There Must Be More: Communication to Close the Cultural Divide
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Introduction

Politicization of science and polarization of public opinion is a common phenomenon around climate change. Many countries have seen a hardening of opposing positions on climate change, accompanied by considerable cynicism, distrust, blame and negative sentiment (e.g., Hulme 2009; Norgaard 2006; Poortinga et al. 2011; Reser et al. 2012; Whitmarsh 2011). Nowhere is the phenomenon arguably as severe and of such devastating global significance as in the United States. This chapter focuses thus on the toughest of all cases – the political and ideological divides on climate change in the U.S. – to explore what lessons it may hold for communication and engagement across cultural and ideological divides more generally. Overcoming this impasse constitutes an adaptive challenge *par excellence*: forward movement will only happen if significant actors and segments of the population reach out to each other, engage, and mobilize for dialogue and action.

The premise from which we launch our argument is a seemingly intractable situation whereby politicization of science and ideological polarization are becoming nearly as solidly established as the ever-clearer scientific consensus on human-caused climate change. To those who are convinced that climate change is a serious problem, this dismal state of public discourse is caused by powerful political influences intentionally distorting public understanding and aiming to stall policy progress (e.g., Lahsen 2005; Oreskes and Conway 2010). To them this is deeply frightening in light of the climate crisis they perceive. From the other end of the political spectrum, accepting climate change as a fact looks like the "beginning of the end" of personal freedoms; it is to give in to the left's alleged attempt to control all aspects of our private lives; and so climate change is declared a "hoax" (Inhofe 2005) or at least an unproven theory, maybe a natural phenomenon, and in any case too uncertain to demand serious attention or action. As Harper Magazine columnist, Thomas Frank, recently noted, conservatives view the state of the world and of national politics in an equally apocalyptic way as the left. Each side, however, sees different problems and different villains at work causing them (Frank 2011).

Repeated public opinion polls and analyses over the last few years have confirmed this polarizing trend in U.S. climate change opinions (Antonio and Brulle 2011; Dunlap and McCright 2008; Leiserowitz et al. 2011a, 2011b; McCright and Dunlap 2011; Mooney 2012). This trend must be seen in the context of a broader trend toward polarization in American politics (e.g., Poole 2008, 2012) and considerable changes in the economic and media landscapes in the U.S. (Boykoff 2011; Brulle, Carmichael and Jenkins 2012). Serious analysts, unconscious communicators, and intentional polemicists on all sides have felt free and justified to brand those

on the other extreme with unfortunate labels, and thus to inflame animosities and further increase the polarization (e.g., Clynes 2012; O'Neill and Boykoff 2010; Powell 2011; U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works 2010; Washington and Cook 2011). For example, former U.S. Vice President Al Gore has been defamed for his stance on climate change; climate scientists are receiving death threats and hate mail; those wishing to see climate action have been called "Communists" or "watermelons" – green on the outside, red on the inside; meanwhile those questioning the reality, human causation, or need for action on climate change have been labeled skeptics, contrarians, deniers, and criminals. Thus, economist and social scientist, Andrew Hoffman (2011, 3) concluded, "the debate appears to be reaching a level of polarization where one might begin to question whether meaningful dialogue and problem solving has become unavailable to participants."

In this chapter, we are interested in exploring openings for meaningful and constructive communication. After summarizing trends in recent opinion polls and the range of explanations for the current state of affairs (Section 2), we explore the opportunities and goals of communicating with those who are not heard in public discourse or who don't have enough forums to explore the climate change issue, along with their own views and those of others (Section 3). Section 4 then turns to the currently opposed sides in the climate debate and asks what possibilities exist for them to come together. Section 5 explains how dialogue may be the most appropriate forum for deliberate attempts in finding common ground and describes both the forms and ways in which we may move from cultural and ideological divides to interpersonal opening and understanding. Section 6 offers a brief conclusion, emphasizing the common denominator we see in engaging all segments of the population, whether they are or are not currently productively engaged.

While dialogue may not be possible with everyone, and some almost certainly will not be interested in sincere exchange, we believe that further diatribe and debate between the extreme factions will only fortify the political stalemate. Conversely, greater engagement of the American public, especially of those holding less extreme views, through dialogue is possible and can be scaled up to change the social and political climate and enable action.

American Attitudes on Climate Change: Polarization and Silence

Evidence of polarized views on climate change is easily found in the news and on the internet. The portrayal found there would lead one to believe that there is nothing but extreme pro or con opinions on the topic. Opinion polling indeed finds that Americans largely occupy two increasingly separate camps, the Democratic, liberal-leaning, climate-change accepting wing and the Republican, conservative-leaning, climate-change skeptical wing, with a quiet, seemingly unimportant contingent in the middle (Dunlap and McCright 2008; McCright and Dunlap 2011).

In actuality, it is more accurate to state that the two polarizing camps in the U.S. make up the extreme ends of a more diverse opinion spectrum.

Since 2008, Anthony Leiserowitz at Yale University and colleagues at George Mason University have tracked public opinion and divided the American public into six distinct opinion segments, "Global Warming's Six Americas", based on underlying value commitments and beliefs: the Alarmed, Concerned, Cautious, Disengaged, Doubtful, and Dismissive. These six segments vary by degree along the more egalitarian/communitarian vs. hierarchist/individualist value spectra at the heart of cultural theory (e.g., Kahan 2007; Leiserowitz et al. 2009; Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky 1990). While segment sizes have varied in important ways in the last five years, according to data from September 2012, the Alarmed, constituting 16% of the population, fall on one of the extreme ends of the spectrum. People in this category are those most engaged on climate change. They are strongly convinced global warming is happening, human-caused, and that it is a serious and urgent threat. This segment of the American public is also most likely to be behaviorally, civically, communicatively, and politically involved in climate change and – either through votes or support for pro-action interest groups – support an aggressive national policy response (Leiserowitz et al. 2012).[1] The next, and typically largest segment – the Concerned (29%) – is also convinced that global warming is a serious problem and supports a strong policy response, but individuals in this group are less personally involved in the issue and are taking fewer actions. The third segment is referred to as the Cautious (25%), which includes those who believe global warming is a problem, but are less certain that it is happening than the Alarmed or the Concerned, less certain that it is human-caused, and they do not view it as a personal threat or feel a sense of urgency to respond. The fourth group, the Disengaged (9%), does not know or think much about the issue and hold no firm beliefs about climate change. The fifth category is made up of the Doubtful (13%) who have mixed beliefs in the reality of climate change. To the extent they believe the problem exists at all, they see it as a natural phenomenon and of little concern in the near term. Finally, at the other end of the spectrum and currently the smallest (but highly visible and outspoken) segment of the population, is that of the Dismissive (8%). People in this category, similar to the Alarmed, are very engaged in the issue but insist that global warming is not happening. And even if it is recognized to exist, it is considered natural and not a threat to either people or the environment, thus it does not warrant a national policy response. Figure 1 is a composite of findings from Leiserowitz and colleagues on how the proportions of the "Six Americas" have changed between 2008-2012. It illustrates how there have been repeated shifts over time into and out of the middle of the spectrum, with politically

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[1] It is important to note that being categorized as "Alarmed" does not mean that everyone is publicly vocal about their views and concerns, out in the streets demonstrating, or alarmist in their public rhetoric. The segmentation underlying the Six Americas is based on value commitments and beliefs, not on actions. Climate-relevant behaviors (such as energy savings, transportation choices etc.) vary remarkably little across all segments of the Six Americas (Leiserowitz et al. 2011a; Leiserowitz, Maibach and Roser-Renouf 2009).However, the Alarmed, like the Dismissive (discussed below), are more likely than all others to be civically and politically active on the issue. This is one of the reasons why their voices are more readily represented in the mass media.

significant shifts in the proportion of the most visible segments – the Alarmed and the Dismissive. While statistically the situation at present is an almost complete return to the status in 2008 (prior to the scandal of stolen emails from the University of East Anglia, the discovery of several mistakes in the Fourth Assessment report of the IPCC, and the effects of the global economic crisis of 2008), the numbers hide the fact that the stances taken on both ends of the spectrum have hardened and seem politically and culturally more polarized than five years earlier.
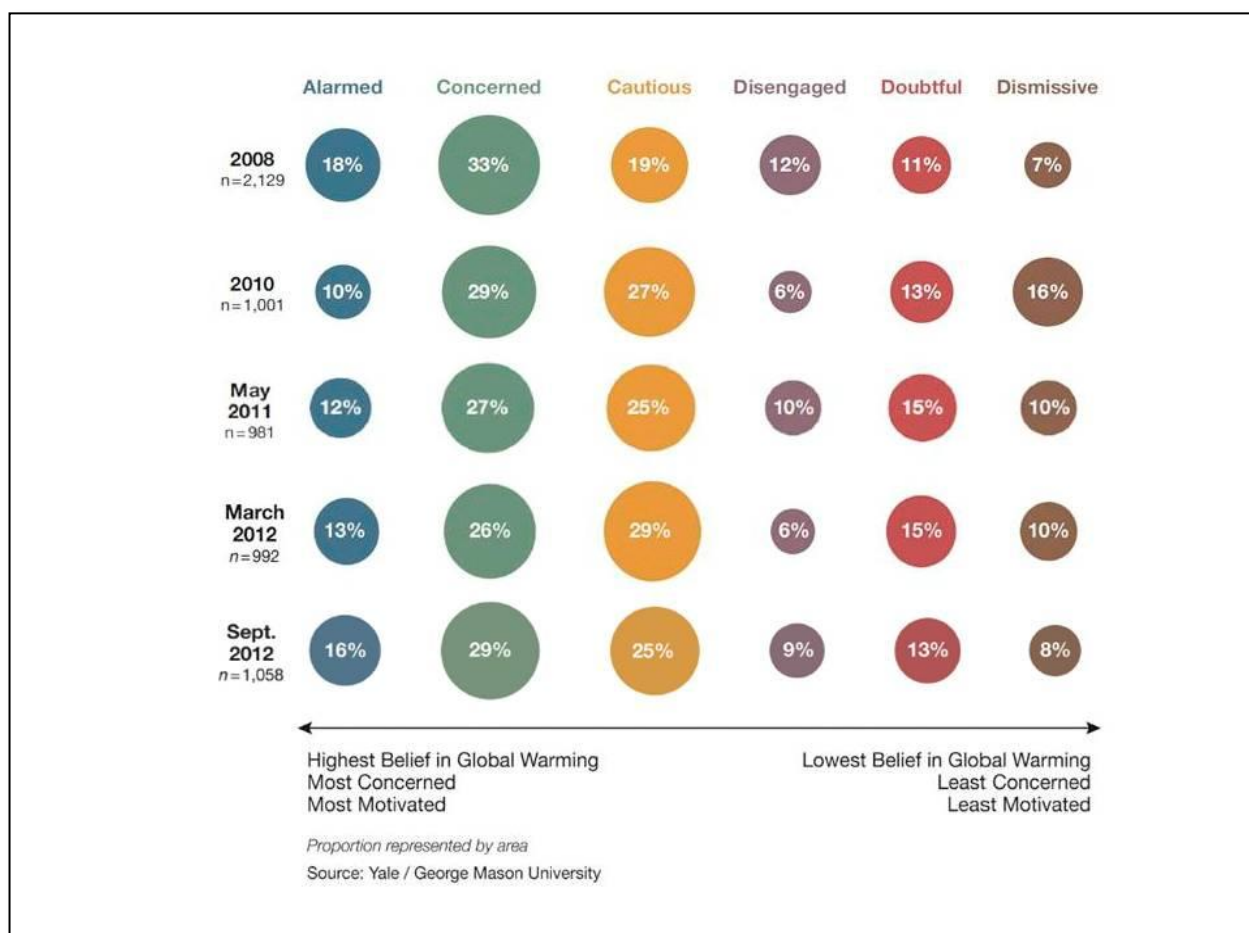

Figure 1: Proportion of the U.S. Adult Population in the Six Americas (2008-2012)
Source: Composite constructed from findings in (Leiserowitz, Maibach, and Roser-Renouf 2008; 2010; Leiserowitz et al. 2011b; 2012; 2013).

Despite important variations over time, the existence and demographic makeup of the Six Americas has been remarkably stable over time (see Figure 1). In late 2012, just like any other year that the survey has been conducted, a large majority of Americans (76%) does *not* fall into the extreme categories of responses to global warming. However, the 24% that are most engaged and most vocal, sometimes called the issue public (Converse 1964; Han 2009; Krosnick 1990), is the portion of the population whose views are heard most frequently in the media, while the less

extreme, more malleable views of the majority are not represented and thus essentially absent from public discourse (Balbus 2012).

Social scientists have taken up the issue of polarization, in no small part driven by the fact that those most vocal and engaged on the dismissive end of the spectrum have had an undeniably chilling impact on public policy and action at all levels of government (e.g., Fears 2011; Kaufman and Zernike 2012; Peach 2012). Coming from different disciplines and theoretical backgrounds, analysts have put forward various complementary explanations of the polarization, particularly, of "contrarian" and "denialist" opinions:[2]

- the political organization of powerful industry interests, particularly in the context of neoliberal globalizing goals (Dunlap and McCright 2011; Jacques, Dunlap, and Freeman 2008; Lahsen 2005, 2013; McCright and Dunlap 2003, 2010; Oreskes and Conway 2010);
- the role of the media in creating controversy and skepticism (Boykoff and Boykoff 2004; Butler and Pidgeon 2009; Carvalho 2007; Painter 2011);
- the importance of the social organization of belief systems held by different groups in society (Norgaard 2006, 2011);
- the significance of human psychological development toward greater maturity, explaining the deeper psychological patterns underlying attitudes and beliefs (e.g., Cook-Greuter 2008; Hedlund-de Witt and Hedlund-de Witt 2012; Plotkin 2008);
- the psychological responses to existential threats (Dickinson 2009; Fritsche et al. 2010; Pienaar 2011);
- the cognitive underpinnings of strongly held beliefs, particularly "motivated reasoning") (e.g., Hart and Nisbet 2012; Jost et al. 2003; Jost, Kay and Thorisdottir 2009; Mooney 2012; Roseman 1994; Whitmarsh 2011); and, closely related,
- the cultural value commitments (and possible evolution in cultural values) that allow or prevent us from accepting certain information and beliefs (Crompton 2011; Hulme 2009; Kahan 2007, 2010; Kahan and Braman 2008; Kahan et al. 2007a, b, 2010, 2012; Kasser 2009; Lahsen 2008, 2013; McIntosh et al. 2012).

Few concrete ideas have been advanced as to how to continue to communicate once an issue has become so polarized, so ideologically driven, and involving such high stakes literally and psychologically. Moreover, there has been limited attention to the communication needs of the three quarters of the "silent", overlooked population in the middle. Thus, we see a need to connect with the ignored middle while fostering the collective capacity to retain a functioning democracy, to collaborate and find solutions together, and rebuild a civic and humane

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[2] With the exception of research driven by an interest in cultural values, notably less attention has been paid in social science circles to why certain individuals or groups hold "alarmist" or "green extremist" views. Remarkably little has been said about how to broaden the issue public and engage those with less strongly held views.

conversation (Palmer 2011). Our own assessment of the situation leads us to prioritize the reengagement of the less-ideologically committed (see next section), and subsequently explore ways to bring the more extreme voices into dialogue.

Communicating with the Missing Middle: Possibilities of Greater Engagement

> Nothing opens up the mind like the glimpse of new possibility.
> John O'Donohue (2004, 139)

The largest opportunity for an expanded and fuller conversation among Americans of different persuasions lies with the three quarters in the middle. But where to start? Developing possibilities to reach and engage those not represented in the ideologically driven public debate begins with two fundamental questions all communicators must grapple with: *who* are we communicating with, and *what is the goal* of that communication? Leiserowitz and colleagues have developed a compendium of insights about the Six Americas – their demographics, values, political identifications, voting preferences, levels of pro-environmental behavior, civic engagement, energy and climate policy support, beliefs, concerns, key questions, climate literacy, and emotional responses to climate change. What we know from this body of work, is that the Six Americas are quite complex. Assuming, for example that the Alarmed are always highly informed, knowledgeable, and politically, civically or behaviorally active is true relative to the Cautious or Disengaged but disregards the finding that the Dismissive are sometimes even better informed on factual knowledge, they just draw different conclusions from it; it would equally discount that almost all of the subgroups take at least some pro-environmental actions (but surprisingly few, even among the Concerned and Alarmed) (Leiserowitz et al. 2011a; Leiserowitz, Maibach and Roser-Renouf 2009).

There is one thing, however, that the Four Americas in the middle all have in common: they are not heard from in the media. Their opinions, concerns and viewpoints are not mirrored and their questions are not addressed in the cross-fire of heated debate. Their level of science literacy in general and climate literacy in particular is rather low, leaving them uncomfortable or unable to participate effectively in a debate that is supposedly over facts (Hill 2010; Leiserowitz, Smith and Marlon 2010). Many have not bothered to learn more because the issue has long been presented as a scientific, uncertain, and complex topic best left to the experts (Marx et al. 2007). Even those who tried have found it difficult, depressing or overwhelming to contemplate (Meijnders, Midden, and Wilke 2001; Moser 2007; Myers et al. 2012). Still not enough understand just how compelling the scientific consensus has grown over the past 20 years (Ding et al. 2011). Because global warming is caused by humans, it requires responses in addition to individual actions, but what those large-scale responses are is unclear to many (Leiserowitz et al., 2011a). Moreover, if it were a truly urgent problem, the argument goes, political leaders

would address it; but apparently there are more immediate matters to attend to (Brulle, Carmichael, and Jenkins 2012). In short, there are personally compelling reasons *not* to engage.

This then raises the question, what would be the goal of "engaging" the middle Four Americas? And what do we really mean by "engagement"? This is not a simple question to answer. The Six Americas segmentation study – based on cultural value commitments and beliefs – is not primarily about behaviors, but rather about convictions, attitudes and opinions. Thus even the most alarmed and dismissive Americans are rarely out in the streets protesting; few of the Alarmed have given up all fossil fuel consumption, and equally few of the Dismissive are actively feeding the disinformation campaign. Some of the Concerned or Cautious may not want to learn more or let themselves be any more disturbed by the facts, but if they saw people like themselves speak out in favor of climate action and were told what to do, they might take or support the right actions. Some of the Doubtful may well come around to understanding that human-caused climate change is real, but may not vote for a carbon tax or a Democratic candidate promising climate action. In other words, engagement can mean many things, and what one may wish to achieve is specific to the group in focus and the intention behind the communication effort.

Table 1 lists key types of engagement which differ in depth and direct impact on climate-relevant actions. Importantly, they are not necessarily hierarchical or sequential (i.e., one kind of engagement is not a pre-condition for the next), though it is unlikely that one-time engagement will achieve more than superficial and impermanent goals. Repeated engagement is often necessary to achieve more significant shifts. While the types of engagement are listed separately, they often occur simultaneously.

Table 1: Typology of Engagement with Climate Change

Type of Engagement	Description with Examples
Cognitive	Focus of engagement is internal, in one's mind • Thinking about climate change • Seeking information and learning/teaching about the issue • Grappling with the complexities of climate change (solutions)
Emotional	Focus of engagement is mostly internal, in one's psyche, but may be shared with others • Allowing emotional responses (e.g. fear, anxiety, concern, grief, anger, guilt, passion, disappointment, despair, hope, empathy) to surface • Consciously or unconsciously coping with the emotional impacts of climate change
Behavioral	Focus of engagement is mostly on day-to-day actions • Making periodic or permanent changes in energy consumption in one's

	home
	• Shifting travel and transportation-related behavior
	• Shifting food and eating habits
	• Reducing material consumption
Professional	Focus of engagement is on climate-related decisions in one's professions, business, work
	• Making periodic or permanent changes in energy consumption in one's work place
	• Developing and implementing strategic plans to guard against negative impacts of climate change (or policy)
	• Developing and implementing strategic plans to take advantage of business opportunities arising from climate change (or policy) (in mitigation and adaptation)
Social	Focus of engagement is on known others, peers, or a social reference group
	• Communicating with others about climate change
	• Enacting solutions together with others, supporting each other
	• Making one's publicly visible behavior help shape new social norms
Moral/spiritual	Focus of engagement is on the transcendent
	• Being motivated to take action by one's belief system und underlying values
	• Developing a sense of responsibility toward nature, others, the future
	• Finding solace in a moral/spiritual conception of the world
	• Prayer
Civic	Focus of engagement is primarily on the commons
	• Speaking out about climate change in public
	• Attending hearings or public meetings
	• Writing letters to the editor of a newspaper
	• Participating in protests
Political	Focus of engagement is on the political process
	• Getting involved in political organizing and campaigning
	• Voting for candidates representing one's climate-related position
	• Voting for local/state climate-related initiatives
	• Running for office to influence policies and decisions

One could develop a "cumulative engagement index" (CEI) from empirical data that reflect these eight fundamental types of engagement. Because some but not all of these types of engagement have been surveyed for the Six Americas over the years, we can only offer a *hypothetical* depiction of such a CEI in Figure 2 (partial information available in the Six Americas citations

listed above). Such a graphic serves as an aid in answering the question – at least generically – what one might want to achieve with communication in terms of "engagement." For example, if the overarching goal is to shift toward a broad, widely visible social norm that accepts and demands more action on climate change, one might want to help elevate the CEI overall to a higher level for the Alarmed, Concerned, Cautious and Disengaged (arrow pointing upward). The primary focus of effort might be on the cognitive, emotional, social and behavioral dimensions of engagement. If by contrast (or in addition) the goal is to generate a political momentum for climate action (generically or a particular policy), the focus would be on moving more people into the Alarmed and Concerned columns (arrow pointing toward the left), activating particularly in the political, civic and moral dimensions of engagement. This is not to make any judgment about the inherent goodness or preference for any particular climate solution (e.g., regulation of CO_2, a market-based cap-and-trade system, or a particular set of energy technologies), but simply to reflect the general preference of the Alarmed and Concerned for action sooner rather than later. We see both of these goals as essential for large-scale climate policy in light of the history of social movements and environmental policy-making in the U.S.: it never started in Washington, but in local communities and state capitols, where progressive ideas were developed first and eventually "trickled up" to Congress when a patchwork of different policies across the nation made business cumbersome (Isham and Waage 2007; Rabe 2004, 2009).
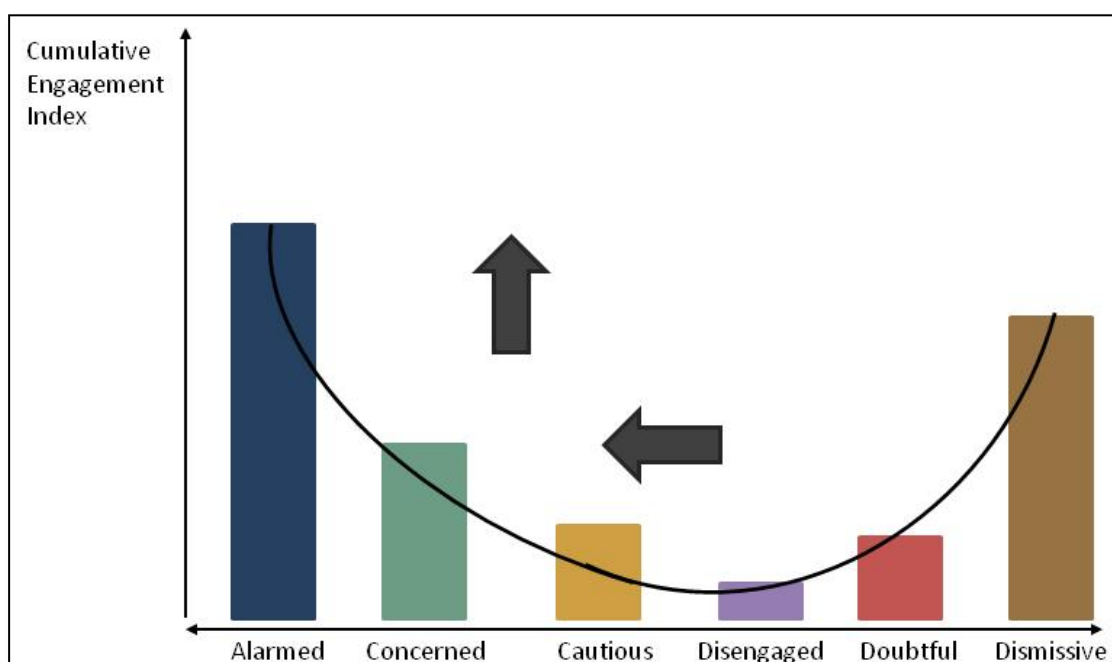

Figure 2: Shifts in the Level of Engagement for the Six Americas Based on a Hypothetical Cumulative Engagement Index (see text for explanation)
Source: Concept developed by authors, informed by Leiserowitz et al.'s findings on the Six America's engagement around climate change

Pragmatically, (re)engaging the middle Four Americas might begin by simply paying attention to them. If the immediate goal is a "good conversation," looking for cognitive, emotional, social and moral forms of engagement, disengagement can be effectively countered by sincerity and genuine interest in the other: interest in them as individuals, in their lives, their local concerns and worries. Not only does such an approach offer a glimpse of "new possibilities" (as John O'Donohue says) and thus open the door to real connection but also insights into the values and issues that can help make the connection to climate change. It offers possible alternative framings that make the problem more salient and the possible solutions more prominent and relevant. It also opens the floor for a values-based conversation – something we all can participate in (compared to a conversation about atmospheric science). In fact, the tit-for-tat debate over scientific facts is often no more than a thinly disguised debate over the underlying values debaters hold (Sarewitz 2004).

Once people are engaged in a conversation over local concerns and values, no one is "right" or "wrong," but a possibility arises to explore commonalities, differences, and ambiguities. Of course, such conversations can be messy and heated (and are easier when professionally facilitated), but at least they can be held directly. By practicing foundational skills of dialogue such as being fully present, deep listening, respect, self-responsibility, clarity, authenticity, speaking one's own truth, and suspending judgment (Bohm 1996; Brown, Isaacs and World Cafe Community 2005; Isaacs 1999), a real exchange and learning from and about each other becomes possible. In fact, having such an open and engaging conversation is more likely with the middle Four Americas as their values are closer to each other, less stuck, and more inclusive and compatible than with those who hold extreme positions. A practical example of such a conversation is described in Box x.1.

　　　　[Textbox inserted at end of document]

Possibilities for A New Start

　　As we work together to restore hope to the future, we need to include
　　a new and strange ally – our willingness to be disturbed.
　　　　　　Margaret Wheatley (2002, 34)

Clearly, developing communication channels to the middle Four Americans is not easy. The example described above, however, provides good evidence that it is possible to bring more people into the climate change conversation. There is no doubt that this opportunity is underutilized. It is also quite possible that the difficulty of doing so fades in comparison with bringing the most extreme sides of the opinion spectrum – for the first time or maybe again – into true dialogue. Here, we turn to that more difficult challenge.

"True dialogue" is much more than bringing people together for a shouting match or debate (e.g., Malone 2009). By dialogue we mean "a process for talking about tension-filled topics" (Schirch and Campt 2007, 5), "that aims to build relationships between people as they share experiences, ideas, and information about a common concern" (Schirch and Campt 2007, 6). It is fundamentally different from discussion or debate, which aim at analyzing and breaking apart a big issue into smaller parts. It is about exploring issues and meanings together (Dietz 2013). It is not about persuasion (by rational argument or savvy moral claim), but about understanding. Or, as David Bohm says, "in a dialogue, each person does not attempt to *make common* certain ideas or items of information that are already known to him [or her]. Rather, it may be said that the two people are making something *in common*, i.e., creating something new together" (1996, 3). Dialogue is also first and foremost not about problem-solving, though often finding commonly accepted solutions to a problem can arise organically from the relationships, trust, and understanding that are developed. Figure 3 illustrates a continuum of discourses, where dialogue is the most involved, most demanding, and potentially most fruitful and rewarding for all involved.
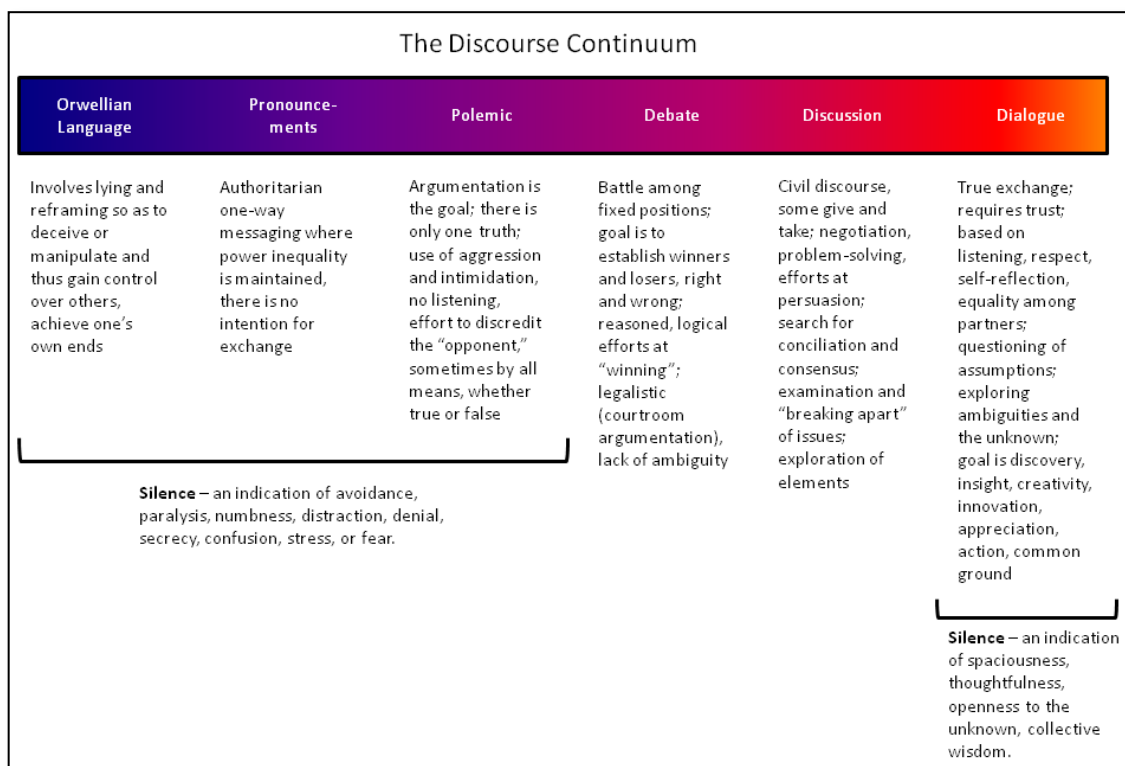

Figure 3: Discourse Continuum from Orwellian Manipulation to True Dialogue
Source: Adapted from Buie (2010, 100-101).

What would make it possible for those currently wildly opposed to come together for true dialogue? For those who believe the climate policy stalemate can be reduced to fossil fuel interests stalling progress, or to environmentalists aiming to establish an all-empowered world

government this question may invite only ridicule. It seems quite impossible to even imagine that the two sides would want to come together to be in dialogue. Clearly, the politics of climate change cannot be understood without a clear-eyed look at the influence of money in U.S. policy-making. Yet outside capitols and beyond policy circles, Americans do indeed have deep differences in values and opinions that currently prevent them from productive exchange. What then are the possibilities for people on the extreme ends of the opinion spectrum to even consider doing the demanding work of dialogue?

We see essentially three reasons that could open possibilities for a new start. By themselves they are not the way to overcome deep cultural divides, but they constitute necessary pre-conditions for a dialogue to even take place. The first is maybe the most likely: necessity. More and more weather- and climate-related crises constitute such necessities. Whether or not they would change any skeptical or dismissive person's mind and bring a revelation or recognition of something previously denied is not the point; rather, crises may simply necessitate that people communicate and collaborate directly to find pragmatic solutions. Another form of necessity may arise from a legal mandate (e.g., a state law requiring local adaptation planning or mitigation actions). And a third may arise from the stalemate itself: if positions are so deeply dug in that progress on anything becomes impossible, political leaders at any level may be at risk of losing their political mandate, and thus feel compelled to come together with previous opponents.

A second reason is gradual marginalization of extreme views as unacceptable. This may occur, for example, as a result of the turn-over of leadership in political and business organizations, the defection of key voices, or the loss of financial support of the increasingly marginalized camp. Deeper structural changes such as improvements in education, changes in the voting system, or recuperation of better in reporting standards could also foster a shift toward the public unacceptability of the extreme views (particularly, the unacceptability of outright climate denial), even if such processes are slow and less likely at present. Maybe most likely is that climate change manifests in increasingly notable ways and public opinion shifts toward greater awareness and acceptance, thus making doubt and denial simply the marginalized position to hold. Those marginalized then might feel pressure to join the new social norm. While innovation studies suggest that there are always some that will not adopt the new norm, their influence will be lessened over time.

The final reason why those in hardened positions may come together is less tangible, less driven by external forces, and yet can be even more compelling and has precedent in historical conflicts: an awakening or revelatory shift in stance, a higher calling. Rather than a "conversion experience" individuals may feel compelling personal reasons to at least talk to each other, e.g., "for our grandchildren" or because of who they wish to be and how they wish to be seen by others.

Whatever the reason, there may come a point when the benefits of stalemate are overpowered by the promises of talking with each other. This will not be easy, given previous self-righteousness, name-calling (and sometimes threats), hostile sentiments, and the strongly held opinions and underlying values. In some cases it may be necessary to begin such a dialogue with a neutral and trained facilitator. Regardless, it requires at least a "willingness to be disturbed," as Margaret Wheatley says, to be shaken out of our solidly held convictions, and to acknowledge the possibility that we may be biased, blind, afraid, yet also hold the power to create or destroy the civic fabric of society.

From Cultural Divide to Interpersonal Opening: The Case for Dialogue

> We have an obligation to have difficult dialogues in a way we really never
> had before. That obligation is deep and […] acute.
>   Cynthia Enloe (2008, 65)

True dialogue – difficult dialogue – among those who hold very different positions from each other such as those on the extreme ends of the Six Americas opinion spectrum is a psychologically demanding, time-consuming investment that requires commitment, perseverance, and personal vulnerability (Figure 3). It may take years or even generations to bridge across cultural divides, and among those most set in their beliefs and unwilling to self-examine and reflect, it may not succeed at all. But where there is willingness to interpersonal opening and connection, both personal and sometimes collective benefits can unfold. This has been shown in compelling cases in the past, ones that seemed entirely intractable at the outset, e.g. in the case of abortion, same sex marriage, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, race relations, electoral and educational reforms, and over retaliatory violence against Muslims after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (Gastil, Kahan and Braman 2006; Schirch and Campt 2007; see also http://www.publicconversations.org). The work just referenced offers important insights: for example, the longer the interaction among participants, the more profound and lasting the effect is; dialogue may occur in a number of formats: one-on-one, one-on-many, several-on-several, and several-for-many; and the higher the stakes and the pre-existing animosities, the more helpful it is to involve a neutral and skilled facilitator.

Surely, as in the Climate Conversations described above, specific questions about climate science and action can be addressed among those holding polarized, but not necessarily deeply educated views (e.g., evidence for the reality and human causation of climate change, scientific approaches to studying climate changes and the extent of scientific agreement, the scope and likelihood of future risks, the options to respond to climate change mitigation and adaptation). But the purpose of dialogue aims deeper: it gives people an opportunity to explore their emotional responses to climate change impacts, their feelings and thoughts about response strategies, the pros and cons and trade-offs of taking certain types of actions. It invites people to

self-scrutinize their views and values, find deeper motivations, examine positions and power differences. When it works, people may come to see how their needs can be met in new ways, allowing them to accept a policy; or they may see that their livelihoods are assured or come to better understand how different things they hold dear are protected, allowing them to agree to share the cost or responsibility for a given action. In other instances, the dialogue format allows new or modified proposals to surface that involve elements of both sides' concerns, and thus become acceptable.

Of far greater significance is the potential for dialogue to shift participants' entrenched positions, and particularly their views of each other (Buie 2010; Palmer 2011). As examples on climate and in other polarized issue areas show, dialogue holds the promise to help us transcend what usually keeps us apart, not by giving us a space to learn about the issue at hand, but to learn about those "others" that hold such seemingly unacceptable views. In short, dialogue gives us an opportunity and asks us to become curious about that other. While we rarely listen to others now, dialogue asks us to listen intently to the other while withholding judgment of what is being said. If we allow silence at all in our current debates, it is typically an indication of withdrawal, whereas in true dialogue, silence is a space for ambiguity, thoughtfulness, taking something in deeply, and for letting feelings rise and settle again. Dialogue creates a space for us to become less certain in the comfort of our convictions. If we are used to quickly forming opinions and judgments in most day-to-day exchanges, dialogue asks that we consider the other's perspective, maybe even empathetically understand it, even if we do not accept it as true for ourselves. Typically, we maintain our differences and separation with anger, cynicism, disdain, name-calling and language that further feeds inflamed responses, yet in dialogue we are asked to begin from a place of goodness, truth and respect – allowing a more humanized picture of the other to arise and ourselves to become more vulnerable. It involves recognizing that the thing that inflames us most about the other is most likely our own unconscious, unexplored shadows. Thus, instead of either-or thinking, dialogue makes space for the finer grey shades of our lives and convictions, allowing us to move from defensive posturing to reflective openness and empathy. Ad hominem attacks are set aside for non-violent speech and action. It is from this openness and curiosity about the other that change in thinking, opinion, and attitudes can occur. When we truly commit and engage in the emotional and cognitive work it takes to be in true dialogue, we evolve, grow up, and irrevocably change somehow.

These basic rules of engagement are not unique to climate dialogues (as the examples from different issue areas given above indicate), but common to all attempts to come into true connection through deep conversation (Bohm 1996; Brulle 2010; Isaacs 1999; Lohmann and Til 2011; Palmer 2011; Patterson et al. 2002; Schirch and Campt 2007; Stone, Patton, and Heen 1999).[3] As Gastil, Kahan and Braman (2006) argue, contrary to what many believe, most people

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[3] A number of organizations have begun using dialogue as an engagement format around climate change. See, for example, The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (http://ncdd.org/); Alberta Climate Dialogue (ABCD)

do not want to impose their views on the whole of society, they simply want to align with the "policy, party, or person [who] will best help them make ends meet and keep them reasonably safe" (section 2, paragraph 9). Since most people lack time and experience to become experts on the science and policies related to climate change, they tend to turn to leaders of their cultural group for guidance. In other words, "citizens use cultural affinity as a heuristic, or mental shortcut, for figuring out which politicians and policies are most likely to put food on their tables" (Gastil, Kahan and Braman 2006, section 3, paragraph 1). Dialogue and deliberation counteract the use of such cultural heuristics. When engaged in "earnest face-to-face deliberation under conditions that convey the good faith and trustworthiness of all participants […] individuals form strong emotional bonds" (Gastil, Kahan and Braman 2006, section 3, paragraph 4). "[U]nder these conditions, citizens interested in pragmatic solutions to common problems can achieve a degree of knowledge that relieves them of the need to lean on culture as a heuristic crutch" (Gastil, Kahan and Braman 2006, section 3, paragraph 4).

Slowly, space is made for questions, reflection and learning, which in turn allows for common understanding to emerge and commonalities in visions, goals, values and strategies to be discovered. As Herzig and Chasin (2006) note, in properly guided dialogues even people who "seem intractably opposed, often change the way they view and relate to each other – even as they maintain the commitments that underlie their views" (p. 1). Eventually, the issue at stake and the divide between groups can be reframed.

Importantly, however, dialogue engages not only cognition, but also feelings, spirit and imagination and as such is always more generative than debate or monologue. An effective use of dialogue thus helps to validate emotional needs (such as one's identity) and passions associated with climate change while promoting empathy and understanding for where these come from within oneself and in the other. When we recognize how our own and others' motivations are influencing positions, they can become less fixed and change becomes possible. Finally, dialogue can help stop the mutual demonizing, because those who hold different perspectives get to actually know each other. It is easy to vilify another via the safe distance of virtual space; it is much harder to maintain such prejudice and judgment when the other becomes a real person with a name, a face, and a story. All of us have stories of pride, love, loss and suffering. Dialogue more than other forms of communication can thus foster deep caring and connectedness. We witness each other in our ethical dilemmas, or – as Parker Palmer says – we stand together in the "tragic gap" between how the world is and how it could or should be (Palmer 2011, pp.26, 189-193). It is from that greater familiarity with each other that defenses can come down, alternative ideas and perspectives can be considered, and spaces for joint problem-solving open up.

(http://www.albertaclimatedialogue.ca/) uses well-designed citizen deliberations to shift climate change politics; and a National Climate Conversation series of community events was held in 2009 (www.climateconversation.org).

Conclusion: There Must be More

In this chapter, we argued that the basic attitude that underlies engaging the unheard majority of Americans is the same as that underlying dialogue across deep cultural differences: curiosity. We should expect that there is more to the "other" than we previously knew or assumed: More than the two extreme positions we usually hear in the media, more than ignorance and disengagement among those we tend not to hear at all, and more humanity than we usually presume among those who think so differently from ourselves. None of us are as simple and homogenous in our stances as our loud opinions might make us believe. Clearly, there is a need and possibility of deeper engagement, driven by this curiosity and the desire to discover more about those currently disengaged, unengaged or wildly engaged on the opposite end of the opinion spectrum. More, faster, and louder one-way messaging will only add to polarization rather than reduce it. We therefore suggest that engagement strategies for the Six Americas need to be rethought and resources redirected accordingly. Continued polarization of some and disenfranchisement of most others will result in the further erosion of the civic fabric, and that in turn will make addressing the challenges of climate change only harder. Given existing polarization, political disenfranchisement and dissatisfaction, and the very demanding work of true dialogue many may not be willing to engage in, it may not be possible to completely overcome the cultural divides and bring everyone into a productive conversation. But we do not have to perpetuate conventional communication practices, and circumstances may compel us to change them. The promise and track record of dialogue to engage people, initiated by smart, courageous and trustworthy leaders who are willing to face the adaptive challenge before us, offers a true and promising alternative.

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Textbox: Climate Conversations: Opportunities for Meaningful Engagement

A practical example may help illustrate the possibility for meaningful engagement. One of us (SM) has been involved in a project entitled "Climate Conversations"[4] (held in four U.S. locations in 2012) with individuals who can be described as falling in the Concerned and Cautious categories of the Six Americas. Belonging to these segments was not formally assessed prior to participation, but was judged on the basis of the questions and concerns participants raised during the events (e.g., few if any were truly convinced climate change is happening, but had noticed changes; the human causation was questioned; people generally knew very little about climate change science or of the magnitude of the scientific consensus). Participants were recruited through The Keystone Center (www.keystone.org), typically with the help of local partners. In a "World Café" style conversation with about 40-50 participants per event (Hurley and Brown, 2009; The World Café, 2008), attendees were neither already persuaded of climate change's importance or urgency nor did they think of it as a political Trojan horse, hoax or conspiracy. Attention was paid to achieving gender, racial, professional and sectoral diversity in the conversations (e.g., by including participants from local governments, the military, garden clubs, farmers, clergy, private firms). Participants came out of curiosity or because of rising concerns over extreme events; some came because a trusted source convinced them to join, while others saw an opportunity to participate in a conversation they might not otherwise get to have. A small number of experts were on hand to answer questions and relate some basic scientific information about historical and projected climatic changes in the region. This helped place people's tacit experience into a broader, credible context, and as such was validating to participants. Their questions fell into a number of categories – and they were deeply appreciative that they could ask them and that answers were given in an open, inviting and non-judgmental environment:

- *Problem existence*: Is global climate change happening or not (sometimes hinging on different lines of evidence or counter-intuitive weather events that confused people);
- *Causation/attribution*: Is climate change caused by human action or not (maybe the most contested aspect in discussion);
- *Climate models*: How sophisticated, reliable, and thus believable are existing global climate models?;
- *Degree of danger*: Are the risks from climate change really that significant, dangerous, and urgent – or not?;
- *Scientific consensus*: Do climate scientists actually agree that climate change is happening, dangerous, and human-caused?;
- *Scientific uncertainty*: How much uncertainty is there in projecting future climate changes and related impacts and does it justify action or delay (or inaction)?;

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[4] See https://www.keystone.org/policy-initiatives-center-for-science-a-public-policy/environment/climate-conversations.html

- *Cost*: Isn't it too expensive to national or local economies to take mitigation or proactive adaptation actions?; and
- *Policy alternatives*: What are the possible interventions and are they really acceptable (due to, for example, the degree of government involvement, the locus of control, the manner of implementation, or the risks and benefits involved in alternative approaches)?

It is precisely these questions that are hotly debated by pundits and echoed in the media, but many in the broader public (just like the participants in the Climate Conversations) have not had or not taken the opportunity to deeply examine relevant information and make up their own minds.[5]

Along with learning about these issues from the experts present, conversation participants were glad to be able to voice their concerns and unease about climate extremes and changes observed, and for the connections they could make with others in their region. They asked for credible sources to learn more, wanted to stay connected with each other beyond the event, and were eager to discuss possible mitigation and adaptation strategies. As is common for conversations among non-experts, these questions were not particularly technical, but reflected concerns over costs and more generally participants' values such as "doing our part," "responsibility" and "stewardship." Participants also wanted to know how to "talk about climate change without mentioning climate change" – clear indications of the frustration they shared about the loaded term and a strong desire to find ways to enact the right responses regardless (see also Furth and Gantwerk 2013). Maybe most importantly, participants expressed a hunger to have a "real" conversation about the issue (see project Facebook page at the above link). The facilitated conversation events lasted about four hours, were conducted during the work day, and participants lingered long after the official adjournment.

The experience highlights some important insights about the opportunities and challenges of attempting to reach those currently less involved in the climate debate. First, the greatest challenge was to bring people to the event. Significant effort was required to make the issue resonant in locally relevant ways and non-inflammatory language, typically by a locally trusted partner who was not perceived as having a particular agenda. Logistical challenges can make participation difficult as well (e.g., not getting time away from work or family) even though travel support and stipends were offered. Second, at least with those in the population that lean

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[5] The nature of the media industry is a key factor in the state of affairs. Most mainstream media outlets are for-profit businesses invested in finding news that sells. One implication of that vested interest is that they report on what they believe the public is most interested in (e.g., the immediate and tangible troubles of the economy), probably one of the key reasons why overall coverage on climate change in mainstream media has actually declined in recent years (Boykoff 2012; Brulle, Carmichael and Jenkins 2012). Another implication of the for-profit nature of the media is that they look for the extremes, sensational, and controversial. Apart from weather extremes, controversy is the most interesting aspect of climate change to report on. As long as the two extreme ends of the opinion spectrum are slinging mud at each other, that battle is more newsworthy than the incremental progress of science or of climate change.

toward accepting climate change's reality and seriousness, there is potential to have a very engaged, meaningful conversation. Once involved in dialogue, people pay attention and process information carefully. They get the questions addressed they most care about, and walk away feeling more educated and empowered, particularly through the connections they made with others. Third, the importance of moving quickly from the "problem" to "solutions" cannot be overstated. This became quickly apparent in the Climate Conversations and has been documented in countless studies (e.g., Dietz 2013; Gifford 2011; Lorenzoni, Nicholson-Cole and Whitmarsh, 2007; Swim et al. 2011; Weber 2011). It suggests that the Four Americas may well be "tuning out" because it is psychologically challenging to stay in a conversation about an increasingly worrisome problem, when solutions seem ineffectual, out of reach, or infeasible and when leadership is elusive.

This then points to the need for scaling up such conversations, i.e., spreading them across the country. While challenging, it is not impossible to reach far more people with such events, as has been demonstrated elsewhere (e.g., Involve 2008; Lehr et al. 2003; Tan and Brown 2005). Many hundreds of individuals were involved in such a deliberative process in Texas, which ultimately led to greater understanding of the opportunities and challenges around wind energy, strong support for wind power, and providing the needed public signal to move state policy forward which, in turn, contributed to Texas becoming a leading developer of wind energy in the U.S. (Lehr et al. 2003).