Are humans to blame for changing the climate?

Dobbie vs Dobbie

When the question about what is causing climate change arises, someone in the room is sure to declare that "97% of all scientists agree that climate change is man-made!" or something to that effect.

This is not true. It is a misinterpretation of an Internet survey of the Institute for Scientific Information database conducted in 2004 by Naomi Oreskes, a professor of Science History and Earth and Planetary Sciences, who typed in the key words, "global climate change" and found 928 papers that mentioned this. "After the analysis, she concluded that 75 percent of the examined abstracts either explicitly or implicitly backed the consensus view, while none directly dissented from it. The essay received a great deal of media attention from around the world." (Forbes).

Dorothy Dobbie

Three years later, she revisited this and concluded that about 20% explicitly endorsed the theory that "Earth's climate is being affected by human activities." About 55% implicitly agreed, meaning they didn't say so directly. And the remaining 25% were focused on other issues. (Wikipedia article). I quote this extensively to respond to the criticism that the first quote was a Forbes fact checker quote by a fellow named Earl J. Ritche, who had worked in the oil business. A jump to discredit the source in the first response you get from the climate consensus crowd when you raise any question about the validity of the "consensus".

Turns out a lot of people do not accept that man is responsible for creating the current volatility of the climate. And they are not "junk scientists" but a wide array of highly acclaimed researchers, theorists, physicists, climate scientists, geologists, and so on.

Sadly, they are all dismissed as crackpots or "climate deniers, cancelled, ridiculed and some have even lost their jobs.

This is very concerning, since as Dr. Michael Crichton put it, "The greatest scientists in history are great precisely because they broke with the consensus."

"Science is organized common sense where many a beautiful theory was killed by an ugly fact," said Thomas Huxley. Sscience is about narrowing uncertainty, said someone else. The point is that we must continue to question, to explore, to look for inconsistencies and absurdities and feel free to express them.

I am not a scientist, but I have an enquiring mind. The first question that always comes to me is Why?

When it comes to the greenhouse gas theory, I want to know why will levels of CO2 lead to destruction when science history says that levels in the past have been much higher? "CO2 levels around 600 million years ago were about 7,000 parts per million, compared with 442 ppm today. Then approximately 480 million years ago those levels gradually dropped to 4,000 ppm over about 100 million years, while average temperatures remained at a steady 72 degrees." – Forbes.

Few people question whether climate change is real but surely it is fair to question conclusions that are drawn from a theory supported only by man made computer models that many are saying are based on flawed premises and all are clearly unproven.

Many totally ineffectual, absurd laws and even sillier proposals have followed on these conclusions.

Why does it make sense to say on one hand that we should eat bugs instead of meat, when the exact amount of methane emitted by the digestive tract of an animal is released by plants decaying on the ground? Why is carbon dioxide suddenly evil when it is the stuff of life – without it, plants that are voracious users of CO2, cannot survive? If they die, we will all die.

Why does it make sense to ban plastic straws when plastic is a key material in the manufacture of both solar panels and current windmills (as is oil)?

Why does it make sense to stop the sale of petroleum products to coal burning Asia and Europe when our petroleum is much cleaner fuel than coal, which emits 40% more CO2 that LNG and 30% more than natural gas? How can we justify the banning of plastic garbage bags and adding a pointless but ever-growing tax on home heating fuels when we deprive other countries of a clean alternative to their energy needs?

How do we justify a law that demands everyone be in an electrical vehicle (made largely of plastic) by 2030 when we know we don't have the current electrical power to meet the demand that will be created (assuming we actually meet this artificial and unrealistic target just five and a half years from now)!

When I started on this article, I had planned to share some alternative theories about what is causing the warming we are hearing about, however, I have run out of time and this is a complicated subject, but there are many theories. The one that makes the most sense to me is that global warming waxes and wanes due to a multitude of factors that, despite all their hard work, climate prognosticators have not yet been able to thoroughly include, and analyze. Perhaps the burning of fossil fuels is one of those factors. Is it the overriding factor? We need to work a little harder at proving, disproving or relegating this to a place on a scientifically proven hierarchical list. Then we can change (maybe) human behaviour as needed.

As for a gradual move away from fossil fuels and sourcing new energy? That will happen over time as we learn more about this planet we live on and learn to live with it instead on against it. Energy is all around us. It will be very interesting to see how we come

Climate change is from human activity

Shauna Dobbie

It's wishful thinking to say that we don't know what causes climate change or that there is no climate change. We are as certain as can be that the Earth is warming faster than it has at any time that humans have existed.

How do I know that? I haven't studied climate, or climate change, or physics, or any of the myriad things that have led most (over 90 percent; a common citation is 97 percent) of the world's scientists to the conclusion that we are undergoing rapid, human-made climate change (1). But I do believe them.

Now, most scientists at the turn of the century (1899 to 1900, that is) fervently believed that we had learned all the basic laws of physics, but then the theories of relativity and quantum physics emerged. Had I been alive in the 1800s, would I have believed the scientists who thought we were done figuring things out? Yes. Because I am not a scientist; I believe what scientists agree on.

Would the many scientists before 1900, who believed wrongly that there was nothing left to learn in physics, be embarrassed or reject the theories of relativity and quantum physics? I'm sure some did, but the ones who looked into these new-fangled ideas simply changed their positions. That's what good scientists do.

The current belief is that the Earth is warming because there is more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere than in the past. There hasn't been this much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere in 3-million years, which is important, because higher levels of carbon dioxide make global temperatures go up. (You can find out why online.) The reason there is so much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is because of humans burning fossil fuels and removing forests, which are a carbon sink, keeping carbon at ground level.

Do some scientists disagree with the carbon dioxide theories of global warming? Sure. And if there weren't scientists trying to find other possibilities to explain the rapid rise in global temperatures, it wouldn't be science. One distinguished scientist (I imagine my mom will tell you all about him), Peter Langdon Ward, believes that climate change is created by volcanoes. He is a vulcanologist. He's spending the remainder of his life trying to get other scientists to agree with him that "heat doesn't flow that way".

The problem with Ward's hypothesis, as I understand it, is that it does not adequately explain many observed patterns of climate change, such as the warming of the oceans, the increase in night-time temperatures, and other critical details that are well-explained by the increase in greenhouse gases.

According to the Pew Research Center, 14 percent of Americans say there is no clear evidence that climate change is even happening. Regular Americans, not scientists. And I can understand why.

Reports on climate change by people in the media (like me) often rely on the worst-case scenario to get people to listen (I don't). We, the public, have been upset about polar bears disappearing and ice caps melting. My daughter told me that the world would be unlivable in 10 years. (I think that was about six years ago.)

The ice caps are melting, and the polar bears, who rely on icy oceans for food will probably start to die off, though "scientists estimate that there is a 70-percent chance the global population of polar bears will fall by more than a third within the next three generations" (carbonbrief.org), which isn't enough to make them disappear too fast. In either case, the doom is something we cannot directly see or feel now.

Some people are very concerned about human life on the planet in 50 years or 100 or 200 years. In 50 years, most of us reading this will be dead with or without global warming. Our children and children's children will still be alive, though, and that may give us pause for concern. If climate change continues to happen at a rapid pace (and unless something changes, it will), imagine what your great-granddaughter will tell her kids about you, and about us.

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Note:

(1) For instance, from a paper called "Consensus on consensus: a synthesis of consensus estimates on human-cased global warming" in Environmental Research, 2016: "The consensus that humans are causing recent global warming is shared by 90 to 100 percent of publishing climate scientists according to six independent studies by co-authors of this paper. Those results are consistent with the 97-percent consensus reported by Cook et al based on 11,944 abstracts of research papers." Renegade economists sometimes disagree with these figures, but their arguments are not hard to poke holes in.