



# BEST PRACTICES IN CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Second Annual Southeast Florida Regional Climate Leadership Summit

October 29, 2010

**CARA PIKE**

Director, the Social Capital Project

[cara@thesocialcapitalproject.org](mailto:cara@thesocialcapitalproject.org)

**THE Social Capital PROJECT**  
The Resource Innovation Group

## **SIX REASONS WHY VASTLY IMPROVED BEHAVIORAL CHANGE-MOTIVATING COMMUNICATIONS IS NEEDED TO ADDRESS GLOBAL WARMING**

- 1. Due to its low threat saliency, global warming is tailor made to be a low human priority: the traditional environmental policy approach alone is thus insufficient.**
- 2. Every major policy will require years to scale-up; behavioral changes can produce rapid emission reductions.**
- 3. Every successful social movement is driven by an emotionally powerful 'strategic frame.'**
- 4. New technologies alone cannot reduce emissions to safe levels and behavioral changes will be needed to ensure that new technologies achieve their potential.**
- 5. Support for public policy increases the more personally engaged people become in solutions.**
- 6. To motivate changes in thinking and behavior communications must be linked with the public's 'stage of change' and 'core values.'**

# FRAMES DEFINE HOW WE SEE THE WORLD



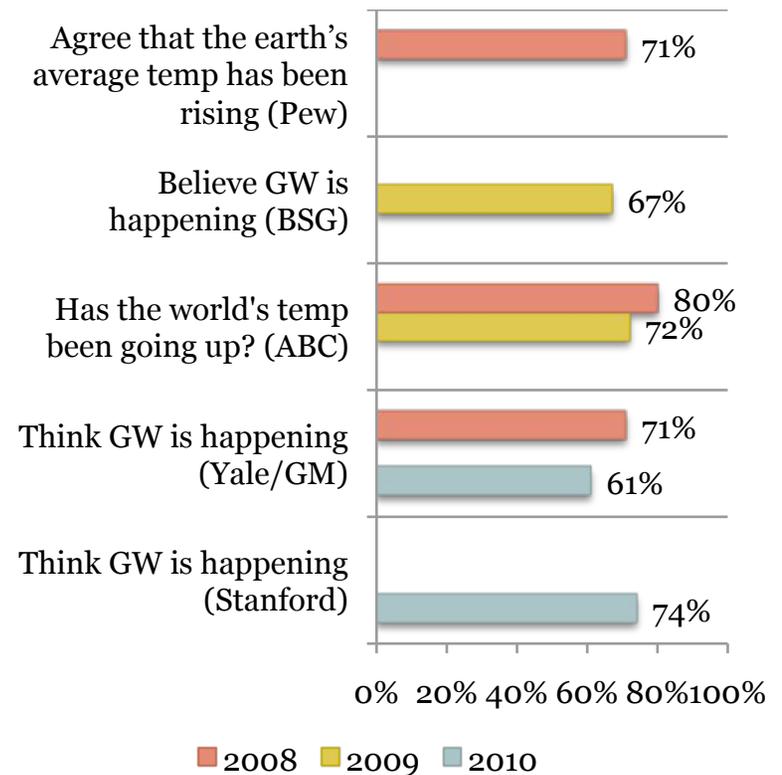
**A frame is a “central organizing idea...for making sense of relevant events....”**

Gamson/Modigliani

# PUBLIC OPINION: IS IT HAPPENING?



In 2010 Americans were less likely to believe that global warming is already occurring or will begin shortly than at any time since 1997. This is most evident among conservatives.

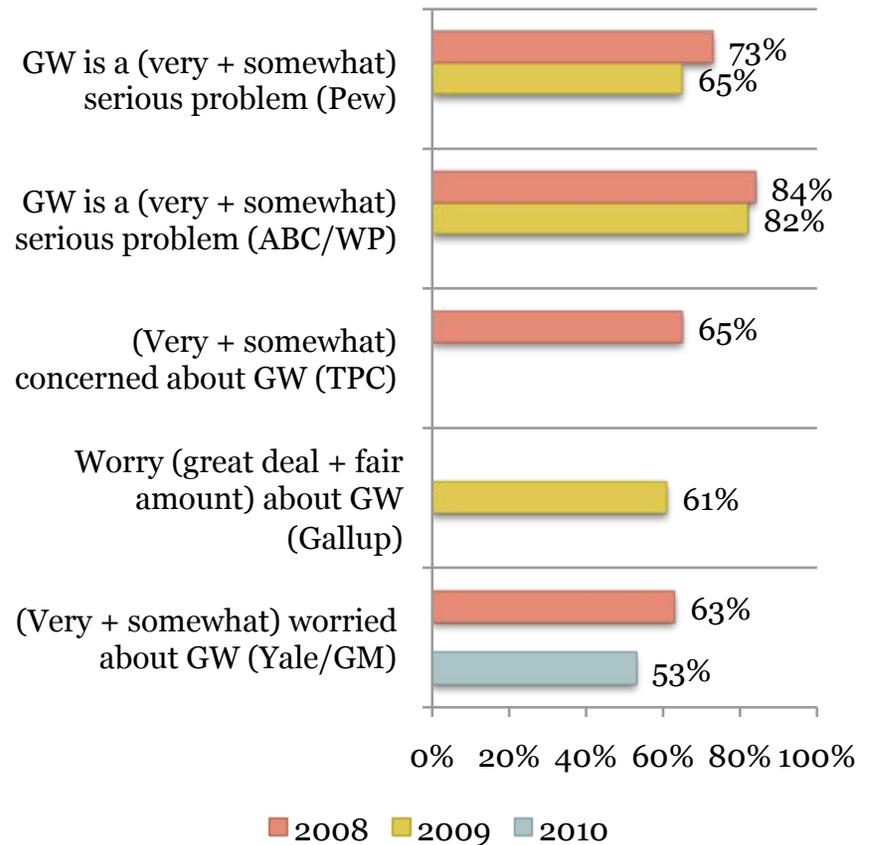


# PUBLIC OPINION: HOW WORRIED?



In 2010, fewer Americans thought global warming was a serious problem than in 2008.

Americans continue to believe that plants and animals are more likely to be affected than themselves personally, their families, communities, other people in the U.S. or industrialized countries. This has been a consistent trend since 1997.

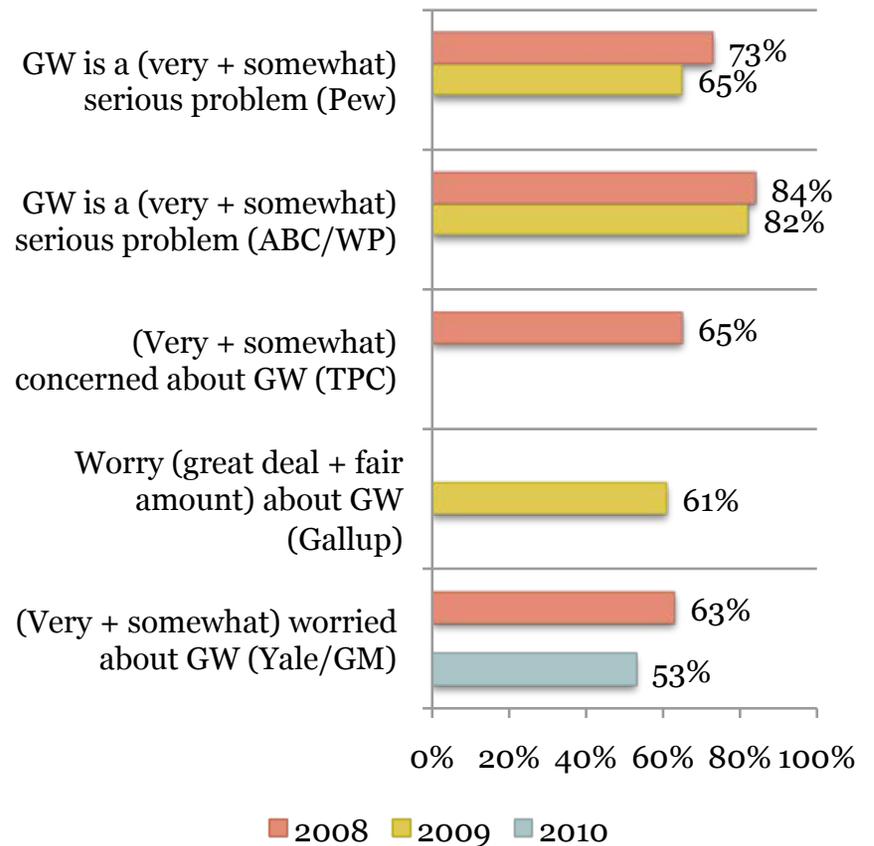


# PUBLIC OPINION: HOW WORRIED?



In 2010, fewer Americans thought global warming was a serious problem than in 2008.

Americans continue to believe that plants and animals are more likely to be affected than themselves personally, their families, communities, other people in the U.S. or industrialized countries. This has been a consistent trend since 1997.

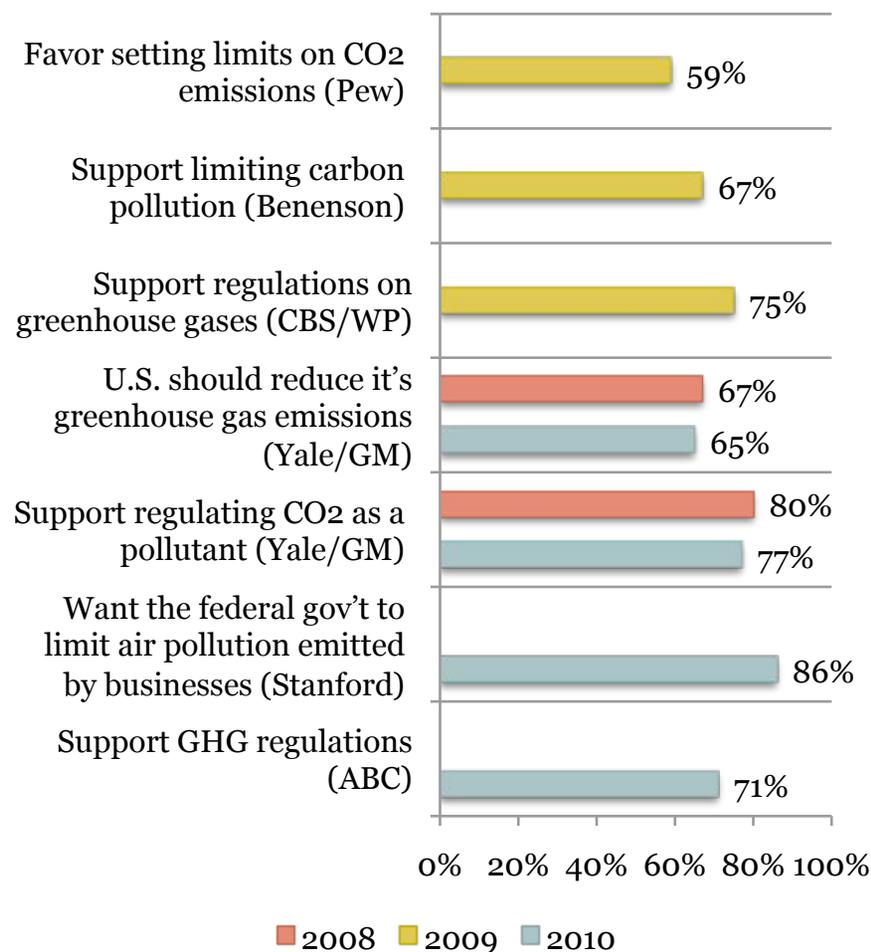


# PUBLIC OPINION: REDUCE EMISSIONS?



In 2010 most Americans favor emission reductions and support regulating carbon dioxide as a pollutant.

A majority of Americans in 2010 want the government to limit the amount of air pollution that businesses emit.



# PUBLIC OPINION: IN FLORIDA



- Half of FL residents have serious doubts about offshore drilling.
- FL residents are more opposed to offshore drilling following the BP Oil Spill.  
*(Public Policy Polling. May 18, 2010)*
- A large majority of FL residents (81%) believe the earth has been getting warmer over the last 100 years.
- 74% of FL residents think the U.S. government should take action to limit GHG emitted by businesses.
- 68% of FL residents are in favor of cap-and-trade (similar to National findings).

*(Stanford University August 2010)*

# CHANGE STAGES AND MECHANISMS

**Disinterest    Deliberation    Design    Doing    Defend**

**Cognitive and Experiential Change Mechanisms** →

**Disturbances** →

**Behavior Change Mechanisms** →

**Awareness-building** →

**Choice expansion** →

**Emotional Inspiration** →

**Supportive relationships** →

**Organizational/  
self-reevaluation** →

**Commitment** →

**Helping relationships** →

**Reinforcement** →

**Substitution** →

**Structural Redesign** →

# HOW DO YOU MOTIVATE CHANGE?



- 1. TENSION:** Dissonance between a desired & current condition.
- 2. EFFICACY:** Confidence in one's capacity to reduce the tension.
- 3. BENEFITS:** Belief that the benefits of new behavior are greater than the downsides of change.

# WHAT IS TENSION AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?



- To change, people must feel tension (dissonance) between a deeply held unmet goal, value, or aspiration & current reality.
- Tension can be a desire to obtain a positive (e.g. better health, live your values, profit, jobs) or to avoid a negative (job or financial loss, diminished health).



**Communications must emphasize a critical problem with global warming or unmet ideal, goal, or value.**

# 6 CHALLENGES IN BUILDING TENSION



1. The Terrarium Challenge
2. The Weather Challenge
3. The Warming Challenge
4. The Someday Challenge
5. The “Technology Will Save Us” Challenge
6. The Long List of Impacts Challenge

# CHALLENGES IN BUILDING TENSION



## 1. The Terrarium Challenge

Framed as an environmental issue, global warming becomes about plants and animals. Other issues seem like a higher priority.



## 2. The Weather Challenge

Most people think about weather from day to day and don't pay attention to the larger climate patterns that play out over time.



# CHALLENGES IN BUILDING TENSION



## 3. The Warming Challenge

When global warming is seen as a slow, uniform warming it's easy to dismiss its importance and caricature.



## 4. The Someday Challenge

When energy solutions are associated with the future, they are forever distant and the path to them unclear.



# CHALLENGES IN BUILDING TENSION

## 5. The "Technology Will Save Us" Challenge

Many Americans believe experts will eventually come up with technological solutions to global warming, reducing the need for urgent action.



## 6. The Long List of Impacts Challenge

A list of frightening impacts is overwhelming to the point that people check out or become defensive of the current American lifestyle.



# 4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDING TENSION



1. Illustrate what it means for the climate to change.
2. Leverage the idea of “too much carbon.”
3. Convey the link between energy and global warming.
4. Emphasize that we are facing a moment of choice.



# 1. ILLUSTRATE WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE CLIMATE TO CHANGE



- *Global warming is not just about temperature – it is about the basic weather patterns, including wind, rainfall and storms, that make up our climate.*
- *Weather patterns affect just about everything in our lives – the capacity to grow the food we eat, the ability to keep our homes and families safe from extreme weather, etc.*

## 2. LEVERAGE THE IDEA OF “TOO MUCH CARBON”



- Use Simple Terms such as: “carbon overload” or “carbon load.”

*Simply put, we're putting too much carbon in the atmosphere, by burning fossil fuels such as coal for energy. The good news is that we can deal with our carbon overload problem with solutions that exist today.*

### 3. CONVEY THE LINK BETWEEN ENERGY AND GLOBAL WARMING



- Make the connection between energy, carbon and global warming.

***Burning fossil fuels is what puts carbon into the atmosphere – whether it's fuel for our cars or to keep the lights on. For example, most of our electricity comes from burning coal.***

- Clarify what is meant by “clean energy” and avoid terms like “green” or “sustainable” energy.”

## 4. EMPHASIZE THAT WE ARE FACING A MOMENT OF CHOICE



- Emphasize a moment of choice and accountability for not acting and illustrate how ignoring global warming will let the problem get worse.

*The time for arguing and delaying is in the past. We are at a crossroads, with a choice between responsibly addressing the problem now, or dealing with severe consequences later.*

- Talk about how taking smart and responsible sense now is the common sense approach.

# WHAT IS EFFICACY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?



People must be **confident** that they have the ability to reduce the tension and close the gap—personal, political and collective efficacy are important.



**Communications must emphasize the personal or collective capacity to make the shift & that a new behavior or policy will make a difference.**

# 5 CHALLENGES IN CREATING A SENSE OF EFFICACY



1. The Kitchen Sink Environmentalism Challenge
2. The Leaders are Taking Care of it Challenge
3. The “Little Things Make a Difference” Challenge
4. The Perfection Challenge
5. The Environmental Overload Challenge

# CHALLENGES IN CREATING EFFICACY



## 1. The Kitchen Sink Environmentalism Challenge

Lack of clarity around the causes of global warming gets in the way of seeing the right action to take.



## 2. The Leaders are Taking Care of it Challenge

If global warming is a serious problem, then leaders must be acting. If they aren't then solutions aren't available or it is not as important as other issues.



# CHALLENGES IN CREATING EFFICACY



## 3. The "Little Things Make a Difference" Challenge

If individual behavior change is the sole focus, it can distract from the need for collective action.



## 4. The Perfection Challenge

A bit of skepticism can be a good thing but it can also lead to a reluctance to solutions that are not 'perfect.'



# CHALLENGES IN CREATING EFFICACY



## 5. The Environmental Overload Challenge

Green is a buzz word. People don't know who trust or how to sort out environmental claims.



## 4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING EFFICACY

1. Connect global warming to other priority issues.
2. Avoid pollution as a lead idea.
3. Focus on solutions at all levels – individual, organizational societal.
4. Give the audience a clear role in the story.



# 1. CONNECT GLOBAL WARMING TO OTHER PRIORITY ISSUES



- Connect global warming to things people already care about (like the economy and job creation) and focus on the actionable solutions they can get involved in.

*There are simple things we can all do to get America back on track, such as saving energy at home. We can save money and create jobs by making our buildings and cars run on less energy.*

## 2. AVOID POLLUTION AS A LEAD IDEA



- Connect pollution to carbon-based energy use and other causes of global warming.

*Pollution, like carbon dioxide, collects in the earth's atmosphere. It traps the sun's heat, which causes the earth to heat up at an accelerated rate.*

### 3. FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS



- Make it clear that government needs to play a proactive role, rather than waiting for the energy situation to “evolve on its own.”

*Business leaders are looking for government to set new standards and invest in carbon-free energy solutions.*

- Make the need for collective action apparent, and highlight the importance of citizen action in keeping government accountable.

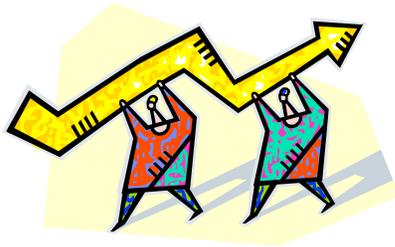
*We need to address global warming together. Driving less helps, but high fuel efficiency standards are as important. Turning off the lights is a good thing, but we also need more carbon-free energy sources.*

## 4. GIVE THE AUDIENCE A CLEAR ROLE IN THE STORY



- Help people to bridge between personal and collective action.
- Lower the bar for “collective action” so that people can begin to get engaged and identify themselves with the issue.

# WHAT ARE BENEFITS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?



To make a fundamental shift, people must see about two upsides to a new behavior for every downside

In the early stages of change, communicators must help people see the pros and minimize the cons of climate protection.

Focus on the cons in the later stages of change when people want help to overcome obstacles.

# 3 CHALLENGES IN CONVEYING BENEFITS TO CHANGE



1. The Economic Benefits Challenge
2. The Identity Challenge
3. The Environmental Fatalism Challenge

# CHALLENGES IN CONVEYING BENEFITS



## 1. The Economic Benefits Challenge

When the economy is in decline, Americans don't prioritize (or make connections to) other issues like global warming.



## 2. The Identity Challenge

Global warming is seen through a partisan lens and associated with environmental elites who appear out of touch with mainstream values.



# CHALLENGES IN CONVEYING BENEFITS



## 3. The Environmental Fatalism Challenge

Environmental degradation is seen as just part of the cost of having the American lifestyle.



# HOW TO CONVEY BENEFITS



## **TWO RECOMMENDATIONS** to convey the benefits of change

1. Tie the need for carbon-free energy choices to the possibility of economic prosperity.
2. Create a connection to people's identities, interests, and worldviews.



# 1. TIE THE NEED FOR CARBON-FREE ENERGY CHOICES TO THE POSSIBILITY OF ECONOMIC PROSPERITY



- Appeal to higher-level values about energy and economy by emphasizing energy independence, national security, and American jobs.

***Shifting away from the carbon-based fuels that cause global warming will create good jobs for millions of Americans. The U.S. can lead and take advantage of this shift, or miss the boat as other countries, such as China, act more quickly.***

- Focus on the need for action now, rather than emphasizing a future transformation.

## 1. TIE THE NEED FOR CARBON-FREE ENERGY CHOICES TO THE POSSIBILITY OF ECONOMIC PROSPERITY



- Provide concrete examples of the types of jobs and economic opportunities that will result.
- Emphasize successful use of renewable energy technologies.
- Illustrate the opportunities associated with energy efficiency as a way to overcome the term's lack of power and urgency.

## 2. CREATE A CONNECTION TO IDENTITY



- Rather than seeing it as yet another cause to have to pay attention to, connect the dots to their community, jobs, families, recreational opportunities and the other issues people care about on a daily basis.

*We all care about improving our communities. With smarter decisions about development, we can cut down commute time, save fuel, and reduce carbon that causes global warming at the same time.*

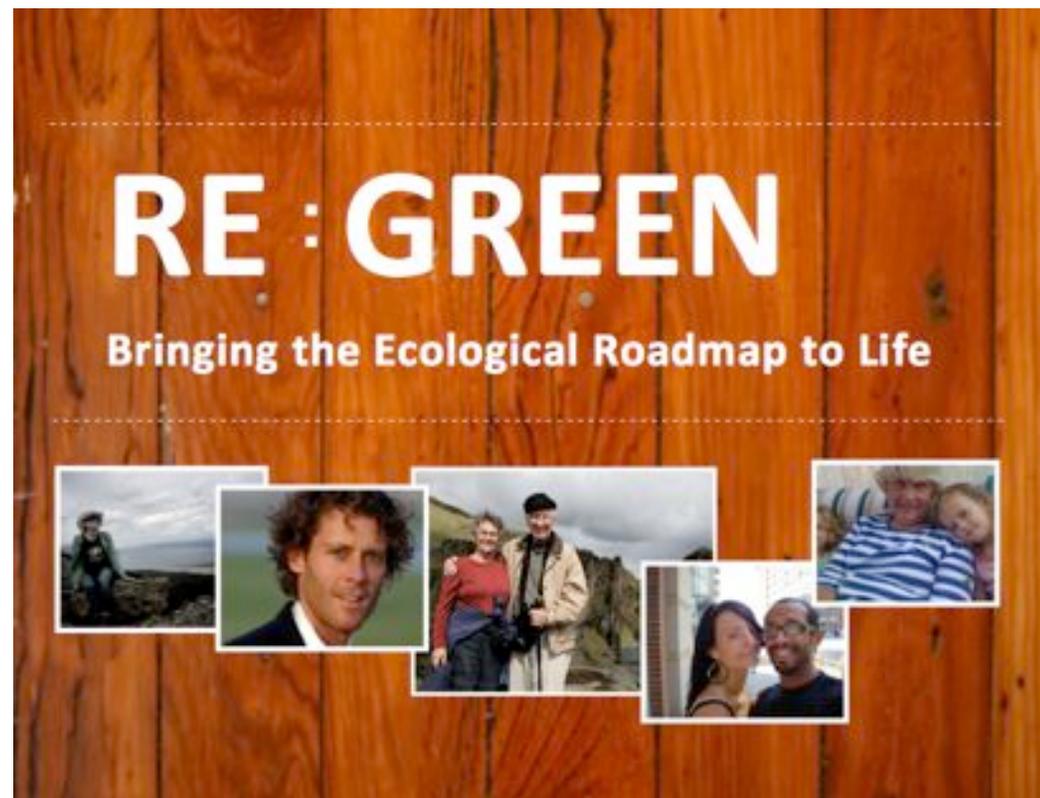
*Being responsible stewards means ensuring that our children have the opportunity to enjoy the same quality of life that we've had. Global warming threatens that way of life and investing in clean energy can bring economic development to communities that need it.*



## THE ECOLOGICAL ROADMAP

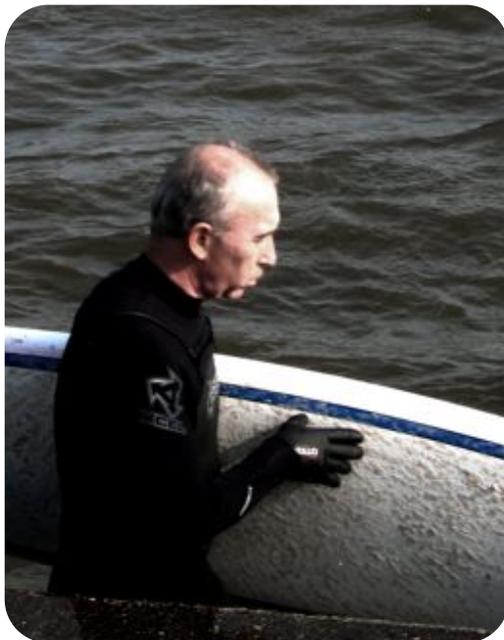
- American Values Survey & focus groups
- In-home survey of ~2,000 Americans 15 and older
- Over 100 social values constructs measured in over ~800 questions
- Validated and clarified findings with a dozen focus groups in OR, WA, CA & NY

A values-based segmentation study, the Ecological Roadmap shows how different segments of the public relate to environmental issues, including global warming, and why...



SEGMENT	% U.S.	WORLDVIEW
<b>Greenest Americans</b>	9%	Everything is connected, and our daily actions have an impact on the environment.
<b>Idealists</b>	3%	Green lifestyles are part of a new way of being.
<b>Caretakers</b>	24%	Healthy families need a healthy environment.
<b>Traditionalists</b>	20%	Religion and morality dictate actions in a world where humans are superior to nature.
<b>Driven Independents</b>	7%	Protecting the earth is fine as long as it doesn't get in the way of success.
<b>Murky Middles</b>	17%	Indifferent to most everything including the environment.
<b>Fatalists</b>	5%	Getting material and status needs met on a daily basis trumps worries about the planet.
<b>Materialists</b>	7%	Little can be done to protect the environment, so why not get a piece of the pie.
<b>Cruel Worlders</b>	6%	Resentment and isolation leave no room for environmental concerns.
<b>UnGreens</b>	3%	Environmental degradation and pollution are inevitable parts of America's prosperity.

# GREENEST AMERICANS



9% of adults, 4% of voters  
35% make \$100k+  
49% have post grad degree  
25% are 65+ years of age  
89% Caucasian  
93% very likely to vote

**68% rank GW as one of the most important issues**

## Tap

Ecological Concern  
Comfort with Ambiguity  
Civic Engagement  
Global Consciousness

## Avoid

National Pride  
American Entitlement  
Confidence in Big Business

# IDEALISTS



3% of adults, 2% of voters

34% make >\$100k

44% between 25-44 years of age

29% are students

73% Caucasian

53% very likely to vote

**51% rank GW as one of the most important issues**

## Tap

Enthusiasm for New Technology

Rejection of Authority

American Dream

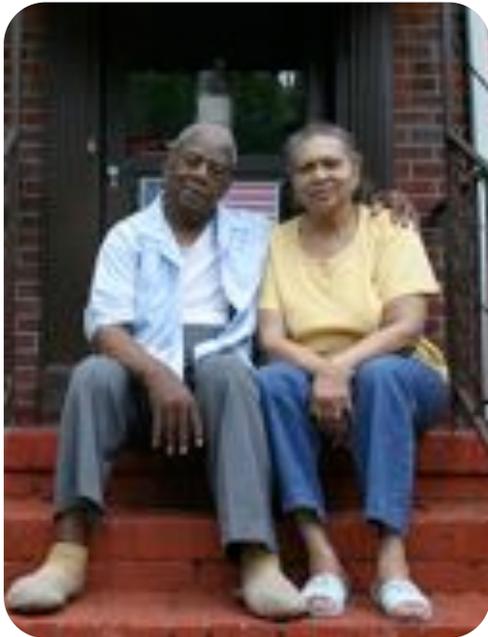
## Avoid

Duty

Saving on Principle

Importance of Discipline

# CARETAKERS



24% of adults, 21% of voters

26% African-American

18% Hispanic/Latino

60% make <\$75k

70% very likely to vote

**44% rank GW as one of the most important issues**

## Tap

Group Egalitarianism

American Liberty

Ecological Concern

## Avoid

American Entitlement

Unfettered Individualism

# FATALISTS



5% of adults, 3% of voters  
32% African American and 21% Hispanic/Latino  
30% between 15-24 years of age  
23% are students  
65% <\$50k  
37% live in a central city area  
**46% rank GW as one of the most important issues**

## Tap

Active Government  
Saving on Principle  
Importance of National  
Security  
Personal Challenge

## Avoid

Ecological Fatalism  
Openness to Change  
Liberal Communitarianism

# TRADITIONALISTS



20% of adults, 24% of voters

81% Caucasian

47% between 25-44 years of age

32% between 45-64 years of age

55% live in a rural location or small town

**22% rank GW as one of the most important issues**

## Tap

Duty

National Pride

Liberal Communitarianism

Altruism

## Avoid

Excessive Taxation

Apocalypse

Humans superior to animals

# DRIVEN INDEPENDENTS



7% of adults, 7% of voters

65% male

31% college degree

45% live in the suburbs

61% very likely to vote

**29% rank GW as one of the most important issues**

## Tap

Saving on Principle

Openness to Change

Enthusiasm for New Technology

## Avoid

Rejection of Authority

Government as Economic

Equalizer

Liberal Communitarianism

# MURKY MIDDLES



17% of adults, 16% of voters

67% make <\$75k

40% identify as Independents

**34% rank GW as one of the most important issues**

## Tap

Equal Relationship with Youth  
Openness to Change

## Avoid

Aversion to Complexity  
Enthusiasm for New  
Technology  
Duty

# MATERIALISTS



7% of adults, 5% of voters  
36% between 15-24 years of age  
22% are students  
29% live in a central city area and 22% in small towns  
43% likely to vote  
**25% rank GW as one of the most important issues**

## Tap

Pursuit of Intensity  
Confidence in Big Business  
Need for Status Recognition  
Active Government

## Avoid

Religiosity  
Ecological Fatalism  
Civic Engagement

# CRUEL WORLDERS



6% of adults, 6% of voters

71% make <\$75k

85% Caucasian

38% work in semi- to unskilled trade

**29% rank GW as one of the most important issues**

## Tap

Entrepreneurialism

American Entitlement

Tried and True

## Avoid

Aversion to Complexity

Technology Anxiety

Every Man for Himself

# UNGREENS



3% of adults, 3% of voters

63% male

32% make >\$100k

53% live in a rural area or small town

96% identify as conservatives

83% very likely to vote

**13% rank GW as one of the most important issues**

## Tap

National Pride

Importance of Discipline

Confidence in Big Business

## Avoid

Ecological Concern

Global Consciousness

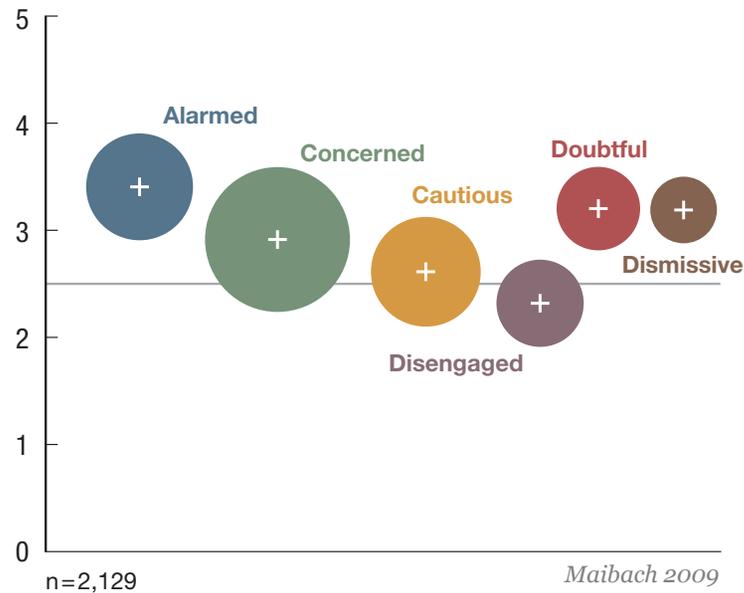
Comfort with Ambiguity

# ENERGY EFFICIENCY MOTIVATES ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM



## Number of energy efficiency improvements made to home

Number of improvements made from the following list of five: Insulating the attic; caulking and weather-stripping the home; installation of an energy-efficient water heater; installation of an energy-efficient furnace; installation of an energy-efficient air conditioner.



Actions Americans want to take to improve the energy efficiency of their homes over the coming year:

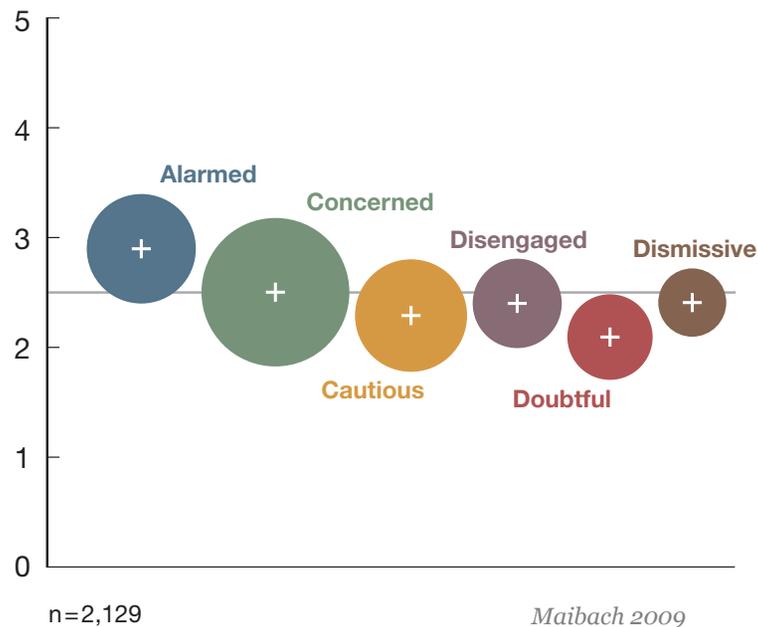
- Insulating the attic (9-17%)
- Caulking & weather-stripping (12-28%)
- Getting a more efficient furnace (12-29%)
- Getting a more efficient air conditioner (14-27%)
- Getting a more efficient water heater (14-30%)
- Changing most of their lighting CFLs (28-51%)

# ENERGY EFFICIENCY MOTIVATES ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM



## Number of habitual conservation actions

Number of actions that respondent does "always" or "often" from the following list of five: turning off unneeded lights; raising the thermostat to 76 or higher or using less air conditioning in summer; lowering the thermostat to 68 or cooler in winter; walking or biking instead of driving; using public transportation or car pools.



## Routine energy conservation actions

- Regularly turn off lights (93%)
- Set the thermostat higher or use AC in summer (56%)
- Set thermostat lower in winter (63%)
- Regularly use public transportation or car-pool (17%)
- Regularly walk or bike instead of driving (19%)

# CHANGE STAGES AND MECHANISMS

**Disinterest      Deliberation      Design      Doing      Defend**

**Cognitive and Experiential Change Mechanisms** →

**Disturbances** →

**Behavior Change Mechanisms** →

**Awareness-building** →

**Choice expansion** →

**Emotional Inspiration** →

**Supportive relationships** →

**Organizational/  
self-reevaluation** →

**Commitment** →

**Helping relationships** →

**Reinforcement** →

**Substitution** →

**Structural Redesign** →

# Contact

CARA PIKE

250.748.1784

[cara@thesocialcapitalproject.org](mailto:cara@thesocialcapitalproject.org)

To download the guide:

[www.thesocialcapitalproject.org](http://www.thesocialcapitalproject.org)

