

WHAT: This is a **two-part learning lab** to help you break out of the cultural dynamics of polarization on climate change in your sphere of influence. In Part One, we’ll work together to ‘map’ these dynamics and in Part Two, we’ll use our map, combined with personal storytelling, to practice creating **authentic connection** with people in our sphere of influence who don’t share our worldview.

WHY: The U.S. is sharply polarized on hot-button issues such as immigration, guns/gun control, abortion, and of course, climate change.

Why is polarization a problem?

- Because it’s essentially the opposite of consensus and collective problem-solving.
- In polarized contexts, people with different opinions start lining up on opposite sides of issues.
- Instead of finding common ground and working together to find solutions:
 - They start defining themselves in terms of their opposition to each other
 - They assume more rigid positions and are less and less willing to negotiate
 - Trust and respect diminish
 - Distorted perceptions and simplified stereotypes emerge

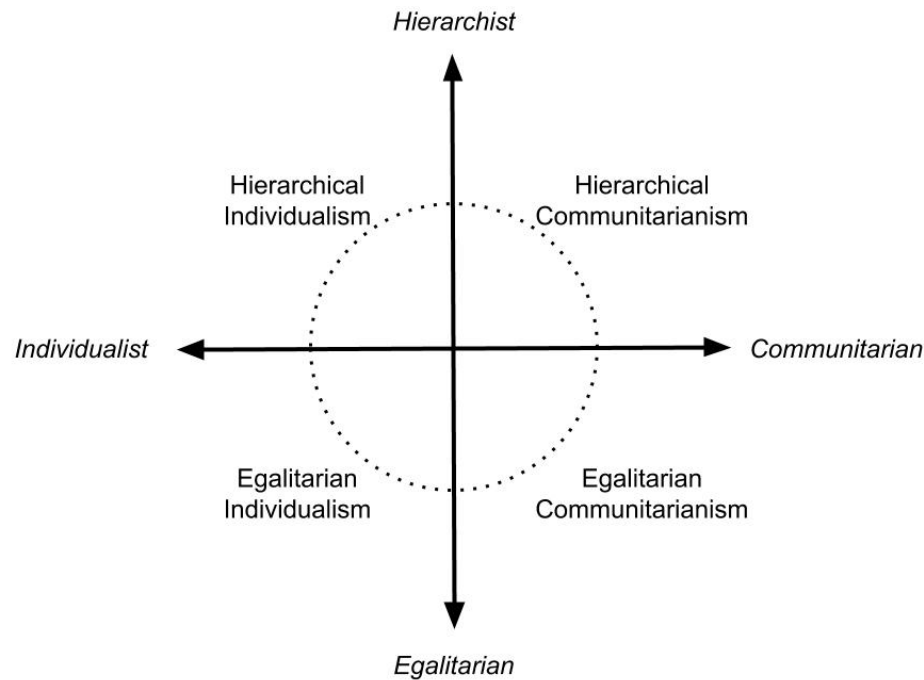
Goal of this two-part learning lab: To co-create a vivid and effective group intervention into the cultural dynamics of polarization within our own spheres of influence, using two exceptional communication tools: the Cultural Worldviews framework and personal storytelling:

- **April 15th (Part 1):** Understanding Cultural Worldviews and how they contribute to polarization in the United States; ‘mapping’ our collective knowledge of environmental and climate issues onto this framework
- **May 13th (Part 2):** Learning an easy framework for effective personal storytelling; using our learnings from Part One to practice breaking out of our polarized bubbles with the help of personal stories drawn from our own life-experiences.

What this learning lab is NOT: My intention is not to endorse, pander to or legitimate the political consequences of worldviews we may see as **harmful**, or to ask you to do so. I believe we can learn more about how other people see things differently **WITHOUT** compromising our own values – indeed I think it can help us to be more effective agents of political transformation!

Who am I? I am a bilingual, Colombian educator, facilitator and consultant with 20 year’s experience in education. I design social learning environments that foster authentic, courageous communication and engagement on climate change as well as other social justice and environmental issues. I partner with non-profits, faith communities, and educational and grassroots organizations across the Front Range to deliver custom-designed community engagement packages in English and Spanish.

Cultural Cognition Worldviews*: Figure 1



Source: Culture and Identity-Protective Cognition: Explaining the White-Male Effect in Risk Perception - [Dan M. Kahan](#), Donald Braman, John Gastil, Paul Slovic, and C. K. Mertz*

Someone with a **HIERARCHICAL** orientation may:

- defer to and trust traditional forms of social and political organization and authority (including traditional gender roles and norms)
- believe that society's hierarchies are due to merit or natural differences

Someone with an **EGALITARIAN** orientation may:

- oppose inequality in society
- distrust and challenge traditional forms of social and political organization and authority (including traditional gender roles and norms)
- favor collective (e.g. state or community) action to equalize wealth, status, and power

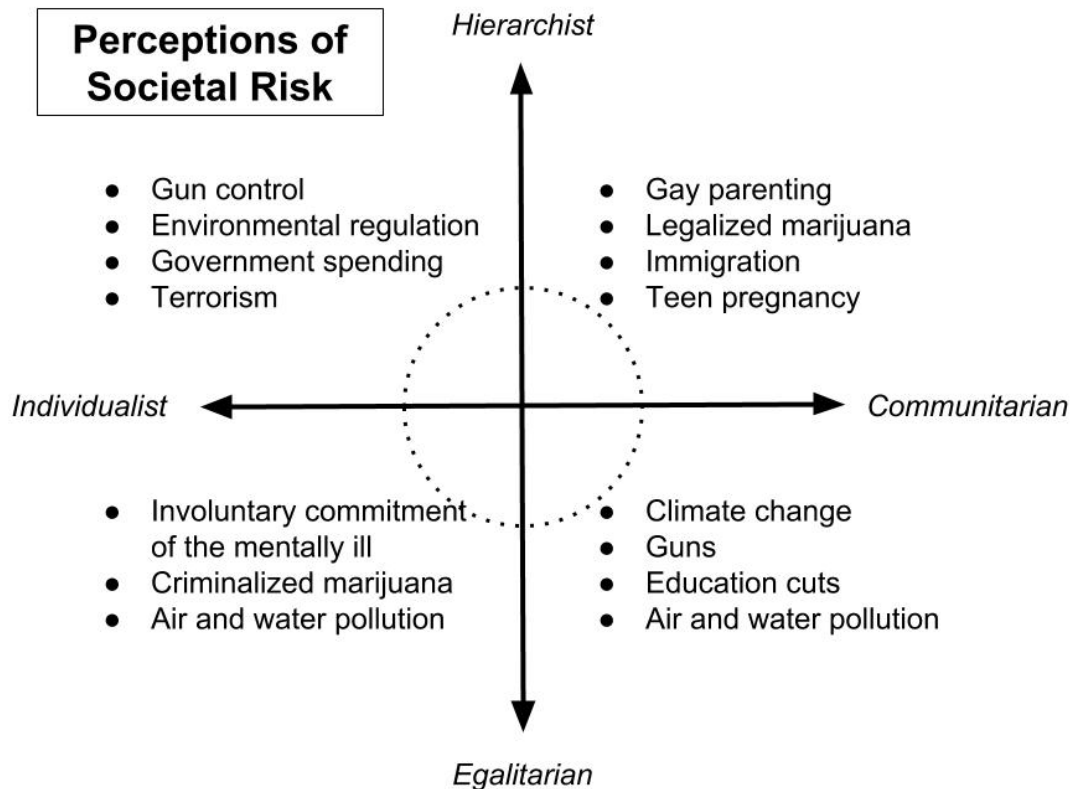
Someone with an **INDIVIDUALIST** orientation may:

- highly value the freedom of individuals from outside interference
- believe that individuals, rather than the collective, are responsible for their well-being
- highly value free markets and private property
- resent government interference with the above

Someone with a **COMMUNITARIAN** orientation may:

- highly value grassroots networks of personal relationships and mutual aid
- believe that it is society's job to provide for the needs of its members
- highly value collective forms of meeting economic and societal needs
- hold the view that protecting the public may sometimes trump individual rights

Cultural Worldviews And Perceptions of Societal Risk*: Figure 2



Source: “This Is How You Should Talk to a Climate-Change Denier: The Complicated Science of Discussing Risk” by Judith Shulevitz, October 22, 2013; <https://newrepublic.com/article/115022/how-talk-climate-change-deniers>

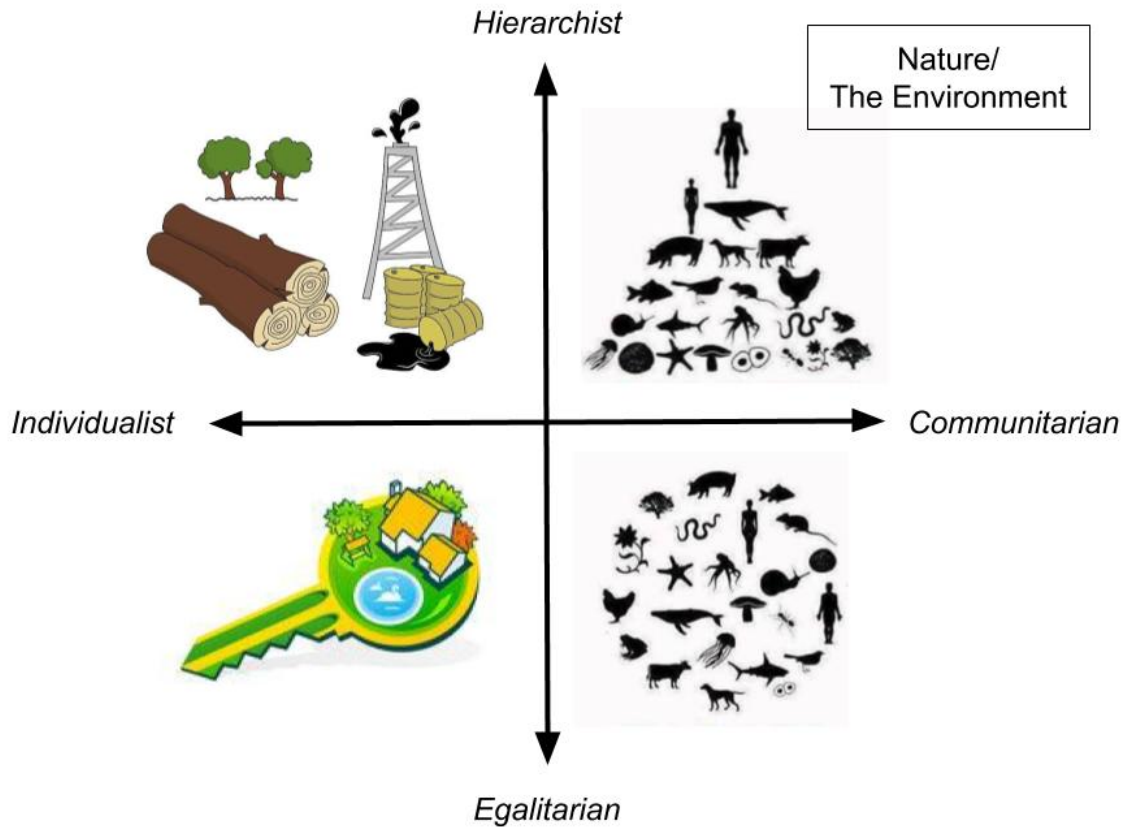
Key Lessons From The Research

1. We tend to reject information and advocacy messages that threaten our core beliefs about how society should be organized, e.g. our “cultural worldviews.”

2. We are inclined to trust our in-group members (those who share our cultural worldview) and distrust our out-group members (those who don’t) when it comes to science information or advocacy messages.

3*. It’s not due to ignorance! The more scientific knowledge an individual has, the more likely that individual is to use that knowledge to reject out-group science information/advocacy and affirm pre-existing values.

Cultural Worldviews and Perceptions of Environment/Nature*: Figure 3



*All references to Cultural Cognition and Cultural Worldviews are drawn from the work of The Cultural Cognition Project at Yale Law School (principal investigator Dan Kahan, Yale Professor of Law and Psychology). Fig. 3 is my own adaptation and application to environmental issues. Permission to use only with attribution; please contact me first for this and all other usage.

HI quadrant: Environment as “natural resources”

HC quadrant: Environment as part of hierarchical, traditional conservative values

EI quadrant: Environment as inherent component of personal freedom

EC quadrant: Environment as part of community of justice and moral equality