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About

What is Climate Change Communication?



On the surface, climate change communication is about educating, informing, warning, persuading, mobilizing and solving this critical problem. At a deeper level, climate change communication is shaped by our different experiences, mental and cultural models, and underlying values and worldviews.

Early scholars described a simple transmission model of communication, comprised of a messenger, who transmits a message, through particular channels, to specific audiences. This simple model is still commonly used, but inherently

describes a one-way process and too often assumes a passive audience who simply receives the information conveyed by the message.

More recently, scholars have recognized that this transmission model is often too simplistic. In many situations there are a variety of messengers, who craft and transmit different and sometimes opposing messages, through an ever-growing number and complexity of channels, to diverse audiences who have their own pre-existing beliefs, attitudes and values, and who actively interpret and construct their own meanings from the messages they receive, which they in turn communicate through their own networks. Thus communication occurs within a rich, highly complex, and dynamic system of individuals, organizations, and institutions, with sometimes widely divergent knowledge, politics, and cultures. And it is through these dynamic processes that societies develop climate change awareness, (mis)understanding, concern, and action.

Individuals, communities, and societies come to understand, care, and act on climate change through their communication with other people. As an academic field, climate change communication scientists and scholars seek to understand these processes, develop and test scientific theories, and identify more effective communication strategies and tactics to address this critical challenge.

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