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Climate Science Glossary

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Term Lookup

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All IPCC definitions taken from *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis. Working Group I Contribution to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Annex I, Glossary, pp. 941-954. Cambridge University Press.*



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MOST USED Climate Myths

and what the science really says...

- 1 Climate's changed before
 - 2 It's the sun
 - 3 It's not bad
 - 4 There is no consensus
 - 5 It's cooling
 - 6 Models are unreliable
 - 7 Temp record is unreliable
 - 8 Animals and plants can adapt
 - 9 It hasn't warmed since 1998
 - 10 Antarctica is gaining ice
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EMBARGOED UNTIL 20 March 2014

Contrarians bully journal into retracting a climate psychology paper

Posted on 20 March 2014 by dana1981

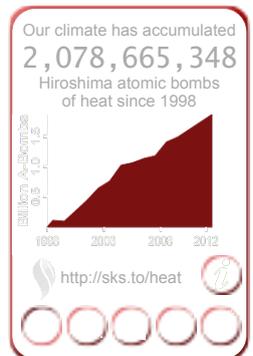
Given that [fewer than 3 percent of peer-reviewed climate science papers](#) conclude that the human influence on global warming is minimal, [climate contrarians](#) have obviously been unable to make a convincing scientific case. Thus in order to advance their agenda of delaying [climate solutions](#) and maintaining the status quo in the face of a [97 percent expert consensus](#) suggesting that this is a [high-risk path](#), contrarians have engaged in a variety of unconventional tactics.

- Funding a [campaign to deny the expert climate consensus](#).
- Harassing [climate scientists](#) and universities with frivolous Freedom of Information Act requests.
- Engaging in [personal, defamatory public attacks on climate scientists](#).
- Flooding [climate scientists](#) with [abusive emails](#).
- Illegally [hacking university servers and stealing their emails](#).
- [Harassing journals to retract inconvenient research](#).

That final tactic has evolved, from merely [sending the journal a petition](#) signed by a bunch of contrarians, to sending journals letters threatening libel lawsuits. Unfortunately, this strategy has now succeeded.

NASA Faked the Moon Landing

The story begins with the publication of a [paper](#) titled *NASA Faked the Moon Landing—Therefore, (Climate) Science Is a Hoax: An Anatomy of the Motivated Rejection of Science*. The paper was authored by Lewandowsky, Oberauer, and Gignac, and published in the journal *Psychological Science* in 2012. Using survey data from visitors to [climate blogs](#), the paper found that [conspiracy theorists are more likely to be skeptical of scientists' conclusions](#) about vaccinations, genetically modified foods, and [climate change](#).



The Consensus Project Website

Winner of the 2011



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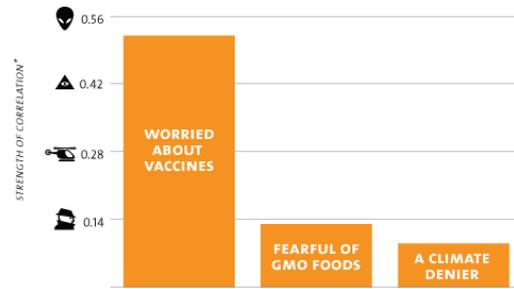
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If You Are a Conspiracy Theorist, You Might Also Be...

Strength of correlation between beliefs in conspiracy theories and various forms of science skepticism



*Statistical correlations range on a scale from 0-1, with 1 being the strongest possible correlation. Note that correlations should not be confused with percentages.

Source: Lewandowsky et al. "The Role of Conspiracist Ideation and Worldviews in Predicting Rejection of Science"

Mother Jones

Suffice it to say climate contrarians didn't like the conclusions of this paper. Ironically, many contrarian bloggers and blog commenters came up with a variety of conspiracy theories about the Lewandowsky paper. As Lewandowsky and John Cook [later wrote](#),

"These range from "global climate activist operation" to "ringleader for conspiratorial activities by the green climate bloggers," to Stephan Lewandowsky receiving millions of dollars to run [The Conversation](#)."

The contrarians had inadvertently provided fertile material for further research, which John Cook began to harvest, collecting all of the blog conspiracy theories about their conspiracy theory paper into a spreadsheet. That catalog became the basis for a follow-up paper.

Recursive Fury

Lewandowsky, known for his creative publication titles, came up with another doosey for the follow-up paper: *Recursive fury: conspiracist ideation in the blogosphere in response to research on conspiracist ideation*. The paper, authored by Lewandowsky, Cook, Oberauer, and Marriott, was published in the journal *Frontiers* on 18 March 2013. That study concluded,

"...many of the [conspiratorial] hypotheses exhibited conspiratorial content and counterfactual thinking. For example, whereas hypotheses were initially narrowly focused on LOG12 [the NASA paper], some ultimately grew in scope to include actors beyond the authors of LOG12, such as university executives, a media organization, and the Australian government. The overall pattern of the blogosphere's response to LOG12 illustrates the possible role of conspiracist ideation in the rejection of science, although alternative scholarly interpretations may be advanced in the future."

Stepping back for a moment to take stock of the situation, it's really not surprising that climate contrarians as a group would tend to exhibit conspiratorial thinking. After all, [97 percent](#) of climate experts and climate research contradicts their beliefs. When you're a non-expert who doesn't want to believe the conclusions of 97 percent of experts, how do you justify that position, psychologically? Writing those experts off as being part of a conspiracy is probably the easiest avenue to take.

Frontiers Bails Out

However, nobody likes being called a conspiracy theorist, and thus climate contrarians really didn't appreciate *Recursive Fury*. Very soon after its publication, the journal *Frontiers* was receiving letters from contrarians threatening libel lawsuits. In late March 2013, the journal decided to "*provisionally remove the link to the article while these issues are investigated.*" The paper was in limbo for nearly a full year until *Frontiers* finally caved to these threats.

In its investigation, the journal found no academic or ethical problems with *Recursive Fury*. However, the fear of being sued by contrarians for libel remained. The University of Western Australia (UWA: Lewandowsky's university when *Recursive Fury* was published – he later moved to [the University of Bristol](#)) also investigated the matter and found no academic, ethical, or legal problems with the paper. In fact, UWA is so confident in the validity of the paper that [they're hosting it on their own servers](#).

After nearly a year of discussions between the journal, the paper authors, and lawyers on both sides, *Frontiers* made it clear that they were unwilling to take the risk of publishing the paper and being open to potential frivolous lawsuits. Both sides have finally agreed to retract *Recursive Fury*.

It's unfortunate that the *Frontiers* editors were unwilling to stand behind a study that they admitted was sound from an academic and ethical standpoint, especially since UWA concluded the paper would withstand a legal assault. Nobody wants to get caught up in a lawsuit, but by caving in here, *Frontiers* has undoubtedly emboldened climate contrarians to use this tactic again in the future to suppress inconvenient research. Academics also can't be confident that the *Frontiers* staff will stand behind them if they publish research in the journal and are subjected to similar frivolous attacks. *Frontiers* may very well be worse off having lost the confidence of the academic community than if they had called the bluffs of the contrarians threatening frivolous lawsuits.

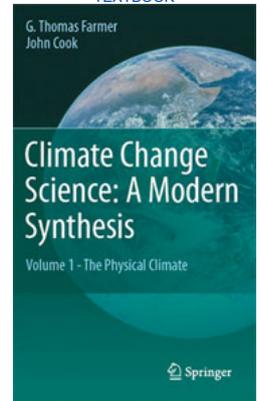
Hopefully editors of other climate-related journals will learn from this debacle and refuse to let climate contrarians bully them into suppressing valid but inconvenient research.

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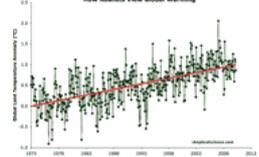
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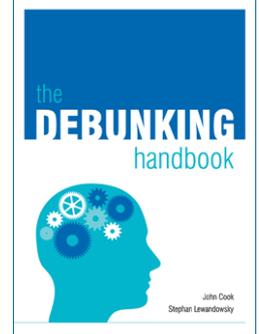


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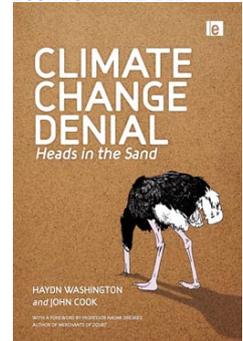


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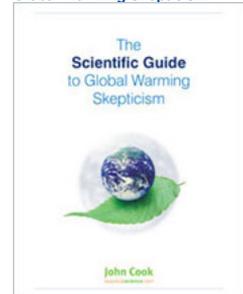
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