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Representation of climate change in the United States: the case study of the Evangelical Climate Initiative

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to critically research and describe how the leaders of the National Association of Evangelicals and within the campaign 'Evangelical Climate Initiative' seek to influence climate change policymaking in the United States. The importance of this study is coming from the need to assess how strongly a religious group influences climate change policymaking in the United States. Their representation of climate change through statements and campaigns is venturing to influence policy-making and climate change debates in the United States while increasing their own visibility in the political scene. My interest in this topic came from learning more about the Environmental Climate Initiative, a campaign carried out by the National Evangelical Association and its implications in advocating for climate change action. Therefore, analysing the way in which the Evangelical Climate Initiative is performing advocacy could indicate how they seek to influence climate change. The case study of the Evangelical Climate Initiative is to be carried out with consideration to Evangelical religious beliefs and their implications in the politics of the United States. Therefore, my study is to be conducted following qualitative research methods, specifically literature review of existing research related and to the Evangelical Climate Initiative. Afterwards, the findings touching the statements made by signatories will be analysed through discourse analysis under the framework of symbolic interactionism theory to determine the character of their speeches while aiming to gain political attention and influence.

Keywords: religion, public policy, perceptions, United States, evangelism, climate change, discourse analysis, Cornwall Alliance, Evangelical Climate Initiative

List of Abbreviations

ECI - Evangelical Climate Initiative

EEN - Evangelical Environmental Network

NAE - National Association of Evangelicals

CDA - Critical Discourse Analysis

USA - United States of America

REMO - Religious Environmental Movement Organizations

GOP - Grand Old Party

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1. Introduction

The choice to study Evangelical Christianity in the United States as an attempted factor of influence on climate change policymaking came partly after considering the high number of Christians in the US (Beal, 2008) and the supremacy of the Evangelical community within the United States (Vasquez, 2003). Evangelical Christians represent the leading religion in the USA with members of 50 million (Hulme, 2009, p. 153). While religion assembles a system of beliefs, ideas, and values that can determine people's lifestyles, perceptions, and actions, religion can be a significant part of a person's life and also part of a person's culture, influencing essential social processes (Goody, 1961). Sociologists like Durkheim and Weber underline the role of religion in society such as the social function, to guide people into a common purpose and exert social control (Posas, 2007, p. 3). Accordingly, religion is an aspect that must be taken into consideration when studying the anthropogenics of climate change and its involvement in the political scene within the context of climate change policymaking. Looking through the history of climate change political and social status in America, the first endeavor within the last century to the idea that the occurring changes in climate have strong anthropogenic roots was only written in the Royal Meteorological Society in 1938 (Hulme, 2009, p. 50). Later, in 1996, it was officially stated in the Second Assessment Report how 'there is a discernible human influence on global climate' (Hulme, 2009, p. 51). Existing research and analysis did not progress to show further results other than the findings that 'age, education and political ideology are consistently [...] associated with environmental concern' (Guth et al., 1995, p. 365).

'One of the reasons we disagree about climate change is because we believe different things about our duty to others, to Nature and to our deities' (Hulme, 2009, p. 144).

Demographically, the United States represents the biggest economy in the world, according to the World Bank (The World Bank, 2021). Therefore, the position of the United States can be considered contradictory to environmental action, as related to what the symbolic interactionism theory entails where the idea that economic growth and environmental action are on two different

sides (Ogunbameru, 2004). By the number of adherents, to date, Evangelical Christians are 50 million from a total of 150 million Christians in the United States (Statista, n.d.).

As part of this thesis, essential pieces of literature have been and are being studied, and so far the literature can be contradictory as to how Christianity impacts policy-making on climate change. The initial hypothesis or assumption on which this study began, was that certain groups of people that practice Christianity might be less aware and concerned with climate change, as they might tend to dismiss facts and rather view God as the only force that can shape the world. Therefore, this is of importance because their perception of climate change interferes with the way politically powerful people from these groups choose to represent climate change and attempt to influence policy making. Hence, the intent of this thesis project is to narrow down to the critical analysis of the statements that were made in 2006 under the Evangelical Climate Initiative and analyze the way in which the discourses within the campaigns of the Evangelical community are mentioning that people should not take action on climate change as part of God's plan, attempting to influence climate change policymaking.

1.2.1 Background of the Evangelical Climate Initiative

The most widespread religion in the United States is Christianity (Beal, 2008). The United States as a nation has been in various ways shaped by evangelicals, making up to 25% of the population until 2017 (Miller, 2018). The 'Evangelical Climate Initiative' was initiated by the National Association of Evangelicals, an organization that is comprised of a total of 30 million followers, which also means between 10 and 15 percent of all eligible voters in the United States. The scope of the Initiative was to bring evangelical Christian principles to carry on questions around climate change (Hulme, 2009, p. 153). While humans, just like other beings on the planet, influence the environment they live in, the concern towards the environment provoked serious debate on whether it is safe, moral, or if the Gods approve of humans to intervene (Bell, 2016, p. 222). Accordingly, it is important to assess how and to what extent religious beliefs can influence debates, politics and policymaking about climate change. Therefore, during the Evangelical Climate Initiative, a total of eighty-six signatories (parties) acknowledged their restraints

regarding climate change engagement. Furthermore, contradictory enough, they also decided to embrace climate change as a moral issue of great importance to American evangelicals in the future (Hulme, 2009, p. 153). Because there is a case where Christians associate climate change with the end of the world in their trying to understand the disastrous natural phenomenon as a sign of punishment from God for humans' sins, they associate the decline of the religious society with death and judgment from God through natural forces. (Hulme, 2009, p. 153). Within the context of Evangelical Christianity in the United States, it is essential to reflect upon the power that religion as an institutionalized community has on political debates that frame climate policymaking. In 2006, the Evangelical Climate Initiative persuaded Washington to adopt a new climate policy initiative leading to interfaith conversations about climate change. (The Evangelical Climate Initiative, October 2007 press release). From the studied literature on the case of the Evangelical Climate Initiative, they used statements issued publicly, advertisements and the media to spread their concern as Christians towards the environment and to attempt to influence policy-making by taking into consideration the bible as a guide for public governance (Nagle, 2008, p. 61). The Evangelicals show interest in climate change among environmental matters and since 1993 when the Evangelical Environmental Network was formed, it took part in the support of the Endangered Species Act with the purpose to prevent changes that might lead to the weakening of the law (Nagle, 2008, p. 61). Evangelicals are active in various religious organizations, that include the World Vision, a youth ministry named the Young Life among others, and finally, Prison Fellowship which is one of the prison ministries (Nagle, 2008, p. 60). Evangelicals were present in the political scene in America since the 19th century with withdrawals and comebacks, usually preceded by major political events, and had strong influences on decisions that involved school praying and matters such as abortion (Nagle, 2008, p. 61).

1.2 Aim and research question

The aim of this study is to understand how a religious organization such as the National Associations of Evangelicals attempted to influence climate change policymaking through the

campaign 'Evangelical Climate Initiative' in the United States. The campaign was established in 2006 and since then it continued its course of action to have an influence around politics.

Research question:

1. *How did the Evangelical Climate Initiative in the United States seek to influence climate policy-making when creating the campaign in 2006?*

Subquestion:

- 1.2 *What tools did the leaders of the Evangelical Climate Initiative use to seek influence over climate policymaking?*

The research questions offer a deeper insight into the way the Evangelical Climate Initiative sought to have an impact on climate change policy-making in the United States in 2006. This research question sets out for a description of the major actions and statements made within the Evangelical Climate Initiative in the United States and how they sought to influence climate policy making since the ECI started in 2006. In order to answer the research question, the analysis will focus on statements made by signatories and the representation done through media channels. A critical, analytical and descriptive study constructs knowledge and gathers attitudes (Agee, 2009, p. 433), which is the core scope of this research project. This study aims to gather data on the formation of the Evangelical Climate Initiative, the statements that had been made regarding the evangelist's views on climate change action and finally, the importance of their statements and role on climate change policymaking. Furthermore, once the data on their statements have been collected, the statements will be analyzed under discourse analysis to determine the type of language, attitudes and behaviors of the evangelical members in the climate change debate. The finding will therefore determine the importance of interaction and discourse in the political scene because it is the political level that they used to try and influence climate policymaking.

1.3 Disposition of the thesis

The thesis is built out of six chapters that are placed in a coherent order to navigate the reader through the introduction; research design; the main theoretical framework along with two other complementary theoretical frameworks; literature review; analysis and discussion, and finally conclusion.

The first chapter of the thesis represents the introduction to the research area and background of the topic of climate change from a sociological perspective in the United States and the case study of the Evangelical Climate Initiative including general evangelical responses to climate change. The general evangelical responses to climate change are being included to supply the position of the evangelical association in the climate change debate and recognise how present it is in the political scene. Further, the aim and the research question is being addressed in order to maintain the direction of this study towards the selected case study of the Evangelical Climate Initiative. Among definitions and delimitations, the research design, methodology and data management are being constructed according to the research question and the aim of the study. Therefore, this thesis aims to understand the way in which the Evangelical members of the Evangelical Climate Initiative sought to influence climate policy by analyzing the statements made by their leaders through critical discourse analysis.

The third chapter illustrates the relevance of the theoretical frameworks such as that of Symbolic Interactionism as the main theoretical framework of this study. Symbolic Interactionism is the support of the method of critical discourse analysis for the statements made in the Evangelical Climate Initiative. Social constructivism is important to identify the types of relations established within the analysis of the statements and how they shaped the opinions of the leaders within the Evangelical Climate Initiative. The theoretical framework of Culture and risk is complementary to Symbolic interactionism and determines the category in which the leaders of the Initiative correspond.

Furthermore, the fourth chapter comprises the literature review. The literature review presents various themes of Evangelism as a community in America, the history of Evangelism and the inter-religious action on climate change between multiple religious organizations and their course of action towards climate change policymaking.

The fifth chapter includes the coherent order of presenting the progression of the Evangelical Climate Initiative, the media as tools for gaining attention in the cause of Evangelicals and their work for impacting policymaking, including the signatories and finally the analysis of the statements under critical discourse analysis. Through this chapter, the research question and sub-questions will have a ground to be answered and clarified before diving into the sixth chapter which represents the conclusion and will include the final results of the study.

2. Research design and methodology

The research design is determined by the inquiry of the study, therefore, since the research question represents an exploratory focus on the way in which the Evangelical Climate Initiative sought to influence policy making in the United States, the methodology will be fundamentally composed of interpreting various finding through literature review within the case study of the ECI. One method of answering the main research question will be through critical discourse analysis of the statements made by the signatories of the ECI, therefore creating the grounds to interpret behavior within the framework of symbolic interactionism and culture risk theory. Ideally, the research design of this study could fit the structure of a longitudinal trend study, which would allow for the study of trends regarding perceptions of climate change and religion over an extended time frame, enabling me to monitor changes in perceptions and changes in religious practices that could influence climate change policymaking and awareness. However, I have chosen to remodel it into a case study of the Evangelical Climate Initiative, given the current research opportunities. A remarkable characteristic identified in this study that delivers it as a case study is the evidence that within its context, a phenomenon is being studied (Ritchie and Lewis, 2002, p. 66). Further, a case study can help describe processes, in order to analyze behaviors within an event (Jones & Ponelis, 2015). Consequently, I have decided to conduct this study based on the context of the Evangelical Climate Initiative with a focus on the way they attempt to influence climate policymaking in the United States in 2006. Importantly, while collecting data from various secondary sources such as the website of the Evangelical Climate Initiative, media and journalistic articles and academic sources, it will enable me to explore

distinctive empirical material that provides divergent perspectives and results. The diversity of the data will allow me to embrace different results as part of my data analysis and will lead to an analysis of the way in which the signatories sought to influence climate change policymaking in the United States, within the theoretical frameworks that will highlight behavior.

2.1 Data collection

While doing qualitative research there is space for analysis and interpretation (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 3), specifically aiming to provide an in-depth understanding of the statements made during the Evangelical Climate Initiative and how through this initiative, the evangelical leaders tried to influence policy-making on climate change at Washington. This research that is performed to critically analyze the case study of the Evangelical Climate Initiative in the United States is composed of secondary material. The data collection will be conducted through a literature review with the aim to gather various data on the Evangelical Climate Initiative and the statements that were made regarding climate change along with the names and political positions of the people that signed the Evangelical Climate Initiative. It is essential to look into how they used the political sphere and the religious context as the means to increase visibility and be heard. Further, data is collected to answer the question regarding the tools that they used, such as the media and advertisement. The events of the ECI gained a lot of attention in the media. Various media written articles are available, from which have been selected the most prominent such as 'The New York Times' and 'ABC news'. While in academia, the sources are limited yet substantial, academic materials such as published scientific articles are also an important part of the secondary data collection offering greater analytical writings. Therefore the main method of literature searching will be made through Google Scholar and other reliable sources of research on the history and growth of the American Evangelicals. The year 2006 represents the main variable between sources because this year represents the time when the Evangelical Climate Initiative was developed and signed by 86 signatories. However, they made statements and continued recruiting supporters until years later. (Wardekker et al., 2008).

2.2 Data Analysis

The analysis of data will be made through critical discourse analysis. The role of critical discourse analysis (CDA) in empirical research is to act as a method in studying the relationship between discourses and the social development of various social spheres (Jorgensen et al., 2002, p. 7). Critical discourse analysis represents “ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity” (Gee, 2014, p. 201). Because the aim is to analyze the statements of the Evangelical signatories during the ECI and understand how they represent climate change in the United States as part of answering how they tried to influence policy making, CDA will provide two of its five common features. The one that *‘describes discourse as both constitutive and constituted of the social world’*, being in dialectic relation with alternative social spheres, contributing and contemplating social structures (Jorgensen, Phillips, 2002, p. 62). This can be in analogy with the position that the Evangelists created for themselves in the political scene and how the discursive practices between them and the policymakers have been determined by the social structure of the United States, where the Evangelical community as a public organization is far from being overlooked (Brown et al., p. 27, 2016). Secondly, discourse, in a Foucauldian view, is a *‘productive force which through discursive practices actors can construct depictions of the world’* (Jorgensen, Phillips, 2002, p. 63) which is part of the discussion of this thesis.

While conducting critical discourse analysis of the statements made by the leaders of the ECI, various elements of their language will be analyzed to identify what kind of expressions, terminology and wording has been used to seek to influence policy making (SAGE, 2019, p. 4). The types of language elements that need to be identified are *intentionality* and *informativity*. Intentionality will capture what the spoken person intends to deliver, and informativity will represent the character of the information in terms of being new or unexpected (SAGE, 2019, p. 4). The informativity will be coded with 1 for representing a religiously dominant argument, and with 5 for being environmental and scientifically based, and 0 for being a neutral affirmation.

Intentionality will be coded with 1 for representing a religiously dominant argument and 5 for representing a solution based argument.

Hence, the qualitative approach of this study is a mix of critical discourse analysis, symbolic interactionism and constructionism intending to understand notions and concepts that people use in everyday life to gain insights into their world. Therefore, understanding the notions and concepts that Evangelicals hold and use to influence the representation of the world of today which is highly focused on climate change. The scope of critical discourse analysis applied in this study is, then, to critically identify and assess the ways in which discourse and interaction in a certain political setting between people of religious backgrounds can impact policy making.

2.3 Data management

In the process of making qualitative data manageable, the collected data, which is secondary, will be sorted in such a way that it will match with the delimitations of the study. Furthermore, data is to be interpreted and analyzed to fit the selected theoretical frameworks. While the main scope of this study is to collect data that captures behaviors within the statements made during the Evangelical Climate Initiative towards climate change action, as part of data management it is essential that the views and behaviors identified are organized from views and behaviors that are in favor or against climate change action and further they will be classified according to the degree in which religion determined these views, constructing an initial thematic framework (Ritchie et al., 2002, p. 282). The indexing and sorting will be conducted to determine which parts of the data are similar and can be applied together, using the thematic framework or topic coding to label them (Ritchie et al., 2002, p. 282).

2.4 Delimitations

As part of the delimitations of this study, no other religion than Evangelical Christians is being included and no other geographical territories where Evangelical communities exist are being taken into consideration by leaving aside topics that do not include the Evangelical Climate

Initiative or religious campaigns related to climate change policy making. Other aspects that are excluded from the thesis represent different occasions in which the Evangelical Community got involved in the political scene within the United States (Moore et al., 2021, p. 171). In this sense, the community is known for getting involved in various political matters such as opposing abortion (Moore et al., 2021, p. 171), as well as for creating new organizations aimed at different social issues and humanitarian action directed at orphans. (Brown et al., 2016, p. 34).

2.5 Conceptual framework

The study within this thesis project captures various keywords and concepts that need to be defined. The definitions given to the major terms used are based on the context of the research and describe the meaning that is intended to be used within the thesis such as climate change, culture, perceptions and religion with a sociological attitude.

To understand climate change, it is first important to understand what *climate* means from its physical aspect. The concept of climate has gained various significance for humans, shaped by their own capacities (Hulme, 2009, p. 3). The word climate was firstly used to contrast between five zones of the earth, which were directly linked to the grade of the sun's rays, from the Equator to the North. As people were advancing to define and understand climate, the main way of measuring it was through meteorological measurements (Hulme, 2009, p. 7). Climate can also be defined as the source of material needs of different human cultures such as rain, sun, wind which are beneficial to the land (Hulme, 2009, p. 2).

Defining *climate change* might be broadly defined as different sorts of outcomes of environmental issues that are visible to people. The fact that the climate is changing is a complex explanation, but simply is the cause of natural agents during a timescale determined by the main cause of climate, that being the sun. (Goudie, 2006, p. 196) From the anthropogenic point of view, climate change has been recognised as being influenced by people's actions, in 1996, officially documented in the Second Assessment Report (Hulme, 2009, p. 51).

Evangelicals according to Cambridge Dictionary means 'belonging to one of the Protestant Churches or Christian groups that believes that the teaching of the Bible and persuading other

people to join them is extremely important.’ Looking into the definition from a more sociological explanation is described as ‘the most discussed but least understood group in America today.’ (Lindsey, 2007).

Dominionism is defined as the ideology that Christians, disregarding their theological views, have the call to exercise their voice in society in a political sense, by getting involved in political institutions. Scrutinizing the definition of dominionism, it represents the Christians as promoting religious supremacy in the United States and rejects the roots of Enlightenment in the American Democracy, considering that the biblical law should be the foundation of the American law. (Political Research Associates, n.d.)

2.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations within this study differ as the data collection is done through literature review. Therefore, through this method, no sensitive or confidential data is being collected, and only data that is available to the public through accessible documentation (Suri, 2019). As a consequence to literature review and to the scope of the study, the collected data is analysed within informed subjectivity and reflexivity (Suri, 2019). As part of the literature review, data will be collected in regards to the community of Evangelicals in the United States including the statements made during the ECI and the names of the people that signed the ECI and therefore, differently from primary research, this data is conducted under systematic reviews of accessible documents. Therefore, three guiding principles will be followed such as transparency, purposefully informed selective inclusivity and informed reflexivity (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020). In order to enforce the systematic review, inside the thesis will be identified a correct epistemological direction and that is represented by environmental sociology and sociology of religion. Further, the right purpose is identified and the literature is researched in accordance followed by the evaluation and construction of the associated understandings to finally be communicated (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020). In this sense, the correct epistemological direction is an interpretive one which emphasizes on the authentical depiction of a group’s experiences and perception (Suri, 2019).

As part of ethical considerations, it is important to focus on the central aspect of the research and not allow bias to intervene (Kara, 2021). Hence, the fundamental focus has to persist on the political implications of the Evangelical association as concern towards climate policymaking. While reviewing the literature on the Evangelical Climate Initiative, it is essential to gather statements made by the evangelical leaders on their point of view and words of action towards climate change and a most important aspect of ethical considerations is to deliver the statements as they are found within the sources and not shape them in any way because not only is it not ethical, but it will distort the results of the analysis and provide eroded results. Further, under ethical consideration, the names of the people that signed the Initiative should not be specified unless they are already made public in the same context. With that in mind, for this study, it is important to look into the political standings of the people who signed the Initiative, as a determination of influential positions. As the researcher, it is important to not cross into investigating any aspects of the personal lives of these people.

3. Theoretical framework

The main theoretical framework of this study stands in the theory of *Symbolic Interactionism* while *Culture theory and risk* along with *Social constructionism* will be the complementary theoretical frameworks. The systematic relationship between these theoretical frameworks supports the systematic approach of the study to gather data from the baseline, which starts with the construction of perceptions within the Evangelical community throughout history; further, the methods that the Evangelical leader of ECI used to promote their political agenda on climate change policymaking and finally to analyze and identify patterns of character in the statements made during the ECI's campaigns. In all the mentioned stages of the analysis, Symbolic Interactionism is present as support as to how the leaders communicate their relations to the environment or their standpoint of human-environment interaction. According to Herbert Mead theory on symbolic interactionism, the interaction between humans can be categorized as symbolic interactionism, while the relationship of interaction between humans and the environment is often overlooked and should be considered as Transverse Signal Interaction.

Social acts such as communication, which take place in a selective environment, impacts both the social life process and the natural world (Weigert, 1991, p. 355). The Culture theory and Risk supports the construction of the category of the societal group in which the leaders of the Evangelical Climate Initiative is found and works as a guide in identifying the character of their group and intentions towards the society. While social constructionism could be applied to emphasize how people's understanding of environmental issues depend on their social backgrounds, the Cultural theory and Risk also highlights what shapes an individual's perception of danger, threat, and pollution (Tansey et al., 1999). The Social constructionism theory will be used as the bridge between Evangelical religious beliefs and how they have been shaped within their community and political agenda.

3.1 Symbolic Interactionism and discourse analysis

The symbolic interactionism theory channels the vision that people act as the tailors of their own actions, contrary to the idea where individuals react in a passive way accustomed to social and institutional patterns (Ogunbameru, 2004). This same idea is reflected in the statements made by the evangelical leaders during the Evangelical Climate Initiative. Furthermore, since symbolic interactionism is a theory that reflects upon people's behavior or attitudes, applying this theory to the case study of the Evangelical Climate Initiative it will enable them to conduct discourse analysis on their statements with regards to communication patterns. (Ogunbameru, 2004). From the perspective of the symbolic interaction theory, a significant distinction between people at large is their choice to either take action and protect the environment or not. The first means that environmental action should be prior to economic growth while the opposite spectrum comprises people who consider that economic evolution is more important than environmental protection (Ogunbameru, 2004). In the case of the ECI, there might be the case where their pronouncement of climate change comes from the need to have a say in the political context and to use a market-based approach.

3.2 Culture theory and risk perception

The framework of Culture Theory and risk is an essential framework that is being used to understand how groups in society perceive danger and whether they have trust or distrust (Tansey, O'riordan, 1999). This theory represents a four-fold classification that depicts individuals or social groups, even entire societies. These classifications bring upon the two fundamental categories of group-oriented people or individual-oriented people. Therefore, in the group-oriented dimensions, we would identify characteristics such as the belief that many rules are necessary to control behavior or that just a few or little rules are necessary. Within this classification, the egalitarians and the hierarchies are strongly group-oriented and have a sense of unity (Mike Hulme, 2009, p. 186). As described by Hulme, these categories differentiate themselves in their views regarding social bonding and whether they consider it to be vertical (the hierarchists) or horizontal (the egalitarians). While the hierarchists perceive the order in society as ranked based on role and place, the egalitarians consider only a few governing rules, therefore, see people as equal. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the individualists and fatalists are rather characterized by self-oriented values. The classification of the four 'ways of life' offers a guide to understanding how different socially constructed groups interpret risk differently.

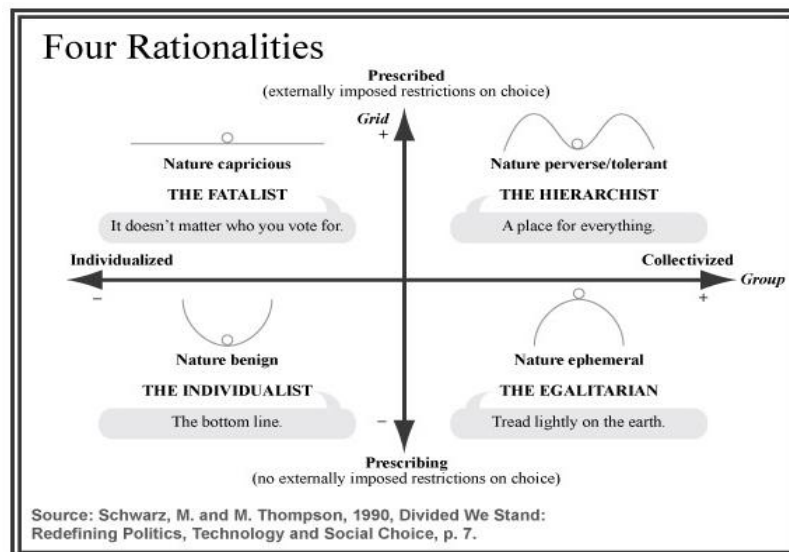


Fig. 1. (Source: Diagrams of Theory: Douglas and Wildavsky's grid/group typology of worldviews)

Having this map as support can guide this study into more findings and results on the way the Evangelists, having a certain set of values, perceive nature and climate change. Therefore, the group of people that are part of the Evangelical Climate Initiative is to be associated with one of these categories as an indicator of the type of rationality that they have. This theoretical framework is complementary to the Symbolic Interactionism theory, and it is also strongly linked to Social Constructionism.

3.3 Social constructionism

The most relevant aspect of social constructionism to this study is the '*taken-for-granted knowledge*'. This approach to social construction emphasizes the importance of discourse and language in shaping perspectives. All of us create reflections of the world that aren't necessarily the objective reality, but the results of the way we categorized the world through discourse (Jorgensen et al., 2002, p. 5). In this case, there is the possibility that Evangelical values shape the language and discourse that people have in a community, resulting in biased and subjective perspectives of the reality regarding climate change, by using abstract language without a certain word of action, as found in their statements made during the ECI. Another aspect of social constructionism is the *cultural and historical specificity* which represents a significant influence on our views and knowledge about the world. Discourse is the social action that produces knowledge, social relations and forms identities, and from an anti-foundationalist perspective, knowledge and identity is contingent, meaning that they could be different and changeable depending on the culture. (Jorgensen et al., 2002, p. 5) This aspect can serve as support in the evidence that Evangelism is a big part of the culture of the people that follow it and can influence people's perceptions about climate change. In the scenario where Christianity wasn't present in their lives, some of their knowledge and world views would have been constructed differently.

4. Research overview

4.1 Historical review of Evangelism in America

Within the United States, evangelicals arranged various endeavors in modern US society, since 1739 when the prime pursuit was the 'First Great Awakening' followed by the 'Second Great Awakening' as a result of many respondents to the first-mentioned. These events led to the expansion of the evangelical church adherents to 25% in 1860 (Routhe, 2013, p. 46). The Awakenings happened around the same time as the Enlightenment was occurring and intensifying, creating a rapport of contradictions and showing resistance to many attributes of the Enlightenment (Noll, 1976, p. 77). During the Awakenings there has been a great concern for the authority of the Bible and personal appropriation of religious aspects, as part of the life of Protestants in America, but the religion that Christians were spreading was having strong attributes influenced by life in America (Noll, 1976, p. 77). The events of the Awakening can represent an example of the Evangelicals' involvement in society from a long time ago. The link between the great concern for the authority of the Bible and the way the leaders of NAE wish to implement the Bible as a guide for governance and policymaking in the U.S. is strongly evident.

Looking into the more recent historical influences on Evangelism and its development, the massive immigration to the United States during 1860 and 1870 of five million people played a significant role, especially because it was followed by significantly more arrivals in the next decade. Until the First World War, the trend continued and the already settled migrants in the rural areas merged with the newcomers in the cities, meaning that churches had to adjust to new contexts of ministry from rural to urban, giving the church 'the greatest inner revolution it has ever known' according to pioneer sociologist of religion in America. (Noll, 1976, p. 264). In parallel, there was great technological growth and change, making communication and transportation tightly linked to the intellectual revolution that leads to changes in thought and perception (Noll, 1976, p. 265). As the drift to new ways of thinking was emerging, evangelical denominations found themselves in an aggravated threat, but as they were more exposed to the changes, some arrived at the conclusion that there are other ways to truth and slightly embraced the scientific approaches to reality, with all its difficulty (Noll, 1967, p. 288). The shift in thinking

that some evangelicals demonstrated can be attributed to their long history of becoming involved in societal issues and seeking a spot in influencing the making of American society.

4.2 The social construction of climate change with regards to political millennialism

The social construction of an issue such as the environment is closely linked to the respective society's perception of threat in relation to natural manifestations of the climate and climate change (Stehr et al., 1995, p. 99). Before climate could be measured, both climate and the weather were interpreted in qualitative concepts of either danger, beauty or prosperity. People and cultures experiencing major weather events would lead them to relate the perspective event to be a message of either judgment or commendation from God (Hulme, 2009, p 13). Reviewing the social meaning of climate in the case of evangelical Americans, there could exist rather a politically influenced construction of the climate, since they make up a very politically influenced population (Carr et al., 2012, p. 276). In the religious-climate debate steered up once with the Evangelical Climate Initiative, in relation to the writings of the author Lynn White with his journal 'The historical roots of our ecologic crisis' about how monotheistic religions are harming the environment, disagreements developed upon the implications of the evangelical community in climate change. The theological disagreement was mainly founded on the doctrine that evangelism is framing, such as the dominion over nature and millennial or pre-millennial views. (Hulme, 2009, p. 154). Furthermore, as a result of interviews conducted within the research of lead author Wylie Carr in 2012 in Montana, 'The Faithful Skeptics: Evangelical Religious Beliefs and Perceptions of Climate Change', many pastors and members of the churches in Dallas, Texas attributed climate change to human sinfulness and the flawlessness of the bible regarding climate change (Carr et al., 2012, p. 276). Millennialism itself represents the expectation of the apocalypse to come, with a series of events ahead, such as environmental issues namely climate change, but also political revolutions (Lienesch, 1983, p. 447). Thereafter, the social construct that evangelicals formed is highly related to end-time beliefs, as David Orr environmental educator has stated 'belief in the imminence of the end times tends to make evangelicals careless stewards of our forests, soils, wildlife, air, water, seas and climate' (Veldman, 2019, p. 7). The

literature offered by Mike Hulme provides an insight into the American Evangelical Christians' political and social influence towards nature, confirming that Evangelical Christian Americans' attitudes towards climate change correspond to beliefs embedded in amillennialism and premillennialism (Hulme, 2009, p. 153). Therefore, the belief in amillennialism might be the leading cause of the reticences of evangelists in climate change action. Pre-millennial views tend to carry the assimilation of catastrophic climate change with the advent of the millennium. These views can influence and diminish behaviors in favor of climate change actions, making it harder for these people to see how important their habits are to avoid such outcomes (Hulme, 2009, p. 155). With all that in mind, in many religions, including Christianity, there exists a principle of stewardship that humans do not own the world, and the richness of the natural world does not belong to humans to dispose of, that humans must seek to maintain the grace and diversity of the world. Despite the existing principle of stewardship, historians and activists tend to discard them. (Hulme, 2009, p. 148).

The tendency of social authorities is to interpret climate change in various extreme forms of manifestation. Social authorities are an essential factor in combating climate change, and these authorities can be scientists, the media and even religious institutions (Stehr et al., 1995, p. 101). The way these authorities decide to offer attention to climate change will implicitly impact the public attention especially because the public will fail to receive an elaborated and common picture of it, therefore what is fed by the authorities to the public is the social construct (Stehr et al., 1995, p. 101).

4.3 Religious Environmental Movements and religious organizations in the United States.

The religious movements on the matter of environment vary from ideological and theological manners to institutional and organizational grounds (Hand et al., 2012, p. 2). In the United States, the environmental movements came from several ideologies of environmental justice, where morality played its role. Interestingly enough, the roots were mostly secular and subordinated by social, political and scientific grounds. This picture has changed when faith groups in the United States are gaining a much more religious following to the environment,

connecting to traditions and faith (Biscotti et al., 2014, p. 414). The dimensions of Christian stewardship, creation spirituality and ecojustice, all depend on the religious community and what their focus of change is, either individual or institutional. In accordance with the literature, Christian stewardship corresponds to evangelical groups with dominant traditional perspectives. This is where evangelism can be identified with the dominion-like approach to the modern ecological predicament, with a most combative and argumentative sector of movement (Hand et al., 2012, p. 3).

Before going into reviewing religious organizations, the construction of these groups needs to be put into perspective. Thereafter, organizations of religious nature most times represent a growing network that includes publishers and mission boards and are being supported financially by their adherents, while it is essential to maintain believers (Biscotti et al., 2014, p. 416). Between 2007 and 2008, over 60 organizations with religious environmentalist profiles, also part of the Religious Environmental Movement Organizations (REMO), were interviewed. The founder of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, Paul Gorman stated that the form of the environmental movement that his organization is operating does not rely on praying but on bringing responsibility to creation in religious life (Evans, 2016, p. 581).

4.3.1 In contrast to the Evangelical Climate Initiative: the Cornwall Alliance

Interfaith Stewardship Alliance, known as the Cornwall Alliance, strongly responded in opposition to the Evangelical Call to Action, demanding for the National Association of Evangelicals to not pursue any further the Evangelical Climate Initiative. The demand came in the form of an open letter that was signed by evangelical leaders and political people likewise (Zaleha et al., 2015, p. 26). According to literature, one of the most high profile signatories of the letter is Richard Land, who is also the head of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. Richard Land has been working on other campaigns such as 'We get it!' manifesting his rejection of climate action and attacking the Call to Action considering it a poorly deemed call for 'action in response to poorly understood, hypothetical risks' (Zaleha et al., 2015, p. 26). Along with the first letter, the Cornwall Alliance also submitted a paper named

‘Call to Truth, Prudence and the Protection of the Poor’ where they are found denying in statements that the danger of the anthropogenic aspect of climate change is not real. (Beisner et al, 2006, p. 3). Calvin Beisner is the spokesperson of the CA and represents the alliance as a group of people that resists the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, claiming that their actions are strongly based on science (Björnberg et al., 2020, p. 692). Additionally, in the book ‘Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives’ by Dunlap and McCright, the Cornwall Alliance is categorized as a front group and ‘astroturf’, being supported by corporations expressing largely their anti-environmental attitudes. The Cornwall Alliance is also described as a strong proponent of neoliberal ideas, in spite of their Christian profile (Dunlap et al., 2015, p. 316).

Research done by academic Swedish institutions such as the KTH Royal Institute of Technology and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, on the Cornwall Alliance arguments against the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is aiming to identify to what extent their arguments express denial of climate change and how much of their arguments are built on science (Björnberg et al., 2020, p. 694). In this research paper the researchers identified types of climate science denial. Therefore, the Cornwall Alliance puts forward an approach to climate change that protects business. The ‘enrichment argument’ states that reducing or stopping activities limited by environmental protection will diminish the human welfare, who has ‘dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens’ as stated in the Genesis. (Björnberg et al., 2020, p. 697). Accordingly, the CA claims that there is no life on earth equal to humans. Secondly, the ‘anti-paganism argument’ highlights the beliefs that God is a different entity apart from creation, and that it is fitting to worship God but wrong to worship nature. (Björnberg et al., 2020, p. 696). Following is the ‘omnipotence argument’ where it is believed that God, as the creator of earth, can cope with any environmental issues, because divine intervention will alleviate the effects of any environmentally dangerous event (Björnberg et al., 2020, p. 698). The ‘lack of moral relevance argument’ comes as an arguments towards climate change mitigation supported by the idea that there are much more grave issues in the world such as gay marriage and poverty (Björnberg et al., 2020, p. 699). Finally, the ‘cost-benefit argument’ states that cutting on greenhouse gas emissions will have costs that are much higher than the benefits (Björnberg et al., 2020, p. 700).

4.3.2 The inter-religious ethical climate action

In the last two decades, climate change has been a pronounced topic in the political debate of the United States, while in 2007 George Bush indicated the issue of climate change as being a society level concern (Wardekker et al., 2008, p. 54). The debate on climate change has been many times surrounded by the religious and ethical aspects of it. The various beliefs and views that different religious entities carry automatically entail different manners to the issue of climate change (Wardekker et al., 2008, p. 54). Various religions can provide direction towards a harmless way of living for the individual and society. The ways in which religion can support ethical action when it comes to climate change vary from the traditional functions of religion to the ability to influence and inspire (Posas, 2007). The advantage of religion in having great influence is the long-term prospect found in their oral narratives, contemplative and ritual commitments that shape values in community living. As shown in the figure below religion can act as a guide to ethical living, educate, sponsor events and programs, appeal to the higher deeper values of humans, provide ethical guidance on status and relationship to nature (Posas, 2007). As an example, in Hinduism, there are found guidelines that regard the diet as a form of respect to other forms of life. There is the message of Buddha ‘One who practices Sila - moral living, Samadhi - concentration leading to mindfulness, and Panna, wisdom, heeds the universe, and the preservation of all forms of life’ (Posas, p. 14, 2007).

The tools that religion can use to encourage people on positive and sustainable climate change action have been used in other issues of ethics, social justice and environmental concern. The religions that are usually involved in ethics and social justice are the most active ones, particularly those that belong to greater networks. According to the Yale University website dedicated to climate change and the role of religion and ethics there exists 8 criteria when checking and calculating the actions of religious entities on climate change, which can be seen in the table below. These criteria include having and maintaining a website and educating adherents in regards to ethics in the context of climate change, backing up their actions with a scriptural basis, promoting their teaching through events, and delivering statements (Posas , 2007).

5. Analysis

5.1 The progression of the Evangelical Climate Initiative

The Evangelical Climate Initiative opened the grounds of a commitment made by the Evangelical Environmental Network in 2006 towards the environment. The EEN intended to mobilize evangelical leaders and pledge to take action on climate change through the Evangelical Climate Initiative (Nagle, 2008, p. 53). Looking at the evolution of the Evangelical Environmental Network, they became advanced within the national political stage around the years of 1995 and 1996 when the Republicans manifested aggression towards the Endangered Species Act. This came as an opportunity for the evangelicals to act as opponents and gather consideration from the media. On this occasion, environmental researcher Calvin B DeWitt stated at Washington, DC, during a press conference, that the Endangered Species Act is the analogy with the 'Noah's Ark of our day', blaming the congress for 'trying to sink it' (Wilkinson, 2012, p. 21). The ECI represented the result of 40 years of development and engagement of American evangelicals with aspects regarding the environmental crisis. The leaders of the EEN, who also signed the ECI are professionals and members of other organizations that are spread around the United States and use the base of the ECI to extend the conversation of climate change within their advocacy, spreading the 'Call to Action' (Wilkinson, 2012, p. 45). The Evangelical Climate Initiative itself is a group that since 2006 has been conjoined by an estimated number of 300 signatories, (Wilkinson, 2012) but the ECI has been described as a campaign as well. Them getting involved in environmental issues, under this form, started once with Lynn White's article, as a comeback, to the controversy of his writings while blaming the biblical doctrine of dominion for environmental issues (Wilkinson, 2012). According to American historian Lynn White and his article 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis', addressed in a journal entitled *Science* that monotheistic religions, principally Christianity, influenced the views and actions of the west around the time of the Industrial Revolution. He mentioned the fault of monotheistic religions for adverse attitudes and ideologies that would encourage hostility towards nature. His notions had been debated, having part of the support and

also the opposition of some historians, theologians and environmentalists, nonetheless, it influenced various angles of advocacy (Hulme, 2009, p. 152). In 2006, the recently formed Evangelical Climate Initiative recognised that climate change is human-induced and the fact that the poorest on the globe will be struck the hardest, demanding that, as Christians with moral principles, people should respond to climate change (Nagle, 2008, p. 64).

By creating the coalition of the Evangelical Climate Initiative, the Evangelicals show proof that they are attempting to decide on the importance of climate change and how to respond to it as a religious community. As a matter of fact, there even exist a classification of social issues that Evangelicals consider important, such as abortion and gay rights where climate change is coming in the last places (McCammack, 2007). The assemblages of evangelical leaders that formed the ECI are generally accepting the scientific facts in regards to climate change as being anthropogenic, yet at the same time, they keep strong consideration of the bible as the mean of shaping policy regarding climate change (McCammack, 2007, p. 647). The most popular and followed ideas from the bible are the ones regarding stewardship and dominion towards the environment as given in the Genesis, urging people to be fruitful as in to populate the planet and ‘subdue it’, to be rulers over another creature living in the sea, in the air, or on the ground. Further, Genesis 2:15 represents the endorsement towards the Garden of Eden to take care of it (McCammack, 2007, p. 648). The exploitation of the environment as an unlimited source from God seems to be a philosophy that evangelicals share. However, the signatories of the ECI, in 2006, advocate for environmental justice under the urgency that poor people could die as a result of climate change. Therefore, the evangelical leaders with rather liberal views, appeal to use various messages addressing poverty that could attract the more conservative evangelicals (McCammack, 2007, p. 649).

The ECI’s ‘Call to Action’ had rather contradictory responses from the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance, founded by evangelical leaders likewise (Nagle, 2008, p. 56), in 2006, claiming that in an effort to cut greenhouse cases might hurt the poor (McCammack, 2007, p. 649). Also known as the Cornwall Alliance (Calvin Beisner et al., 2006.), acted with resistance towards the ECI with a statement called ‘Call to Truth’ denying climate change and the anthropogenic of it, stating that God is the one responsible for the environment. Further, they

declared that the best way to help the poor is to increase energy consumption, but keep energy inexpensive and promote economic growth (Hiebert, 2017, p. 61).

The character of the Evangelical Climate Initiative is reflected in many aspects of it, from statements and signatories to documents and participation. A document from 2006 covers quotes from corporations such as General Electric and DuPont supporting the urgency of climate change, yet, finding ways to reassure the evangelicals. The need for reassurance comes from the evangelicals being worried about how regulations of emission would harm businesses. The validity of this document could be supported by statements made by Ted Haggard, a former president of the National Association of Evangelists ‘evangelicals want to be pro-business environmentalists’ stirring confusion on whether the priority of evangelists stays in protecting the environment or the business domain (McCammack, 2007, p. 658).

5.2 The media as part of ECI’s broadcasting tools

National media has played a role to increase and directing a lot of attention to the uncommon alliance of the evangelicals (Nagle, 2008, p. 56). While scrutinizing the use of media within the Evangelical Climate Initiative, it can be established to what extent the media helped make the campaign visible.

5.2.1 The New York Times

Since the Evangelical Climate Initiative was founded in 2006, it got a lot of attention from the media including various popular publishers and channels like ‘The New York Times’. The ECI appears in a multitude of published journalistic articles even where the central discussion doesn’t cover the ECI itself, proving that it has immense visibility and attention, to be used as an example or at least be reminded in articles regarding climate change and politics in America. The ‘New York Times’ published the article ‘Evangelical Leaders Join Global Warming Initiative’ on February 8, 2006, before the ECI was launched in Washington. The piece of text written about the ECI is very consistent and neutral, representing large information from who are the

signatories, what is the scope of the ECI, who is in the opposition, who is financially supporting it, what are the methods of promoting it, what has been stated and the impact of it. In the article, the ECI is portrayed as a statement and it is being highlighted from the start that there existed opposition from colleagues of the Evangelical leaders, yet despite that, they continued to support their ambition. The article mentioned one of the most well-known leaders that signed the ECI, Rick Warren. Further, some of the statements regarding climate action are being quoted in the article and as it appears, they are aimed to call for federal legislation that would demand a reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide. It is mentioned that the evangelicals are calling for a cost-effective and market-based mechanism, some of them being pro-business. The opposition came from renowned evangelicals and twenty-two of them took the action to sign a letter ‘Global warming is not a consensus issue’ (Goodstein, 2006).

5.2.2 ABC News

In the article ‘Science + Religion = New Alliance to Save the Planet’, ABC News is representing the Evangelical Climate Initiative as strongly tied to science as a result of major changes within their community. As stated by Richard Cizik, a member of the National Evangelical Association, ‘It's important to understand the profound changes occurring in the evangelical community in just the last year’ (ABC News, 2007). Richard Cizik is giving statements to ABC News saying that the board of NAE has approved in anonymity an alliance between science and religion sparking more interest in the environment from local churches. The evangelical community is calling on businesses, religious and political leaders to take action and as the news article entails, many representatives of the community took the initiative to hold meetings in the Congress requesting to meet President Bush (ABC News, 2007). The article is highlighting the cooperation between the religious institution of evangelicals and scientists from John Hopkins University, calling the agreement ‘historical’ and ending the news with mentioning a new moral awakening supported by the statement that ‘clearly articulated in Scripture and supported by science, that we must steward the natural world’ (ABC News, 2007).

5.3 The signatories

The Evangelical Environmental Network represented the link between the actors of the Evangelical Climate Initiative. Besides, the discourses that they use in sharing their concern on climate change action is what bind them together as a network (Wilkinson, 2012). Importantly, investigation incorporating the people that signed the Initiative and their position in politics could offer a hint into the legitimacy of the Evangelical Climate Initiative as a real concern and genuine Call to Action or just a method to increase the visibility of the Evangelical church in political religion sphere by representing climate change in the light of a religious mission. Among the signatories that gave their signatures to the Evangelical Climate Initiative, there are names such as notable pastors: Rick Warren; Jack Hayford; presidents Duane Litfin of Wheaton College, Timothy George of Beeson Divinity School, and CEOs of major evangelical organizations such as Richard Stearns of World Vision and Todd Bassett of the Salvation Army' (Allison, 2007).

Rick Warren represents one of the most well-known pastors in the American evangelical scene, being the leader of the network between churches in 160 countries. He is one of the signatories of the 'Call to Action' crucial purpose of the ECI. Interestingly enough, since the launch of the ECI in 2006, Rick Warren did not respond to the call of the ENN until a long time later, which is not exactly available (Wilkinson, 2012).

5.4 The statements

The Evangelical Climate Initiative acted as a facilitator for the evangelical group that led it to stand up for its views on climate change and make statements on the issue within the context of America. The statements are readily available to the large public from both academic and journalistic sources, but the statements that are included in this literature review are borrowed from academically written articles. Their statements included the appreciation for the opportunity to act in the shaping of public policy as a chance given by God "never before has God given American evangelicals such an awesome opportunity to shape public policy in ways that could contribute to the well-being of the entire world" (Nagle, 2008, p. 54) and describe how they are

driven to shape public policy in the United States "recognize both our opportunity and our responsibility to offer a biblically-based moral witness that can help shape public policy in the most powerful nation on earth, and therefore contribute to the well-being of the entire world" (Nagle, 2008, p. 54). Therefore, the table will constitute segments of the statements that can be analyzed within discourse analysis and help identify the intentionality, informativity and intertextuality of their statements. While analyzing the discourse available, certain patterns will be identified such as negation, distortion, emphasis, primacy and incompleteness and repetition. The key aim of the discourse analysis is to identify the religious elements and the scientific elements of the statements made by the signatories during the Evangelical Climate Initiative, in order to answer how the evangelicals sought to influence policy making in the United States.

Statement	Informativity	Intentionality
<p>‘Christians must care about climate change because we love God the Creator and Jesus our Lord, through whom and for whom the creation was made. This is God’s world, and any damage that we do to God’s world is an offense against God Himself’ (Ackerman, n.d.) (“Statement of ECI - Christiansandclimate.org Christians and Climate”, 2016)</p>	<p>1 = religiously dominant discourse</p>	<p>1 = religiously dominant discourse</p>
<p>‘Human-Induced Climate Change is real. In the face of the breadth and depth of this scientific and governmental concern, only a small percentage of which is noted here, we are convinced that evangelicals must engage this issue without any further lingering over the basic reality of the problem or humanity's responsibility to address it.’ (“Statement of ECI - Christiansandclimate.org Christians and Climate”, 2016)</p>	<p>5 = environmental and scientifically based argument</p>	<p>1 = religiously dominant discourse</p>

<p>‘Over the last several years many of us have engaged in study, reflection, and prayer related to the issue of climate change (often called "global warming"). For most of us, until recently this has not been treated as a pressing issue or major priority. Indeed, many of us have required considerable convincing before becoming persuaded that climate change is a real problem and that it ought to matter to us as Christians’ (“Statement of ECI - Christiansandclimate.org Christians and Climate”, 2016)</p>	<p>0 = neutral affirmation</p>	<p>1 = religiously dominant discourse</p>
<p>‘Poor nations and poor individuals have fewer resources available to cope with major challenges and threats. The consequences of global warming will therefore hit the poor the hardest, in part because those areas likely to be significantly affected first are in the poorest regions of the world. Millions of people could die in this century because of climate change, most of them our poorest global neighbours.’ (“Statement of ECI - Christiansandclimate.org Christians and Climate”, 2016)</p>	<p>5 = environmental and scientifically based argument</p>	<p>0 = neutral affirmation</p>
<p>‘Christians, noting the fact that most of the climate change problem is human induced, are reminded that when God made humanity he commissioned us to exercise stewardship over the earth and its creatures. Climate change is the latest evidence of our failure to exercise proper stewardship, and constitutes a critical opportunity for us to do better’ (“Statement of ECI -</p>	<p>1 = religiously dominant discourse</p>	<p>1 = religiously dominant discourse</p>

Christiansandclimate.org Christians and Climate”, 2016)		
‘In the United States, the most important immediate step that can be taken at the federal level is to pass and implement national legislation requiring sufficient economy-wide reductions in carbon dioxide emissions through cost-effective, market-based mechanisms such as a cap-and-trade program.’ (“Statement of ECI - Christiansandclimate.org Christians and Climate”, 2016)	5 = environmental and scientifically based argument	5 = solution based argument

(Source: statements retracted from *Statement of ECI - Christiansandclimate.org | Christians and Climate* website which is the main website of the campaign, that includes statements, signatories and policymakers).

6. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study revolves around the findings on how the Evangelical Climate Initiative attempted to influence climate change policymaking in 2006 and what were the tools that the leaders of the National Association of Evangelicals used to promote their statements in the attempt to influence policy making. The campaign has been largely promoted through various media channels and newspapers that included detailed data on their objectives and their concern for the environment as well as a call to action towards political leaders, requesting to meet President George Bush. The use of media in the Evangelical Climate Initiative campaign has proved as the main tool to gain visibility and make their statements heard, having articles published by various news channels such as ABC News and The New York Times. Their statements, which have been included in the analysis, have proved to represent more environmental and scientifically based arguments regarding informativity of what they are

campaigning for. However, the intentionality of their statements is predominantly religious and seeks to adopt a religious approach to solutions regarding climate change. Their statements are being used in the context of their campaign, directed towards people with political influence, where the evangelical community itself also has a lot of influence within certain political parties such as The Republican Party. As stated by Karen Breslau & Martha Brant, in the paper *God's Green Soldiers: A New Call to Combat Global Warming Triggers Soul-Searching and Controversy Among Evangelical*: 'it's the evangelicals, with their close ties to the GOP, who 'have the power to move the debate They could produce policies more palatable to people who have . . . been [un]moved by secular environmental groups.' (Nagle, 2008, p. 55). Therefore, the statement that is also the most solution-oriented argument revolves around the importance of market-based mechanisms 'In the United States, the most important immediate step that can be taken at the federal level is to pass and implement national legislation requiring sufficient economy-wide reductions in carbon dioxide emissions through cost-effective, market-based mechanisms such as a cap-and-trade program.' (Statement of ECI, 2016). Consequently, the approach that the evangelical leaders have adopted in order to influence climate change policymaking has proven to be addressing the issue by prioritizing market-based mechanisms and political influence, which can turn into a social problem. The case study of the Evangelical Climate Initiative also aims to identify behaviors while using critical discourse analysis to analyze the statements and further, with the help of the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism and culture and risk theory, identify behaviors and their correlation to the findings of the study. The culture and risk theory, as approached in this study, supports the construction of different groups in the society. Therefore, the signatories of the Evangelical Climate Initiative and their behavior and intentionality is identified within the 'Four Rationalities' diagram as a collectivized, group oriented type, showing characteristics of a natural ephemeral type. At the same time, this rationality represents equality, solidarity and a change to collective action (Velástegui, 2020). This can be supported by the intentionality of their statements because the religiously dominant discourse represents a high level of collectivity. Yet, the way the signatories are encouraging a market based approach to climate change, it might seem that the rationality behind the campaign is an individualistic one, given the competitive nature with the Cornwall

Alliance, only applying their action because it is necessary to protect a functioning market (Velástegui, 2020). The theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism guided the research towards understanding how discourse (through the selected statements) can influence policy making. Policy making represents a process and it is influenced directly by politicians and the government (Hewitt, 2009). Policy making involves a centralized research on laws, regulations and implementation processes, while Foucault's idea of power also centralizes the importance of social and political relation, emphasizing that policy making is only possible with the existence and a flow of discourse (Hewitt, 2009). Political action, aspiration and thought are highly connected to individuals, organizations and groups of individuals while still being independent, because policy discourse takes form during social interaction (Hewitt, 2009).

The conclusion is that while it is difficult to measure the way in which the signatories of the Evangelical Climate Initiative ever influenced policy making, the existing data is enough to understand how they sought to influence it and that was definitely through the use of media and the circulation of discourse.

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