for American war positioning and framing around abstract threats like the war on drugs, cancer and poverty, the last of which carries as many structural engineering implications as a war on global warming. Whatever framing is ultimately selected in the implementation phase, it is essential that it create an inclusive, all-encompassing campaign, capable of utilizing multiple positions/frames, and motivating diverse constituencies.

CHAPTER 7: REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW NARRATIVES TO EMERGE

The ideas presented in this section of the dissertation, while prescriptive, are based largely on the data mined from the key Media and Congressional informants regarding what is needed and what is required for these new narratives to emerge. The key informants were quite vocal about what was absent, what needed to be addressed, and what needed to be created. This section gives testament to this aspect of the data. While many key informants had specific ideas, many informants, including Members of Congress, were at a loss as to what exactly was needed and consequently offered parallels and analogies to indicate the tenor and tone of what is required.

For example, as one Member of Congress said in the interview, “We need to take this very seriously. We need grassroots campaigns that need to be reinforced daily. Not that dissimilar from the campaign to get people to quit smoking that the tobacco companies fought and fought against. But they couldn’t fight against kids who were really armed with actual information that cigarettes killed their parents and their parents knew that cigarettes killed them. What was that? The federal government working with healthcare professionals.”¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Interviews: MC: BM-3.

This section covers several areas for new narrative development and examines what is needed specifically in terms of media engagement, congressional engagement, and constituent engagement.

Media Behavior

As a preface, it is important to note – as elucidated by Brulle et al. – that “Several factors, including the inherent difficulty of understanding climate change, the limitations of personal experience, and inappropriate mental models all combined to limit individual understanding (Weber and Stern 2011),” and that “culturally and socially appropriate messages that properly convey this information will result in a shift in public opinion about the threat of climate change (Pidgeon and Fischhoff 2011; Reynolds et al. 2010; Sterman 2011)” (Brulle et al. 2012, 7).

Moreover, it is important to recognize that media’s impact on public opinion vis-à-vis climate change is substantial. According to Brulle et al., “Media coverage of climate change directly affects the level of public concern. The greater the quantity of media coverage of climate change the greater the level of public concern. This is in line with the Quantity of Coverage theory of media effects, and existing individual level research on the impact of television coverage and climate-change concern. The importance the media assigns to coverage of climate change translates into the importance the public attaches to this issue” (Brulle et al 2012, 17).

All of this is important to keep in mind as we consider what is needed on the media coverage front going forward. The mainstream Media informants interviewed

were a mix of highly qualified and experienced environmental and science reporters at several of the top-ranking and established media outlets, as well as reporters at media outlets that have been newly assigned to cover the environment and climate change due to the downsizing of news staff and subsequent firing of the environmental/science reporters who had previously retained the staff expertise to cover the issue. To capture the problem among many Media informants, given the lack of expertise on staff to cover the issue of climate change, one informant said, “I think the one thing that would keep me from reporting more on it, if given the opportunity, is the scientific understanding of climate change. I don’t have a scientific mind. Whenever I do science stories, I have to go to numerous experts to have them break down in layman’s terms what we’re dealing with.”¹¹¹

A consistent and persistent theme that came up in the media interviews regarded the need for training. The majority of the Media informants recognized the complexity of the issue and the complicated nature of the climate data and the need for clearer, simply ways of communicating the complexity. One political reporter who covers the environment noted that when it comes to more effectively writing on climate change, “I’d have to educate myself. That would make it easier for me if I knew my stuff.” Another Media informant explicitly identified a tangible takeaway for reporters: “Host environmental forums for journalists, regional conferences that are offered with scientific

¹¹¹ Interviews: MM: JB2-2.

experts to brief journalists about a number of topics. I think that would be really useful.”¹¹²

Training for media on the issue of climate change seems like a no-brainer in terms of improving media’s ability to communicate the consequences of this environmental conflict. However, it is a common assumption that media do not always like to be trained or taught something, which may be the obstacle getting in the way of actual training in climate change terminology, concepts, and data. Since key Media informants who are working at mainstream media outlets are calling for this kind of training, however, as evidenced by this dissertation’s research data, it may be worthwhile for climate change practitioners to consider new strategies to address this need.

Another issue of paramount importance that came up consistently for my Media informants had to do with climate change’s relevance to economic policy and macroeconomics more generally. There was consensus that the economic foundation for a war on climate change has not been made effectively, if at all. Most informants intimated that if climate change’s financial/economic cost argument could be made effectively, it would make it much easier for them to cover the issue. Take a look at how one informant interview illuminates how clearly the economic boundaries are delineated at some media agencies: “Our newspaper is focused solely on the money and the economy. There’s nothing more far reaching than an economic issue that affects everyone. Once climate change gets to the point where it’s about the cost of jobs or the

¹¹² Interviews: MM: JB2-4.

costs of money, then you'll see more coverage of it in the newspaper.”¹¹³ Other key informants supported this thinking as well saying, “On climate change I think if you'd say there's some kind of tangible economic benefit, that is a much better approach,”¹¹⁴ and another Media informant saying that, “I still find the insurance argument the most convincing. We buy insurance on longer odds than the climate scientists are getting for the kinds of effects we're likely to see in terms of extreme weather.”¹¹⁵

In the last five years, the trend among media professionals towards an economic focus has been growing, paralleling the crises in society, from the financial crisis, to the foreclosure crisis, to the housing crisis, and to the Eurozone crisis. Interviewed informants noted that this was visible at the very top of the influential media chain: “With other papers – the *Times*, the *Journal* – their economic coverage has grown exponentially. I think it predicts that climate change will become more of an issue once the money is involved, or once people show that it does affect money issues.”¹¹⁶ Even a Member of Congress chimed in here with an economics message: “We need to hear from the economic argument of what will happen to use if we don't do something. I think we don't hear enough about that. We need business folk.”¹¹⁷ This indicates that more work is needed to connect the dots between this environmental conflict, specifically global warming, and the economy.

Whether it is an increase in science-based training for media professionals or an increase in economics-oriented messaging, the informant data from mainstream media is

¹¹³ Interviews: MM: WA-6.

¹¹⁴ Interviews: MM: DM-9.

¹¹⁵ Interviews: MM: PS-7.

¹¹⁶ Interviews: MM: WA-6.

¹¹⁷ Interviews: MC: RG-4.

instructive for how any campaign against climate terrorism will get legs within the media community. There are practical barriers preventing climate change from making its way to the civil sphere via media portals, barriers that can ultimately be overcome if the right messaging tweaking and training is taken seriously.

Congressional Behavior

In the interview data, it became clear that Members of the US Congress only felt comfortable engaging in activities that were mandated or endorsed by their congressional committee or constituency. It was surprising, in fact, that some Members of the US Congress were adamant about the existence of climate change and the need to do something about it immediately, but were quite reluctant when it came to acting on their beliefs and their attitudes in Congress. These Members of Congress assessed that their inability to act on climate change was based almost entirely on the fact that they were not situated on the correct congressional committee and that it was the responsibility of those more appropriately situated Members of Congress to act on their behalf.

Additionally, many Members of Congress explained during the interviews that the majority of their constituency had not reached out to them on the issue of climate change, thus failing to provide the Member with the mandate to become more active. One Member of Congress, however, took some Congressional responsibility for this apparent lack of constituent attention, “The bottom line is that we’re not doing anything right now

to promote awareness of our carbon footprint as a nation, carbon footprint as a state, carbon footprint as a community, and carbon footprint as individuals.”¹¹⁸

So how will Members of Congress increase their activity, irrespective of congressional committee or constituent impediments? Some Members of Congress identified a staffing/resource need: “Having staffers who consistently stay on top of the issue and constantly search for new information. They would doggedly keep moving on the bill that I want written and provide me venues and platforms to speak to the issue of global warming, innovation and democratization of energy.”¹¹⁹ Other Members suggested that more climate-related disasters were necessary: “In our country, we have to be visited again with a disaster that reminds us of global warming.”¹²⁰ It is important to note that these disasters allow the Member of Congress to rally the public in ways that are not normally available to Members of Congress. During natural disaster situations, not only are emergency funds, public attention, and media attention more available to elected officials, but also the ideological ground is more fertile for making a point about climate change.

A case in point, according to a Zogby poll conducted one year after Hurricane Katrina, a majority of Americans were making the connection between the hurricane and climate change: “As Americans recover from this summer’s heat wave and mark the first anniversary next week of Hurricane Katrina, an overwhelming majority say they are more convinced that global warming is happening than they were two years ago, and they

¹¹⁸ Interviews: MC: MH-2.

¹¹⁹ Interviews: MC: MH-2.

¹²⁰ Interviews: MC: MH-2.

are also connecting intense weather events like hurricane Katrina and heat waves to global warming” (Zogby 2006).

In this way, a war on global warming or a campaign against climate terrorism, then, would free up Members of Congress to take action, irrespective of congressional committee or constituency engagement. Most, if not all, Members of Congress have webpages devoted to the war on traditional, armed terrorism. Members of Congress do so because they know it is a prerequisite for reelection and that their constituencies will want to feel safe in the protection of their anti-terrorism rhetoric. After September 11, 2001, it became a necessity for Members to message on the war on terrorism and to appear strong on national security.

A war on global warming, if messaged correctly, could enable Members of Congress to engage in similar behavior, without the confines of congressional committee or constituent mandate. And even if Republican involvement is minimal, Democratic Members of Congress can still substantially influence public opinion and concern. According to Brulle et al., when it comes to climate, one of the “strongest effects on public concern are Democratic Congressional action statements...which increase public concern” (Brulle et al. 2012, 17), thus showing that Democrats can still exert a major impact by issuing statements in favor of action on climate change.

Previous sections of this dissertation that illuminated, through content analysis, strong Congressional legislative and public commitment to the war on terrorism, irrespective of congressional committee constraints, shows that Congressional engagement on a war on global warming is possible. And according to the informant

interview data, it appears to be a resource issue; in other words, too few staff, too few web pages, too few legislative efforts and too few public statements devoted the issue. Thus the constraints are not inherent to the constructs of Congress or immutable by individual Members of the US Congress. Engagement, in fact, is quite possible – as noted by the war on terrorism efforts – it is a mere matter of commitment to do so.

Egalitarian Focus

Why is an egalitarian focus necessary in successfully preventing climate change and global warming? For two clear reasons: First, we know from the Yale-GMU paper on “Climategate, Public Opinion and the Loss of Trust” (Leiserowitz et al. 2010) that those with an egalitarian worldview tend to trust climate scientists – and consequently their data, assumptions and predictions – significantly more so than those with an individualistic worldview. Second and perhaps more importantly as it pertains to the earlier chapters on positions and frames that relied on an “other,” this war on global warming must not create an “other” or “out-group” that marginalizes or demonizes a substantial part of the public, like the environmental and security positioning erred in doing. An egalitarian worldview, in contrast, wherein the collective public is waging war on something bigger than their individual selves (e.g. the ozone hole) will be most effective in waging war against global warming or a campaign against climate terrorism.

According to this same study by Yale-GMU, “prior research has found that the underlying cultural worldviews of egalitarianism and individualism are strongly correlated with climate change risk perceptions and policy preferences. Egalitarians are

predisposed to perceive climate change as a serious risk and to support a variety of policies to address it. Individualists, however, are predisposed to perceive climate change as a non-existent or low risk and to generally oppose climate specific policies, especially those that involve government action” (see “Climategate,” Leiserowitz et al. 2010).

This dissertation is not solely suggesting that we attempt to try and create, through structural engineering, more egalitarian cultures and contexts, although a move in that direction might be useful for other topics beyond climate change, like poverty for example. It is merely setting up the pretext for understanding and ultimately investing in a climate change frame/position that taps into and fosters egalitarian thinking. Not unlike the campaign to close the ozone hole tapped into egalitarian thinking by rallying the public against the hole itself and anything that widened the hole, so too can a war on global warming tap into egalitarian thinking by rallying the public against the disasters and danger wrought by climate change and anything that exacerbates it.

Robert Axelrod’s work on *The Evolution of Cooperation* is useful here. Axelrod notes that the results of Cooperation Theory show that “cooperation can get started by even a small cluster of individuals who are prepared to reciprocate cooperation even in a world where no one else will cooperate,” and that there are “two key requisites for cooperation to thrive...that the cooperation be based on reciprocity and that the shadow of the future is important enough to make this reciprocity stable” (Axelrod 2006, 173).

This is why a campaign against climate terrorism must make the “shadow of the future” important enough to motivate and sustain a cooperative environment. Continues

Axelrod, “For cooperation to prove stable, the future must have a sufficiently large shadow. This means that the importance of the next encounter between the same two individuals must be great enough to make defection an unprofitable strategy...it requires that the players have a large enough chance of meeting again and that they do not discount the significance of their next meeting too greatly” (Axelrod 2006, 174).

This relates to previous theoretical sections on communicative action, structuration and dialectics. The public must be interacting frequently enough within the political spheres in which they dwell – a reality that has been obstructed, in part, by the creation of nonprofit organizations, lobbyists and political action committees in the last 30-40 years to represent the public to the policymakers. The public must also be interacting frequently enough within the economic spheres and communities that are experiencing the negative consequences of climate change and/or the negative consequences of the public’s consumptive and energy-intense lifestyles, e.g. China landfills full of American computers, iPads, etc. Encouraging this communicative dialectic will help foster the egalitarian thinking that is necessary.

Communication

As a preface, a note from Jürgen Habermas, in terms of how to conduct any communications campaign, which was as relevant in 1989 as it is in 2012: “If public concern is to be sustained under the present circumstances, there is a need for continuous public communications efforts to maintain public support for climate change action in the face of opposing message campaigns” (Habermas 1989, 141).

The dissertation data from the Media and Congressional informant interviews outlines very clearly what is needed here. Among the key Media informants, there was a consistent call for visuals. Building on the war metaphor and reiterating the previous section's articulation of the possible parallels with the ozone hole example, one seasoned environmental/science reporter quipped, recalling how the ozone hole was messaged, "They said, hey remember those pictures with the ozone hole? You're going to have a lot more people getting skin cancer. And so the general public, right then, saw the threat. They saw the immediate threat to their family. They saw the threat to the world. You need an immediate threat, you need a visual, and we're not seeing either of them."¹²¹

This reporter, a key informant in my interviews, captured the need in a nutshell. This is exactly what the climate change movement – and any campaign against climate terrorism – needs. The benefit of traditional, armed terrorism is that it has an immediate and visual threat and public efforts to protect against it or to reduce its threat are also immediate and visual, e.g. security screenings and measures, armed police, armed forces, etc. Contrast this with efforts to combat climate change, efforts that are less immediate and less visually compelling, which is why, perhaps, the American public does not consider their energy-saving actions as effective in reducing their contribution to global warming. When polled in November 2011 by Yale-GMU, 68 percent said their energy saving actions would reduce global warming a little or not all. Part of this sentiment is due to disbelief in individual agency and efficacy (see earlier chapter on communicative action, structuration theory, and dialectic of control), but a big part of this is due to the

¹²¹ Interviews: MM: PR-6.

lack of visual feedback, e.g. the immediate decrease of natural disasters, lowering of temperatures, and lessening of pollution.

Other Media informants, who were interviewed, concurred with this conclusion, “If you see a mountain that was once snow-capped and now it’s bare, or if you see a glacier melting, I think that’s more compelling.”¹²² Another Media informant recommended something similar, saying, “I think the images of pollution going into the air, get images of that into the mass public’s eyes. I think images affect people more than data.”¹²³ Lastly, one noted the need for “translating academic data into plain language. A lot of scientific papers come out in jargon.”¹²⁴

Members of the US Congress chimed in too, agreeing with their Media informant counterparts. “Graphics have to be a part of what you stick in people’s face, in other words, these are the dire consequences of not doing anything. I think that would be effective. You know, we’ll keep people working for another 20 years and then what? There won’t be any work for anybody. That’s the dark picture that needs to be shown.”¹²⁵ Other Members of Congress backed up the visuals recommendation and the need to bring it home: “To help me on this would be a data bank of power points, data that speaks to information about ice cores. Visuals are the best thing. We have a lot of evidence, we just haven’t brought it home.”¹²⁶

Key Media informants also recognized that if a new cultural movement (per Hulme’s recommendation) is going to be created to effectively deal with climate change,

¹²² Interviews: MM: DM-5.

¹²³ Interviews: MM: JB-7.

¹²⁴ Interviews: MM: BS-6.

¹²⁵ Interviews: MC: RG-5.

¹²⁶ Interviews: MC: MH-3.

then Hollywood must play a leading role in that fight. One mainstream reporter for a global wire service noted that, “Hollywood certainly plays a role in shaping the cultural views on a lot of things. Everything from whether or not smoking is socially acceptable to wanting acceptance of gay culture. Once you start seeing men kissing on TV that helps. I think Hollywood plays a huge role in climate change. I think the most influential actor in the debate is Hollywood.”¹²⁷

While Hollywood is increasingly making movies that are seemingly climate-related, doomsday-type films, these apocalyptic scenarios are not often or explicitly associated with climate change. For example, in the follow movies *2012*, *The Day After Tomorrow* and *The Road*, there is an assumed climate-change-related natural disaster that imperils humankind, but the movies do not make direct reference to climate change or global warming, nor do they communicate to the public audience that the threat is on par with terrorism and therefore a fight, or war, must be waged to counter this threat. In contrast, innumerable films have already been made about traditional, armed terrorism and the war against terrorism, clearly pitting the “good” against the “bad” and generally communicating to the public that the war on terrorism is necessary, that it’s being fought, and that the threat continues to exist (e.g. *The Kingdom*, *Hurt Locker*, *Zero Dark Thirty*). Once Hollywood switches to making feature films (not just documentaries like *An Inconvenient Truth*) that simulate a “good” war against global warming, then the public too may be persuaded.

¹²⁷ Interviews: MM: RD-5.

In addition to Hollywood, there is some compelling data about who the right messenger should be to carry this message forward. Take a look at the data in the Yale-GMU November 2011 polling regarding whom Americans trusted most as a source for global warming information (Leiserowitz et al. 2011e). Forty-eight percent strongly or somewhat trusted the US President as a source, while only thirty-one percent strongly or somewhat trusted their Congressman/Congresswoman. The numbers were roughly the same for UN scientists as 32 percent of Americans strongly or somewhat trusted the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as a source of information about global warming. In the same November 2011 poll, however, when Americans were asked if 90 percent of climate scientists were to agree and state publicly that global warming is happening, 47 percent of Americans noted that it would increase their level of concern.

What's interesting to note here is that Americans are suspicious of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (perhaps because of general US skepticism about the UN), because when it comes to strongly or somewhat trusting "climate scientists" more generally, the percentages are much higher, at 74 percent according to the November 2011 polling by Yale-GMU. Other high numbers of "strongly trust" or "somewhat trust" - as sources of information about global warming - are found among television weather reporters (58 percent), local public health department (61 percent), and other kinds of scientists (65 percent) (Leiserowitz et al. 2011e).

Despite the high numbers of support and trust for climate scientists, Brulle et al. are critical of the overall effect that climate science has public opinion based on their recent study: "The promulgation of scientific information about climate change has a

small but significant effect. Science articles, generally not read by the public, have no discernible effect, while major assessment reports and articles on climate change in popular science magazines do affect public concern. The implication would seem to be that science-based information is limited in shaping public concern about the climate change threat” (Brulle et al. 2012, 17).

These data on which source the public trusts most, as well as the interview data featured throughout this section on communication, have clear implications regarding who is the right messenger to carry the message forth, and what are the right communication vehicles necessary for a new cultural movement in a “Hulmesian” sense. All of it will be necessary in activating the relatively dormant constituency, who believes but does not act on that belief, and will be the focus of the next section.

Constituent Outreach

Given the low constituent outreach and constituent advocacy on this issue (recall the overwhelming majority of people polled by Yale-GMU who were not reaching out to elected officials on the issue of global warming), there is a clear need for increased constituent engagement. The Members of the US Congress who were interviewed for this dissertation reiterated this need, intimating that it will be easier for them to focus on climate change if constituent outreach and advocacy increases. Constituents believe climate change is happening and that something should be done about it, but they are simply not telling their Members of Congress what they do, in fact, believe.

In the November 2011 survey by Yale-GMU regarding “Public Support for Climate and Energy Policies,” 66 percent of America supported a large or medium scale effort to reduce global warming even if it has “large” or “moderate” economic costs. In the same poll, another 62 percent supported protecting the environment, even if it reduces economic growth, and 54 percent think environmental protection improves economic growth and provides new jobs. An even more surprising number of Americans – 60 percent – “strongly supported” or “somewhat supported” a carbon tax, provided all revenues would be returned to taxpayers by reducing their federal income tax (Leiserowitz et al. 2011f). This high percentage support is almost unheard of in an American media that primarily promulgates, disputatiously, the belief that a carbon tax is a non-starter and that the public does not want to pay any more money at the gasoline station pump given already high gas prices. All of this data shows that the constituent support for Congressional engagement is there, if only constituents will communicate this support to their Members of Congress.

One interviewed Member of the US Congress put it succinctly, summarizing the problem that is preventing Members of Congress from becoming more active on the issue of climate change: “The more that the public is involved, the more that the public and media is talking about it, the easier it becomes for those of us who are in the House [of Representatives] because a lot of times the legislative body is a reactive body as opposed to a proactive body. We react to constituents that we represent, so the more attention that is being put to it on the outside, in the media and otherwise, the more noise that’s being

made by the people on the outside, our constituents, the easier it makes for my job on the inside.”¹²⁸

Other interviewed Members of the US Congress identified specific groups of constituents that have been particularly effective in messaging to the public and in outreach to Congress. One Member of Congress suggested that faith communities have been particularly effective: “What some of the different faith communities have done on the environment is fine but this has to be sustained. It has to be day-in and day-out. That’s what they did with tobacco.”¹²⁹ Another Member of Congress identified “Veterans for American Power,” who “tour the country in a bus, coast to coast. They all talk about the wisdom of the climate change agenda, to think outside the barrel. We’re sending hundreds of billions of dollars a year to the Middle East for our glutinous dependency on fossil-based fuels. Their message was: we saw the danger out there. You’ve got drought, you’ve got flooding, you’ve got less available land, less usable land, leading to a weaker people, unable to defend themselves - essentially a breeding ground for terrorist activity. What an interesting angle.”¹³⁰

So how to increase constituent engagement given that constituent engagement is largely absent? In a previous chapter, wherein I talked about structuration theory and the dialectic of control, it became evident that nonprofit organizations, lobbyists and political action committees, which are predicated on the concept of representing public opinion, may be ultimately be undermining public, civic and constituent engagement. That,

¹²⁸ Interviews: MC: GM-4.

¹²⁹ Interviews: MC: BM-3-4.

¹³⁰ Interviews: MC: PT-3-4.

combined with the growing influence of money in politics, leaves the public left feeling like traditional constituent engagement is a futile exercise. Furthermore, the 2011 Supreme Court ruling *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission* opened wide the gates for Super Political Action Committees to funnel money to US Presidential and Congressional candidates with no financial limit or single-contribution ceiling (Gross 2012).

If campaign finance reform, a platform on which US Presidential candidate and then-Senator Barack Obama campaigned, was not critically needed before the Supreme Court ruling, it is now more than ever before. The Arab Spring-inspired Occupy Wall Street protests, which spread across America and included an Occupy Congress and an Occupy K Street, may be tapping into the wellspring of discontent, disenchantment and disengagement by the broader American public constituency. The Tea Party also tapped into public disillusionment with the federal government and the Occupy protests captured that sentiment as well.

Until constituents seek and ultimately obtain direct access to their elected officials, we will not witness active constituent engagement on the issue of global warming. In contrast, on the issue of the war on terrorism, the public is sufficiently scared enough of their own mortality to be motivated to overcome aforementioned hurdles like nonprofit and Super PAC representation and industry influence. That is why a campaign against climate terrorism or a war on global warming will be essential in motivating a complacent public into active civic engagement and motivating stakeholders

to actively transform this environmental conflict, thus building a bridge between stakeholder beliefs and behaviors.

The next and final chapter on the conclusion will summarize next steps for conflict practitioners and chart the way forward for new research at the nexus of this environmental conflict and the communicative practices of media and policy.

CHAPTER 8:
CONCLUSION: CLIMATE AS CONFLICT:
NEXT STEPS FOR CONFLICT PRACTITIONERS

This qualitative research project represents the integration of my life's work as a conflict practitioner in the field of environmental conflict and my life's work in the communicative practice fields of media and policy. Within the environmental conflict field, the disparity between belief and behavior among stakeholders and constituents of environmental conflicts – i.e. that people believe climate change is happening but fail to do anything about it – has always confounded me. Within communicative practice, similarly, the disparities evident in this research data between key informant beliefs and key informant behaviors have been perplexing to observe and analyze. Why, when knowledge of and belief in a particular conflict – like global warming – is high among stakeholders, is there little proactive behavior in response to that conflict as part of a larger effort to manage, transform, or resolve that conflict?

This research, consequently, aims to explore the obstacles that obfuscate a consistent pattern between Media, Congressional and constituent beliefs and behaviors. Many of the obstacles are found in the limitations of positions and frames and their implementation. As this research showed, these positions not only failed to be inclusive enough for all constituents and conflict stakeholders to feel welcome and participate, but these positions also relied heavily on the existence of an “other,” an “us-versus-them”

paradigm or an out-group, which ultimately creates additional and secondary conflicts through marginalization, disenfranchisement and exclusion. A great example of this is the “energy security” and “energy independence” position and frame, which relies on an evil other, namely oil-rich and rogue states, with which the US has bad relations and from which the US wants energy independence.

In exploring the obstacles to consistency among conflict stakeholder beliefs and behaviors, this research also realized through observation and analysis that this incongruity between belief and behavior failed to exist for other security threats and impending conflicts, like traditional, armed terrorism. Among Media informants, for example, obstacles were less apparent in terrorism reporting than they were in climate change reporting. Regarding the latter, Media informants stated in interviews that both sides – climate skeptics and climate advocates – must be given equal treatment in the press and that media were responsible for telling both sides of the story. But with terrorism, the mainstream media seemed less inclined to stick by these journalistic principles of equal representation. Among US Congressional key informants as well, the incongruity between beliefs and behaviors was apparent in this research data on climate change, but less apparent when observing engagement by Members of Congress on traditional terrorism and security conflicts. Limitations stated by Congressional informants in my research data, regarding committee jurisdiction over climate change-related issues, was a less apparent limitation when it came to dealing with traditional, armed terrorism.

What is known from this research is that Members of Congress would be more engaged on the issue of environmental climate change if their constituents were more communicative. What is also known is that members of the mainstream Media feel limited in their communicative practice due to insufficient climate science expertise, materials, visuals, data, training, opportunities, staffing and messaging regarding the economic costs of climate change. What is also articulated in this dissertation is the degree to which the public and constituents are disengaged from the civil sphere, thus making any influence on key informants, such as Members of the US Congress, particularly difficult. The lack of genuine Giddens-type structuration between constituents and Congress undermines stakeholder engagement and depresses the possibility of a democratic dialectic.

What is also apparent in this research is that a different narrative is needed to spur further conflict stakeholder engagement – be it among Media, Members of the US Congress or their public constituents. One possible narrative worth pursuing, which positions the conflict external to the population – thus avoiding the “othering” or out-grouping that happens with environmental, religious, security, economic and social positioning, while encouraging an egalitarian approach – is the concept of climate terrorism and a war on global warming.

This is not a new concept and one that has already be proffered by Jimmy Carter and Stephen Hawking, as previously mentioned, and by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, global philanthropist Richard Branson, and even US Congressman Gregory Meeks, who serves on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, in an op-ed I coauthored

with him for the *Christian Science Monitor* on March 24, 2008. It is, however, a difficult concept to encourage or create because it ultimately requires a personal and professional engagement by stakeholders unfettered by the consumptive quest for competence and equality, as discussed in this paper. One way of freeing up the conflict stakeholder from consumptive behavior that contradicts and undermines the stakeholder beliefs (as articulated by the wealth of data mined by Yale-GMU), is to devise a new narrative from which new behavior can more feasibly be formed and fostered.

In this way, a war on global warming, not unlike previous wars on poverty, cancer or drugs, if positioned appropriately, might enable the public and constituents, members of the Media, and members of the US Congress, to pursue behaviors as freely as they do when attempting to prevent, transform, manage or resolve traditional terrorism conflicts. Media, Members of Congress, and the public, as this paper showed, exhibit a willingness to transcend normal behavior when engaged in conflicts related to terrorism. Mainstream media report freely on terrorism conflicts, and misrepresent the threat, with little disclaimers or caveats regarding equal representation. Members of Congress, similarly, legislate more freely on terrorism conflicts, with less concern about committee jurisdiction or sufficient constituent outreach.

New narratives, like climate terrorism, may serve to increase conflict stakeholder involvement among the Media and Members of the US Congress, and it may empower the American public to pursue a more egalitarian and protective patriotism. But a new frame, position or narrative will do little to fix the structures that fetter communicative action, structuration and democratic dialectics. This is where structural engineering will

be necessary. That the representatives of American public opinion – first in the late 20th century as nongovernmental organizations, now in the early 21st century as political action committees and Super PACs – are positioning themselves based upon their ability to financially invest in Members of Congress, makes conflict stakeholder engagement by the public in the civil sphere increasingly difficult. The only way to circumnavigate this influence industry is for the public to reverse the trends illuminated by Yale-GMU in its “Americans’ Actions” reports (2011, 2010), namely to contact elected officials, communicate in the media, reward/boycott companies based on climate position, and support organizations based on their climate change position. Mere minimal improvements in behavior on any of these fronts would be an improvement from 2011 and 2010 Yale-GMU data, would begin to build a bridge between constituent belief and behavior, help spur communicative action, structuration and a democratic dialectic, and would ultimately help undermine the influence industry’s ability to keep stakeholders out of elite decision-making spheres.

Along with the long list of requirements mentioned in the previous chapter that are necessary for new narratives to emerge around a war on global warming, as identified by the interviewees and the data that came from the qualitative research, there is an additional requirement that is worth mentioning. Climate change is a multidisciplinary field that will require new research by multiple academic fields, including the conflict analysis and resolution field, given climate change’s diverse and devastating impacts on societies, environment, health, economies, and the list goes on. That the literature on

environmental climate change is still underdeveloped and primarily originating in the environmental sociology field should compel other fields to spur research of their own.

As environmental conflicts will likely only proliferate in the decades ahead, so too should the conflict analysis and resolution's concomitant compendium of research on this topic. Furthermore, given the lack of leadership among key informants and key stakeholders to this environmental conflict – as noted by this research, among Media and Members of the US congress – the conflict field should pursue new paths in communicative theory and practice as a way of better understanding and ultimately involving these stakeholders in conflict analysis and resolution efforts.

Even if all this is pursued, will conflict stakeholders be able to prevent climate change from escalating? The mere evidence of geo-engineering is indicative of the fact that some stakeholders do not think climate change prevention is possible anymore but rather, only climate change adaptation is possible. Survival, not prevention, is the focus for many geo-engineers readying the world to react to imminent and worsening climate change. The analysis suggested in previous chapters, furthermore, as elucidated by the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *The Civil Sphere*, suggests that market forces will always tap into basic human needs and the propensity for consumers to seek equality and competence through consumption of products, often at the expense the planet. These are heavy and formidable psychosocial forces prohibiting active stakeholder engagement in the resolution of this particular environmental conflict.

If it is to work, the answer is found in egalitarianism. We know from the previously cited paper by Yale-GMU that egalitarian societies are significantly and

substantially more inclined to care about climate science, and thus likely to do something about it, than individualistic societies. For America, this is a particularly poignant point. As previously referenced in this dissertation, the US is experiencing record highs of income inequality and poverty figures – rates that are growing rapidly throughout America and the rest of the rich world. Sadly, what accompanies high inequality rates, as noted by UK economists Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett in their book on *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, are equally high rates of social-health problems like obesity, illness, addiction, violent crime, teenage pregnancy, infant mortality, and low rates of social mobility and life expectancy and low levels of trust among society, thus making the public less able to focus on anything as seemingly peripheral as climate change. When one's person, family, house or community is falling apart, it becomes all the more difficult to think globally or adopt a more egalitarian view.

What is interesting to note here is that the US income inequality gap began to substantially widen in the 1970s, due to tax, trade and labor policy changes, not far from when the modern environmental movement began to build momentum. One wonders if climate change had reared its head when America's income inequality wasn't as evident, would our more egalitarian society have been better equipped to tackle climate change.

It is unsurprising, then, that the issue of climate change is dead in Congress and that stakeholder involvement in preventing, managing or resolving this environmental conflict is so negligible. The structural engineering needed and the whole-systems approach to this problem would simultaneously tackle income inequality and poverty – and the most basic of basic human needs – as a way of improving the likelihood of these

stakeholders being capable of and committed to an egalitarian worldview that could effectively wage a war against climate terrorism and global warming. This is much to ask of practitioners, perhaps, but apparently essential nonetheless.

What becomes clear in this conclusion is that an effective response to climate change, as recommended by the Media and Congressional informants interviewed in this dissertation, is not merely about social engineering and finding the right visuals, experiencing more natural disasters, identifying the right messengers, polling the right political party, procuring the right climate-friendly products, pursuing the right legislative vehicle, serving on the right congressional committee, fairly representing the stakeholder stories in this conflict, or hiring trained reporters. It is much bigger than that. It is about structural engineering and creating a system that meets society's basic human needs, which is the prerequisite for cultivating an egalitarian worldview that is more predisposed to active stakeholder engagement in climate change.

In meeting basic human needs, it is not solely about fixing income inequality and poverty, though this would go far in improving the public's proclivity to care about climate change and attend to the security aspect spelled out in Vern Redekop's articulation of the five basic human identity needs in *From Violence to Meaning: How an Understanding of Deep-Rooted Conflict Can Open Paths to Reconciliation*: security, meaning, connectedness, action, and recognition (Redekop 2002). It is also about providing opportunities for communicative *action* and democratic *meaning*, the creation of which would enable constituents to actively pursue a democratic dialectic with their elected officials, a reality that currently does not exist. Without this *recognition* by elite

leaders, opinion shapers and decision makers, the public will continue to feel disempowered and incompetent. This will not only undermine the egalitarian worldview but also encourage a repetitive and redundant cycle of increased consumption as a way of achieving equality and competence.

In sum, this dissertation's research into stakeholder attitudes, beliefs and behaviors vis-à-vis environmental climate change, and its concerted analysis of Media and Congressional data, shows that the implications of the findings are broader than my previously defined scope. Unquestionably, new narratives are critical to improving climate change stakeholder engagement - whether by constituents in the civil, economic and political spheres, Media representatives, or Members of the US Congress. Limitations within the environmental, religious, economic, security and social positions and frames could be complemented by a war/terrorism frame that repositions everyone within the "good" against a non-human "bad," thus avoiding the marginalization that accompanies many of the aforesaid positioning. Indeed, this may liberate Media, Congressional and constituent engagement for reasons already identified. But likely this newly positioned frame, too, will also fall short if basic human needs are not addressed.

Going forward, conflict practitioners who are keen to prevent, manage, transform or resolve environmental climate change must be cognizant of how unmet basic human needs ultimately drive consumption and the concurrent quest for equality and competence. As long as this individualistic behavior continues, the creation of an egalitarian context necessary for climate change stakeholder engagement to thrive

becomes difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. And without egalitarianism, the society's willingness to act collectively will also be severely impaired.

This is where social capital comes in. Without it, society has a slim chance of operating collectively to combat and counter climate change. The greater the income inequality in society, the greater the distrust and the lesser the reciprocity, all of which equates to less social capital. Therefore, no matter how many natural disasters remind Americans of climate change, no matter how many resource wars are waged by oil-dependent states, and no matter how many wind turbines and solar panels are planted throughout the wind-belts and sun-belts of America, climate change will still come up short of the total stakeholders needed for adequate intervention, prevention and mitigation.

The root cause of this environmental conflict is something much more basic and elemental, which the conflict field should explore more fully in order to contribute to the ever-evolving compendium of theory on climate-related conflict. Lowe and Goyder were right when they suggested that public attention to environmental claims is not merely in response to dramatic events or powerful group persuasion, but additionally, included “sustained periods of economic expansion, which magnify growth’s environmental impact; relative prosperity, which provides leeway for environmental regulation; a sense of social limits to growth; and the alarm dramatic events create” (Lowe and Goyder 1983, 32; Ungar 1992, 485). It is this “relative prosperity,” or lack thereof, which Lowe and Goyder mention, to which we must pay particular attention.

If unmet basic human needs are not only obfuscating the emergence of egalitarianism and scuttling capacity to overcome consumptive drives for equality and competence, but also impeding communicative action and a democratic dialectic, then conflict analysis and resolution practitioners have a unique opportunity to weigh in on this environmental conflict's theory and practice. Building upon the conflict community's early stake in defining the basic human needs literature and merged with a new understanding and exploration of this environmental conflict and the communicative practices of media and policy, the opportunity for pioneering theory and practice is paramount.

This is the nexus that will undoubtedly define the next generation of conflict researchers, a set of stakeholders that will have an even more vested interest in the prevention of climate change. This conflict is not going away anytime soon, thus the sooner the conflict research begins the better.

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONS FOR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Questions for Members of Congress:

The following questions represent what the researcher will ask Members of Congress in order to elicit stories, narratives and metaphors on how the Member first learned about the concept of climate change, what their attitudes toward the concept were, how they engaged based on their attitudes vis-à-vis climate change, and what obstacles or struggles they faced. The purpose of the elicitive interviews is to allow the Member the space to tell stories from which the researcher will later code and analyze for underlying frames and positions.

QUESTION 1: When did you first hear about climate change and what did you think about the issue?

QUESTION 2: What shaped your learning about climate change and what eventually confirmed your belief?

QUESTION 3: Once you decided upon your belief, what did you decide to do about it, what actions did you take and how much of a priority was this for you?

QUESTION 4: Have you experienced any obstacles along the way that have kept you from becoming more engaged or have hampered your work on this issue?

QUESTION 5: How involved should Congress be on this issue and how responsible are they for leadership on this issue?

QUESTION 6: To what degree do you hear from your constituents about this issue and what do they ask of you?

QUESTION 7: Who are some of the most effective Members of Congress advocating for your belief and why are they so effective? The least effective?

QUESTION 8: What are the most convincing arguments that contradict your belief and who is making these arguments?

QUESTION 9: What, if anything, would make your work easier going forward, as a Member of Congress, in advocating for your belief?

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONS FOR MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Questions for Media Representatives:

The following questions will be asked of media representatives, given their expertise in analyzing, constructing and reifying frames and narratives within the medium of mainstream media. The following questions represent what the researcher will ask media representatives in order to elicit how the media representative first learned about the concept of climate change, what were their attitudes toward the concept, how they engaged based on their attitudes vis-à-vis climate change, and what obstacles or struggles they faced. The purpose of the elicitive interviews is to allow the media representative the space to tell stories from which the researcher will later code and analyze for underlying frames and positions.

QUESTION 1: When did you first hear about climate change and what did you think about the issue?

QUESTION 2: What shaped your learning about climate change and what eventually confirmed your belief?

QUESTION 3: Once you decided upon your belief, what did you decide to do about it, what actions did you take and how much of a priority was this for you?

QUESTION 4: Have you experienced any obstacles along the way that have kept you from becoming more engaged or have hampered your work on this issue?

QUESTION 5: How involved should media be on this issue and how responsible are they for leadership?

QUESTION 6: Who are some of the most effective media representatives in advocating for your belief and why are they so effective? The least effective?

QUESTION 7: What are the most convincing arguments that contradict your belief and who is making these arguments?

QUESTION 8: What, if anything, would make your work easier going forward, as a member of a media agency, in advocating for your belief?

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Climate Conflict:

Positions and Frames Motivating Stakeholder Engagement

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to examine how [Members of Congress/Media] first learned about the concept of climate change, what were their attitudes toward the concept, how they engaged based on their attitudes vis-à-vis climate change, and what obstacles or struggles they faced. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in one interview with the researcher, lasting roughly one hour.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in climate change beliefs and narratives.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the data, which will be stored confidentially and securely, files that will be deleted after research is complete. The researcher will provide no one with access to this data. The following applies for each interview participant: (1) your name will not be included on the interviews and other collected data; (2) a code will be placed on the interview and other collected data; (3) through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your interview to your identity; and (4) only the researcher will have access to the identification key.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

AUDIO TAPING

The interviews will not be public and will be kept confidential and secure by the researcher, stored in a safe and destroyed upon completion of the research. The researcher will not provide anyone with access to the interviews. The interviews will be audio-recorded by the researcher only in order for the researcher to collect and code the data. Your name will not be attached to the collected and coded data.

_____ I agree to audio taping.

_____ I do not agree to audio taping.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Michael Shank at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. He may be reached at [redacted] for questions or to report a research-related problem. You may also contact GMU Faculty Advisor Dr. Solon Simmons at [redacted]. You may contact the GMU Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

Name (Please Print)

Signature

Date

APPENDIX D: INVITATION LETTER

Dear...

I am writing to seek [your/the Member's] participation in a climate change study that I am conducting at George Mason University to research and assess policy attitudes vis-à-vis climate change.

I am a doctoral student at George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, where I am conducting this analysis.

[For Members of Congress] As your Member has been a vocal leader on this issue, I am particularly interested in their perspective.

[For Media] As your media company plays an important role in reporting and influencing debate on this issue, I am particularly interested in your perspective.

The research will examine how influential stakeholders, like [you/your Member], first learned about the concept of climate change, what were/are your attitudes toward the concept, how you engaged based on these attitudes, and what obstacles or struggles you faced during the process. The interviews, which will last roughly one hour, will be entirely confidential and the privacy of the participant will be of primary importance.

As part of this project, I will be meeting with Members of Congress and members of the media to discuss each participant's belief and behavior vis-à-vis climate change. The project is slated to run August 2009 – June 2011, and I will be able to share the results of the project after completion upon request.

I hope you accept the invitation to participate in this research. Your experience and perspectives will be a valued and appreciated addition to my academic endeavor.

Michael Shank
Doctoral Program
School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
George Mason University
Cell Phone: [redacted]

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