

Discourse Analysis of Comments on a Climate Change Op-Ed, Part 2

Working Paper #2

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I. Introduction.

This paper is the second in a series of working papers which analyze successive comment threads responding to one newspaper opinion piece on climate change. Each thread will be analyzed separately, though the analysis of each thread will build on prior work, and an overview essay will complete the series. The series is intended to make visible for discussion and feedback my process in working out the methodological approach and tools suitable to my purposes.

This work is motivated by the view that it is in conversation that community norms are negotiated and their transformations become visible. Indeed, it may often be the case that conversations can be the medium by which transformations are begun, elaborated, or established.

My particular interest is in conversations about climate change, and in preparation for a series of public conversations involving people of diverse perspectives, I am analyzing some samples of online discourse to explore key themes and discourse features that may arise in debate about this topic.

Discourse and discussion are both revealing and socially constitutive activities (Bailey et al. 2014, Condor & Antaki 1997, Schultz 2001, Halliday 1990) that contribute to the development and transformation of social norms. Social norms in turn play an important role in motivating and sustaining social action.

The overarching research question here is:

What are key discourse features of climate conversations among participants with diverse points of view?

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