

WHAT: This is Part Two of a **learning lab** designed to help you use personal storytelling to create **authentic connection** when you communicate with others about issues you care about, especially if those others don't share your worldview.

WHY: The U.S. is sharply polarized on hot-button issues such as immigration, guns/gun control, abortion, and of course, climate change. (Sometimes people refer to this as the “culture wars.”)

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 training: To practice creating **authentic connection** in polarized contexts, through personal storytelling that bridges different worldviews. Specifically:

1. You'll learn an easy framework for effective personal storytelling (**Part 1**)
2. We'll explore an exciting tool for understanding the different cultural worldviews that exist in U.S. society (“Cultural Cognition”) and how they contribute to polarization (**Part 2**)
3. You'll get rich support and feedback as you practice telling your personal stories with the help of the Cultural Cognition tool (**Part 3**)

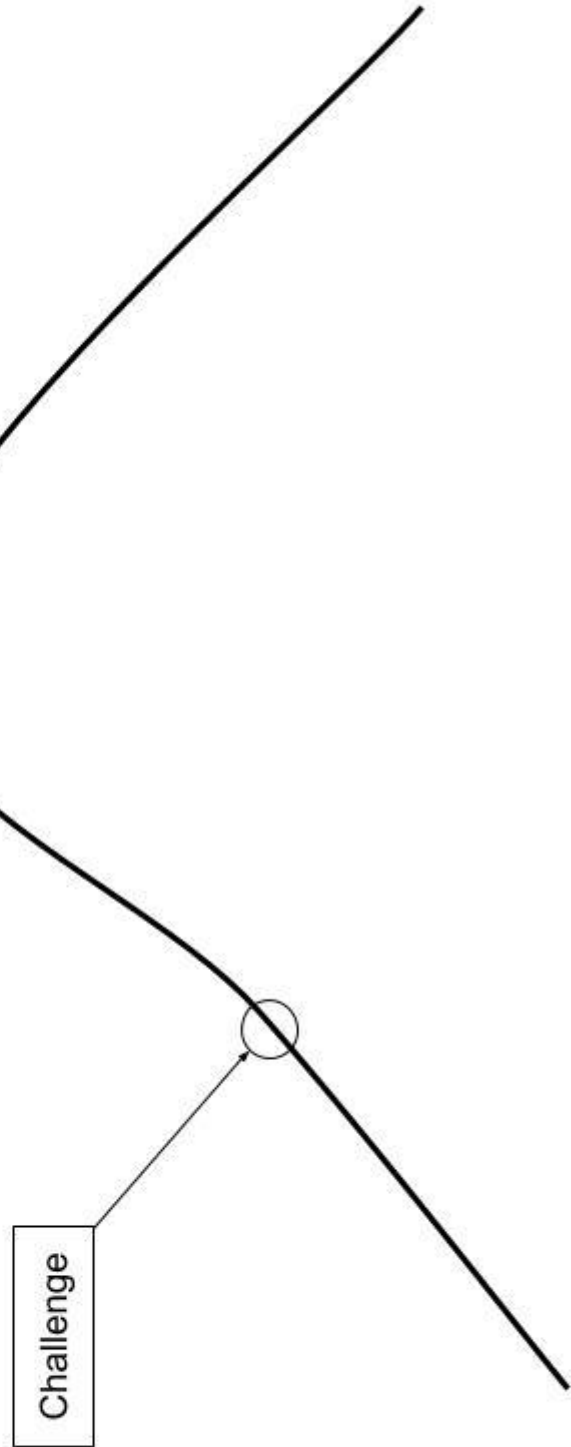
What this training is NOT: My intention is not to endorse, pander to or legitimate the political consequences of worldviews we may see as as **harmful**, or to ask you to do so. I believe we can learn more about how other people see things differently **WITHOUT** compromising our own values – indeed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

© 2019 Maria Talero, maria@climatecourage.cc
Climate Courage, LLC
All rights reserved.
Permission to use with attribution.

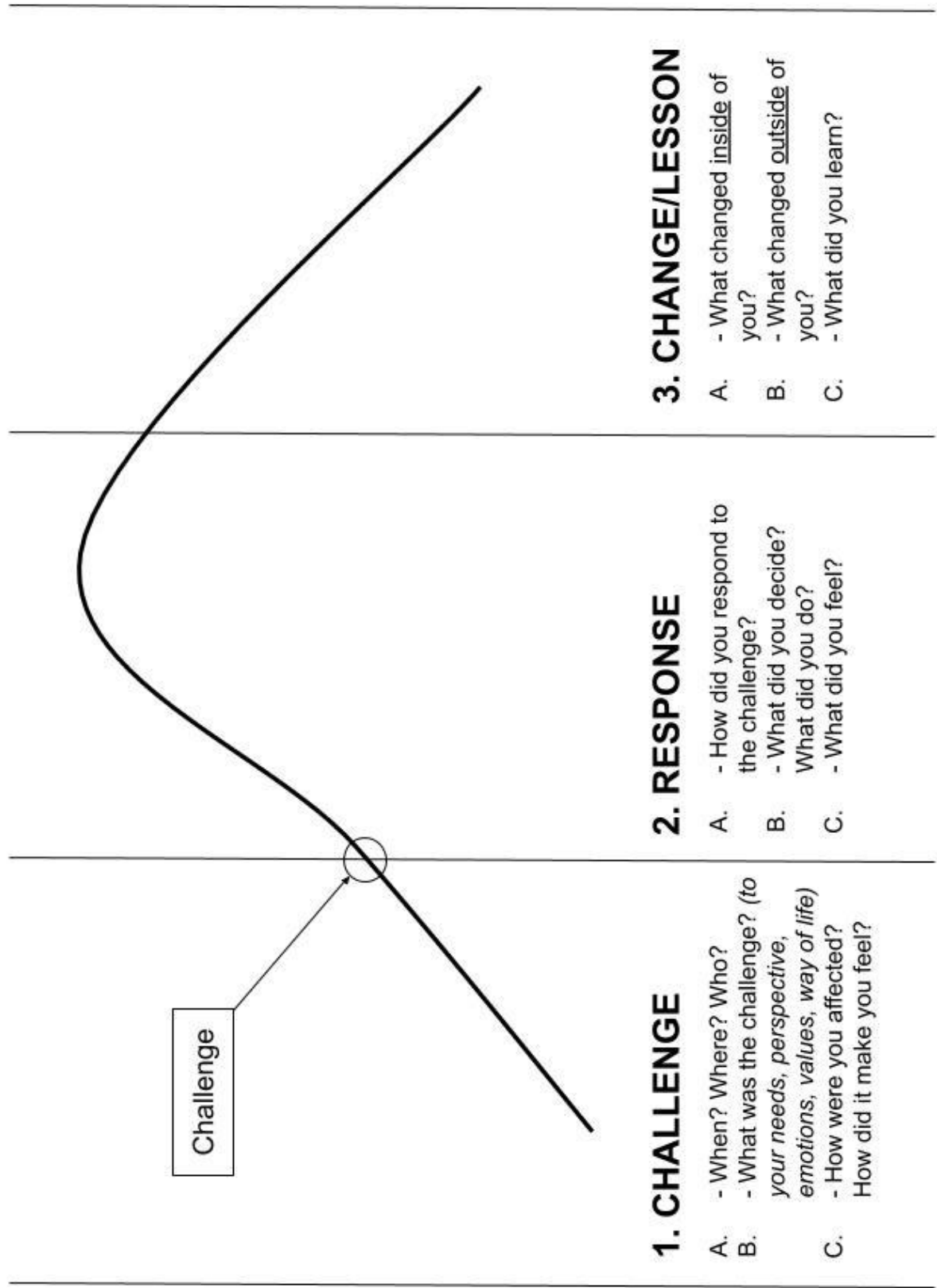
Story Shape (for Strategic Storytelling)

- Effective stories have a distinctive shape: an “arc” of rising tension and excitement for the listener.
- The challenge is what propels this arc.
- The challenge is like the beating heart of the story, which gives it tension and excitement: without it, the story is “flat” and lifeless for the listener.



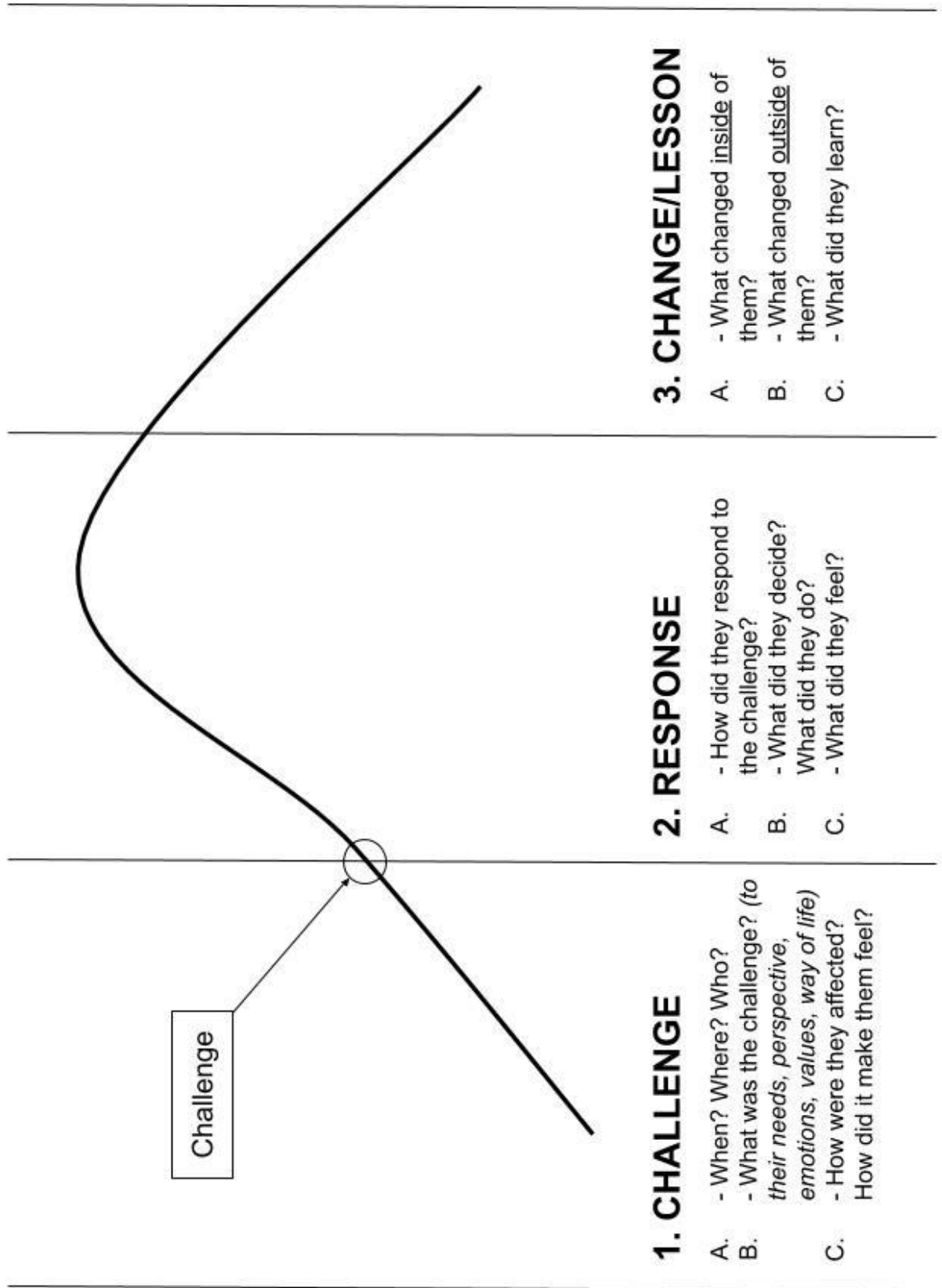
© 2019 Maria Talero, maria@climatecourage.cc
Climate Courage, LLC
All rights reserved.
Permission to use with attribution.

Strategic Storytelling Arc: Telling YOUR Story



Strategic Storytelling Arc: Telling THEIR Story

© 2019 Maria Talero. maria@climatecourage.cc
Climate Courage, LLC
All rights reserved.
Permission to use with attribution.



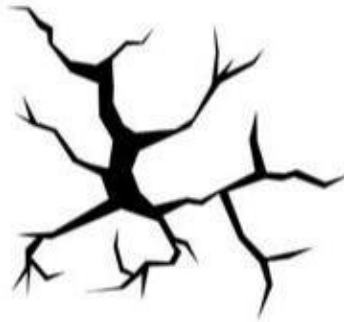
Strategic Storytelling Arc: Telling YOUR Story

© 2019 Maria Talero, maria@climatecourage.cc
Climate Courage, LLC
All rights reserved.
Permission to use with attribution.



1. CHALLENGE

- A. - When? Where? Who?
- B. - What was the challenge? *(to your needs, perspective, emotions, values, way of life)*
- C. - How were you affected? How did it make you feel?



2. RESPONSE

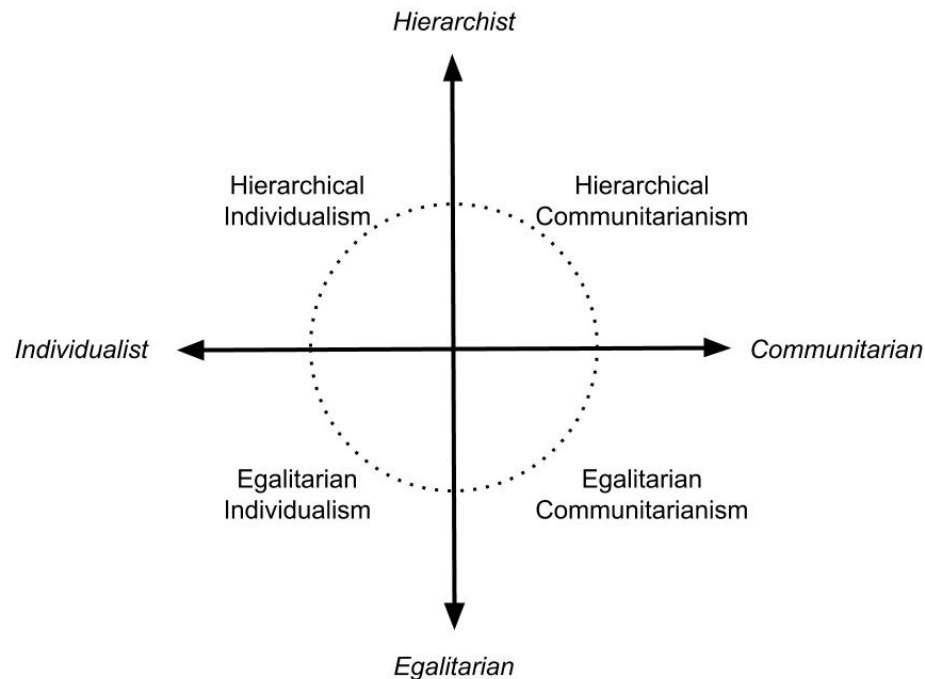
- A. - How did you respond to the challenge?
- B. - What did you decide? What did you do?
- C. - What did you feel?



3. CHANGE/LESSON

- A. - What changed inside of you?
- B. - What changed outside of you?
- C. - What did you learn?

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 action to equalize wealth, status, and power

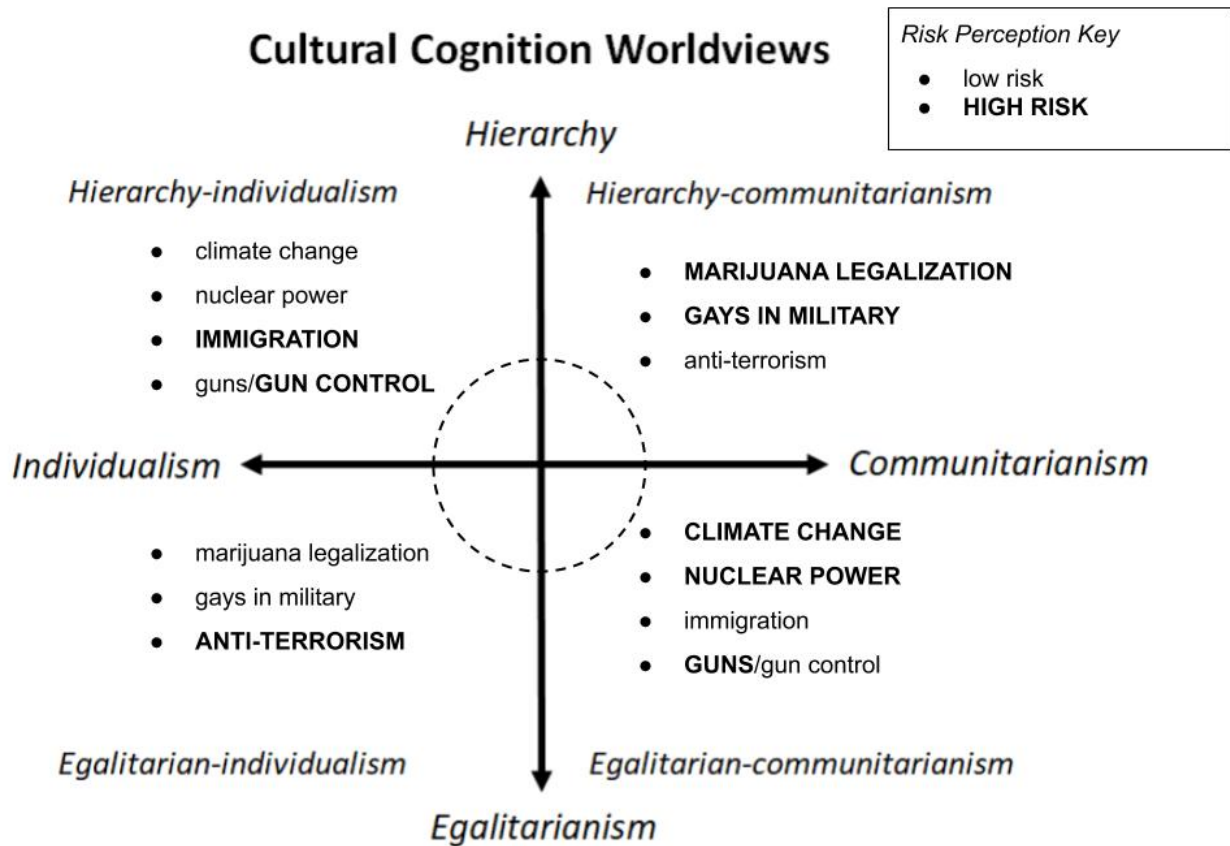
Someone with an **INDIVIDUALIST** orientation may:

- highly value the freedom of individuals from outside interference
- believe that individuals alone are responsible for their well-being
- celebrate 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
- celebrate cooperative and public forms of meeting economic and societal needs
- hold the view that protecting the public may sometimes trump individual rights

Cultural Cognition and Societal Risk Perception: Figure 2



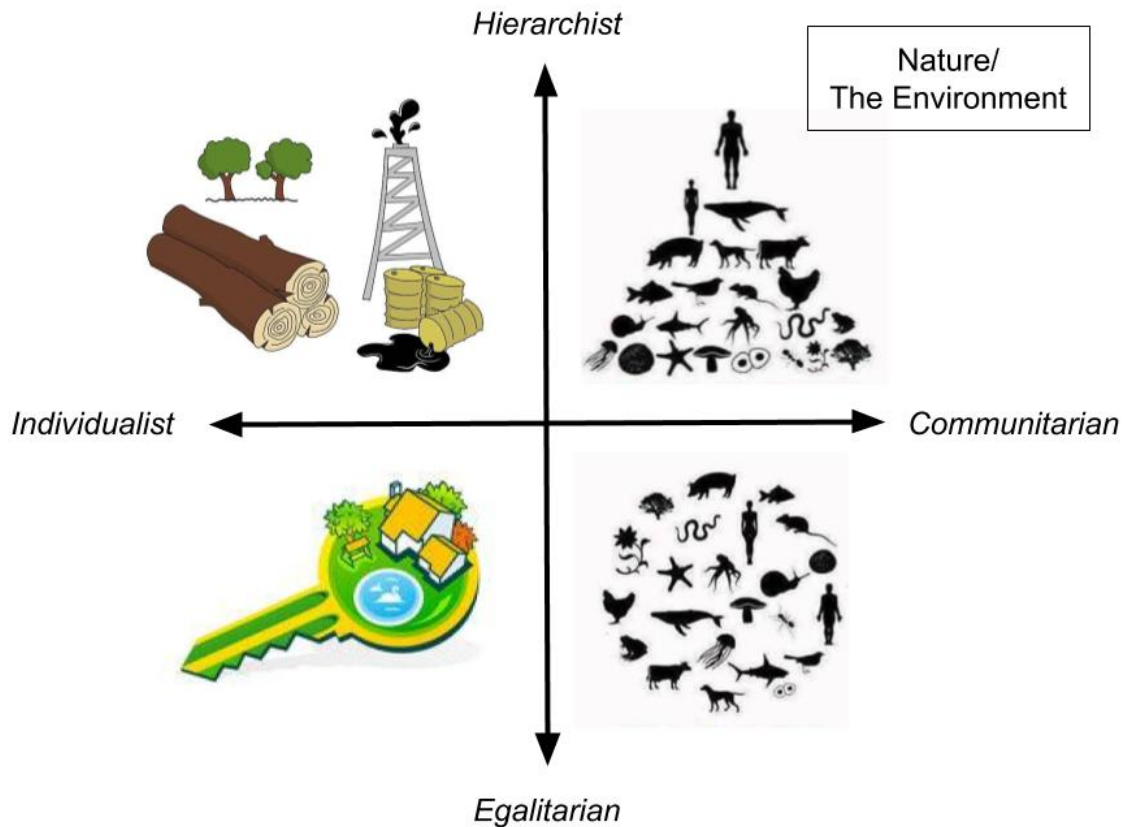
Key Lessons From The Research

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*



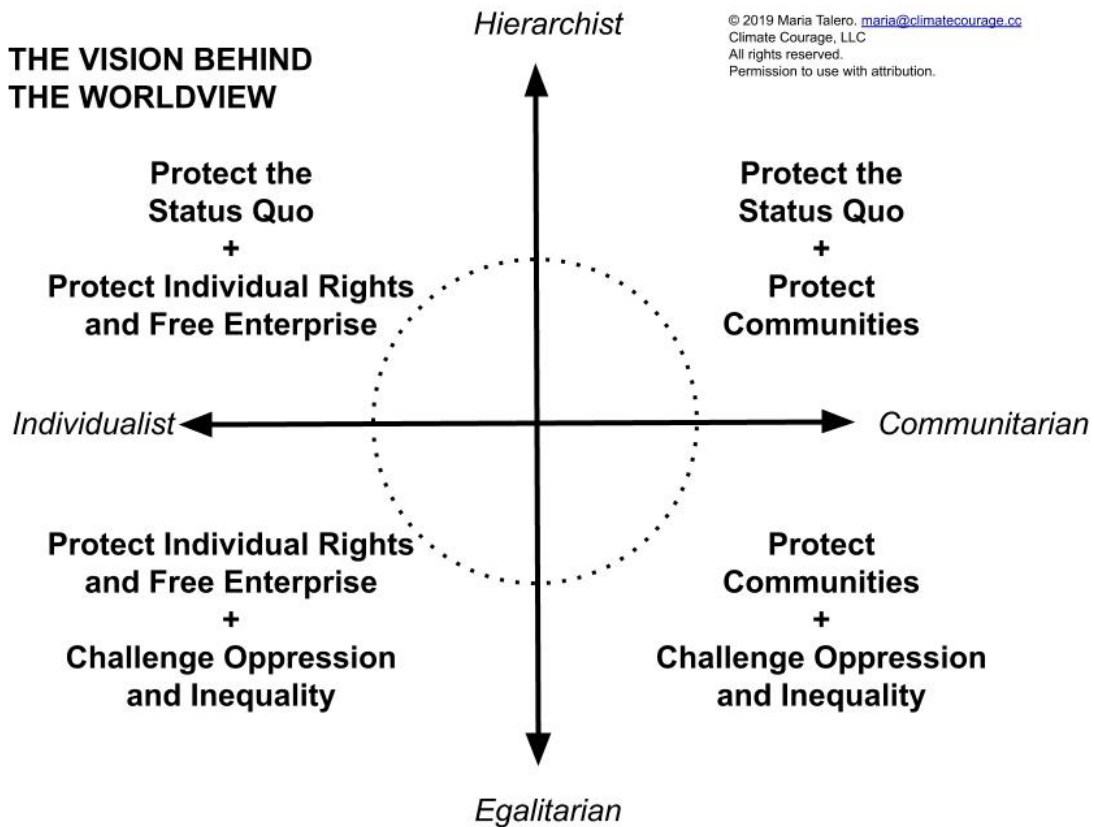
HI quadrant: Environment as “natural resources”

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

Figure 4*:



Adapted from the work of the Cultural Cognition Project at Yale Law School

*All references to Cultural Cognition and Cultural Worldviews throughout 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 and Fig 4. are my own adaptation and application to communication and environmental issues. Permission to use only with attribution; please contact me first for this and all other usage.

NOTES