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Identity, Knowledge, and Environmentalism: How the Media can Affect the Politics of Climate
Change in the United States

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DePauw University Honor Scholar Program

Class of 2022

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Introduction

There is a great divide in American politics between the Republican party and the Democratic party over climate change, specifically government action that should be taken to address climate change. By the early 1990s global warming had been defined as a problem that deserved the attention of American policymakers, creating a conceived threat to the spread of the current neoliberal policies worldwide. The perceived threat sparked an anti-environmental countermovement, which was spearheaded by conservative foundations and politicians. The resulting countermovement created a divide in political agendas between the Republican party and the Democratic party, where Republican politicians immediately challenged environmental science and policy starting in 1994.¹

This rightward shift in the U.S. political culture in 1994 allowed the Republican party to increase opportunities for the conservative movement to oppose climate science and climate policy through media networks, creating an era where U.S. newspapers were more likely to portray climate science as uncertain when compared to newspapers in other developed nations, and where the American public is less knowledgeable about global warming and its causes.² This was heightened by George W. Bush's presidency from 2001 to 2009. The same year that George W. Bush took his oath of office, two reports establishing the current scientific consensus that global warming had begun and that human activities are a contributor to global warming were published. These reports were the IPCC's 2001 *Third Assessment Report* as well

¹ Aaron McCright and Riley Dunlap, "The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public's Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010," *The Sociological Quarterly* 52, no. No. 2 (spring 2011): 158.

² McCright and Dunlap, "The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public's Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010," 159.

as the National Research Council's 2001 *Climate Change Science*.³ These same years, the start of ideological and partisan polarization surrounding the issue of climate change began. In contrast to the Republican party, the Democratic party has remained receptive toward climate change science and policy, demonstrating a large divide among political elites as well as organizations in America. Contemporary political discourses are filled with varying claims that Americans are becoming increasingly unwilling to compromise, with some going as far as claiming "that it is 'almost impossible' to achieve consensus solutions on important policy issues in the contemporary political environment."⁴ This all leads to the question, is this divide present in the general public? And if so, does the American public continue to widen this divide through their voting behaviors?

Citizens who identify as liberal or conservative tend to take cues from different elites, as well as media outlets, who express the same views as them. These differing cues expose people to different beliefs and attitudes on issues like climate change, especially as American media sources disproportionately report on the uncertainty and controversy surrounding climate science. This disproportionate reporting occurs even when each person may claim that they understand the issue a great deal. The way that the media and elites represent climate change follows party agendas on climate change, with left-leaning media sources promoting scientific knowledge on climate change, and right-leaning media regularly challenging the scientific knowledge through discussion of a few contrarian scientists.⁵ The fact that American citizens

³ McCright and Dunlap, "The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public's Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010," 164.

⁴ Matthew Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, Chicago Studies in American Politics (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 5.

⁵ McCright and Dunlap, "The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public's Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010," 161.

take cues from elites and media with specific political agendas leads to the question: what is influencing people's beliefs about climate change?

The steep decline in the belief that climate change had already begun among conservatives and Republicans is exemplified in a report that Fox News published, criticizing Al Gore, who had become the face of climate change advocacy with the success of his book *An Inconvenient Truth*, which was published in 2006.⁶ Between 2006 and 2010, the Pew Research Center found that Americans who believed that 'solid evidence' of global warming exists decreased from 77% to 59%.⁷ These divergencies in public opinion on climate change do not follow the political scene during 2008, as former Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a politician who has wrestled with climate change, and current Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi filmed an ad together stating that "'We do agree' ... 'Our country must take action to address climate change.'"⁸ This advertisement is followed by Senator John McCain expressing support for cap-and-trade legislation in 2008, a proposed policy to reduce carbon emissions in the United States. Despite these political elites expressing support for climate change legislation, a group titled Americans for Prosperity launched a campaign bearing the slogan, "'Global Warming Alarmism: Lost Jobs, Higher Taxes, Less Freedom.'"⁹ These claims during the 2008 financial crisis could have had a larger effect on the American public than political elites expressing support for climate change policy. How have these mixed messages from political

⁶ See Appendix A for a graph on the divergence over time in belief in climate change.

⁷ Deborah Lynn Guber, "A Cooling Climate for Change? Party Polarization and the Politics of Global Warming," *American Behavioral Scientist* 57, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 98, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764212463361>.

⁸ "Timeline: The Politics of Climate Change," *Frontline*, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/timeline-the-politics-of-climate-change/>.

⁹ "Timeline."

elites over time, as well as between political elites and politicized groups, affected Americans' perceptions and beliefs about climate change?

This paper will examine how individual identities can affect both their news media preferences and their belief in climate change. Identity impacts what news sources an individual finds trustworthy, and therefore what news sources they read and watch. Identity also affects an individual's belief that climate change is already happening, and that it is manmade. Media preferences can also shape those beliefs, based on the way they frame the same story, and what rhetoric is used within each frame. The media uses rhetoric and framing to influence individuals' knowledge on particular topics, which impacts their voting behaviors. A person's identity can influence many things, including their chosen media source. This identity can have several different implications, including the knowledge that they have on climate change and climate change policy based solely on the media sources that they trust. Media sources have the power to influence individuals' knowledge of climate change and climate change policy because of the way that they present the same news story.

Identity, News Media Preferences, and Belief in Climate Change

Differences in both age and sex influence an individual's news media preferences. Older individuals are more likely to use all types of news sources. In addition to these factors, ideology, party, as well as education highlight distinctions between audience demographics. A 2018 study by Lawrence C. Hamilton, a Professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire, and Jessica Bolin, a Ph.D. student at Boston College, finds that party and ideology significantly affect Fox News watching, as it is highest among conservatives, while liberals are

more likely to listen to public radio.¹⁰ This same study also finds that education also exhibits a significant, albeit weak connection to Fox News viewership.¹¹ This significant connection is a negative relationship between education and the probability of belief in anthropogenic climate change among the most conservative individuals.¹²

Generally, party ideology is represented by a set of ideals that each American political party champions. American conservatives, as represented by the Republican party, hold ideals of individual freedom, as well as private property rights and limited government which promotes a free market. Environmental protection challenges conservative values as it usually entails government intervention in markets as well as restrictions on property rights. From 2001 to 2010, 42.57% of American conservatives, and only 41.84% of Republicans believed that the effects of global warming had already begun to happen.¹³ In comparison, American liberals, as represented by the Democratic party, promote collective rights through market regulation and government intervention, making environmental protection consistent with liberal viewpoints.¹⁴ In the case of American liberals from 2001 to 2010, 68.82% believed that the effects of global warming had already begun to happen, and 65.36% of Democrats believed this.¹⁵ Liberals and Democrats are more likely to have beliefs surrounding climate science that are consistent with the scientific consensus that global warming has begun, as well as to

¹⁰ Jessica L. Bolin and Lawrence C. Hamilton, "The News You Choose: News Media Preferences Amplify Views on Climate Change," *Environmental Politics* 27, no. 3 (May 4, 2018): 467, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2018.1423909>.

¹¹ Bolin and Hamilton, "The News You Choose," 467.

¹² Bolin and Hamilton, "The News You Choose," 466.

¹³ McCright and Dunlap, "The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public's Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010," 167.

¹⁴ McCright and Dunlap, "The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public's Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010," 160.

¹⁵ McCright and Dunlap, "The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public's Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010," 167.

express personal concern surrounding global warming when compared to conservatives and Republicans.

Another important study was done in 2012 by Lauren Feldman, an associate professor of journalism and media studies at Rutgers, Edward Maibach, a professor, and the director of George Mason University's Center for Climate Change Communication, Connie Roser-Renouf, a research scientist at the Center for Climate Change Communication at George Mason University, and Anthony Leiserowitz, the founder and Director of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. These researchers found that republicans who frequently watch CNN or MSNBC, 17% of their sample, are less conservative than other Republicans, in particular, those who watch Fox News more than any other news source. Similarly, Democrats who frequently watch Fox News, 42%, are less liberal/ more conservative than the other Democrats, especially those who watch CNN or MSNBC, two left-wing American news outlets, more.¹⁶ The interaction between Fox News viewing and political partisanship is found to be negative in this study, suggest that the negative association between global warming acceptance increases among those with stronger Republican partisanship. There was a positive interaction between CNN or MSNBC viewing and partisanship found in this study, suggesting that the positive association between consuming CNN or MSNBC news and the acceptance of global warming is strong among Republicans as well.¹⁷ This same study found that the conservatism for those Republicans who watch more CNN or MSNBC than Fox News still falls above the scale midpoint

¹⁶ Lauren Feldman et al., "Climate on Cable: The Nature and Impact of Global Warming Coverage on Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161211425410>.

¹⁷ Feldman et al., "Climate on Cable," 20.

of conservatism/liberalism that this study used.¹⁸ This means that the group of Republicans that watch CNN or MSNBC more are still considerably more conservative than every Democrat viewing group.¹⁹ This finding led the authors to the conclusion that while ideology is related to partisans' news preferences, this does not fully account for the fact that frequent viewer of CNN or MSNBC, regardless of partisanship, have similar levels of global warming acceptance.²⁰

Education also impacts the probability that an individual will believe in anthropogenic climate change. Education increases the probability of belief for those who identify as moderate and liberal, however, there is a negative relationship between education and the probability of belief in anthropogenic climate change among the most conservative individuals.²¹ Females are more likely to report beliefs that are consistent with the scientific consensus on climate change than males.²² In a similar vein, younger adults are also more likely to report that their beliefs are consistent with the current scientific consensus as compared to older adults.²³ Ideology, party identification, and education's impact on information choice, in turn, follow patterns that selection bias predict. Those who watch Fox News show a negative effect on the belief in human-caused climate change.²⁴ In this way, political ideology and party identification can predict climate change beliefs both directly and indirectly through selective exposure to politically aligned news sources.

¹⁸ See Appendix B.

¹⁹ Feldman et al., "Climate on Cable," 21.

²⁰ Feldman et al., "Climate on Cable," 22.

²¹ Bolin and Hamilton, "The News You Choose," 466.

²² McCright and Dunlap, "The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public's Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010," 182.

²³ McCright and Dunlap, "The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public's Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010," 182.

²⁴ Bolin and Hamilton, "The News You Choose," 468.

The link between education, ideology, political party, and news media preferences is consistent with the selective exposure hypothesis. This hypothesis states that “more educated individuals are demonstrably more selective in their information choices, and especially so regarding sources commonly seen as conservative... or liberal... in outlook.”²⁵ The results of Natalie Stroud’s 2008 study, which was done during the election campaigns between George W. Bush and John Kerry demonstrates the importance of selective exposure. Partisan selection can be seen for all four media types that this study, newspaper, talk radio, cable news, and political internet. During the 2004 election news cycle, “64 percent of conservative Republicans consume[d] at least one conservative media outlet compared to 26 percent of liberal Democrats. In contrast, 43 percent of conservative Republicans consume[d] at least one liberal outlet while 76 percent of liberal Democrats consume[d] at least one liberal outlet.”²⁶ This study’s results also demonstrated that during the 2004 election cycle, people’s cable news selections became increasingly related to their political beliefs. One of the possible explanations for this occurrence is that because cable news networks are widely available people are more likely to select a cable news network based on their individual political beliefs.²⁷ These two findings further the claims that people’s media use is motivated and based on their political beliefs and ideologies, although selective exposure is not so pervasive that, as of 2004, people had not fully surrounded themselves with like-minded media outlets. Selective exposure comes from Americans seeking news that contains reinforcing information, and for a growing number

²⁵ Bolin and Hamilton, “The News You Choose,” 467.

²⁶ Natalie Jomini Stroud, “Media Use and Political Predispositions: Revisiting the Concept of Selective Exposure,” *Political Behavior* 30, no. 3 (September 2008): 358, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-007-9050-9>.

²⁷ Stroud, “Media Use and Political Predispositions,” 359.

of American's listening to political news is specifically about seeking out reinforcing content.²⁸ It is important to note that while partisan exposure is a significant trend, Americans also expose themselves to a variety of sources, which Matthew Levendusky describes as 'crosscutting.'²⁹ These two studies exemplify how ideology and education can affect media choices, which may further reinforce some preexisting beliefs.

Media's Influence

Media can have a great influence on the news that people hear, and how people interpret that news. This paper focuses on two types of news media, mainstream media, and partisan media. Mainstream media is a term that is used to refer to the mass news media outlets that influence many people. Partisan media can be part of the mainstream media umbrella, but function to report the news with a particular political bias. Both forms of media allow their journalists to create stories within power relationships, often which are asymmetrical. Journalistic norms and values, such as impartiality and objectivity, are used in mainstream media but can have a detrimental effect on the politics of climate change. The norms and values, which are meant to safeguard the news against abuses of power, can create asymmetrical power relationships around the media coverage of climate change.³⁰ These practices within journalism can amplify forms of asymmetrical power through the providing of media coverage to a minority viewpoint, all in the name of remaining impartial and objective.³¹

²⁸ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 15.

²⁹ While this is an important topic of discussion, I do not have time to dive into the specifics and peculiarities of 'crosscutting.' For more information, see Matthew Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, Chicago Studies in American Politics (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

³⁰ Maxwell T. Boykoff, "From Convergence to Contention: United States Mass Media Representations of Anthropogenic Climate Change Science," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 32, no. 4 (2007): 478.

³¹ Boykoff, *From Convergence to Contention*, 484.

Even though an overwhelming majority of climate scientists, 97% according to NASA, agree that humans are the cause of climate change, mass media and partisan media sources alike will give as much airtime to the 3% who disagree as they will to the 97% who agree.

Partisan media outlets, which have emerged with the creation of Fox News in 1996, have begun to shun the norms of objectivity that emerged at the turn of the 20th century, instead, turning to explicitly advocating for a particular point of view.³² Because of this polarized lens, cable news networks can present very different interpretations of the same news stories simply by providing one-sided, opinionated commentary on the same event. Polarized media only attracts a fraction of the U.S. population, with Fox News prime time, 8 p.m. to 11 p.m., capturing an average of 3,082,961 views a night and MSNBC capturing an average of 1,597,577 views a night.³³ If only a fraction of the U.S. population watches partisan prime time media, how can there be any important effects? Why would a media source choose to become polarized when only a fraction of the U.S. population engages with their material?

There can be many reasons why a media company chooses to engage in polarized reporting of the daily news. Dan Bernhardt, Stefan Krasa, and Mattias Polborn discuss a model in which media bias arises as an optimal choice for media sources who want to maximize profit in response to specific voter preferences. Through this choice to maximize profit, media sources can selectively omit relevant information, but they will not fabricate news or information outright.³⁴ Within this model, the voters are aware that media is biased and update their views

³² Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 8.

³³ "Trends and Facts on Cable News: State of the News Media," *Pew Research Center's Journalism Project* (blog), accessed March 2, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/cable-news/>.

³⁴ Dan Bernhardt, Stefan Krasa, and Mattias Polborn, "Political Polarization and the Electoral Effects of Media Bias," *Journal of Public Economics* 92, no. 5–6 (June 2008): 1093, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2008.01.006>.

rationally, however, most individuals cannot recover the suppressed information completely, as learning all of the news of the day is costly when a citizen who listens to a second news source will have to listen to many stories they have already heard.³⁵ This model also relies on the assumption that liberals and conservative citizens prefer to hear the news that is positive for their ideologically closer candidate and policy and negative about the opposing candidate and policy.³⁶

Human beings are classified as motivated reasoners, in particular choosing to follow directional goals, the desire to reach a preferred conclusion, rather than the correct conclusion. Motivated reasoning is defined as a phenomenon in which emotional biases lead to decisions that are based on their desirability, and not on the presentation of facts and evidence. Partisan media outlets are found to heighten motivated reasoning through the broadcasting of one-sided messages to their viewers, as well as through powerfully invoking their viewer's partisan identities.³⁷ Motivated reasoning allows like-minded viewers to uncritically accept the pro-attitudinal messages that come from their chosen media source and the absence of a competing message, especially for those who choose to only watch one news source, or those who only choose to watch like-minded news sources, allows individuals to enact motivated reasoning easier.³⁸

In a 2013 study on how Partisan Media has polarized the American public, Matthew Levendusky discovered a trend in which individuals who were assigned to watch their like-

³⁵ Bernhardt, Krassa, and Polborn, "Political Polarization and the Electoral Effects of Media Bias," 1096.

³⁶ Bernhardt, Krassa, and Polborn, "Political Polarization and the Electoral Effects of Media Bias," 1096.

³⁷ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 51.

³⁸ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 51.

minded media segment became noticeably more extreme after viewing when compared to their counterparts who watched a neutral news segment and those who watched a crosscutting segment, here defined as watching a news segment with a different political viewpoint than your own.³⁹ This study allowed Levendusky to conclude that even a short exposure to like-minded partisan media can shape individuals' attitudes towards issues in ways that stay with the individual and that those who watch neutral news segments, or news segments that differ in beliefs have no effect.⁴⁰ In this way, partisan media increases polarization in the U.S. through an increase in polarization for those who are already less moderate, rather than increasing the polarization by people who are considered to be moderates. This study also found a correlation between those who preferred like-minded partisan media and the strength of their partisanship. Those who preferred like-minded media were 19 percent more likely to be stronger partisans, as well as 16 percent more likely to vote in a primary election.⁴¹ This demonstrates a correlation between those who prefer like-minded media, and those who have greater political motivation. Those who turn out to vote at a primary election are typically more politically motivated than those who choose not to vote in a primary election. Partisan media's ability to polarize can have a greater effect if their viewership is more likely to become polarized while being more likely to be politically motivated. Partisan media sources use both

³⁹ It is important to note that individuals who choose to watch crosscutting media are not a random subset of people, but to describe who chooses to watch crosscutting media is outside the scope of this paper. For a more in-depth discussion on this issue, please see Levendusky's *How Partisan Media Polarize America*. Levendusky leaves the topic of crosscutting open for future research, in particular why particular individuals choose to watch crosscutting media, rather than like-minded media.

⁴⁰ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 74–75.

⁴¹ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 81.

their rhetoric, and their framing of the news to prime a salient party identity, which increases like-minded viewers' biases towards partisan information.

Rhetoric

Citizens' political orientations allow them to filter out new information on climate science, making looking for and publishing new data ineffective in reducing the current political divide over climate change. These political orientations instead will magnify the divide, as political elites will selectively interpret or even ignore new climate change data and studies, and news outlets will promote this selective interpretation. When citizens listen to one news channel, or only listen to news channels and favored elites with their political views, they will mainly be presented with global warming information that is framed in such a manner that is already consistent with the citizens' pre-existing beliefs on the issue of climate change.⁴²

Rhetoric is communicating to build and maintain communities that must reason together to stay together.⁴³ In this way, rhetoric is the bridge between climate scientists and the public, as well as climate change denialists and the public. Rhetoric can help to facilitate effective public reasoning. Rhetoric is important when looking at media and public figures' discussions about climate change and climate policy. The rhetoric used by the media and public figures can be very influential, as climate politics rely on the exchanging, and changing of social norms to be more environmentally friendly. The use of rhetorical approaches demonstrates

⁴² McCright and Dunlap, "The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public's Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010," 171.

⁴³ Lynda Walsh, "The Visual Rhetoric of Climate Change: The Visual Rhetoric of Climate Change," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 6, no. 4 (July 2015): 361, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.342>.

how “climate-change arguments are political” as well as the fact that “their effects are contingent on the time and place of their presentation.”⁴⁴

Framing

Mass media and partisan media alike use framing, or the packaging of the daily news in such a way that encourages specific interpretations and discourages other interpretations. This process involves choices to cover certain events and not others, which are then converted into the news stories that people read and watch. Media consistently frames discussions surrounding climate science as contentious, despite a great amount of consensus in the scientific community that climate change is real, and human-made.⁴⁵

Climate change is publicly represented through the media, and in this way, the media can construct climate change as a social problem.⁴⁶ Societies can culturally determine what are considered to be events, and through the dissemination of information about these events, news organizations can circulate as well as shape knowledge thereby playing a role in setting the political agenda of their viewership.⁴⁷ This impact that the media can have on public views of climate change are compounded by the professional standards that are intended to prevent bias. When the professional standards are supposed to prevent bias are ignored, this can create a systematic distortion of the news. The false assertion that the language of specific media sources, such as Fox News, is neutral, fair, and balanced when it can reinforce certain value systems is another factor adding to the impact that the media can have on people’s opinions.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Walsh, “The Visual Rhetoric of Climate Change,” 361.

⁴⁵ Boykoff, “From Convergence to Contention,” 481.

⁴⁶ Liisa Antilla, “Climate of Skepticism: US Newspaper Coverage of the Science of Climate Change,” *Global Environmental Change* 15 (2005): 339.

⁴⁷ Antilla, “Climate of Skepticism,” 341.

⁴⁸ Antilla, “Climate of Skepticism,” 339.

One of the ways that US conservative efforts to dismiss the reality of climate change is through the framing. This framing asserts that the actions needed to mitigate the anthropogenic factors leading to climate change would be too great a threat to the nation's economy and sovereignty.⁴⁹ These claims appeal to those with more conservative political viewpoints, as having a strong economy and maintaining the United States' sovereignty and ability to rely on itself is a common viewpoint in the Republican party. Those who come to see that the United States' economy and sovereignty could be negatively impacted by climate change policies are less likely to support them.

Partisan media sources, the news sources that present news stories in such a way to promote a particular political agenda, cover the same daily news in strikingly different ways from each other. Mathew Levendusky notes that "rather than engaging with the same set of themes, the shows 'talk past' each other in a fundamental way, focusing on separate aspects of the debate that suit their ideological predispositions."⁵⁰ This form of framing allows the news sources to give factual, albeit one-sided presentations of the evidence that surrounds a particular story, carefully picking the facts which support their side and omitting the facts that work towards the opposite political agenda's favor.⁵¹ When presenting the other side's arguments, it is typically done in a 'straw-man' fashion, and these arguments are usually shot down in the long run.⁵² The discussion of the opposition's arguments also include a link to a more general flaw in logic within the opposition party. To do so, the partisan media outlets

⁴⁹ Antilla, "Climate of Skepticism," 344.

⁵⁰ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 26.

⁵¹ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 27.

⁵² Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 27.

highlight errors, as well as emphasize outrageous comments that are made, and more generally mock the opposing side.⁵³ In addition to slanting their coverage on the opposing party, partisan media also engage in a culture where standing on principal, and not compromising on ideals or ideas is the more important strategy in what they deem to be flawed bipartisanship, thereby slanting the coverage on attempts to compromise with the opposing party as well.⁵⁴

This framing effect is magnified when partisan media outlets devote different levels of attention to certain news stories. This differing in attention occurs both through repeating the same basic story repeatedly, as well as offering something new as the news story evolves. This keeps reinforcing the original story while offering something new to keep watchers and readers continuing to tune in to the news stories. Repetition of the same storyline acts as a reinforcement, continuing to remind viewers about the other parties' flaws, and continuing to push viewers toward a greater polarized view of American politics. In addition to this, repeated exposure to the same partisan messaging strengthens the certainty with which an individual holds their attitudes.⁵⁵ This differing level of attention also allows the opposing ideological news site to discuss more general flaws in their opposition.⁵⁶ The greater the number of times the basic storyline is repeated the surer people become in their convictions. Repetition has a reinforcing characteristic. This difference in coverage can lead two partisan media sources to cover different stories entirely, continuing to reflect the idea that partisan media sources choose to focus on the news stories that will best support their position.⁵⁷

⁵³ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 32.

⁵⁴ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 34.

⁵⁵ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 90.

⁵⁶ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 29.

⁵⁷ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 30.

The overall effect of partisan media divides and polarizes their audiences. Those who choose to watch like-minded media are more likely to view the opposing party, and their leadership less positively, as well as trust the parties' leaders less and, are more skeptical of bipartisan cooperation. This in turn can increase gridlock, as compromise is harder to reach when constituents are skeptical of bipartisan legislation. This gridlock can have greater political impacts, as a greater amount of gridlock means less legislation can pass through the legislature, making it difficult for the government to find effective solutions to problems such as climate change. Without bipartisan support for bills, there can be little change in the U.S. government's response to climate change.

The viewing of like-minded media can have a significant impact on voter choices, as the rhetoric, framing, and repetition used in partisan media sources allow news stories to be presented in a specific light, affecting like-minded viewers' perceptions on candidates and legislation. Because different partisan media sources have differing agendas, it can be assumed that their consistent viewers will view different issues as being important and requiring government attention.⁵⁸ While the viewership of partisan media may be small, the effects of partisan media are great. Partisan media's politically active viewership can put pressure on their elected legislators to become more extreme, and more polarized. Because partisan media's viewership is more likely to vote in a primary election, they can have more of a say in who is running under the two main parties. The more extreme a candidate that is voted in during the primary election the more extreme a political platform, and therefore more polarizing their running for office will be.

⁵⁸ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 144.

Foucault and the Power that the Ability to Construct Knowledge Has

Michel Foucault, a 20th-century French philosopher, introduces an idea called power-knowledge, which he uses throughout his works on power, the subject, and sexuality.

Foucault's work has been used in various ways since its publishing and is a way to analyze the power dynamics that are present in societies. This paper will use Foucault's concept of power-knowledge to the way that the media has the power to influence the knowledge that individuals have, but that individuals also have the power to create the knowledge they want from the various news sources. To Foucault, society exhibits control over its subjects through the communications that are present in society, which is regulated based on lessons, and the knowledge of each person.⁵⁹ This use of power to regulate individual knowledge requires the ability to communicate with people, which is how news sources can play a role in facilitating the knowledge that each person has on a particular subject. In the case of climate change policies, news sources pick and choose which facts are used in the story and the framing and rhetoric to use to present these facts. This influences the knowledge that people have, and this knowledge influences aspects of their voting behavior. If an individual watches a news source that prioritizes climate change policy, that individual is more likely to use their knowledge to vote for a candidate that also values climate change policy. On the other hand, if an individual watches a program that does not value climate change policy, their knowledge will lead them to vote for a candidate who has other priorities that are more in line with the voters. In this way, media not only influences individual knowledge but also which politicians are given the

⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 787.

ability to enact policy. In this way, knowledge is created through power, but also knowledge creates power.

Both political and media elites can present facts in such a way that assists them in making the arguments they want to make.⁶⁰ While partisan media viewers make up a small percentage of the United States population, partisan media can still have a great effect on how people view the daily news. Through their use of rhetoric, framing, repetition, and choosing the news that gets aired, partisan media outlets are constructing a narrative that the other side is completely wrong. These stories can be picked up by mainstream news outlets, or simply believed by a politically motivated, like-minded viewer, who makes their voice heard through actions like volunteering on a political campaign. In this way, those who are creating the narrative can have a great amount of power to affect U.S. politics.

A 2010 poll by Gallup finds that individual knowledge has a great effect on the average level of concern among Democrats and Republicans. Democrats who self-reported a great level of understanding of global warming were more concerned than those who did not self-report a great level of understanding. Many Republicans who self-reported a great level of understanding were far less worried about global warming than those who knew less about the issue.⁶¹ This self-reported understanding directly relates to the knowledge that these individuals have. The fact that similar levels of knowledge results in two different levels of concern must mean that the type of knowledge they are receiving is different. As partisan media can report different facts of the same story, or even report different stories, part of this

⁶⁰ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 146.

⁶¹ Guber, "A Cooling Climate for Change?," 105–6.

differing knowledge could come from consuming partisan media sources. Those who watch conservative partisan media, which focuses on the economic impacts of climate change policies, may report less of a concern with global warming, as compared to someone who watches liberal partisan media, which focuses on the urgency of climate change, may report more of a concern with global warming. Those who have the power to disseminate knowledge to the public can influence individual people's knowledge, thereby affecting their concern over global warming. This concern impacts several things, including whom one votes for, which can create gridlock in Congress over climate change policy.

News Sources Chosen

Partisan Media

This paper analyses four different print news sources, of which two are conservative, and two are liberal news sources. Fox News and *The Wall Street Journal* are the two conservative-leaning news sources, and MSNBC and CNN are the two liberal-leaning news sources used here. These news outlets all have online print news published every day and kept up with current events happening in the United States. Two of these media sources, Fox News and MSNBC, consist of partisan media, as they have prime-time shows and publish articles and transcripts of these shows, which present the facts of a particular story in such a way that supports a particular conclusion. Various partisan media outlets also choose to devote differing amounts of time to specific news stories.⁶² In this way, the news stories published by partisan media sources are framed to advance a particular political agenda which follows the news

⁶² Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize American*, 25.

outlets underlying principles.⁶³ The polarized media from Fox News advances the conservative political agenda of the Republican party while the polarized media from MSNBC advances the liberal political agenda of the Democratic party.

Fox News

While it is true that a fraction of the American public watches' partisan media during their prime-time news segments, 3,082,961 viewers on average watch Fox News and 1,597,577 on average watch MSNBC nightly, these small numbers are influential in many ways.⁶⁴ The citizens who watch partisan media outlets are more politically active, and more likely to have their voices heard by politicians. These news segments are also snowballing and can disseminate several partisan stories into mainstream news over the past several years.⁶⁵ In this way, partisan news media uses the news as a vehicle to advance a particular point of view, allowing news to no longer be informational, but rather to reflect an individual's political beliefs.

Fox News is a well-known conservative news outlet, started by Rupert Murdoch on October 7, 1996, to appeal to a conservative audience. Fox News presents of climate change in a way that conforms closely with the Republican and conservative positions on climate change.⁶⁶ Fox News offers a primarily one-sided argument to advance their own political position, which includes opinionated commentary from the hosts of their prime time news, only discussing the opposing liberal view to mostly criticize it.⁶⁷ In a study published in 2012

⁶³ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 8.

⁶⁴ "Trends and Facts on Cable News: State of the News Media."

⁶⁵ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 16–17.

⁶⁶ Feldman et al., "Climate on Cable," 6.

⁶⁷ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 3.

which focused on 269 cable news transcripts from 2007-2008 which discussed climate change and/or global warming, Fox news was the least likely to be accepting of climate change while simultaneously being the most dismissive of climate change when compared to CNN and MSNBC.⁶⁸ This study found that less than 20 percent of Fox News discussions of climate change accepted climate change, while nearly 60 percent of their broadcasts were dismissive of climate change.⁶⁹ According to Lauren Feldman, P. Sol Hart and Tijana Milosevic, in 2007-2008 Fox News “broadcasts were more likely to include statements that challenged scientific agreement on climate change, undermined the reality of climate change, and questioned its human causes.”⁷⁰ The findings from this 2012 study suggest how cable news presents climate change and global warming in different lights and can positively or negatively affect their audiences’ perception of climate change.

The Wall Street Journal

The *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) is a conservative-leaning news source, especially in its writings about climate change. The WSJ has been recognized as feigning a balanced view, one which stresses that there is uncertainty around climate change. At other times, it writes in a dismissive view that denies the reality of anthropogenic climate change.⁷¹ Within an analysis of news stories about climate change written between January 1, 2006, and December 31, 2011, the WSJ was found to have continued this trend. The WSJ did offer the most coverage of actions to prevent or slow climate change. However, this referred to a lack of potential or a lack

⁶⁸ Feldman et al., “Climate on Cable,” 10–11.

⁶⁹ Feldman et al., “Climate on Cable,” 11.

⁷⁰ Feldman et al., “Climate on Cable,” 14.

⁷¹ Lauren Feldman, P. Sol Hart, and Tijana Milosevic, “Polarizing News? Representations of Threat and Efficacy in Leading US Newspapers’ Coverage of Climate Change,” *Public Understanding of Science* 26, no. 4 (May 2017): 486, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662515595348>.

of success from specific actions and policies created to address climate change, and framing the conflict between politicians and political parties over climate change policy. The WSJ was also found to be highly likely to highlight any negative economic consequences that could be related to taking any action on climate change. This framing of climate change action is something worth noting as the WSJ emphasizes business and financial news, meaning its discussion of economic issues is likely to be important to its readers.⁷²

MSNBC

MSNBC, the left-wing partisan news outlet, was founded on July 15, 1996. The same study that looked at Fox News and CNN looked at MSNBC, which was also more likely than *Fox News* to state that global warming is real, and there is scientific consensus on this claim. Between 2007 and 2008, MSNBC was least likely to include any discussion of the scientific agreement surrounding climate change when compared to both CNN and Fox News.⁷³ In the discussions that MSNBC did have on climate change, virtually none of their broadcasts challenged the idea that climate change was not real, while 52 percent of their broadcasts affirmed that climate change is happening, and 33 percent of the broadcasts included statements that human activities are the cause of climate change.⁷⁴ MSNBC as a polarizing media source is also more likely to offer a primarily one-sided argument to advance their liberal political position, allowing their hosts to provide opinionated commentary, and discussing the opposing side's argument in mainly criticizing ways.⁷⁵

⁷² Feldman, Hart, and Milosevic, "Polarizing News?" 493.

⁷³ Feldman et al., Feldman et al., "Climate on Cable," 11.

⁷⁴ Feldman et al., Feldman et al., "Climate on Cable," 12.

⁷⁵ Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, 3.

CNN

In comparison to Fox News, CNN was more likely to state that global warming is real and is happening. In the same 2012 study done on Fox News, more than 70 percent of CNN broadcasts accepted climate change, and only 7 percent of CNN broadcasts took a dismissive tone towards climate change. CNN was also the most likely to include any information or discussion of the scientific agreements surrounding climate change, and almost no broadcasts challenged the reality of climate change.⁷⁶ In addition, 61 percent of CNN broadcasts included statements that human activities cause climate change.⁷⁷ Overall, CNN was the most likely of the three newspapers analyzed in this 2012 study to affirm that there is scientific agreement on climate change, and to claim that climate change is real and that it does result from human activities.

Climate Change Policies between 2016 and 2022

In this section, there will be a discussion of 4 different climate change policies that occurred between 2016 and 2022. Two of these policies are from Donald Trump's presidency, and the other two are from Joseph Biden's first two years of his presidency. The news sources used are a mix of print and online media, and televised broadcasts. While I did try to ensure that the policies I chose were somewhat congruent, it was difficult since the two Presidents had very different stances on climate change policies. Trump, a Republican President, made it very clear that climate change was not his top priority, and many of his policies reduce climate change policies already in place in favor of the American economy. Biden, a Democratic

⁷⁶ Feldman et al., "Climate on Cable," 11–12.

⁷⁷ Feldman et al., Feldman et al., "Climate on Cable," 12.

President, has made it clear that climate change is one of his top priorities to make America a strong competitor in the future. These two different views on climate change are apparent in the policies that each President chose to enact. President Trump left the Paris Climate Accord, which was negotiated in 2015 by President Obama, a Democrat, and the replacement of the Clean Power Plan, another Obama-era policy, for the Affordable Clean Energy Rule. President Biden, on the other hand, increased greenhouse gas reduction targets with his 2030 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Target and created a pathway for this to be achieved through his American Jobs Plan and Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill.

This upcoming section will use one news story from Fox News, The Wall Street Journal, MSNBC, and CNN to analyze how the media discusses climate change policy when discussing policies from their like-minded party and ones from the opposing party. This section also analyzes the implications of the discussion on the voting behaviors of their viewers, mainly depending on what their viewer prefers. How can a partisan discussion of policy affect individuals differently based on their party identity? How can party identity affect what sources someone trusts and where they choose to get their information from?

Trump's Withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord

On June 1, 2017, former President Trump announced the United States Withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord. In a press release published by Trump's administration on the day of the announcement, the claim is made that by leaving the Paris Climate Accord, President Trump was fulfilling a campaign promise to maintain the U.S.'s position as a leader in clean energy while still protecting the American economy and workforce. According to Trump's administration, the Paris Accord undermined the U.S. competitiveness and American jobs

because the Accord imposed unrealistic targets for the U.S. to meet in reductions in carbon emissions for an impact on the climate which would be negligible, a reduction in global temperature rise by .02°C in 2100.⁷⁸ This decision to leave the Paris Climate Accord was met by objections from left-leaning individuals and democrats. How did various media sources discuss the leaving of the Paris Climate Accord?

Fox News discussed Trump's pull out of the Paris Climate Accord through the lens of criticizing the moral outrage about the impacts that the decision could have on the future of climate change. In a politicized discussion, Bernie Goldberg, a Fox News Contributor, criticizes the left for not having moral outrage over what he deems to be immediate threats.⁷⁹ To Goldberg, the 'mainstream media' only represents one side of climate change, and that people cannot deviate from that view without being labeled as a heretic.⁸⁰ At the beginning of the news clip Goldberg also states that "it's an absolute fact that the further out you go the less difficult it is to predict what's going to happen. Nobody would dispute that. Yet, they're predicting what's going to happen 50 and 100 from now."⁸¹ This statement disagrees with most climate scientists, 97% of whom agree with the statement that climate change is man-made. Scientists have been advocating that climate change will begin having severe impacts on more than just the day-to-day weather but will impact weather patterns and extreme events. Goldberg claims that this is not certain and that these events may happen, but they may not.

⁷⁸ "President Trump Announces U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Climate Accord – The White House," accessed April 7, 2022, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/articles/president-trump-announces-u-s-withdrawal-paris-climate-accord/>.

⁷⁹ Fox News, *Goldberg: Where's the Moral Outrage over Immediate Threats?*, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4FXVFDXewM>.

⁸⁰ Fox News, *Goldberg*.

⁸¹ Fox News, *Goldberg*, :16-:30.

Through the framing of the discussion surrounding climate change as moral outrage on something that *may* happen, Goldberg conveys to like-minded viewers that climate change is not an immediate threat and that we cannot be sure that climate change will affect humans. This viewpoint can significantly impact what issues voters find important and whom they support. If you believe that climate change is not an immediate threat, you may be more likely to put climate change policy lower on your list of topics you want your chosen candidate to have a particular stance on or someone who prioritizes other aspects of life, such as the economy, over climate change policy.

In a WSJ article titled “Donald Trump Withdraws from Paris Climate Deal Despite Allies’ Opposition,” Eli Stokols discusses the debates surrounding President Trump’s decision to leave the Paris Climate Accord. This debate, according to Stokols, was centered around seeking agreements that prioritize American needs within the economy and the environment. Stokols quotes President Trump, stating that “this agreement is less about the climate and more about other countries gaining a financial advantage’ over the U.S.,” with some industries and politicians supporting President Trump’s decision and others criticizing his decision.⁸² Stokols states that Trump’s plan to renegotiate the agreement could be challenging because the leading economies in the agreement have stated they plan to continue with the original deal even if the U.S. left.⁸³ This framing surrounding the contention of the decision to leave the deal, and the difficulty that could result from trying to rejoin under different criteria which would benefit the U.S. could leave the reader questioning whether Trump’s decision was the correct

⁸² Eli Stokols, “Donald Trump Withdraws From Paris Climate Deal Despite Allies’ Opposition,” WSJ, accessed April 10, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/donald-trump-to-exit-paris-climate-deal-officials-say-1496343854>.

⁸³ Stokols, “Donald Trump Withdraws From Paris Climate Deal Despite Allies’ Opposition.”

one to make. By stating that Rex Tillerson, the Secretary of State at the time the decision was made, Ivanka Trump, as well as Exxon Mobil Corp., General Electric Co., and Apple Inc. all publicly and privately argued in favor of remaining in the agreement, Stokols is reiterating the contention surrounding the decision to leave the Accord.⁸⁴ This article could be read two ways, depending on what the reader's desired outcome of this article is. For a reader who is in support of President Trump's decision to leave the accord, they will take away that Trump is upholding his commitment to his America First campaign, as this withdrawal is allowing for the domestic industry not to have to follow through on the voluntary carbon emissions goals, allowing for more jobs to be created, especially in the energy production sector. A reader who is against President Trump's decision to leave the accord will take away the pushback that Trump received, even within his advisors and cabinet for this decision, as 'proof' that this decision was not a good idea. Motivated reasoning would affect what a reader takes away from this article, as it talks about the support and the pushback that this decision received.

In an article published on MSNBC's Maddowblog titled "Trump positions the Republican Party as a Global Outlier," Steve Benen discusses that he sees nothing in the rest of the world that compares to the contemporary Republican party. Benen presents the decision to leave the Paris Climate Accord as having gone against mainstream views on global warming in the United States. Benen also presents the politics of the republican party as becoming radicalized, positioning itself as a global outlier for any mainstream democratic party.⁸⁵ This framing of the Republican party is an international outlier, especially with the decision to leave the Paris

⁸⁴ Stokols, "Donald Trump Withdraws From Paris Climate Deal Despite Allies' Opposition."

⁸⁵ Steve Benen, "Trump Positions the Republican Party as a Global Outlier," MSNBC.com, accessed April 10, 2022, <https://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/trump-positions-the-republican-party-global-outlier-msna993161>.

Climate Accord. By shining a light on the U.S. being one of three countries that rejected the Paris Climate Accord, Benen attempts to paint the decision as a true anomaly. Benen did not discuss what led Trump to leave the accord or what was said throughout the U.S. and the world about the decision. All that Benen discusses is how the Republican party is an exception.

On a news segment from CNNi featuring former U.S. state department official and Harvard professor Nicholas Burns there is a discussion about the impact of the U.S. leaving the Paris Climate Accord. In this video Burns states that the United States reliability as a nation will be called into question with our choice to leave the accord.⁸⁶ Burns is very clear that he believes that the U.S. leaving the Paris Climate Accord is detrimental to climate change policies and America's position on the world stage. Through the frame of the negative impact the decision had on America's role as a world leader, individuals can call into question whether leaving the accord was a good idea. Did the so-called economic benefits outweigh the hit our nation took in the ability for other nations to rely on the U.S. to keep its commitments? Is it worth indicating that climate change is not our top priority when most European countries consider to be one of their top concerns?

Trump's Replacement of the Clean Power Plan with the Affordable Clean Energy Rule

During former President Obama's second term in office the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the Clean Power Plan (CPP). This 2015 proposal was marketed in an EPA fact sheet as flexible, designed to help strengthen the trend towards cleaner energy through the creation of "achievable standards for power plants and customized goals for states

⁸⁶ "Trump Exits Paris Climate Accord," *CNNi* (CNN, June 2, 2017), :19-:22, <https://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2017/06/02/exp-trump-exits-paris-climate-accord.cnn>.

to cut the carbon pollution that is driving climate change.”⁸⁷ The CPP fact sheet details that by 2030 CO₂ emissions will be 32% below 2005 levels.⁸⁸ The CPP, however, never got initiated as the Supreme Court issued a stay on the implementation of the CPP. The Affordable Clean Energy Act was meant to replace the CPP whose implementation was blocked by the Supreme Court.

In 2018 the EPA proposed the Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) Rule as a replacement for the CPP, which had been put into effect in 2015. According to the EPA’s press release on August 21, 2018, the ACE would help to empower states and would both promote energy independence as well as economic growth and job creation when compared to what was described as Obama’s administrations “overly prescriptive and burdensome Clean Power Plan.”⁸⁹ Included in this press release is how the proposal will work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through four actions: defining the best system of emission reduction, providing states with a list of technology that can be used in their state plans, updating the New Source Review to further encourage efficiency improvements, and aligning regulations to give states adequate time as well as flexibility to develop individual state plans.⁹⁰ Through these actions the EPA predicted that the proposal will reduce 2030 CO₂ emissions will be reduced by up to 1.5%, and that when states have fully implemented the ACE proposal that power sector CO₂ emissions

⁸⁷ United States Environmental Protection Agency, “Fact Sheet: Overview of the Clean Power Plan,” Overviews and Factsheets, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://archive.epa.gov/epa/cleanpowerplan/fact-sheet-overview-clean-power-plan.html>.

⁸⁸ United States Environmental Protection Agency, “Fact Sheet.”

⁸⁹ United States Environmental Protection Agency, “EPA Proposes Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) Rule,” Speeches, Testimony and Transcripts, US EPA, August 21, 2018, <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-proposes-affordable-clean-energy-ace-rule>.

⁹⁰ United States Environmental Protection Agency, “EPA Proposes Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) Rule.”

could by up to 34% below 2005 levels.⁹¹ How did news media outlets discuss this change in policy?

Fox News's report on the Affordable Clean Energy Rule titled "Trump EPA Overhauls Obama-Era Regulations for Coal-Fired Power Plants," written by Andre O'Reilly, discusses how the ACE helps the struggling coal sector. O'Reilly writes that because of the broad authority the ACE gives to states to determine how to restrict their carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions states will not have to shift away from coal towards less-polluting energy sources.⁹² The news article does not go into detail about the ACE Rule, and only glances over liberal pushback on the relaxing of regulatory compliance with the replacement of the CPP with the ACE Rule. This framing of the ACE Rule helping bring back a struggling energy sector can be appealing to a like-minded readership, with there being no need to discuss any environmental impacts that the adoption of the ACE Rule could have, whether positive or negative. This differs greatly from the discussion the Fox News had on many of the Biden Administrations efforts to reduce greenhouse gas pollution.

The WSJ discusses both the positive and the negative impacts that the ACE Rule will have in an article published on Jun 19, 2019. This article, written by Timothy Puko, discusses the environmentalist pushback, including the plans for both California and New York to sue to stop the Rule from being implemented over a dispute where the EPA has the power to overturn the Obama-era CPP.⁹³ Puko goes on to explain the current trends in the energy sector, which had

⁹¹ United States Environmental Protection Agency, "EPA Proposes Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) Rule."

⁹² Andrew O'Reilly, "Trump EPA Overhauls Obama-Era Regulations for Coal-Fired Power Plants," Text.Article, Fox News (Fox News, August 21, 2018), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-epa-overhauls-obama-era-regulations-for-coal-fired-power-plants>.

⁹³ Timothy Puko, "EPA Overturns Obama-Era Clean Air Rules for Power Plants," WSJ, accessed April 7, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/epa-overturns-obama-era-clean-air-rules-for-power-plants-11560963259>.

continued to close coal-fired plants, due in part to the lowering cost of other power sources, so the ACE could be a lifeline to some of the coal-fired plants who would have faced an increase in expenses in order to continue to comply with federal environmental mandates.⁹⁴ Puko contradicts this argument, saying that with the rise in popularity of natural gas, and the increase in the adoption of wind and solar energy many power companies were unlikely to start using coal once again. Even without the CPP the energy industry had outpaced the CPP projects of CO2 emissions being less than 32% of 2005 emissions level by 2030. In 2017 emissions were already down 28% from 2005 levels.⁹⁵ Puko frames his discussion of the ACE Rule as something that does not follow the direction that the nation is going, and as an attempt to try and give a lifeline to failing coal plants. This framing is not favorable of the ACE Rule, despite including that many communities do rely on coal power plants being the lifeblood of their communities. Puko seems to insinuate that even without the CPP being in effect coal plants are not as viable, and the ACE Rule will do little to lower the cost of coal in comparison to natural gas and the continuing decline in the cost of renewable energy sources.

MSNBC took a completely different approach to their discussion of the Trump administration's ACE Rule. In an article by Steve Benen that was published on August 21, 2018, titled "Coming to Terms with Just How Dangerous Trump's Pollution Plan Is," the discussion centers around the adverse environmental and health issues that will come from the implementation of the ACE Rule. Benen states that "the 'fine print' in the administration's new plan 'includes an acknowledgement that the plan would increase carbon emissions and lead to

⁹⁴ Puko, "EPA Overturns Obama-Era Clean Air Rules for Power Plants."

⁹⁵ Puko, "EPA Overturns Obama-Era Clean Air Rules for Power Plants."

up to 1,400 premature deaths annually'... this is the price that Donald Trump and his team believe we should collectively pay to help support pollution from a dying industry."⁹⁶ This is a discussion that no other news source covered, however the Benen did quote a New York Times report on the increase in deaths. What is not clear is what this report is comparing the increase in deaths to. Is that an increase from 2005 standards, the current standards, or the standards that the CPP had set? There is clear partisan rhetoric in the discussion of the "price that Donald Trump and his team believe we should collectively pay to help support pollution from a dying industry."⁹⁷ This partisan language leaves the reader feeling that the ACE will cause more deaths, although it is unclear what this number should be compared to. By using such strong wording, Benen can influence his readership that the ACE Rule, as well as Donald Trump himself, does not care about the health safety of American citizens, let alone the health and safety of the planet. The frame of public health can have a powerful impact on readers, especially like-minded, partisan readers who are already weary of Trump's policies.

CNN goes more into depth about the plan for states to sue the EPA in order to block the implementation of the ACE Rule in an article titled "States Sue to Block EPA's coal power plant emissions rollback." This article, written by Gregory Wallace and published on August 13, 2019, details parts of the ACE, as well as 22 states and 7 cities planned lawsuit against the ACE Rule. According to Wallace, this suit was over the claim that the ACE Rule does not follow the requirements set up in the federal Clean Air Act, as the ACE Rule would limit states' abilities to

⁹⁶ Steve Benen, "Coming to Terms with Just How Dangerous Trump's Pollution Plan Is," MSNBC.com, accessed April 7, 2022, <https://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/coming-terms-just-how-dangerous-trumps-pollution-plan-msna1135731>.

⁹⁷ Benen, "Coming to Terms with Just How Dangerous Trump's Pollution Plan Is."

switch from coal to another source of power which would reduce greenhouse gas emissions. According to the Clean Air Act, air pollutants must be limited based on reductions that are achievable through what is called the 'best system of emission reduction,' and the ACE violates this requirement. By discussing what grounds the states and cities will sue on, Wallace is framing the ACE Rule as a matter of questioning its legality. Other articles have questioned its effectiveness, or its health implications, however, Wallace is bringing into question whether this rule is legal and whether it can be implemented at all. The framing of the discussion in terms of legality can lead people to question if the ACE Rule is the best way to go about ensuring states have more regulatory authority over the energy sector.

Biden's 2030 Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Target

The White House posted a press release on April 22, 2021, announcing President Biden's 2030 Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Target, which is aimed at creating good-paying, union jobs as well as securing U.S. leadership in clean energy technologies. According to the press release, the target is to achieve a 50-52% reduction in economy-wide net greenhouse gas pollution from 2005 levels by 2030. The 2005 economy-wide net greenhouse gas pollution levels were 6,635 MMTCO₂e (million metric tons carbon dioxide equivalent), meaning a 50% reduction by 2030 would be 3,317 MMTCO₂e.⁹⁸ This is a monumental increase in the reduction target from both the CPP and the ACE Rule that the Obama administration and the Trump administration put into place. The Whitehouse has stated that this reductions target is "part of the President's focus on building back better in a way that will create millions of good paying,

⁹⁸ "The Long Tail of Economy-Wide Greenhouse Gas Emissions," Global Energy Institute, accessed December 5, 2021, <https://www.globalenergyinstitute.org/long-tail-economy-wide-greenhouse-gas-emissions>.

union jobs, [and] ensure economic competitiveness....”⁹⁹ A few examples of jobs that will be created from the list that the Biden administration included in the press release on the 2030 Greenhouse Gas Reduction target are line workers, who will lay millions of miles of transmission lines, autoworkers, who will build electric vehicles, workers who will cap abandoned oil wells and create a charging infrastructure to support electric cars, and farmers who will be able to use cutting-edge tools to make American soil the “next frontier of carbon innovation.”¹⁰⁰ However, there are media sources, such as Fox News, who chose to report on the backlash, and support, surrounding this reduction target announcement, rather than the announcement itself.

Fox News published an article the day that President Biden announced his 2030 Greenhouse Reduction Target which was titled “Republican States Lambaste Alleged Legal Defects of Biden’s ‘Radical’ Climate Plan.”¹⁰¹ While there are tweets and Facebook posts from both Republican Attorneys General and Democratic Attorneys General, there is no discussion of what the memo states, only the backlash and praise that it has received.¹⁰² Fox News choose to report on the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Target through a frame of contention. The highlighting of Attorneys General who announced plans to sue President Biden over this target frames this in a way that allows people to conclude that there is contention over this target,

⁹⁹ “FACT SHEET: President Biden Sets 2030 Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Target Aimed at Creating Good-Paying Union Jobs and Securing U.S. Leadership on Clean Energy Technologies,” The White House, April 22, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/22/fact-sheet-president-biden-sets-2030-greenhouse-gas-pollution-reduction-target-aimed-at-creating-good-paying-union-jobs-and-securing-u-s-leadership-on-clean-energy-technologies/>.

¹⁰⁰ “FACT SHEET: President Biden Sets 2030 Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Target Aimed at Creating Good-Paying Union Jobs and Securing U.S. Leadership on Clean Energy Technologies.”

¹⁰¹ Audrey Conklin, “Republican States Lambaste Alleged Legal Defects of Biden’s ‘radical’ Climate Plan,” Text.Article, Fox News (Fox News, April 22, 2021), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/republicans-biden-emissions-plan-legal>.

¹⁰² Conklin “Republican States Lambaste Alleged Legal Defects of Biden’s ‘radical’ Climate Plan,”.

that people will lose their jobs, without reading the White House announcement themselves and judging it from there. In an article that only includes the responses to a plan, how are individuals supposed to form their own opinions? As motivated reasoning suggests, are they more likely to read and agree with the opinions of the Attorneys General that share the same party as them, and not form their own, educated opinion about this Greenhouse Reduction Target? This inclusion of reactions to the proposal, rather than the discussion of the proposal itself is how Fox News was able to discuss the flaws that they see in the proposed plan, enabling the polarization of the news coverage on the Greenhouse Reduction Target.

The posts that are included in the Fox News piece can have a great impact by themselves, without the attention that a Fox News article brings them. Attorney General for the state of Arkansas, Leslie Rutledge, posted a tweet on the day that President Biden's Office released a statement concerning the 2030 Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Target. This tweet read: "I wake up every morning wondering how I will have to sue Pres. Biden over his radical job-killing climate plan. It's time Pres. Biden starts working w/ existing businesses to create more jobs instead of unconstitutionally shutting them down. Arkansans & Americans deserve better."¹⁰³ This frames the target as one that will create job loss, rather than one that will also create new jobs, many of which will have the same skill set required as the jobs that may be lost due to this reduction target.

Attorney General Rutledge has a current Twitter following of 24,000 people, and this tweet was published in a Fox News article about the pushback from Republicans about Biden's

¹⁰³ Leslie Rutledge, Twitter Post, April 22, 2021, 11:10 AM, <https://twitter.com/AGRutledge/status/1385249540370931712?s=20>.

proposed reduction target.¹⁰⁴ This most likely means that the post received more traffic than her twitter following suggests that it did. Montana’s Attorney General Austin Knudsen has a Facebook following of 1400 and was also featured in the same Fox News article as Attorney General Rutledge. Attorney General Knudsen is more active on his Facebook on issues pertaining to environmentalist action than Attorney General Rutledge is. His Facebook post for the Biden Administration’s press release included statements that Biden’s climate action has been an attack on American jobs, energy independence, and working families.¹⁰⁵ This post also included another pledge to fight Biden’s federal overreach in court, reading, “From his attempt to cancel the #KeystoneXL pipeline on Day 1 until now, Biden’s so-called “Climate Action” has been nothing more than empty virtue signaling and an attack on American jobs, energy independence and working families. As Montana’s attorney general, I will continue to fight his federal overreach in court.”¹⁰⁶ Both of these posts are framed in a way that discusses how people will lose their jobs because of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Target, the likeminded individuals that see one, or both, of these Attorneys General as a credible elite will see this target in the same light. Rather than highlight that many of the jobs that this target will create require the same skillset as the jobs that will be lost, posts and articles that highlight the job loss only paint one side of the story, making this issue into a partisan issue.

The WSJ focuses on the changes that would need to happen in various U.S. economic sectors to allow this reduction target to happen. In an article by Russell Gold and Collin Eaton

¹⁰⁴ Conklin, “Republican States Lambaste Alleged Legal Defects of Biden’s ‘radical’ Climate Plan.”

¹⁰⁵ Austin Knudsen, 2021, “From his attempt to cancel the #KeystoneXL pipeline on Day 1 until now,” April 22, 2021,.

¹⁰⁶ Knudsen, “From his attempt to cancel the #KeystoneXL pipeline on Day 1 until now.”

published on April 23, 2021, titled “Biden’s Pledge to Slash Emissions Would Require Big U.S. Changes,” discusses the fact that while many industries are already moving towards addressing many aspects of climate change, the new reduction target would require many industries to accelerate this transformation.¹⁰⁷ Gold and Eaton seem to call into question the reality of this target, if industries will be able to make the needed changes in 9 years, or if many of these changes required will take more time and investment to reach the target. According to Gold and Eaton, transportation generates 29% of U.S. carbon emissions, electricity generation 25%, and industry 23%.¹⁰⁸ This breakdown of carbon emissions means that these industries would need to see substantial change, which they may not be prepared to make. There will have to be a clash-for-clunkers style program to get older, high-pollution cars off of the road and replace them with electric vehicles, or more efficient cars. The increase in demand for electric vehicles will mean that batteries and semiconductors supply will need to be dependable, and right now it is not.¹⁰⁹ This is just one of the great changes to the U.S. economy that Biden’s target would require. Gold and Eaton do not leave this frame without hope, concluding that if this goal is to be met it will be through a collaboration of government and private partners. This frame puts into perspective how ambitious this goal is, but not necessarily in a negative light. The frame does not include discussion of lost jobs, but rather increased opportunity for industries to advance their technology and work together with the federal government to ensure that these goals can be reached. This article could be taken two ways depending on the motivated

¹⁰⁷ Russell Gold and Collin Eaton, “Biden’s Pledge to Slash Emissions Would Require Big U.S. Changes,” WSJ, accessed April 10, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/bidens-pledge-to-slash-emissions-would-require-big-u-s-changes-11619184478>.

¹⁰⁸ Eaton, “Biden’s Pledge to Slash Emissions Would Require Big U.S. Changes.”

¹⁰⁹ Eaton, “Biden’s Pledge to Slash Emissions Would Require Big U.S. Changes.”

reasoning of the individual reading it. Either these changes are too great, and the target is unachievable, or the target creates a challenge, but one that will lead to new and exciting technologies that will be successful and lead our nation into the future.

MSNBC's show *The Rachel Maddow Show*, which aired April 22, 2021, brought in the White House national adviser on Climate, Gina McCarthy. In this discussion with McCarthy, the question was asked whether the overall goal of the 2030 Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Target would be achieved. McCarthy emphasized the infrastructure bill and the American Jobs Plan as two of the steps being taken by the Biden Administration to reach this goal. The focus of the American Jobs Plan is on growing jobs, reinvigorating unions, and moving people out of poverty through a focus on clean energies future, rather than coal and gas.¹¹⁰ This frame highlights the positive aspects of this goal, and how two of the bills the Biden administration was introducing to Congress would help this goal be achievable. There is no discussion of the conservative pushback of this ambitious goal, nor what exactly is required for this goal to be achieved. Those who watched the Rachel Maddow Show would walk away with positive information, not with the negative aspects that are associated with this target such as job loss or the changes that are needed to achieve this target.

Rather than focusing on the Conservative pushback on Biden's press release, CNN chose to focus on the press release and Biden's virtual global climate change summit. One article by Kate Sullivan and Kevin Liptak titled "Biden Announces US will aim to Cut Carbon Emissions by as much as 52% by 2030 at Virtual Climate Summit," focused on what Biden discussed during

¹¹⁰ "Transcript: *The Rachel Maddow Show*, 4/22/21," MSNBC.com, accessed October 19, 2021, <https://www.msnbc.com/transcripts/transcript-rachel-maddow-show-4-22-21-n1265056>.

the 2021 virtual climate summit, including the job creation and economic opportunity that comes with climate responses.¹¹¹ Included in this discussion is the impact that this target had on other nations' climate goals, with South Korea announcing new carbon neutrality pledges and Germany announcing the want to achieve 55% less emissions by 2030 when compared to the emissions in 1990.¹¹² There is no discussion of partisan pushback on this target, nor is there discussion of what this target will require in terms of changes made by various economic sectors. There is, however, a partisan discussion of how this target symbolizes a departure from the Trump administration's climate policy. Sullivan and Liptak focus on how Biden has rejoined the Paris Climate Accord, and his infrastructure proposal that would tackle the climate crisis, making climate change an essential element in his US foreign policy as well as his national security plans.¹¹³ This frame is clearly a partisan one, comparing a Democrat presidency to a Republican presidency, and having a positive focus on the overall announcement of the greenhouse gas reduction target.

The American Jobs Plan vs. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill

On March 31, 2021, the Biden administration announced a \$2.3 trillion plan titled the American Jobs Plan. This plan was marketed as an investment which will create new jobs, rebuild infrastructure, and make the United States' more competitive. The White House press release associated with the American Jobs Plan commits that it will do many things, but there

¹¹¹ Kate Sullivan and Kevin Liptak, "Biden Announces US Will Aim to Cut Carbon Emissions by as Much as 52% by 2030 at Virtual Climate Summit," CNN, accessed October 18, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/22/politics/white-house-climate-summit/index.html>.

¹¹² Sullivan and Liptak "Biden Announces US Will Aim to Cut Carbon Emissions by as Much as 52% by 2030 at Virtual Climate Summit".

¹¹³ Sullivan and Liptak, Sullivan and Liptak "Biden Announces US Will Aim to Cut Carbon Emissions by as Much as 52% by 2030 at Virtual Climate Summit."

are several parts which relate specifically to combating climate change. In this proposed plan, \$85 billion dollars was to go towards modernizing public transit, \$80 billion towards investing in a passenger rail service, and \$175 billion into building electric vehicles.¹¹⁴ These investments will help make every-day transportation 'greener,' through increasing people's use of commuting via public transit, and investing in electric cars, which cut down on the use of fossil fuels for one's every-day commute. Biden's plan also invested \$46 billion dollars into strengthening manufacturing supply chains for clean energy, allowing clean energy producers such as windmills and solar panels to decrease in cost, as their manufacturing chains become more secure and diverse.¹¹⁵ This proposal also included a plan to build an electric transmission system which would move clean energy nationwide at a cheaper rate than it currently does. These improvements include \$16 billion towards plugging abandoned oil and gas wells as well as cleaning up abandoned mines and \$10 billion towards conservation of public land and water.¹¹⁶ The White House press release mentions time and time again how this bill will help to address the climate crisis we are facing by building sustainable infrastructure and improve productivity which will impact America's economic growth.¹¹⁷ However, this proposal was tweaked while passing through the Senate, and the resulting bill was titled the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill was incorporated into previously approved funds on August 1, 2021. The total infrastructure bill is worth \$1.2 trillion, with the Bipartisan

¹¹⁴ Arturo Conde, "Biden's Infrastructure Bills: Inside the \$3 Trillion Plan," SmartAsset, January 8, 2022, <https://smartasset.com/financial-advisor/biden-infrastructure-plan>.

¹¹⁵ Conde, "Biden's Infrastructure Bills".

¹¹⁶ Conde "Biden's Infrastructure Bills".

¹¹⁷ "Fact Sheet: The American Jobs Plan," The White House, March 31, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/31/fact-sheet-the-american-jobs-plan/>.

Infrastrucre Bill accounting for \$550 billion. This bill, worth just about one fourth of the original plan, included some major budget cuts for many of the green projects included in the proposal. On \$39 billion was given to invest in public transit, \$66 billion towards investment in a passenger rail system, \$7.5 billion towards electric vehicle infrastructure, and another \$7.5 billion towards electric buses and other forms of electric public transit.¹¹⁸ In addition to cuts in the realm of public transit infrastructure, the power infrastructure portion of the original plan was cut from a total of \$100 billion to just \$73 billion towards the building of new electricity transmission lines to help expand the use of renewable energy.¹¹⁹ Two aspects of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill that were not included in the original proposal is \$50 billion dollars to help prepare infrastructure for the impacts of cyber-attacks, extreme weather conditions, and most importantly the impacts of climate change, and \$21 billion towards environmental remediation.¹²⁰ The Bipartisan infrastructure bill cut one of the largest budgets in Biden's proposed plan, the \$300 billion towards strengthening manufacturing supply chains, completely.¹²¹ What implications can these budget cuts have, especially on Biden's greenhouse gas reduction target? How did news media discuss both the proposed plan and the Bipartisan Infrastructure bill?

On the conservative daily morning talk show, Fox and Friends there was limited discussion on what the Biden administration's proposed American Jobs Plan would do, or the impacts that it would have on the nation, besides the fact that America will pay for this plan

¹¹⁸ Conde, "Biden's Infrastructure Bills."

¹¹⁹ Conde, "Biden's Infrastructure Bills."

¹²⁰ Conde, "Biden's Infrastructure Bills."

¹²¹ Conde, "Biden's Infrastructure Bills."

through their taxes. On May 7, 2021, Fox and Friends aired a segment they titled “America Will Pay for Biden Plan – in Taxes: Graham Allen.” Graham Allen is a conservative media personality, and recently dropped out of the 2022 South Carolina seventh district Congressional Race, voiced his opinion on Biden’s American Jobs Plan. In his interview on Fox and Friends, he states that “Joe Biden is killing the American dream,” because America needs jobs and to have people get up and go to work.¹²² This discussion of the proposal does not focus on what the goal is, or what exactly the American Jobs Plan was going to do. Instead, it was framed along the lines of tax increases and government handouts, without quantifying whose taxes are being increased and how a plan to create jobs would be encouraging people to stay home and not go to work.

On the Hannity Show, a Fox News nightly talk show hosted by Sean Hannity the discussion of the Bipartisan Infrastructure bill once again did not revolve around the benefits of the bill, but rather the tax implications of the new spending and Republican politicians blasting the passage of the bill. On August 11, 2021, Sean Hannity featured Senator Kennedy from Louisiana in a show titled “Sen. Kennedy Blasts the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill.” In this segment Senator Kennedy discussed how the bipartisan infrastructure bill is not about ‘real infrastructure’ and how the bill will be paid for by an increase on taxes. Hannity also discusses the differing in definitions of infrastructure, stating that this bill is a part of the new definition of infrastructure which is new green deal socialism.¹²³ By using word such as new green deal and socialism, Hannity is using rhetoric to bind his like-minded viewers together. The phrase

¹²² “America Will Pay for Biden Plan -- in Taxes: Graham Allen,” Fox News, accessed April 5, 2022, <http://video.foxnews.com/v/6253049168001/>.

¹²³ “Sen. Kennedy Blasts the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill,” Fox News, accessed April 5, 2022, <http://video.foxnews.com/v/6267399289001/>.

“new green deal socialism” can be charged with emotions, many of which are negative, as it is seen as a radical policy which would destroy the economy. By linking this infrastructure bill to the new green deal, Hannity is instilling a fear in his viewers, that this bill will destroy America’s economy and create a socialist America.

The Wall Street Journal choose to take more of an objective stance; however, this stance still created an unequal power dynamic between the two arguments for and against the American Jobs Plan. In an article published on April 4, 2021, titled “Biden Infrastructure Plan Draws Attacks From Right, Left,” Timothy Puko chooses to frame the American Jobs Plan as a contentious proposal that may struggle to get the support it needs to pass successfully through Congress. This article echoed many of the opinions that were discussed in Fox News about the proposal, that it increased taxes too much, and devoted more money on mass transit and the climate than on roads and bridge infrastructure, in other words that the proposal is too broad to be considered an infrastructure bill. Puko also chooses to highlight the contention coming from the left, that the proposal does not do enough, and that congress will need to increase spending in areas like climate change and public housing for the bill to be effective.¹²⁴ In choosing to frame the American Jobs Plan as a contentious proposal, Puko is continuing the trend of news media suggesting that climate change is a contentious issue. This politicization of what this bill means using the criticisms from both sides of the aisle can influence readers. Do you want to pay higher taxes for a bill that doesn’t devote much money to fixing roads and bridges, or do you want to spend even more in taxes to make sure that the bill includes more

¹²⁴ Timothy Puko, “Biden Infrastructure Plan Draws Attacks From Right, Left,” Wall Street Journal, accessed April 5, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-infrastructure-plan-draws-attacks-from-right-left-11617565108>.

money for climate change efforts and public housing? For the WSJ's conservative readership this answer may be clear, do not approve the bill to spend less money on taxes.

The WSJ's discussion of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill was very different from the discussion on the American Jobs Plan. In an article published on November 6, 2021, titled "How the \$1 Trillion Infrastructure Bill Aims to Affect Americans' Lives," the WSJ laid out the major aspects of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, discussing in depth what each part means for Americans. This article had different sections, one for each focus of the Bill, written by different journalists, but all which followed a similar layout: discuss the major parts of the bills, their advantages, and the shortcomings of each. For example, in the discussion on how the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill will adjust how Americans get power, Timothy Puko discusses how the infrastructure package will put \$28 billion towards power line's resiliency against disasters, and another \$36 billion towards the development of technology for cleaner energy, and \$2.5 billion to help eliminate greenhouse-gas emissions from America's power grid. Puko follows up this discussion with how studies have found that this investment will be nowhere near the \$360 billion that would need to be invested into eliminating the greenhouse-gas emissions from the U.S. power grid.¹²⁵ This framing is quite different from the framing used in Puko's piece on the American Jobs Plan, as instead of focusing on the partisan criticisms of the proposal, this article focuses on the specifics of the bill, and where experts deem it to fall short. This frame does not create contention over party lines, but rather frames the discussion of the bill in a way that leaves the reader feeling that this bill cannot be the last of its kind to pass through Congress. If

¹²⁵ "How the \$1 Trillion Infrastructure Bill Aims to Affect Americans' Lives," Wall Street Journal, accessed April 5, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-the-1-trillion-infrastructure-bill-aims-to-affect-americans-lives-11636173786?mod=Searchresults_pos15&page=4.

we want to reduce America's contribution to climate change more will have to be done than what has been proposed in this bill.

On MSNBC's Maddowblog page, Steve Benen claims that the popularity of Biden's American Jobs Plan contradicts what the Republican party is claiming. In the article posted on April 27, 2021 titled "Popularity of Biden's Infrastructure Plan Should Make GOP Nervous," Benen sites that a Monmouth poll found that 68% of Americans support Biden's American Jobs Plan, and that these results are seen across several different polls.¹²⁶ Through the discussion of Republican pushback not being backed by public support, Benen is framing this discussion of the American Jobs Plan in such a way which invalidates the GOP's claim that popularity of the proposal will wane if they claim that the plan will increase taxes for everyone and is part of the socialist new green deal. This article did not go into the specifics of the plan, rather it focused on the public popularity of the plan and that the Republican party does not understand what most of the American public wants.

MSNBC's the 11th hour's discussion of the passing of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill discusses the celebration experienced in the House of Representatives when the bill passed. Ali Vitali, NBC's Capitol Hill correspondent, discusses the excitement and celebration over the passing of the bill, but also what the next steps are for the Democratic party. This bill was part of a larger project, and the second, larger, social spending bill has yet to pass through the congress. The discussion surrounding the passing of the bill does not center around the benefits, or the drawbacks, but rather what is next for the Democrats in congress. Vitali frames

¹²⁶ Steve Benen, "Popularity of Biden's Infrastructure Plan Should Make GOP Nervous," MSNBC.com, accessed April 5, 2022, <https://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/maddowblog/popularity-biden-s-infrastructure-plan-should-make-gop-nervous-n1265463>.

the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill as part of a larger plan, and one that Democrats will need to sell to their constituents.¹²⁷ In a group interview, Susan Del Percio, MSNBC's political analyst discusses how this bill could have been passed months ago, and probably would have had the same result.¹²⁸ This framing sets up the democratic party as willing to take longer and compromise, but also makes the compromising seem pointless. Why spend this extra time trying to pass a bill you would have been able to pass without having to cross the aisle and make the bill a bipartisan effort if you do not have to? Many like minded viewers may walk away from this segment believing that the bipartisan effort was unnecessary and time consuming.

CNN's discussion of the Biden Administration's American Jobs Plan takes a very different route from how the other news outlets discussed it. Matt Egan, a CNN Business reporter discussed coal miners support for the proposed plan. In his article titled "Coal Miners Join Climate Activists to Back Biden's \$2 Trillion Infrastructure Plan," Egan discusses the support of moving manufacturing back into coalfields from the United Mine Workers of America, as the coal industry would benefit from many of the aspects of Biden's plan, such as rebuilding bridges and airports, which would increase a demand for steel, and the carbon capture and storage investment, which will help to protect the coal industry.¹²⁹ This support from the coal industry over the investment in carbon capture is juxtaposed in this article with the dissent from climate activists, who argue that investing in carbon capture is not a permanent solution, what is

¹²⁷ "House Finally Passes Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill," MSNBC.com, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.msnbc.com/11th-hour/watch/house-finally-passes-bipartisan-infrastructure-bill-125548613636>.

¹²⁸ "House Finally Passes Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill."

¹²⁹ Matt Egan, "Coal Miners Join Climate Activists to Back Biden's \$2 Trillion Infrastructure Plan," CNN, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/20/business/coal-union-biden-infrastructure/index.html>.

needed is a permanent shift away from fossil fuels.¹³⁰ This dissent is quickly mentioned, and then disregarded for a continued discussion of the coal industries support for the American Jobs Plan, allowing Egan to keep the focus on the support of the plan by an industry that was not discussed in other article on the American Jobs Plan. This brings in the opinions of an unlikely supporter, highlighting the popularity of the Jobs Plan which MSNBC discussed in their article.

CNN's report on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill was very different than the approach CNN took on reporting about the American Jobs Plan. In an article written by CNN's Chief Congressional Correspondent Manu Raju and Alex Rogers, another congressional reporter for CNN Politics, titled "GOP Senate Candidates Align with Trump in Bashing Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill," Republican approval and disapproval of the bill is discussed. This article begins with stating that Republicans are looking to replace Republican Senators who approve the bill with those who believe that the bill is something that the U.S. cannot afford, and who side with former President Donald Trump who called on the Republican party to oppose the proposed bill. However, then Raju and Rogers claim that Trump's opposition to the proposal has not have a great influence on GOP senators, including those who are up for reelection.¹³¹ This framing of the GOP contention surrounding the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill can leave readers confused. Do Republicans support the bill or not? The article does not go into depth about what the bill includes, or what its goals are, only about the contention among Republican

¹³⁰ Egan, "Coal Miners Join Climate Activists to Back Biden's \$2 Trillion Infrastructure Plan."

¹³¹ Manu Raju and Alex Rogers, "GOP Senate Candidates Align with Trump in Bashing Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill," CNN, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/06/politics/infrastructure-republican-senate-candidates/index.html>.

senators on whether to support the bill or not. This can leave readers confused as to whether they should support the passage of this bill.

Discussion

Each climate change policy had a different discussion in the news based on factors such as partisan media, and public support for the policy. The two partisan media sources, Fox News and MSNBC consistently discussed the policies within the frame of their political party. Fox News discussed President Trump's climate policy positively, while discussing President Biden's climate policy negatively. MSNBC did the opposite, discussing President Trump's climate policy negatively and President Biden's climate policy positively. This could also have to do with the nature of each President's climate policy. Fox News with a more conservative outlook, preferring small government, small taxes, etc. most likely prefers less governmental control over things like greenhouse gas emissions, however, Fox News did talk positively about the Affordable Clean Energy Rule, which while criticized by Environmentalist and Democrats alike for not being strict enough on 'dirty' energy like coal and oil, did set stricter carbon emission reduction targets than had existed in the Clean Energy Plan. This suggests that, in part, the positive discussion of the policies enacted by President Trump was because of his political party affiliation, and not because of the policy he was enacting. The same cannot be analyzed for MSNBC as many of President Biden's policies around climate change have centered around the Democratic Party's stance that climate change is a real threat to America's economy, national security, and the health of American citizens.

Fox News discussed the contentions surrounding issues more than the issues themselves. When discussing both President Trump and President Biden's policies around

climate change Fox News would frame the discussion around the conservative or liberal pushback a particular policy received. For Trump's decision to leave the Paris Climate Accord, the liberal's moral outrage was not justified as the problem of climate change is not immediate like other issues are. This was also the frame used when discussing both of President Biden's policies. For the 2030 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Target, Fox News choose to focus on the responses to the target, highlighting two social media posts threatening to sue President Biden over this non-binding target over the oversimplification that it would cost Americans jobs. For the discussions surrounding the American Jobs Plan and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, Fox News used Republican politicians' contention over the proposed bill and the passed bill to highlight how not every American is in favor of quantifying a bill that focuses on human infrastructure as an infrastructure bill, and not every American wants to move jobs away from the coal and oil industry and into the clean energy industry. The only discussion that did not follow this framing of contention is the news article on President Trump's ACE Rule. This article instead focused on the positive effects that the ACE Rule would have on the coal and oil energy sectors in the American economy. While a discussion into why Fox News uses this frame of contention in many of their news pieces, both in print and on television, is needed, this is for future research, and cannot be accurately analyzed in this broad analysis.

MSNBC, the liberal partisan media outlet, discussed policies in light of the Democratic party's statement that climate change is a real threat to America. MSNBC's *The Rachel Maddow Show* has a blog segment on MSNBC's website which discusses policies in depth. The journalist who published the posts I analyzed from this blog was Steve Benen, wrote in an extremely partisan way, discussing the radicalization of the Republican party, and the popularity of the

Democratic party's president's American Jobs Plan. Fox News's discussion of the American Jobs Plan framed the discussion so that the viewer would walk away believing that no one who was not a liberal Democrat did not support the plan, while MSNBC framed the discussion that most of the American population did, except for a few conservative Republicans. The way a news outlet frames the discussion, and the words and points they choose to use make a huge difference in what the audience walks away with. A viewer of the Fox News story would walk away thinking no one wanted the American Jobs Plan, while a reader of MSNBC would walk away thinking the plan is extremely popular. This is on the same news story, the same event, but two completely different ways to discuss it. But what about the mainstream media that is not considered to be partisan? How did these outlets represent these news stories?

The Wall Street Journal and CNN were the two non-partisan, mainstream media sources that I chose. Non-partisan does not mean that there is no ideological tilt to the news stories that each news source publishes, and in this case, both have an ideological tilt to them. The WSJ is considered to be a more conservative news outlet that prioritizes smaller government involvement. CNN is considered to be a more liberal news outlet which prioritizes larger government involvement in American life. This ideological slant does come into play with what each news outlet chooses to focus on in each story, however, in all situations, CNN and the WSJ did attempt to follow the journalistic norms of impartiality and objectivity when reporting on the days news stories, however, each news source gave an asymmetrical power relationship that is outside the day-to-day power relationship between the two viewpoints. In general, 97% of scientists agree that climate change is anthropogenic, and from the data given in Appendix B, 51% of Americans believe that the effects of climate change have already begun. This does not

line up with the stories that CNN and the WSJ have published on climate change policies, which depict contentions around the policies from both the public, political elites, and corporations. The data supports that there should be limited contention over whether policies should exist to combat the effects of climate change.

The WSJ framed many of its stories around the contentious discussions surrounding various policies. This choice of framing can have two options, depending on what the reader is looking for when it comes to their news. If they are looking for a reading that will confirm what they believe, then they will read one of two things. Either that the contention surrounding the policy is proof that the policy was not a good move, and that it is harming the United States more than helping, or that this contention shows that the President and his administration are doing their jobs, despite pushback from the other party to ensure that American citizens are being heard. The one exception to this framing of contention is found in the WSJ's piece on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, which framed the bill as a start, but a start which falls short of what is truly needed to combat climate change. This is a more liberal take on the bill, as many Democrats were cited as stating that this bill was not enough to make true and lasting changes that will impact America's carbon emissions to reach Biden's target of 50% less emission by 2030.

CNN chose to highlight Democratic and elite pushback to the policies that Donald Trump chose to pass, which highlights their more liberal viewpoint that big government should be used to address climate change. The approach to discussing climate policies that Joe Biden chose to pass. In these cases, CNN chose to focus on how Biden's presidency is a departure from Trump's presidency, especially when it comes to climate politics, and the support that Biden's

policies are getting from unexpected places. Trump viewed himself a champion of the coal miners with his Affordable Clean Energy Bill, but Biden's American Jobs Plan received support from coal miners because it gave them a way to push forward and create new jobs while moving towards net zero admission, allowing them to stay open in the long run. This policy is framed in a way that allows the reader to understand how the American Jobs Plan can actually create jobs in industries that might not involve what is deemed to be clean energy.

All four of these news sources involve American citizens using motivated reasoning in different ways. Fox News and MSNBC require people to use motivated reasoning to watch and read their programs, as they are written in such a way that mainly partisan readers and viewers would want to watch and read their news stories. Each outlet choose elites that like-minded viewers would find credible, but that a differing opinion may not find credible. In this case, two different people watching or reading two different news stories would walk away with differing opinions of the same story because they were given two different sets of information and opinions. For CNN and the *WSJ*, motivated reasoning would occur while reading or watching the news. In the case of these outlets, the news stories are presented in a way that a motivated reasoner would read the article or watch the show and draw a conclusion they want to from the information provided. Two different people could walk away from the same news stories with two different opinions of the news story, even though they both were given the same facts and opinions.

Each of these news sources contribute differently to the setup of Foucault's idea of power knowledge. Every news source can give readers and viewers a different knowledge base of which to vote with. Even within a given media source, individuals may walk away with

completely different sets of knowledge based off of how motivated reasoning affected their interpretation of the information presented to them. In this way, the media has a great power over the knowledge an individual has on climate change policy and its importance. We have seen how differently news sources can present the same story, and this differing in rhetoric and framing along partisan lines can have huge implications on individuals' knowledge about specific politicians, political parties, and policies. If one were to only watch Fox News you would have a different knowledge base about the Democratic party, and therefore view the Democratic party differently than someone who only watches MSNBC. News sources can change your knowledge base, which can change the way you vote.

Conclusion

As we have come to understand, the media people watch can influence their voting choices, but how does this happen? Many people select their preferred news source based on their own identity, typically choosing a news source which reflects their ideological positions. Ideological positions affect party politics as well, as the Republican party and the Democratic Party have two different ideological positions, especially pertaining to climate change. While both Democrats and Republicans alike tend to agree that climate change is occurring, there is a disparity in the level of government involvement that the two parties feel should occur to mitigate climate change. The Democratic party's stance on climate change is that the government should be doing everything in its power to mitigate the effects and slow down the rate at which the global temperature is rising. The Republican party's stance reflects their apprehension at big government, instead preferring that corporations and individuals make voluntary changes to mitigate the effects of climate change. These differing in ideological

positions means that each party supports different types of policies that relate to climate change. Those who ideologically relate to the Republican party are more likely to favor policies the Republican party favors, and those who ideologically relate to the Democratic party are more likely to favor policies that Democrat politicians favor.

So how do news outlets relay this type of information to people? How does partisan media, or ideologically slanted media, allow its readers and viewers come to different conclusions over the same piece of news? Through a medias rhetoric and framing of individual news stories, viewers and readers can reach different conclusions. For example, those who chose to watch the Fox News segment on President Trump's decision to leave the Paris Climate Accord would walk away from the segment with the belief that the liberal and Democratic reaction to the decision was unwarranted, as there was no immediate danger that was posed by the decision to leave the agreement. An individual who chose to only read MSNBCs take on the decision to leave the Paris Climate Accord would walk away with the idea that this decision placed the United States, but specifically the Republican Party, as a global outlier in its opinions on climate change. Both stories contain the truth, but different facts were selected and the framing of the discussion surrounding the decision was different, leading to two completely different stories on the same event.

People who choose to only trust one news source, or only trust news sources that share their ideological positions can miss out on sides of the story, since media outlets all select different facts and different ways to frame the same event in a way that favors their ideological position. A like-minded individual who is using motivated reasoning to process the news will not challenge this framing and will most likely come to believe what the news outlet is trying to

convey. In the previous example, a likeminded individual who is watching only Fox News can conclude that liberals and the Democratic party are alarmists when it comes to their climate change policy, while a likeminded individual who is watching only MSNBC can conclude that Republicans and conservatives are becoming the global outliers when it comes to their choice in climate change policy.

These beliefs can change the way people vote over time. Someone who believes that the Democrats climate policy is unnecessary and will vote for a candidate that has other priorities, as climate change is not their top priority. The same can be said for someone who believes that Republicans are increasingly becoming the global outlier, will instead vote for a different candidate who does prioritize climate change policies. This can have a host of consequences, including an increasingly polarized world. We already see the effects of this polarization around climate change in media, with 69.67% of self-identified Democrats believing that the effects of climate change have already begun, and only 28.96% of Republicans believing that the effects of climate change have already begun.¹³² This polarization will continue as long as partisan media and mainstream media alike continue to present climate change in such a polarized way.

¹³² See Appendix A

Appendix A

These graphs from McCright and Dunlap depict a great drop in conservative and Republican beliefs that the effects of climate change have already begun to happen beginning between 2007 and 2008.¹³³

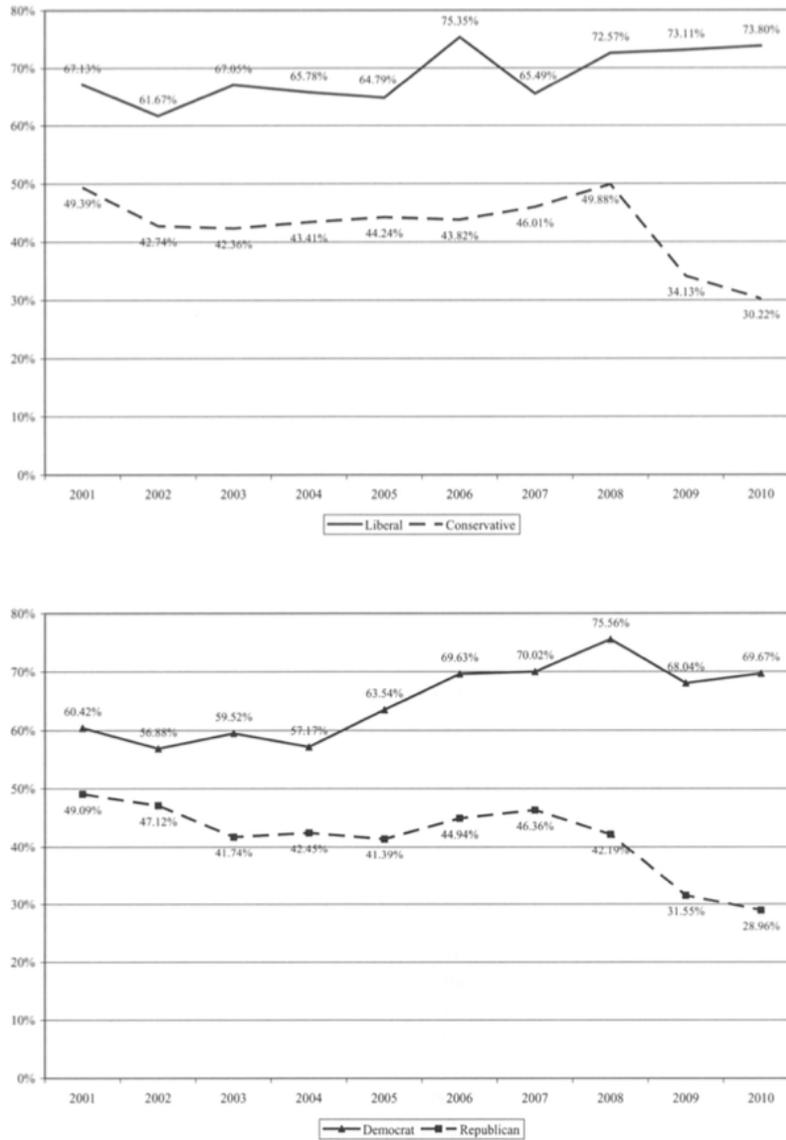


FIGURE 4. Percent of Americans Who Believe the Effects of Global Warming Have Already Begun to Happen from 2001–2010, by Political Ideology and Party Identification.

¹³³ McCright and Dunlap, “The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public’s Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010,” 176.

Appendix B

These graphs from Feldman et. al's 2012 study demonstrate the conservatism of Republicans compared to Democrats who watch Fox News as well as MSNBC and CNN. This conservatism towards climate change is represented through the acceptance of global warming.

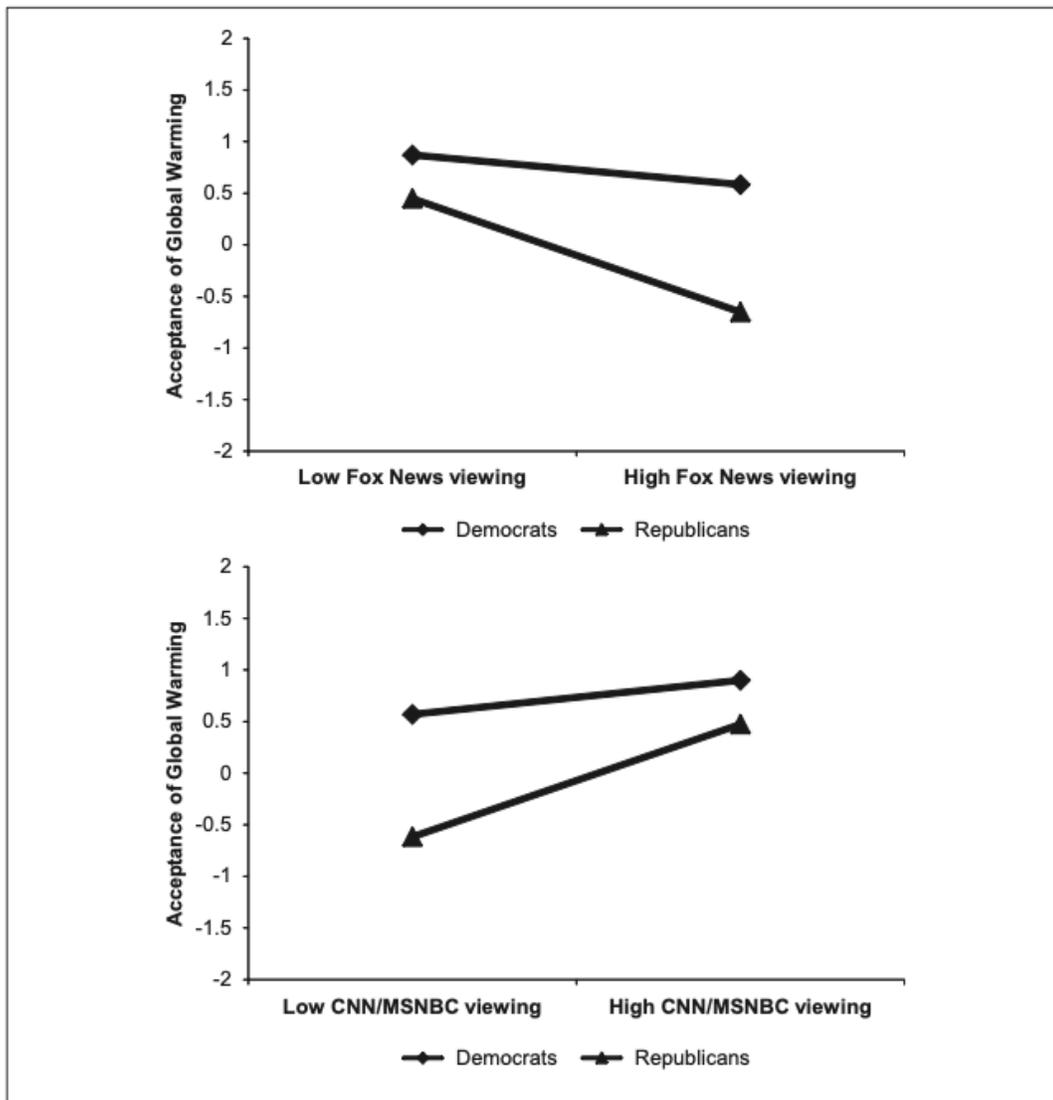
¹³⁴

Figure 6. Interaction between cable news use and political partisanship in predicting acceptance of global warming

¹³⁴ Feldman et al., "Climate on Cable," 21.

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