Cultural identity and climate change (2)

“How did an issue like climate change become so toxic, so caught up in what we call the culture wars?”

Andrew J. Hoffman

In his small but interesting book, *How Culture Shapes the Climate Change Debate*, Andrew Hoffman asks us to see how we see. We are so used to seeing the reality we have created, we seldom step back to examine our process of reality-creation. How is it we all live in the same world but possess vastly different views of this world? And how is it that each of us arrogantly clings to our view as uniquely true while we insist that those who disagree with us must be wrong?

Hoffman points out that all credible scientific organizations on the planet agree that human-caused global warming is a reality but less than half of Americans agree. Besides the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), nearly 200 other scientific agencies in the world hold the position that climate change has been caused by human action.

When looking at the peer-reviewed scientific literature on anthropogenic global warming (AGW) we find nearly 12,000 climate abstracts published from 1991–2011. “Among abstracts expressing a position on AGW, 97.1% endorsed the consensus position that humans are causing global warming.”

Another study looked at nearly 14,000 published between 1991 and 2012 and only found 24 that disagreed with the scientific consensus view that humans are responsible for our warming planet. Another review looked at 2,258 articles published between November of 2012 and the end of 2013 and only found one article by a single author in a Russian journal that rejected man-made global warming.

Another study found that 97% of members of the American Geophysical Union and the American Meteorological Society agreed that global temperatures have risen over the past century. 84% agreed that “human-induced greenhouse warming is now occurring.”

Another study found that “97–98% of the climate researchers most actively publishing in the field surveyed” support the view that human-caused climate change is established science.

Nearly ten years ago, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) stated, “The scientific
evidence is clear: global climate change caused by human activities is occurring now, and it is a growing threat to society.”

According to the National Academy of Sciences, “Rigorous analysis of all data and lines of evidence shows that most of the observed global warming over the past 50 years or so cannot be explained by natural causes and instead requires a significant role for the influence of human activities.”

Five years ago, a worldwide Gallup survey found over one-third of adults in 111 countries agreed that global warming was caused by human activities, “while less than half as many (14%) blame nature.

“People nearly everywhere, including majorities in developed Asia and Latin America, are more likely to attribute global warming to human activities rather than natural causes. The U.S. is the exception, with nearly half (47%) — and the largest percentage in the world — attributing global warming to natural causes.”

Why here?

Why among all nations on Earth is America the number one denier? What is it about culture in America that makes it more likely than any other nation to not believe scientific evidence? What is it about the minds of millions of Americans that allows them to put culture and ideology above scientific fact?

Back in 1997, slightly more Republicans than Democrats believed that global warming was already happening (47% and 46%, respectively) but ten years later, the gap had grown to a 35-point gap. While 41 percent of Republicans believed global warming was happening in 2008, 76 percent of Democrats stated this understanding that year. What happened in the first decade of this century that allowed Democratic opinion to track close to the scientific consensus but pushed Republicans in the opposite direction?

Another study found that “the percentage of Republicans who believe that ‘the effects of global warming have already begun’ declined from 49 percent in 2001 to 28 percent in 2010 while the corresponding percentage for Democrats increased from 60 percent to 69 percent in the same period.”