

Chapter 1 Extract

Climate change was first proposed in the 1820s when mathematician and physicist, Joseph Fourier identified a number of mechanisms that could account for Earth's extra warmth. He proposed what is now widely recognised as "the greenhouse effect"¹ a process where "molecules of certain gases trap heat".² However, it wasn't until 1938, when Guy Stewart Callendar made measurements and calculations, that "the greenhouse effect" was proven to be the cause for global warming. Callendar's claims were "largely met with scepticism"³ which was typical of the early 20th century's trend of environmental denial, "a denial of facts and circumstances that don't fit religious or traditional beliefs".⁴ The generation growing up through this era of climate change revelation was the 'Silent Generation', who are often referred to as "traditionalists" for their "conservative"⁵ philosophies. This generally meant that these traditionalists weren't open to claims of human-induced global warming as it didn't reflect their beliefs. It can be inferred that environmental denial has remained an element of continuity throughout the life course of older generations as they are known to "carry their core values across their life spans".⁶ According to the "Echo Chamber Effect" theory, "people expose themselves only to beliefs that reinforce their own, through their own social networks, which may reinforce their views".⁷ This theory therefore supports the reason that "environmentalism" has been "identified as an issue for an aging population",⁸ thus allowing for the continuation of a trend of environmental denial. This is because older generations, over their life course, have surrounded themselves with people who share similar traditional values and ideologies about climate change, most likely people of a similar age demographic. The results of my questionnaire⁹ supported this notion, with 57.8% of respondents agreeing that older generations continue to be more likely to show environmental denial. This suggests that there is a general consensus that older generations demonstrate environmental and climate

¹ Nuccitelli, D. (2015). *Climatology Versus Pseudoscience: Exposing the Failed Predictions of Global Warming Sceptics*. California. pp.32

² Kacsur, Katherine M., *Addressing the Issue of Climate Change Denial* (2017). *Senior Theses*. 175.

³ HISTORY. (2017). *Climate Change History*. [online] Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/natural-disasters-and-environment/history-of-climate-change> [Accessed 11 Feb. 2019].

⁴ Nuccitelli, D. (2015). *Climatology Versus Pseudoscience: Exposing the Failed Predictions of Global Warming Sceptics*. California. pp.17

⁵ *Slide 1*. (n.d.). [pdf] Missouri, pp.1. Available at: <http://extension.missouri.edu/extcouncil/documents/ecyl/meet-the-generations.pdf> [Accessed 12 Feb. 2019].

⁶ Frumkin, H., Fried, L. and Moody, R. (2012). *Aging, Climate Change, and Legacy Thinking*. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(8), pp.1434-1438.

⁷ Gregoire, C. (2015). *Why Some Conservatives Still Won't Accept Climate Change Is Real*. [online] HuffPost Australia. Available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/climate-change-denial-psychology_us_ [Accessed 4 Feb. 2019].

⁸ Moody, H. R. (2014) *Overcoming Objections by Elders to Action on Climate Change*, *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 80(1), pp. 64–75. doi: 10.1177/0091415015591110.

⁹ See Appendix A: Questionnaire

change denial. However, this may not be representative of the opinion and evaluations of the older generations themselves. In my questionnaire,¹⁰ 63.3% of respondents aged 70 and over agreed that climate change is a real issue we are facing in our society. It should be noted, however, that only 3.2% of respondents were aged 70 and over, the age category of members of the 'silent generation'. This demonstrates a considerable age bias among my sample of respondents, as 29% were aged 13-19. It was therefore not equally representative of the opinions of all age groups, particularly of the silent generation. Only a small representation of this generation commented on the connection between older generations and environmental denial.

¹⁰ Ibid.