

EDITORIAL NOTES FOR THE SPECIAL ISSUE

When the editors of the International Journal for Sustainability Communication asked me to guest edit a special issue on climate change, neither they nor I had a clear sense of the nature of the scholarship that we would attract, or even if we would attract a sufficient number of high quality papers to publish an entire issue of the journal. As a public health professional who has only recently turned his attention to climate change (because I've come to see climate change as the ultimate threat to the public's health), I'm somewhat alarmed by the relative lack of attention climate change is receiving in the communication research community. By my assessment, communication and marketing are potentially powerful tools for shaping population behavior and public policy responses, and are therefore important tools for societies as they attempt to respond to climate change (Maibach, Roser-Renouf & Leiserowitz, in press). So, why then is there a relative paucity of communication and marketing scholarship on this topic? And, perhaps of more immediate relevance to this journal, what if we threw a party (i.e., issued a Call for Papers on climate change) and no one showed up?

I'm delighted to report that many authors did show up for our party – more than we ever had anticipated. In fact, we received so many interesting, high-quality papers that we decided to publish the accepted papers in two sequential special issues of the journal. This issue (Volume 3, Issue 1) contains the first installment of those papers.

Many of the articles in the current issue – all of which are well grounded in communication and behavior change theory – are highly practical and overtly prescriptive in nature. Summarizing several of their field experiments and related research, Griskevicius, Cialdini & Goldstein lead the special issue with a Research Paper describing social norms – and the ability to inexpensively influence social norms through programs of planned communication – as an “underestimated and underemployed lever for managing climate change.” They make a crucial overarching point: We know how to use communication to influence people's behaviors in ways that minimize greenhouse gas pollution, and these methods can often be implemented at very low cost. Failure to implement this knowledge broadly throughout our societies can only be thought of as a significant missed opportunity.

In a provocative Practice Paper -- “An Open Letter to the 44th President of the United States of America” (i.e., the next American President) -- Moser urges rapid adoption of a far more vigorous and committed American response to climate change than in the past, and suggests that doing so effectively will require active efforts to engage the American public (or, more accurately, the American publics). She provides seven principles of audience-specific “retail” communication that the next American President should use to guide these public engagement efforts.

In another Practice Paper, McKenzie-Mohr makes the case that information campaigns alone are often not sufficient to achieve the types of population-based behavior change that campaign planners often seek. Building on his previous publications, he presents community-based social marketing as “an attractive alternative to conventional information intensive campaigns.” His approach blends social marketing techniques with behavior change tools arising from the psychology literature. A five stepped approach, it involves: careful selection of the behavior(s) to be promoted; identification of the barriers and benefits to the behavior, development of a strategy that addresses these barriers and benefits; pilot testing of the strategy; and finally; broad scale implementation of the program.

In the final Practice Paper in this issue, Geltz presents two compelling case studies that demonstrate the prescriptive power of Diffusion of Innovation Theory. With small businesses as her target, and adoption of energy efficiency and demand reduction programs as her objective, she describes diffusion-based communication and marketing strategies that enabled a California-based utility in one case, and a consortium of small California cities in the second case, to dramatically improve the impact of their outreach methods.

In a Student Paper that assesses and critiques Australian climate change communication over the past decade, Gaillard recommends six new communication strategies to build on the recent changes in Australian’s understanding of -- and response to -- climate change. With these six recommendations as her organizing construct, she also presents preliminary findings from her dissertation research: an evaluation of Al Gore’s and the Australian Conservation Foundation’s *The Climate Project – Australia*.

Last but certainly not least of the overtly practical papers in this issue is a Research Paper by Roser-Renouf and Nisbet: The Measurement of Key Behavioral Science Constructs in Climate Change Research. Working from the premise that “the growth and integration of social science research on climate change will be facilitated by careful, consistent measurement of its central constructs,” these authors have compiled and organized, for a variety of relevant constructs, a vast number of measures from previously published peer-reviewed studies and public opinion polls. This paper is an asset of immediate relevance and utility to all who are conducting climate change communication and behavior change research.

A Research Paper by Peters & Heinrichs provides an intensive examination of how climate change risk has been covered in the German news media during recent years. Specifically, through analysis of approximately 1,200 news stories, the authors found that risk is reported in German mass media in a manner that “closely mirrors the position of the scientific community as documented in the IPCC reports.” They conclude that this science-based reporting of risk has likely played an import role in legitimizing a strong political response to climate change in Germany.

In the final Student Paper in this issue, Takahashi analyzed 10 years of reporting on climate change by two major newspapers – one American and one Canadian – both from the Great Lakes region of North America. He found the American paper represented the issue as more controversial, and placed more emphasis on problems associated with proposed

international and domestic policies, than did the Canadian paper. He concludes that these differences may be, in part, due to the more proactive approach to climate change taken by the Canadian government, and in part due to general differences in the way in which Canadian and American newspapers operate.

The issue concludes with Boykoff's detailed Book Review of Susanne Moser's and Lisa Dilling's (2007) volume *Creating a Climate for Change: Communicating Climate Change and Facilitating Social Change*. Interesting in both his praise and his critiques, Boykoff concludes the book "represents a leap forward in pursuits that grapple with the challenges of communicating climate change, and facilitating social change."

The editors and I are extremely pleased to bring you this special issue of the journal. Our initial anxieties were clearly without foundation; many fine scholars "stepped up to the plate" and produced provocative and useful research and ideas for this issue. Now it's your turn. Having survived a rigorous "pre-review" by members of the Editorial Board and two additional peer reviewers, the three Research Papers are published here as "drafts for discussion." We urge you to take this opportunity to provide the authors of the three Research Papers with your feedback on their contributions. Your feedback – offered here online – will be taken into consideration by the editors and the authors as these drafts are revised into their final published form. It's your turn now to "step to the plate."

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