

Communicating about Climate Adaptation & Preparation

November 15, 2010

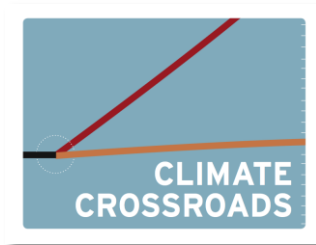
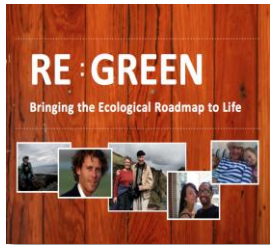
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THE SOCIAL CAPITAL PROJECT



Adaptation/Preparation

- Global Warming Polling

Summary

2007-2010 60 polls

- Media analysis

2007 – 2010 US Print Media Trends

- Literature review

40 articles Academic & trade journals

OVERVIEW

- What is missing from the global warming conversation?
- What is known about communicating climate adaptation & preparation?
- Questions for further research.

1. PUBLIC OPINION:

Levels of Concern and Priority

- Concern about global warming increased from 1997 to 2008, but in 2010 declined to 2001 levels.
- From 1997 to 2010 global warming has ranked at the bottom of America's priorities.



2. PUBLIC OPINION:

Impacts – when and who?

- In 2008, 65% of Americans agreed that global warming has or will soon begin. In 2010 this dropped to 53%.
- Since 1997, Americans have believed that plants and animals are more likely to be affected than:
 - themselves
 - their families
 - their communities
 - other individuals in the U.S.
 - industrialized countries



What's missing from the global warming conversation? *Urgency & Relevancy*

- People don't know how or when global warming will impact their lives.
- Adaptation has been largely ignored.



Nancy J. Gassman

VULNERABILITY IN THE U.S. AND ABROAD

US Adaptation Articles:

- National security
- Infrastructure
- Wildlife

International:

- Climate refugees
- Poor populations
- Food Security



NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE

- Developing countries need to focus on adaptation due to vulnerability and low emission levels.
- “Climate justice” and the responsibility of developed nations.



MITIGATION VS. ADAPTATION

- Adaptation & Mitigation – competing or complementary?
- Will adaptation divert public attention from mitigation?



COMMUNICATING CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND PREPARATION

LITTLE RESEARCH HAS BEEN DONE & THE FOCUS IS NARROW

- Adaptation and mitigation are not commonly understood.
- Adaptation sounds natural, gradual and passive.

Preparation has potential

- Preliminary evidence that “preparation” or preparing for climate impacts/extreme weather events might have traction.

Climate Preparation

Preparation sounds proactive, hopeful and does not specifically reference “climate change”.



Caution when communicating impacts

“Mad Max”



Impacts projected into the future



“Realistic Hope”



Direct, local impacts



Climate adaptation and preparation allow for alternative framing around health, safety, prosperity.

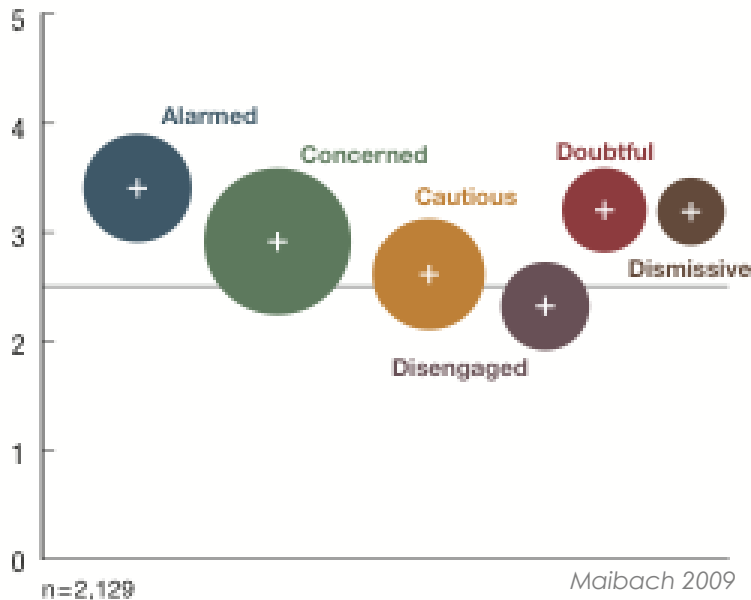
People may not accept global warming, but will still take steps to prepare.



Motivating Support for Action 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%)

The Role of Uncertainty

Successful risk communication depends on recognizing uncertainty.

“Some people may disagree with the science of global warming, but we can all agree that taking steps to ensure our communities are prepared to deal with drought (or fire, flooding, storms, etc.) makes sense.”



FRAMING OPPORTUNITIES

- Community resilience
- Prevention pays
- Readiness
- Better future
- Health and well-being

FRAMING CHALLENGES

- Urgency is lost when impacts are projected into the future.

Need to emphasize near-time consequences with supporting facts when possible.

- Avoid triggering protectionist or anti-immigration views.

Emphasize collective action.

- Adaptation is a long-term issue where success is not obvious.

Set milestones and avoid the idea that we can put an end to global warming.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the best way to talk about impacts and how to address them?
- Should adaptation/preparation be discussed separate from mitigation?
- How do you tie together local impacts and solutions with regional, national and international trends?
- What adaptation policies and behavior changes would the public be willing to support?
- Who are the best preparation messengers?

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To download the guide:

www.thesocialcapitalproject.org

