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Summary

Despite broad scientific consensus on the existence and dangers of anthropogenic climate change, the United States – the largest historical emitter of the greenhouse gases, which have accelerated climate change in the past century (Baumert et al. 2005) – and the global United Nations institutions tasked with protecting the environment have been unable to effectively address an environmental crisis, which would seem to threaten humankind’s very survival. Some argue that *environmental crisis fatigue* (Williams 2002: 500) has led to apathy and inaction; others argue that a relentless campaign to breed uncertainty about climate change has undermined public trust in science; while others argue that the economic downturn has pushed climate change into the background. Yet, none of these arguments are supported by empirical evidence.

Prior environmental crises, such as the hole in the ozone layer and acid rain, have been effectively addressed in the past within a much shorter time frame from discovery to solution. Despite sustained, well-funded ‘denier’ campaigns, nearly three-quarters of Americans still see scientists – and science related organizations – as the most trusted sources of information about global warming. Yet, in the midst of the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression, a solid majority of Americans remain committed to addressing climate change (Yale Project on Climate Change 2010). In November 2010, California voters, amidst a dismal economy and high unemployment, soundly rejected a measure, which would have halted the implementation of its landmark Global Warming Law (AB32). Since California’s environmental laws are typically harbingers of national laws¹, this vote was largely seen as a litmus test for public support of national climate law, even in a bad economy. Furthermore, two-thirds of Californians con-

¹ For example, air pollution (California Clean Air Act of 1988 led to the federal Clean Air Act amendments of 1990), fuel standards/air pollution (Motor Vehicle Air Pollution Control Act amendment to the Clean Air Act 1970 and later California’s Motor Vehicle Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards of 2005 led to federal changes to standards in 2009), and clean water laws (Porter–Cologne Act of 1970 was the model for the federal Clean Water Act).

tinue to support AB32, and sixty percent support a carbon tax² (Public Policy Institute of California 2010), further debunking the excuses of apathy and lack of salience. Why, despite broad public consensus on the science, risks, and policy to address climate change, has it not been effectively addressed? The research presented herein sought answers to two primary questions:

- I. What does the development of and intense public interest around anthropogenic climate change say about the United States? (Climate Change as Metaphor)
- II. How might this interest catalyze substantive change in the United States? (Climate Change as Catalyst)

In his work on environmental political discourse analysis, Hajer (2006: 6) found: “The analysis of discursive constructions such as narratives, story lines or metaphors is especially powerful when done in the context of the study of the social–historical conditions in which the statements were produced and received”. Thus, answers to my first research question was sought from an exploration of the historical development in the United States of the national, socio–cultural, and religious discourses of anthropogenic climate change. My research, and the resulting dissertation presented herein, first looks at how notions of culture, universalism, power, and history shape worldviews³, which, in turn, construct the political discourse of environmental issues and solutions.

To answer my second research question, I looked at the construction and solutions offered by alternative worldview and explored parallels between

² A tax (instead of a carbon unit) would be administered through the government instead of traded in a carbon market.

³ In this dissertation, I use the terms ‘paradigm’ and ‘worldview’ interchangeably as the focus of study. Even Pirages and Ehrlich themselves, who are widely known for their work on paradigms, define a paradigm as “the collection of norms, beliefs, values, habits...that form (a) world view” (1974: 43). Both because paradigm is a widely overused term, and because I focus on the body of research on worldviews more common in cultural studies (Hall 1976, Singer 1987), socio–biology (Clark 2002, Wilson 1975, 1978), philosophy (Næss 1973), and ecology (Cramer 1998, Devall & Sessions 1985), I will use the term worldview more often throughout this dissertation. The *dominant social paradigm* identified by Pirages and Ehrlich (1974) mirrors the ideas of the dominant worldview outlined by Devall and Sessions (1985) and Cramer (1998), while the *new environmental paradigm* (Dunlap et al. 2000, Dunlap & Van Liere 1978) mirrors that of the deep ecology worldview (Cramer 1998, Devall & Sessions 1985).

it and the universal quests of humankind identified by scholars of anthropology (Boas 1911 (1938), Douglas and Wildavsky 1982, LeVine and Campbell 1971/1972, Mead 1956, 1970, Textor 1967), comparative literature and religion (Campbell 1949, 1988, Smith 1958), psychology (LeVine and Campbell 1971/1972), political science (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982), and biology (Clark 2002, Wilson 1978, 1984, 1999). Finally, I looked at the type of policies this alternative worldview may inspire and how they might engage citizens of the United States in addressing climate change.

To go beyond the current discourse analysis of climate change as a scientific or social phenomena, my academic inquiry relied upon Schmitt's (2005: 358, 374) *Systematic Metaphor Analysis*, which creates a "procedure for the reconstruction of metaphorical concepts" for researchers with knowledge and experience in the cultural context. My *cultural metaphorical analysis* followed the iterative, heuristic methodology defined by Motterlini (2002) – initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, creative synthesis, and validation – to uncover the deep frames connecting discourses and the dominant worldviews that inform these deep frames. Climate change was analyzed both as metaphor – for the dominant social paradigm – and potential catalyst to make a shift towards an insurgent paradigm.

My research led me to conclude that, in contrast to prior environmental crises, climate change is vastly more complex and echoes an ages-old prophesy of climate catastrophe. It is not a stand-alone environmental issue but one tied – discursively and ecologically – to other social and environmental concerns. It has been dramatized and localized by global media focused on profit-making sensationalism. Most importantly, though, climate change has proven itself unsolvable within the same western *dominant social paradigm* (Pirages & Ehrlich 1974: 43) of centralized, free market based technology, decision making, and public policy instruments, which addressed prior environmental crises. The inability of this paradigm to address climate change – especially in light of a confluence of crises in the economy, food, health, and energy in the past few years – has allowed a different worldview, an *insurgent discourse* (Cox 2010: 64) or *new environmental paradigm* (Dunlap et al. 2000, Dunlap & Van Liere 1978) to gain credibility. The longer the *dominant social paradigm* is seen as incapable, the longer this insurgent paradigm has had to make a case (van Ginneken 2003). That this new paradigm also answers universal quests for meaning, purpose, nature, and community makes it that much more potent. The primary lessons learned along this inquiry were:

- I. The culturally-relative *dominant western worldview* (Devall & Sessions 1985, Cramer 1998) or *dominant social paradigm* (Pirages & Ehrlich 1974) has been universalized by linking truly universal values, such as freedom, democracy, and peace, with very western goals of free market capitalism and economic growth, individualism as freedom, and happiness as the pursuit of material wealth (Korton 1995, Rothkopf 1997, Soros 1998, Tomlinson 1991) – and institutionalized within international organizations, such as the World Bank, IMF, WTO, OECD, and sections of the United Nations (Brecher & Costello 1994, Godden 2000, Kluckhohn 1950, Parsons & Smelser 1956).
- II. This dominant, institutionalized western worldview led to anthropogenic climate change, and a host of auxiliary crises, and how the solutions for it continue to be framed within the same worldview.
- III. Despite massive efforts to the contrary, a marginalized, yet millennia-old Gaian worldview has survived because its core tenets mirror the universal quests of humankind for meaning, purpose, community, and contact with nature.
- IV. Climate change has become a metaphor for the failure of the dominant western worldview to address the social and environmental issues identified herein and how this failure – along with a growing awareness that something is just not right in our western system – is catalyzing social change towards a Gaian worldview, which seeks to offer fundamentally different alternatives.

Ultimately, these findings are not restricted to the issue of climate change. Climate change offers a richly illustrative case study of how the current dominant social paradigm shapes and limits public debate and the solutions considered in order to address global crises and how insurgent paradigms, in turn, gain credibility so long that the dominant paradigm is unable to address a crises. Reconciling what appears to be two contradictory paradigms – or worldviews – lies, not in simply shifting the surface frames of their associated lifestyles⁴, but in breaching the chasm between the ingrained beliefs which underlie them.

⁴ Lakoff (2006a) distinguishes between surface frames, which are often associated with marketing spin, and *deep frames*, the “basic frames that define a moral or philosophical worldview,” which can enable major societal change.