

Boston College

Environmental Studies Senior Seminar



Communicating Climate Change to Religious Audiences

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I. Abstract

In this research we discover religious avenues of discussion on the topic of climate change. Within the topic of religion, we focused on creating specific arguments that would pertain to Catholic liberals, moderates, and conservatives. In order to do this, we utilized Jonathon Haidt's research in *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* to establish how each Catholic subgroup made decisions in their daily lives based off of his Moral Foundations Theory. We then scoured religious documents, such as Pope Francis' encyclical, for ecotheology that resonates with the moral foundations of each subgroup. After collecting this research, we map out which types of environmental religious rhetoric would best speak to the moral foundations of each subgroup, in order to better convince them of the importance of environmental action. Our overall goal was to establish a tool that can be used practically to attract the disinterested or the disengaged into participating in climate change initiatives.

Keywords: Climate, Communication, Morality, Catholicism, Ecotheology, Haidt

II. Introduction

In recent years, creating discussion around the topic of climate change has become increasingly polarized. Leftists are promoting stricter government regulations, while the right is protesting them. As parties have only become more stubborn and less interested in hearing the opposing argument, this debate has turned into a stalemate. Locked into their views and dismissive of one another, communication has been skewed, misinterpreted and overall ineffective. Regardless, the science is in and climate change is real. For activists, the objective has shifted; it is no longer about proving climate change, but rather “how information is interpreted [and] what meaning it holds for people” (Hall 26). Individuals, think tanks, corporations, political parties and other groups must disengage from the ideological warfare at hand and address the threat that it poses to all of humankind. According to a study by Pew Research Center, 59% of Americans recognize that climate change will harm them and 53% want legislation passed that will protect them from this harm, as shown in Figure 1A and Figure 1B. As activists, environmentalists and citizens of the Earth, there are two questions to address: who opposes climate change and how can their positions be changed?

In particular, the Catholic audience presents an opportune population to explore climate change with. While 83% of the population identifies as Christian and 22% identifies as Catholic, there is much to gain from focusing on the connection between religion and the environment (Langer). Fundamentally, Catholicism speaks to basic humanity: caring for both one another and the Lord’s creation, our planet. There are many environmental avenues that can be properly addressed through a Catholic lens, one of the most pertinent to our political climate being the refugee crisis. The notion of protecting the weak, sheltering the abandoned and sharing resources with those in need resonates both catholically and environmentally. The leader of the Catholic

church, Pope Francis, has even spoken to how Catholicism can be a powerful tool in addressing climate change. As stated in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, “science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both” (Francis 45). Ultimately, the appeal to religion presents many avenues that can properly communicate and reach audiences that are not yet convinced by the growing amount of data that supports the realities of climate change.

In the United States, believing in climate change is scattered. The different ethical perspectives that hinder climate change belief vary, ranging from liberal to conservative. When it comes to communicating climate change, the believers and nonbelievers need to be identified and properly targeted. In a study conducted by the Yale program Climate Change Communication and The George Mason University’s Center for Climate Change Communication, *Faith Morality and the Environment: Portraits of Global Warming’s Six Americas*, the authors provide its readers with a breakdown of six attitudes that represents the various perspectives of the American perception on climate change (see Figure 2). This analysis helps to identify believers from nonbelievers, their moral foundations and political orientations, all of which will be crucial in prescribing effective communication tactics. In our research, we will use these “six audience segments” that are referenced, in conjunction with Jonathan Haidt’s *The Righteous Mind*. Haidt’s research, which focuses on the Moral Foundation Theory and its connection to human behavior, will help us target the moral compass of each audience and the most effective way to communicate to each. In using these references, we will isolate the groups that have a strong connection with Catholicism and use religious rhetoric, drawing from religious texts, such as the Bible, *Laudato Si*, and writings from the saints to target their morals. In doing

so, our goal is to connect the Catholic community to environmentalism and inspire action against climate change.

III. Background

Climate change is an overarching problem that is innately complex. Its fundamentals are rooted in politics, economics, sociology and many other sectors of society. This interconnectedness is both crucial and limiting to the communication of climate change. Its importance lies within being able to attract any type of audience; everyone can find a way to connect with environmental concerns. In our current society, it is apparent, and possibly more common, that these connections can also become barriers. Depending on a group's stance or opinion, these common interests can function in dividing groups, ideologies, individuals and priorities. When appealing to a mass audience, it is important to focus on this interconnectedness, rather than the divergence that is otherwise created. Climate change forces us to connect through “[inviting] us to consider important questions about how societies work and the kinds of relationships that exist between various actors in these complex systems” (Brown, Koteyko, Nerich 98). Religion, and in this context Catholicism, functions on a similar wavelength; its basic principles urge its followers to understand others, their needs, and desires. Certain Catholic axioms such as “owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law” promote values that carry over into how many people see and interact with the world, and more importantly each other (Catholic Bible Association, Romans 13:8). Both concentrations, climate change and religion, compose the actions and beliefs that dictate many aspects of our everyday lives. Incidentally, studying climate change through a religious lens requires the cooperation of science and religion, which is certainly no simple task. In combining these two large subjects, it is important to establish an understanding of how

anthropogenic climate change has been communicated in the past both scientifically and theologically.

The communication of climate change has certainly shifted as scientific research shows more certainty in the data and less action by the public. In the beginning, much of the communication that spoke to climate change was coming directly from the scientists in the form of dense scientific research. Susan Moser speaks to this in her essay when she notes that “much of the early communication was relatively narrowly focused on scientific findings and synthesis reports sometimes occasioned by particularly extreme events, sometimes by high-level conferences or policy meetings” (32). Due to the fact that climate change was moving at a slower pace, the method most commonly utilized was providing facts and the data, hoping to appeal to the people’s common sense. In the 1990s, a more serious conversation began on whether or not global warming was happening and what its effects were. Statistical data shows that concern about global climate change affecting one’s daily life in the United States rose from around 25% in 1997 to 34% by the early 2000s, as shown in Figure 3 (Stern, Weber 318). This number would continue increasing until 2008 when it began to drop again, which will be further addressed when discussing where climate change communication has fallen short. However, as support began to align in the 1990s, climate change became an increasingly discussed topic as the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the US Global Change Research Program (GCRP) pushed it to the forefront of many agendas. These organizations prioritized communicating the scientific evidence of climate change not “through panels of scientists offering an array of opinions,” but “through a collective and consensus-based voice”; in doing so, the priority became making “climate change science actionable for policy-makers” (Russill 33). As the 2000s approached, this method of communicating climate change proved to

be ineffective. It was not creating necessary changes or inspiring elected officials to slow warming. In addition to this, it also failed to address the many individuals, especially Americans, to whom many of these problems were attributed.

Entering the 2000s, it was clear that the method of climate change communication needed to be adjusted in order to be properly conveyed and understood. Luckily, during this time, the Internet and other forms of mass media were thriving, which led to many mediums through which to convey the message. For many Americans “exposure to “climate change” had been almost entirely indirect, mediated by news coverage, Internet postings, informal conversations, and documentaries and video footage of events in distant regions (such as melting glaciers in Greenland) that describe these events in relation to climate change” (Stern, Weber 320). While many believe that this increase has aided the discussion of climate change, the dissemination of information produced two major consequences. First, many opinions, especially erroneous ones that were not based in fact, were now more accessible than ever. Many believe that this emergence of fake news muddled the conversation on the true changes that our planet was experiencing. Second, this increase in connection made it increasingly easy for people to only discuss the matter amongst those of the same “socioeconomic and attitudinal background”, otherwise known as homophily (Moser 42). This makes it very difficult to engage “tight-knit social groups with distinctly different views”, where information that may go against their adopted and accepted worldviews (Moser 42). While these were two negative consequences, the most important thing at the time was that information was becoming accessible to the people.

Weather patterns also played a role in this. In 2005, one of the strongest hurricanes in United States history, Hurricane Katrina, hit New Orleans. Strong storms such as this, began to demonstrate to the people that it was possible that the warming climate was drastically altering

our environment. Hurricane Katrina provided one of many steps forward that carried climate change communication from the “specialist journals” to “mainstream discourse and public debate” (Russill 35). Shortly after Hurricane Katrina, Al Gore, a staunch supporter of environmental regulation, released his environmental documentary named *An Inconvenient Truth*. This film helped further place climate change in the public spotlight. With environmental concerns on the forefront of many agendas, it seemed as though this new communication method worked highly effectively. Many saw these as “promising avenues for increasing communication” and a “means to fulfill knowledge needs, enhance learning, and overcome societal divisions and disengagement” (Moser 42). The switch from a science-driven method of communication to an action-drive method had drastic impacts on how climate change information was received. It seemed as if the real change that many early communicators had attempted to achieve would finally prevail. With the increase accessible data and the reinforcement strong weather patterns, the future looked bright. However, this success would be short-lived due to a series of factors that hinder communication to the public in years to come.

The fundamental difference from the way climate change was communicated in the 1990s into the 2000s lied within the messenger, especially in the field of climate change news. This was the first factor that would come to slow the progress that climate change communication had made. As television evolved and entertainment took over, accurate descriptions of the planet would be increasingly skewed and distorted. In the entertainment industry, portraying an “accurate description of the world is only one objective of an enterprise”, in addition to the main goal to “maximize audience share and conform to the interests or values of the media outlet owners and advertisers” and viewers (Stern, Weber 320). Accordingly, scientific information and climate change news were not the forefront of the entertainment

industry. Rather, more tragic, crude and exciting stories that adhere to the public desire for drama and action took over most programming, as they maintained high ratings and lucrative audience numbers. Unfortunately for the communication of climate change, the public does not desire its contents. While climate change has spurs of enticing news, such as natural disasters, it is ultimately a slow process that fails to provoke dramatic conflicts that captivates an audience. Singular storms such as Hurricane Katrina have this impact, but once the storm has receded and the drama subsides, people go back to their normal news stories. Unfortunately, headlines that quantify greenhouses gases and their effects on biodiversity and carbon levels of the Earth do not provoke the same interest. Not much longer after this, the financial crisis of 2008 would provide the second important factor in hindering climate communication due to its consequently rearrangement of both government and media agendas. In order to bring back jobs to America and remedy the economic crisis, ideas of “shopping our way to safety” floated around, putting environmentalism on the backburner in place of the economy (Dalby, O’Lear 3). At the time, the government was primarily concerned with bringing the economy out of the danger zone, while the media saw the financial troubles as a dramas that would stimulate viewership. One can see how many of these same things take place today, as news organizations broadcast dramatic conflicts from Syria to North Korea rather than the Paris Agreement or the destruction of the Great Barrier Reef. These events show *how* the conversation on climate change began to wane, but it only shows part of the story on *why* the public stopped engagingly receiving the information.

The public stopped being as receptive to climate change communication because the message, while it was being projected in a more practical way, was not projected the most effective way. Climate change simply wasn’t as “salacious” as many other topics, such as the

Iraq War or gang violence. As previously stated, climate change is a very slow process that takes place over long periods of time. This simply did not resonate with the media-consuming public, who thrive off of short-attention-spanned drama that takes place on major news channels and websites. Due to the “the very nature of the problem combined with the nature of human behavior,” society was not resonating with climate change because it did not have the same emotion that many other stories do (Dilling, Moser 34). People like definitive answers, beginning and ends, and calculated outcomes. Climate change does not provide this information. Being that its processes are still in motion and its repercussions are not obvious yet, “our current society, and societal decision making work against action” by not stimulating the public into acting (Dilling, Moser 34). While the speed of climate change plays a huge role in society’s inaction, its lack of immediacy is also a huge obstacle. Many of the negative effects of climate change do not occur in the backyards of first world nations. This makes it difficult for citizens to associate causation established between environmental degradation and consequence. More commonly, this has been referred to as the “out of sight, out of mind” mentality. While it is difficult to grasp many of the environmental problems that are occurring at a slow pace or in other countries, it is also hard to see the environmental changes that *are* taking place in our own backyards. Even if there are consequences that present themselves in our own environments, these effects are often invisible. Carbon dioxide is not tangible or visible, neither is ozone, microbacteria in water pollution, CFCs or methane. If these toxic pollutants were bright red as they were seeping from farms, cars, boats, planes and factories, people would be alarmed, and probably scared. However, these elements are gases and thus cannot be pointed out, seen or observed by the human eye. When the effects go unseen, the public does not fully understand the magnitude of the problem or the “direct and immediate health implications” posed by a changing climate (Moser 33). Due to the

combination of these two issues, the urgency of climate change simply did not hit close enough to home for the American people.

These are not the only reasons that the public lost interest in climate change, since other factors like the content of the messages, also played a role in driving the public away. When climate change issues did make it onto the agenda of major media outlets, the “gloom and doom” narrative was highly stressed in order to add the dramatic element that climate change lacked. Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus provide a critical example of why fear does not work when they note how, “Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream” speech is famous because it put forward an inspiring, positive vision that carried a critique of the current moment within it. They ask the reader to consider how history would have turned out had King given an "I have a nightmare" speech instead” (157). This notion of communication by inducing fear would not have, and still does not, resonate with an audience. While it may seem like the most rational way to approach the message, highlighting the consequences and “cautionary tales and narratives of eco-apocalypse” are more likely to “provoke fatalism, conservatism, and survivalism among voters” rather than the “the rational embrace of environmental policies” and other action against climate change (Hall 27). This fatalistic idea of climate change consequently forces people to cling to their traditional values which only makes the discussion more polarizing, individuals harder to reach and communication more difficult to facilitate. This is apparent in our current society, where this trend is illustrated by deeply ingrained divisions on the perception of climate change.

‘Gloom and doom’ was only one part of the problem when grappling with the content concerning climate change. The other part speaks to the times that climate change has made it on the news. Other than these moments being far and few between, they were framed in a highly

controversial manner in order to increase the drama of the programming. It is fairly well known now that 97% of scientists agree that climate change is occurring, but if one were to watch the news it would not appear this way. Equal time is given to climate deniers as well as climate activists in an attempt to stimulate a suspenseful conflict. Susanne Moser and Lisa Dilling speak to the effects that providing equal airtime may promote when they note that,

“An important hurdle, of course, is the media, which tends to portray the climate change issue as one of large uncertainty, filled with competing claims and intense debate within the scientific community. The common practice of giving equal time to unequal sides is highly misleading. “Balancing” the scientific consensus with the voices of a comparatively tiny number of contrarians overstates the actual degree of disagreement. This reinforces the public’s perception of uncertainty and adds to confusion” (36).

Equal airtime stimulates skepticism because it creates an issue out of something that many recognize as already being proven. It feeds into this idea that climate change is not real, or that scientists are split on their beliefs, when in reality that is hardly the case. Unfortunately, many of the few owners of these large media conglomerates, and the politicians they show, are all highly invested in the fossil fuel industry, meaning a large amount of their business or political interests thrive off the public’s inability to deny climate change, entertain the fossil fuel industry and misunderstand the facts. This flood of misinformation plays into another reason that the public has not been receptive to the climate change message. On television, whether a political debate, news show or other informational segment, the facts being communicated never seem to be verified. The current political climate operates in a manner where “no lie is too extreme to be published, aired, and repeated, with little or no repercussion for its perpetrator” (Eubanks 9). This makes the debate “look very much like a he said, she said dispute” that’s not just about “what’s correct and what’s not,” but also “what is exaggerated and what is not” (Eubanks 24). With this trend taking over television, it has become extremely difficult for audiences to decipher

what is true, what is exaggerated and what is completely false. This has a huge effect on the ability to communicate climate change, as its deniers can undermine the power of scientific evidence, news and reporting that can be paired the other alternative fact, unreliable information jargon that is spewed on television. It also puts the credibility of news sources, which many hold to be telling the truth, in jeopardy.

During this time of increasing climate skepticism, the Catholic Church has an increasingly significant role in advocating for climate change action. Especially with its stable credulity, reputation and most sacred text, The Bible. The Bible makes many references to protecting God's creation, but these messages seem to be lost on the public, who focus on other religion issues like pro-life versus pro-creation. Regardless of this, the Church has made some commentary on the degradation of the environment in the modern era, such as Saint John Paul II stating, "human beings frequently seem to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption" (Pope Francis 5). This commentary though initially limited, has been aided by present dialogue from many Catholic figures, resulting in the idea that the Catholic Church does believe in anthropogenic climate change. The Church's role has been amplified as Pope Francis, a Jesuit who studied chemistry in years past, advocates strongly for countries of the world to come together in order to protect God's creation. His encyclical, entitled *Laudato Si*, would come to add a much needed and refreshing element to the conversation of climate change and has thus played a large role in how we conducted our research for communicating climate change to religious audiences. Pope Francis has recognized that "the rich heritage of Christian spirituality, the fruit of twenty centuries of personal and communal experience, has a precious contribution to make to the renewal of humanity" that modern environmentalism promotes (Pope Francis 157-158). Religion in previous years did not

presented this avenue of discussion. Instead, it resisted and minimized such exploration, which is why its current existence is extremely promising for amplifying the communication on climate change today.

All of this is to say that the American public is at a point where they do not know what to believe about climate change anymore. They have been bombarded with the “doom and gloom” message that we are all going to die from global warming as well as witnessing skeptics say that climate change is one big hoax. While past conversations tried to play into the public’s ability to rationalize the facts and come to their own conclusions, it has been established that this simply does not work. Likewise, the fear-based method also has proven ineffective. As a result, there is also much skepticism in the ways that news organizations and conservative politicians have countered the message. Combating this is certainly no simple task, but Catholicism's increasing role in the discussion provides hope that many of these skeptics, both liberal and conservative, can still be reached and moved by how climate change is currently affecting our world. Currently, the people are not engaged, motivated or inspired by the discussion, and so, it is time for a new method of communication that can reach these people and bring them back into the conversation.

IV. Objective

This research, coupled with recommendations and data, aspires to function as a tool for activists seeking to convert the beliefs of the disengaged, doubtful or dismissive Catholic audience in climate change. The results and recommendations can be geared towards any conservative, moderate or liberal member of the Catholic or Christian community. In doing so, we hope to inspire others to look into eco-theological rhetoric as a method for convincing religious audiences to take a stand on climate change. Environmentalism, activism and science are not

exclusive to liberals and can be accessed by anyone willing to find a connection to a greater moral cause. In sum, this research is a starting point for exploring how climate change can be renegotiated to persuasively engage religious audiences.

V. Key Terms

In the efforts to maintain a consistent and universal tool, we have defined key terms that will be referred to frequently throughout our research:

Politically liberal:

1. A political theory founded on the natural goodness of humans and the autonomy of the individual and favoring civil and political liberties, government by law with the consent of the governed, and protection from arbitrary authority (American Heritage)

Politically moderate:

1. Tend to see both sides of complex issues (Ball)
2. 40 percent of moderates consider themselves Democrats, while just 21 percent are Republicans (Ball)
3. Moderates worry about structural obstacles to the American dream, but they don't see themselves as victims (Ball)

Politically conservative:

1. The inclination, especially in politics, to maintain the existing or traditional order (American Heritage).
2. A political philosophy or attitude that emphasizes respect for traditional institutions and opposes the attempt to achieve social change through legislation or publicly funded programs (American Heritage)

Alarmed: very certain global warming is happening, understand that it is human-caused and harmful, and strongly support societal action to reduce the threat. They discuss the issue more often, seek more information about it, and are more likely to act as global warming opinion leaders than the other segments.

Concerned: moderately certain that global warming is happening, harmful and human-caused; they tend to view global warming as a threat to other nations and future generations, but not as a personal threat or a threat to their own community. They support societal action on climate change, but are unlikely to have engaged in political activism

Cautious: likely to believe that climate change is real, but they aren't certain, and many are uncertain about the cause. They are less worried than the Concerned, and view global warming as a distant threat, if any. They have given little thought to the issue and are unlikely to have strongly held opinions about what should be done to address it

Disengaged: the smallest segment of the U.S. population. They have given the issue of global warming little to no thought. They have no strongly held beliefs about global warming, know little about it, and do not view it as having any personal relevance

Doubtful: are uncertain whether global warming is occurring or not, but believe that if it is happening, it is attributable to natural causes, not human activities. They tend to be politically conservative and to regard global warming as having little to no personal relevance

Dismissive: certain that global warming is not happening. Many regard the issue as a hoax and are strongly opposed to action to reduce the threat

VI. Data

Figure 1A

CLIMATE, Change

Question: How concerned are you, if at all, that global climate change will harm you personally at some point in your lifetime? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned or not at all concerned?

Source: Pew Research Center

Date: Nov. 5, 2015

Results:

	very	some- what	not too	not at all
United States	30%	29%	17%	24%
Canada	27	37	21	14
France	35	44	13	8
Germany	18	42	25	15
Italy	37	44	14	4
Poland	15	51	19	8
Spain	36	35	18	10
United Kingdom	19	27	29	23
Russia	26	42	18	6
Ukraine	22	41	26	5

Field Date - Spring 2015

Figure 1B

CLIMATE, Change

Question: Do you want Congress to pass legislation to fight climate change?

Source: Economist/ YouGov

Date: Sep. 16, 2015

Results:

yes	53%
no	27
not sure	20

Field Date - Sep 11-15, 2015

Universe: Country: United States

Method: online

Sample Size: 2000

Contact Information: YouGov Polimetrix

285 Hamilton Avenue

Suite 200

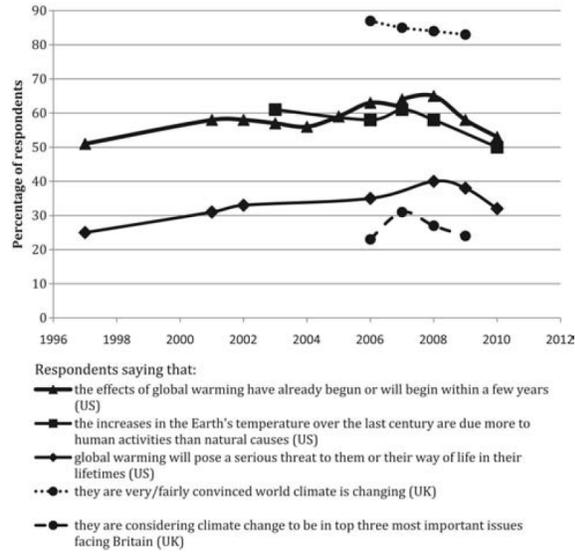
Palo Alto, CA 94301

(650) 462-8000

fax (650) 462-8422

Figure 2

Percentages of American (Solid Lines) and British (Dashed Lines) Survey Respondents Endorsing Various Statements About Global Climate Change



Note. Data for American respondents are from nationally representative Gallup polls taken between 1997 and 2010. Data for United Kingdom (UK) respondents are from nationally representative National Statistics Opinions Surveys taken between 2006 and 2009.

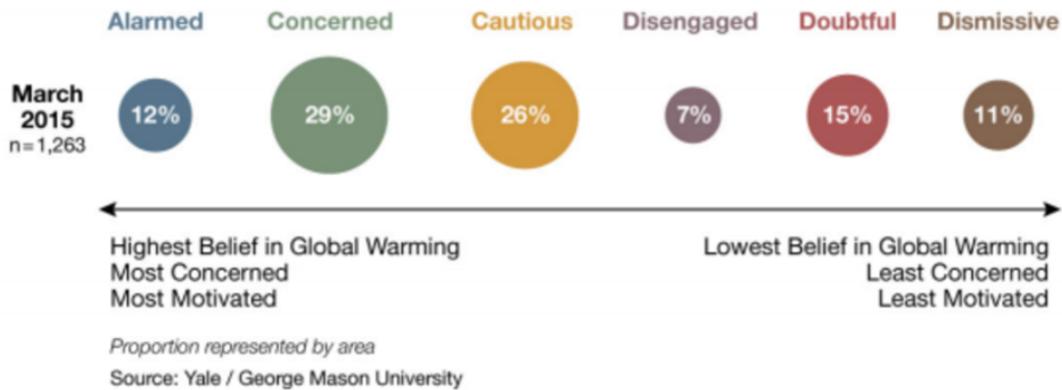


Figure 3

Figure 4

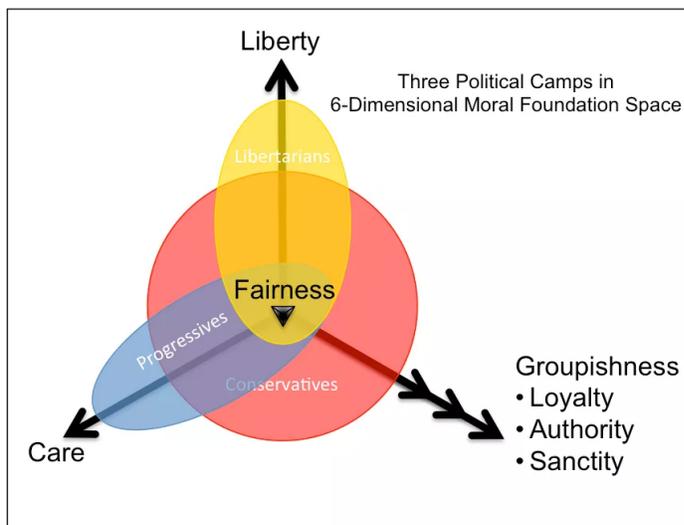
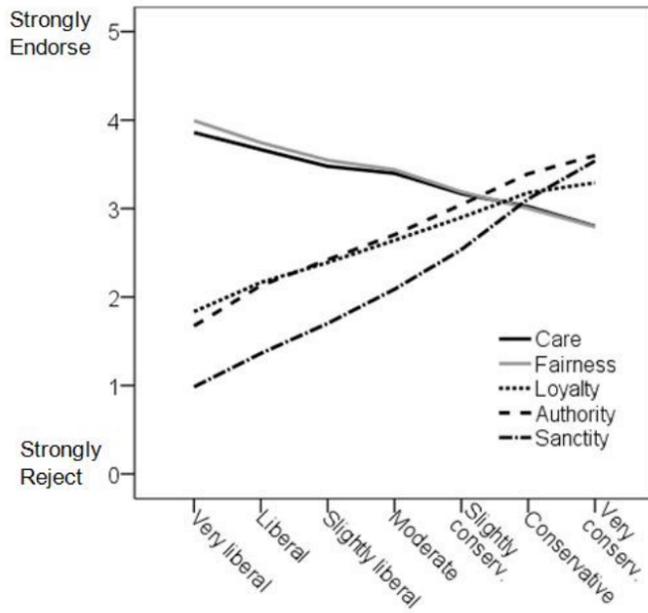


Figure 5

VII. Methods

Morality plays a large role in how people go about making decisions, especially when it comes to political ideologies. Once people join a certain political team, they become even more ensnared in the moral matrix identity of that group. Because of this, it becomes very difficult to have a constructive argument about polarizing topics, especially climate change. Our arguments, then, were established by analyzing the Moral Foundations Theory laid out in Jonathan Haidt's book, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. In referring to Haidt we could better understand the decision-making process of each political ideology. After analyzing the moral matrices of the three audiences we are studying (conservative, moderate, liberal), we utilized Catholic teachings found in the Bible, Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si*, and articles from prominent Catholic scholars. With these, we combined what we knew resonated with each group's morality from Haidt and the religious teachings that were associated with that morality to create arguments that would encourage Catholics within each group to support climate change initiatives. Haidt's six moral foundations that we used to create our arguments include the care/harm foundation, fairness/cheating foundation, the loyalty/betrayal foundation, the authority/subversion foundation, the sanctity/degradation foundation, and the liberty/oppression foundation. The moral matrices of liberals rely predominantly upon the care/harm foundation, the liberty/oppression foundation, and fairness/cheating foundation. While the moral matrices of conservatives utilize a much more well rounded view of morality by focusing on all six: care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation, and liberty/oppression, but placing fairness, care and authority as the highest priorities. The value that each group places on each foundation, ranging from liberals to moderates and into conservatives, can be seen in Figure 4. As one can see, the lines for care and fairness start high for those that consider themselves "very liberal" and drop as they move across

the graph to the “very conservatives”. In contrast, the lines for loyalty, authority, and sanctity start out incredibly low on the “very liberal” side and consistently move up as they move right towards “very conservative.”

It is also important to acknowledge that while the care and fairness lines descend towards the conservative side of the graph, they still stay considerably higher than the loyalty, authority, sanctity lines do on the liberal side of the graph. This demonstrates that while the liberals only evaluate with their two moral foundations (the liberty/oppression foundation was not yet conceived when Figure 4 was made), the conservatives are operating off of a more diverse moral compass because their definition of morality features all six foundations instead of two. Conservatives, therefore, operate in such a way “that their broader moral matrix allows them to detect threats to moral capital that liberals cannot perceive” (Haidt 357). This observation can be seen in Figure 5, which shows the disparity between the moral foundations of each major political faction. With this in mind, it should be noted that some conservatives, while they do not have as strong a connection to care and fairness as liberals, could also be appealed to with some of the arguments that have been established for liberals. However, the same does not hold true for the arguments that resonate the most with liberals. Liberals do not possess the remaining three moral foundations that conservatives do, authority, loyalty and sanctity, and thus those arguments would not appeal to them. In order to not repeat ourselves then, we have chosen to explain the care, fairness, and liberty foundations once when talking about the results of our liberal arguments as they appeal to both major factions (as well as the moderates). Since those three are being talked about in the liberal results, the conservative results will feature the remaining three foundations that appeal only to them.

In combining our study of Haidt's morality and religious texts, we created arguments that spoke more to the intuition rather than the rationality because of another concept that Haidt establishes, the relationship between the elephant and the rider. This analogy is meant to show that our rationality is like the rider and our intuition is like an elephant; the rider can be compared to the spokesperson of the elephant that is very "skilled at fabricating post hoc explanations for whatever the elephant has just done" (Haidt 54). The elephant is responsible for our intuition, and much like an actual elephant and rider pair, the elephant is the one who actually has the control of the situation. Keeping this in mind, when it comes to changing someone's mind about a political issue, we need to cater to his or her elephant. Accordingly, in our argumentative research we left out all scientific data that might speak to a person's rider, choosing instead to focus our arguments towards a person's intuition. This is why using the Moral Foundation Theory was highly influential in our research; it provided us with a key to unlock the intuitions of religious audiences, and this made it possible to create the most convincing arguments.

VIII. Results

Liberals

When appealing to a liberal Catholic audience, it is important to focus on their primary moral foundations: care/harm, liberty/oppression and fairness/equity. In using this method, we will provide the reader with religious rhetoric that speaks to those principles in conjunction with environmental dialogue.

The liberal moral matrix resonates strongly in supporting ideals for "social justice", "compassion for the poor" and "political equality among the subgroups that comprise society" (Haidt 211). These liberal principles speak directly to the Catholic church, as Pope Francis

teaches that we must say no to “an economy of exclusion and inequality” (Ferguson). The Pope has advocated, more than any Pope to date, for social change. These progressive declarations, along with the traditional religious principles that embody the Catholic religion, will be extremely important in appealing to the care, liberty and fairness of liberals.

As Catholics, or students of its teachings, we know that its central ideology is to care for others; the sick, the poor, the disabled and the abused. When gearing conversation towards the environment and climate change, we must find circumstances in which this concept of care extends to the Earth. In Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si*, he claims, “The work of the Church seeks not only to remind everyone of the duty to care for nature, but at the same time “she must above all protect mankind from self-destruction” (Francis 47). This plea by Pope Francis is not only calling on the people to protect the Earth, it is asking the people to care for one another. In reading *Laudato Si*, it is clear that the Pope is alluding to the ideology that without caring for the Earth, we cannot care for the people. This is extremely important in addressing the care aspect of morality. When addressing a doubtful, dismissive or disengaged audience, it is important to find a common ground, and this quote provides that. It offers a simple ideology that all liberals can relate to: care for people. When referring to the Moral Foundation Theory, it is not clear *what* the liberals care about (mostly because it is entirely individual-based), but it is safe to assume that the well being of people is a top priority. When engaging in heated or polarizing topics like climate change, there may be people who do not particularly care for the environment. However, the glory in this quote is that it implies their interconnectedness: all people rely on the climate and therefore an individual cannot care for one without the other. If someone cares about social justice or ending poverty, pointing out this relationship, especially in the name of Pope Francis, could be an extremely effective way to inspire interest in environmentalism. The moment people

can find a connection to his or her own interests and values, he or she are innately more interested. This quote, providing a common ground, coming from the Pope and inspiring environmentalism, is a great place to start.

When addressing liberty through a catholic lens, it is equally important. A verse in the Bible from Galatians reads, “God gave us free will and it’s our duty to use that free will to protect the Earth and do good” (5:13). Free will is extremely relevant to environmentalism. Many of the actions that have caused climate change, or could stop it, are choices. In using this quote, liberals can be inspired to use their free will to do good. As stated in the verse, it is our duty to use this free will to protect the Earth. In using this quote, the responsibility is completely black and white. The Bible, executed through the Catholic faith, directly asks its followers to protect the Earth. If this was not enough, Pope Francis has also spoken to this ability to choose. In *Laudato Si*, the Pope speaks to “liberty throughout the land for all its inhabitants”, which suggests equal sharing of resources and accessibility (53). In addition to this, he also says, “the gifts of the Earth with its fruit belong to everyone” (53). This speaks to resource sharing and environmental injustices that are a result of many people being oppressed. While some people are abusing their free will or not exercising the rights they have, there are many people all over the world who do not have the same opportunity, let alone the array of decisions. For a Catholic liberal, these environmental inequalities have the opportunity of impassioning audiences to engage in environmental dialogue or action concerning the lack of decisions that many people have with regard to the environment.

Lastly, when appealing to a liberal audience it’s important to target their fairness ethics. Equity is a huge concern for liberals as it is central to their ideology. Many liberals promote equity and fairness in all sectors of life; whether it be the promotion of equal rights for women,

the LGBTQ community, colored communities or other minorities, promoting equality is the cornerstone of liberalism. Catholicism also speaks to this, as “God destined the Earth with all that it contains for the use of all men and nations, in such a way that created things in fair share should accrue to all men” (Folsom 49). Environmentalism speaks to many injustices, whether it be resource scarcity or environmental racism. Talking about these issues could be a great place to begin when starting dialogue about climate change and environmental dialogue with liberals. Whether it comes down to food scarcity in Africa, water shortages or contamination or overexposure to toxic chemicals, liberal Catholics will empathize and find interest in such equity issues. In addition to this, when pointing out that many of these inequalities are a product of Western civilization and the lifestyle of many liberal Catholics, it has potential to run even deeper.

“Our moral life has been so individual-oriented that the social teaching of the church...has yet to inspire the great mass of Christian people. The study of ecology and impending environmental crisis which is upon us should show us we must take social responsibility for preventing the destruction of the earth. As it has been pointed out by so many scientists and ecologists, the western technological countries are responsible for the worst of the environmental crisis” (Folsom 50).

Liberals could be inspired by the Catholic Church to make a change concerning these types of inequalities. Pope Francis discusses the importance of insuring “balance and fairness in...relationships with others and with the land on which they lived and worked” (Francis 53). While this speaks to everyday actions, the inspiration to bring equality to third world nations can also be inspired through charity and other types of environmental justice programs that support countries like Kenya or Bangladesh, who suffer the most from climate change, but have contributed the least. When combining the Catholic faith and call to equality with liberal moralities and strong environmental facts, there is a large space for dialogue and an extremely promising zeal to take action.

Moderates / Libertarians

For the sake of brevity and efficiency, we have combined our results for libertarians and moderates, as they share many of the same values ideals. When it comes to moderate Catholics, Haidt provides the readers with an image of a “socially liberal and economically conservative” sector of society that “loves markets and lacks bleeding hearts” (350-351). The Moral Foundation Theory depicts libertarians as concerned with liberty/oppression and fairness/cheating morals, which Haidt notes would just classify them as liberals. In addressing this, Haidt suggests that libertarians “diverge from liberals most sharply on two measures: the care foundation and economic liberty” (352). In reality, libertarians are mostly concerned with the liberty/oppression moral foundation, but only because of the market’s dependence on such. In targeting a politically moderate Catholic, it would be beneficial to discuss the notion of free will that was discussed in appealing to liberals. The Pope goes into detail of free will in relation to the market in his encyclical:

“Every [citizen] has a natural right to possess a reasonable allotment of land where he can establish his home, work for subsistence of his family and a secure life. This right must be guaranteed so that its exercise is not illusory but real. That means that apart from the ownership of property, rural people must have access to means of technical education, credit, insurance, and markets” (70).

While appealing to this sector will be the same, inspiring them to engage in environmental dialogue will be different. Instead of encouraging them to bring free markets or services to others, we will want to play on the notion of preserving their own access. Currently, environmental issues are one of the biggest threats to the free markets. Many legislative proposals, tax ideas or economic programs that seek to aid environmental issues threaten the free market. The worse climate change gets, the greater danger the free market will be in. That being said, creating dialogue and engaging in action is the best means for them to conserve the free

market. Without taking the steps to preserve these markets through environmental action, which the Church supports, they will ultimately lose their economic liberties.

Conservatives

While it may seem sometimes that conservatives do not care about other people based off media portrayal, this is extremely biased due to the fact that it only shows one part of their moral compass. Unlike liberals, conservatives operate off of a much larger moral foundation that takes into account things like tradition and structure. The arguments laid out above that apply to liberals still apply to conservatives, but it is important to recognize that, upon returning to Figure 3, conservatives base moral judgments on other foundations more often. Climate change has often been pitched to audiences as a necessity to help those who are going to be most affected or to think of future generations. However, these arguments work off of a care/harm foundation when other stronger arguments can be made to resonate with conservatives. Accordingly, the following arguments work off of sanctity, loyalty, and authority, which Haidt shows produce a much stronger reaction with a conservative audience.

An obvious starting point for creating an environmental narrative with one of the moral foundations that resonates with conservatives is sanctity due to Catholics view God as working through nature. This connection between ecotheology and conservative sanctification will also play a role later on in the discussion of the other moral foundations. The sanctity foundation demonstrates that conservatives see an innate sacredness to the human body and to life. One can see this very prominently in the generally held conservative view that abortion is wrong because the human fetus represent the sacredness of life chosen to be born by God. In many ways, nature is the same way in that, like the fetus, it “has its origins in the mind and purpose of God” (Van Dyke 50). Because of this relationship, nature does have an intrinsic sacredness because God

flows through nature and everything in nature has its source through God. Not only does nature have a sacredness because it contains the work of God's hands, but also because nature represents a method for us to come to know God through "the greatness and the beauty of creatures" (Wisdom 13:5). By destroying the Earth then, we are harming our relationship with God and the very creation that she asked us to oversee in the creation story. Pope Francis also echoes the special relationship that man has to God through nature when he notes in *Laudato Si*, "as Christians, we are also called "to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God" (9). Man's sanctity also plays a role in the sanctity of nature in a couple of ways. First, man has been made in the image and likeness of God meaning that human beings have the same connection to nature that God does. Similarly, as noted in the creation story, man has been born *from* nature in that we "are from dust, and to dust shall [we] return" (Genesis 3:19). As one can see, human beings and God have a special relationship with nature because of how the sanctity of our body and the Holy Spirit flow through the creatures, plants, and trees all around. In other words, whenever we harm nature we are harming the role that God plays in our lives and this will be expanded upon in the Loyalty foundation argument. With regard to the sanctity argument though, it is a fairly easy connection to make for conservative audiences because of how highly conservative audiences hold objects within which they believe God lies. Similarly, these Bible passages represent only a small portion of the religious doctrine that speaks to God being in the beauty of the world around us.

One of the other traditional values that conservatives represent in their morality includes loyalty and when considering religious doctrine, this plays out in a number of ways. For starters, the loyalty foundation plays off a primal desire to form coalitions as a response to a threat or challenge. Nowadays this plays out more in modern sports, but religions also function in a team-

like manner because of it creates “group-level adaptations... [of] cohesiveness and trust” (Haidt 306.) With teams come goals and when we look at religion as a team endeavor, many would agree that Catholicism’s main goal is carrying out the will of God. While there are many interpretations as to what the will of God is, many would argue that it is to “cooperate with God in carrying out God’s plan for his creation” (Van Dyke 203). So, by disregarding the impact that man is having on the environment, Catholics are disregarding the central message that God is telling us to participate in. In this regard, humanity is also weakening the relationship they have to God since his people are going against what He desires. This argument functions by telling Catholics that they are being disloyal to will of God by desecrating one of the avenues that they have to God, His creation. Pope Francis speaks to the weakening of a relationship with God when he notes that the Catholic’s relationship to God has

“been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin. The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations. This in turn distorted our mandate to “have dominion” over the earth (cf. *Gen* 1:28), to “till it and keep it”” (48).

Disloyalty to God is only aspect to this dilemma though, because not recognizing the will of God’s creation also has implications for your human religious relationships. Since the Pope is preaching on the subject and is therefore establishing the Church’s perspective on the issue, to not follow one’s word shows a disloyalty to the very religion that one professes their deep faith to every Sunday while reciting the “Profession of Faith.” One important thing that Haidt establishes in his argument on the derivation of moral capital is that conservatives are often very good at maintaining moral capital because they do not change too many things at once. Jonathan Haidt describes moral capital as “the degree to which a community possesses interlocking sets of values, virtues, norms, practices, identities, institutions, and technologies that mesh well...and

make cooperation possible” (341). There lies a problem then in disregarding the importance of climate change as a Catholic since the rest of the Church has acknowledged that it is indeed occurring. By going against what the Church has established, one who denies climate change or the importance of the environment would be going against the values of the larger group and therefore lowering the moral capital of Catholicism. Loyalty plays a large role in conservative morality. In this specific argument, the goal is to play off of a person’s disloyalty to the Church in order to push them into recognizing that climate change is happening.

Along with traditional values, conservatives also value traditional structures of power, which are reflected in the authority foundation present in their moral compass. The authority foundation plays an interesting role in Moral Foundations Theory because of the fact that it must “look in two directions-- up towards superiors and down to subordinates” (Haidt 168). To use this foundation to benefit an environmental conversation, it is important to look to those who hold power in the Church. The most obvious example is God portrayed as an all-powerful being with the religious people as his faithful followers. God’s role is as a Fatherly authoritative figure is highlighted in multiple spots in the Bible, one such example being the prayer “The Our Father” which is written in the four gospels. In this sense there is a beneficial relationship to be had between listening to the will of God the father who tells his children to “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me” (John 15:4). Abiding in God means following his will and one of the requests that God has left for his people is to be the guardians of his creation here on Earth. This authoritative relationship then speaks to a stewardship of the Earth that is a necessary part of one’s relationship with God. This verse speaks to their being a natural connection to God’s role as a bearer of fruit in the lives of his people. God’s role as a father figure is not the only way that

an environmental argument can be made to appeal to the authoritative foundation in the conservative moral pallet as the Pope presents another obvious connection. The Pope is the leader of all of God's Church here on Earth meaning that what he preaches reflects the will of God. Invoking the power invested upon a Pope by God can be an effective strategy for establishing the authority that a conservative may desire. For example, if Pope Francis says "we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures," then the people of God must respect what the Pope says since he represents the will of God here on Earth (49). With regard to authority figures, the saints also present other options of invoking their higher position to express environmental concerns because the saints are held to just high esteem. For example, St. Francis of Assisi was a strong advocate for ecotheology and protecting nature because he saw it as a way to more deeply connect with God. St. Francis "invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness," and this message carries more weight than something a layperson could say because St. Francis has a position of authority (Pope Francis 11). At first conservative values seem to present an obstacle because of how oppositional their views appear to the ideals of environmentalists; however, if approached in the correct manner, such as through one of the three morally foundation arguments outlined here, there are clear avenues of discussion that can help change the stalemate that current climate change communication finds itself in.

IX. Discussion

One of the responses that we expect to encounter is the notion that God made the Earth for man. This ideology can be drawn upon in a verse from Genesis 1:28 that states, "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds

of the sky and over every living thing that moves on earth.” Many people will use this verse as a counter argument when faced with the task of placing the Earth’s sanctity over human desires. We realize that this can be a barrier in communicating the importance of climate change and necessity to take action. In addressing counter arguments similar to this, we suggest taking advice from Fred Van Dyke, who says that “the world is to be understood as intrinsically valuable” and that human need is never to “usurp needs of other elements of creation” (196). While the verse from Genesis plays on the Earth being made for man, Van Dyke does not disagree. He promotes its use for all creations, but focuses on its *equal* use. If we humans are using the Earth to such an extent that it is taking potential use for other humans and creatures, then we are at fault.

An analogy, which may be more accessible than philosophy, theology or text, can be used in this scenario. In this specific circumstance, we do not argue with our audience whether or not God made the Earth for us; that would be compromising one of their fundamental beliefs as a Catholic, which is not our intention. Rather, our goal is to frame those beliefs in a constructive way. The analogy that we have provided for this counter argument asks the audience to view the Earth as a store. Instead of seeing ourselves as customers of the store, or Earth, we must see ourselves as managers. If we are managers, we have a stake in its vitality. If the store is running out of goods, if its interior is being vandalized or if it is not sustaining itself, the manager suffers. Just like the Earth, if these things occur, man (and all living things) will suffer. There is no such thing as being a customer of the Earth. Anything that happens to the Earth, any consequences or repercussions from climate change, will have an effect on the people. In this context, we are not the customers who can go to the store, leave, and do as we please; we are inarguably all managers of the Earth. We own the store, we have a stake in it and without the proper

management it will plummet. This analogy does not argue whether the Earth was made for us; it argues what that role and responsibility require. Many battle the question of “Earth for man or man for Earth?”; the solution that we offer is neither. Instead, we are men *of* Earth. As men of Earth, our duty, just like a store or business, is to protect it.

X. Recommendations

While Haidt offers a great analysis into the decision-making process of large swaths of people, at the end of the day one’s moral compass is much more nuanced than these six foundations can show. The arguments that we have produced, that use religion to aid in the discussion of climate change, function in a similar fashion in that they are broad ideas that serve as a starting point. The real answer to what Catholic texts or ideals produce climate change conversations is that it will depend on the audience. Our hope with this project was to establish, for those willing to engage religious audiences on climate change, a starting point that would stimulate further thought into theological-ecological connections. As noted in the beginning of our project, climate change is a very difficult topic to address because of its very broad reach in many aspects of our daily lives. However, we believe this perspective only furthers the ineffective idea of “doom and gloom,” that many have tried to drill into those who are still skeptical. This idea shows a resignation that, because it is so pervasive, it will be difficult to quantify for an audience. Instead, climate change communication should be looked at as something quite *easy* to engage in specifically *because* it touches so many parts of our lives. When it comes to religion, the possible avenues of connection open even wider because there are so many references to a Catholic tradition of ecotheology, and it becomes difficult to find a way to not connect God to the natural world around us. Accordingly, the most important recommendation that we can offer about engaging religious audiences about climate change is to

just start talking. With so many rich texts to choose from, be it the Bible, works from the Pope, or works from other Christian scholars, there is a wealth of information to engage any congregation. Whatever texts may be used though, it is important not forget that what drives decision-making in people is not necessarily their rationale but rather their intuition, or their elephant to use Haidt's idea that we discussed in our methods section. This was something we stuck closely to when formulating our arguments and we believe that if anyone is to use our arguments as a starting point for their own that they continue this trend; the elephant is the one making the decisions. The elephant uses the moral foundations to actually make decisions, so all future arguments must take the elephant if they are to be successful.

XI. Conclusion

This report is a cohesive guide on how to communicate anthropogenic climate change to a Catholic and religious audience. There are many tools and texts that, when utilized together and properly, that can truly open up new avenues of discussion. The Moral Foundation Theory, given to us by Haidt, is a great way to appeal to a wide audience concerning polarizing or otherwise difficult topics. As shown through our research, Catholic texts clearly resonate with the basic principles of environmentalism and offer a new perspective on an otherwise locked conversation. With Catholicism, and religious climate dialogue in general, there is hope that the two major factions can find common ground from which serious change can be enacted. We provide this tool with a means of doing so.

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XIII. Appendices

While these figures were not referenced in our research, we believe they provide useful information for our readers in order to better understand some of the statistics in our country as they currently stand.

CLIMATE, Change

Question: Do you agree or disagree with the message from Pope Francis calling on the world to do more to address climate change?

Source: Quinnipiac University Poll

Date: Aug. 3, 2015

Results:

	Total	Repub- lican	Democrat	Indepen- dent
agree	65%	40%	84%	67%
disagree	27	48	9	27
don't know/ no answer	8	12	7	6

Field Date - Jul 23-28, 2015

Universe: Country: United States

Method: telephone; landline and cell phone

Sample Size: 1644

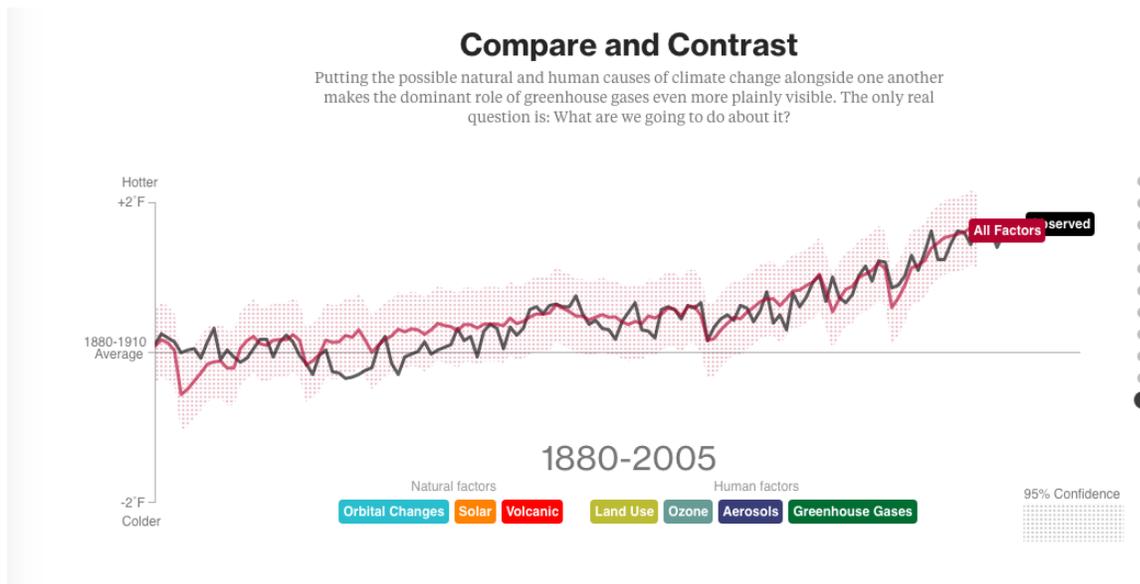
Copyright Info: Reproduced with permission.

Additional Information: registered voters

Contact Information: Quinnipiac University
Polling Institute
275 Mt. Carmel Avenue
Hamden, CT 06518
(203) 582-5201
fax (203) 582-8790

Addendum 1

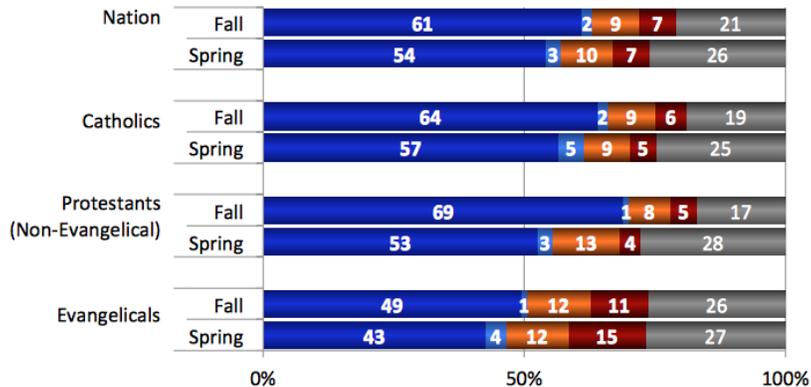
Addendum 2



Addendum 3

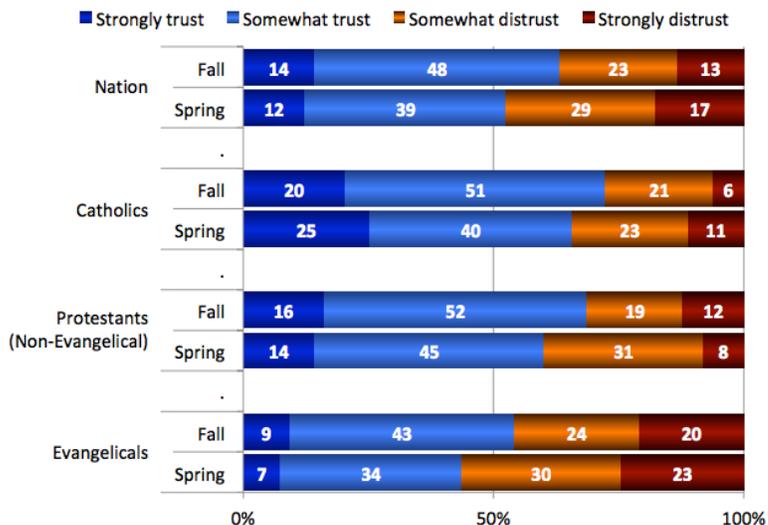
People disagree whether the United States should reduce greenhouse gas emissions on its own, or make reductions only if other countries do so...

- Regardless of what other countries do
- Only if other industrialized countries (such as England, Germany, and Japan) reduce their emissions
- Only if other industrialized countries and developing countries (such as China, India, and Brazil) reduce their emissions
- The U.S. should not reduce its emissions
- Don't know

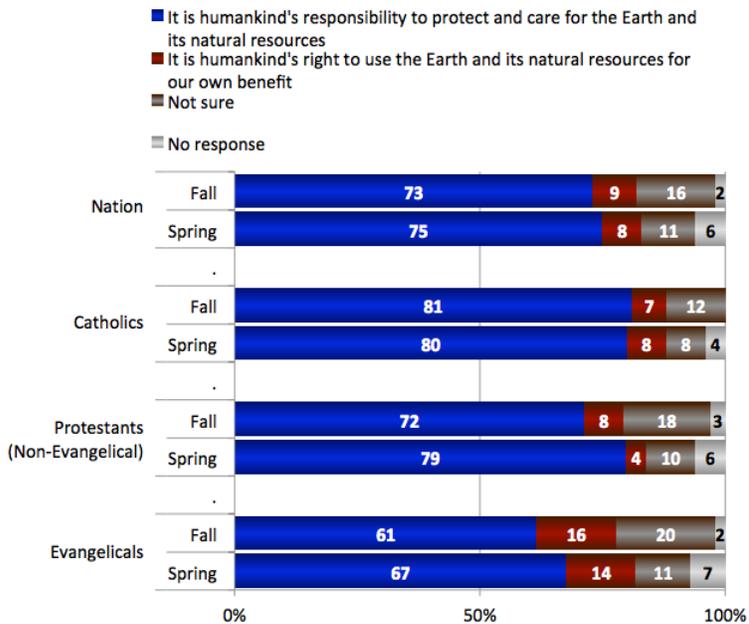


Addendum 4

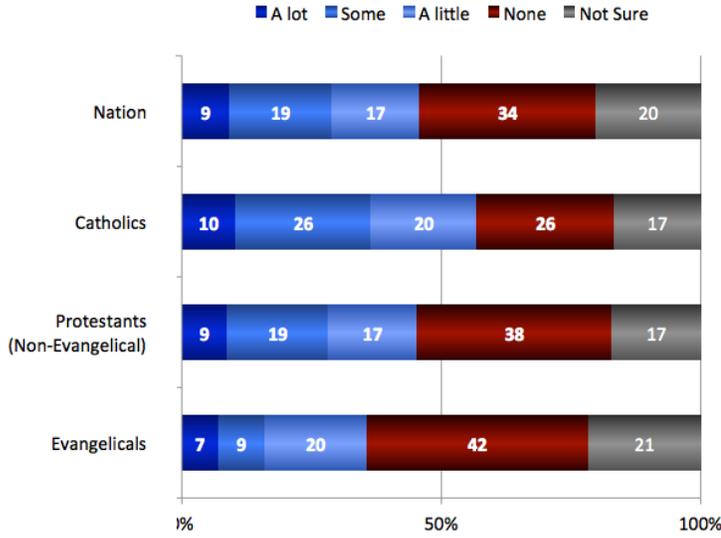
How much do you trust or distrust the Pope as a source of information about global warming?



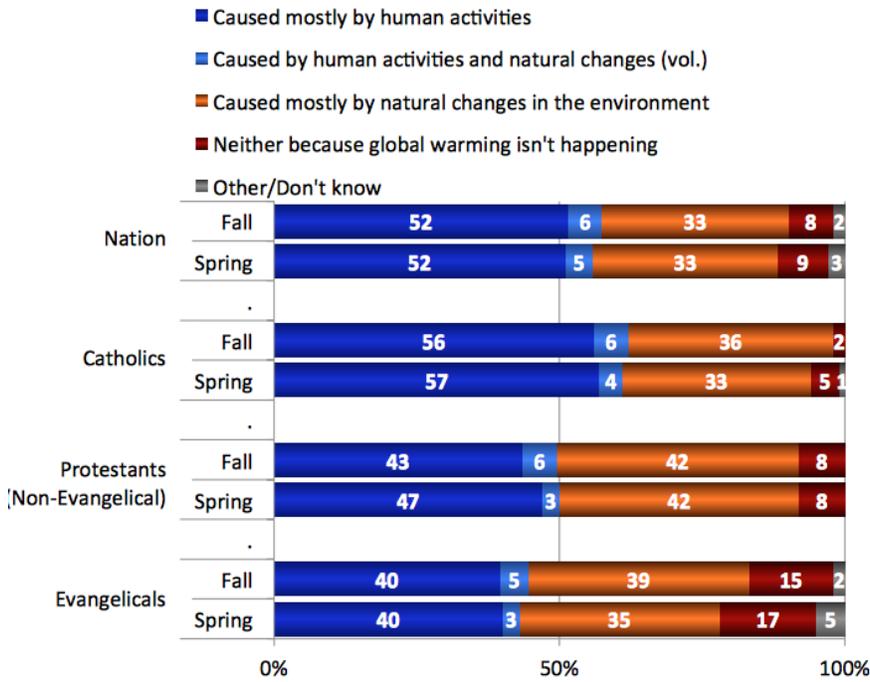
Please indicate whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views – even if neither is exactly right.



How much media coverage, if any, about Pope Francis' views on the following have you seen, read, or heard in the past few months?

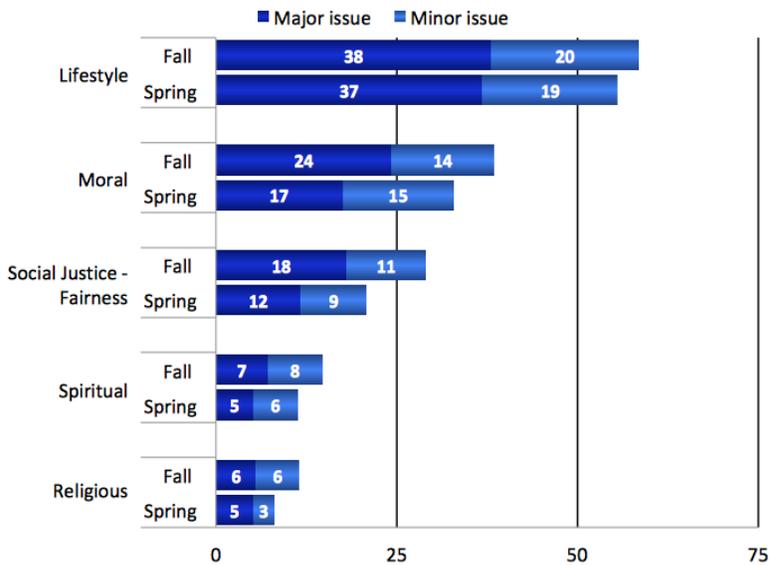


Assuming that global warming is happening, do you think it is...



Addendum 7

*In your opinion, do you think global warming is a ...?
(if yes) Do you think global warming is a major of minor issue?*



Base: Americans 18+ (n=905). March, 2015 & Oct. 2015.

