

**Progress Report for
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***Hot Cold Hot:
The Lived Experience
of Climate Change
in Australia***

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1.i. Introduction

“[Climate change] is not just the biggest crisis ever, it’s the biggest story ever.”

—Bill McKibben, journalist and climate activist

There is an overwhelming scientific consensus on the subject of climate change.¹ Ninety-seven per cent of all climate scientists agree that climate change is real; it is anthropogenic, that is, caused by human activities; and it is already underway.² (The other 3% are non-committal.) However, climate change is not just a scientific issue. As well as being a physical phenomenon, Professor of Climate and Culture Mike Hulme stresses that climate change is “simultaneously a social phenomenon”.³ As such, climate change—or rather the *concept* of climate change—has the potential to affect almost every aspect of our lives, from our philosophical/theological conceptions of what it means to be human, through to the countless (un)ethical consumer choices we are faced with every day. In this broader cultural context, there is unavoidable contestation and conflict about the *implications* of climate science, as well as what climate change ultimately ‘means’—and, more importantly, what we should be doing about it.

Journalism is an essential part of the “cultural circuit”⁴ that determines how people understand and experience climate change. Unfortunately, the institutions of Australian journalism are arguably ill suited to the task of interpreting and communicating the significance of climate change to the Australian public. The Murdoch press’ deliberate distortion and obfuscation of climate science for political-ideological reasons is only the most blatant example of this.⁵ At an institutional level, the bulk of newsroom journalism, with its focus on the here-and-now and its preference for pre-packaged narratives of conflict and celebrity,⁶ struggles to engage with the climate change ‘story’— a story that is baffling, incremental, emotionally fraught and of extraordinarily long duration. In fact, the ramifications of climate

1. For the purposes of this thesis, I am using the phrase ‘climate change’ as shorthand for ‘anthropogenic climate change’. I sometimes use the phrase ‘global warming’ interchangeably with ‘climate change’.

2. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), “Consensus: 97% of Climate Scientists Agree” (NASA: 2013), <http://climate.nasa.gov/scientific-consensus>. (Accessed 29 March 2014.)

3. Mike Hulme, *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xxv.

4. Hulme, *Why We Disagree*, p221.

5. See Wendy Bacon, *Sceptical Climate Part 2: Climate Science in Australian Newspapers* (Sydney: The Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, 2013).

6. See Harold Gess, “Climate Change and the Possibility of ‘Slow Journalism’”, *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies* 33.1 (2012); also see David Roberts, “How to write about climate: Pull up a barstool”, *Grist*, 23 August 2013, <http://grist.org/climate-energy/how-to-write-about-climate-pull-up-a-barstool/>. (Accessed 6 May 2014.)

change for the future of life on this planet (or lack thereof) are so complicated and all-encompassing that some theorists have dubbed it a “wicked problem”: a conundrum “of mind-bending complexity, characterised by ‘contradictory certitudes’ and thus defying elegant, consensual solutions”.⁷ In recent years, this status has been upgraded to “super wicked problem”,⁸ in recognition of the fact that we are approaching a series of catastrophic and irreversible climatic ‘tipping points’, and running out of time to deal with them.⁹ Crossing any of these thresholds would ‘lock in’ runaway global warming of not just two degrees but upwards of six degrees, enough to disrupt the physical basis of most life on earth, triggering untold wars and humanitarian crises in the process.¹⁰ Conventional journalism’s failure to do justice to this ‘super wicked’ situation, then, can be seen a twin failure of interpretation and contextualisation.

To make the journalistic concept of ‘the public interest’ actively meaningful to our discussions of climate change, journalism needs to provide the public with detailed and nuanced accounts of how people currently experience and make sense of climate change. The practices of long-form cultural journalism and oral history prioritise the quotidian experiences of ordinary people, and focus on the broad cultural contexts that news events occur within. As such, they are arguably appropriate methodologies for an in-depth investigation of people’s lived experiences of climate change. This research project, *Hot Cold Hot: The Lived Experience of Climate Change in Australia*, will conduct extensive interviews with a range of people across Australia. I will then analyse the important psychological-cultural aspects of people’s experiences of climate change, as conceptual and discursive phenomena. The resulting oral testimony and its interpretation will be edited and arranged into a provisional meta-narrative of people’s experiences of climate change in their own lifetimes: a subjective cultural history of climate change in Australia. This project is necessary because, as Bill McKibben said last year, climate change “is not just the biggest crisis ever, it’s the biggest story ever”.¹¹ The lived experience of climate change is a vital, and thus far neglected, part of this story.

7. Steve Rayner, in Hulme, *Why We Disagree*, xxi-xxii.

8. See Kelly Levin *et al*, “Overcoming the Tragedy of Super Wicked Problems: Constraining Our Future Selves to Ameliorate Global Climate Change”, *Policy Sci.* 45, no. 2 (2012): 123-52.

9. Potential ‘tipping points’ include: the collapse of the Greenland ice sheet; the melting of the Siberian permafrost; and the immolation of the Amazon rainforests. See Mark Lynas, *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet* (Washington, D.C.: Harper Perennial), 2007.

10. See Gwynne Dyer, *Climate Wars: The Fight For Survival as the World Overheats* (Carlton North, Vic.: Scribe Publications, 2010).

11. Katherine Bagley, “About a Dozen Environment Reporters Left at Top 5 U.S. Papers”, *Inside Climate News*, 17 January 2013, <http://insideclimatenews.org/news/20130114/new-york-times-dismantles->

1.ii. Research Questions

This project has four central, inter-related research questions:

- **What are some of the lived experiences of climate change in Australia?**
- **What do these experiences tell us about climate change as a cultural phenomenon in Australia?**
- **How does an innovative cultural journalism/oral history methodology push forward what is journalistically possible in the documentation, interpretation and representation of climate change?**
- **What does this journalistic experiment tell us about the potential of cultural journalism to contribute to social change and public action?**

By addressing the above questions, I am attempting to advance the political and journalistic ‘debate’ on climate change beyond its current impasse. My thinking here is informed by Jonathon Rowson’s 2013 report, *A New Agenda on Climate Change: Facing Up to Stealth Denial and Winding Down on Fossil Fuels*. “At present,” Rowson argues, “public debates focus around the question: do you believe in climate change?”¹² This seemingly innocuous question actually perpetuates a *scientific uncertainty frame*; a way of conceptualising the issue that has been deliberately promoted by right-wing think-tanks for over a decade to delay action on climate change.¹³

environmental-desk-climate-change-global-warming-journalism-newspapers-hurricane-sandy. (Accessed 9 May 2014.)

12. Jonathan Rowson, *A New Agenda on Climate Change: Facing up to Stealth Denial and Winding Down on Fossil Fuels*, (London: The Action and Research Centre, 2013), 46.

13. See Bruno Latour, “Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern,” *Critical inquiry* 30, no. 2 (2004): 225-248. Right-wing lobby groups and media corporations have been dismayingly successful in this matter.

1.iii. Subsidiary Questions

The following subsidiary question underscores the journalistic nature of this project:

- **How do people’s past experiences of climate change influence their experiences of climate change in the present—and what are the implications of this for social change in the immediate future?**

This resonates with Lee Wilkins and Philip Patterson’s proposition that responsible reporting on risk “must anticipate problems and provide, where appropriate, mobilizing information to allow concerned citizens to act”.¹⁴ It is my firm conviction that, in the case of climate change, the “mobilizing information” required by the public is not scientific or quantitative, but is interpretive and essentially cultural. Unfortunately, of course, many people still do *not* think that climate change is happening, and/or that it isn’t a serious concern. It is therefore vital to engage with this issue of belief politics, without reinforcing the (false) impression of scientific uncertainty in the process. In this context, an important subsidiary question this project asks is:

- **What *kind* of climate change do people (not) believe in?**

The participants’ responses, when contextualised as part of their life history—the sum total of their personal experiences, values, beliefs, and more—will enable us to better understand climate change as a cultural phenomenon in Australia, and the implications of this for social change in the near future. Following Rowson, I will strive to replace the misleading ‘scientific uncertainty frame’ with a more journalistically responsible *public interest frame*, encapsulated in this question:

- **What do you think we should do about climate change?¹⁵**

14. Lee Wilkins and Philip Patterson, quoted in Gess, “Slow Journalism”, 59.

15. Rowson, *Stealth Denial*, 46.

1.iv. Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review examines journalistic and academic writing on the lived experience¹⁶ of climate change, in Australia and internationally. Professor of Environment and Development Gordon Wilson stresses that climate change “is a real-world, global challenge, and such challenges rarely fall neatly within the epistemological boundaries established by academic disciplines”.¹⁷ This ‘unruly’ interdisciplinarity is reflected in the following survey, which encompasses various forms of journalism, oral history, environmental science, sociology and social psychology. While much has been written that is indirectly related to aspects of the lived experience of climate change in Australia, there are far fewer studies that address this subject directly. For this project, the relevant literature can be divided into two categories: scholarly work that examines the phenomenon of climate change from a range of disciplinary perspectives directly useful to this research project; and journalism specifically about people’s lived experiences of climate change and/or climate-change-related events, such as bushfires or droughts. Within the former section, I focus on two overlapping sub-themes: climate change as a scientific phenomenon; and climate change as a cultural phenomenon. In the latter category, two important sub-categories emerge: cultural journalism about people’s lived experiences of extreme weather events; and documentary journalism about people’s lived experiences of climate change. Note that this review restricts itself to studies written in English. It also does not address works of climate change denialism or ‘scepticism’.

Climate change as a scientific phenomenon

There is a considerable body of work, both specialist and general-interest, about climate change as a scientific phenomenon. For the purposes of this review, I am concerned with how these scientific-journalistic accounts of climate change engage with the concept of the lived experience of climate change, either explicitly or implicitly. Prior to the 1990s, book-length studies of climate change—or global warming, as it was then called—were very rare, and intended for specialist audiences. *The End of Nature* (1989) by US journalist and environmentalist Bill McKibben, is

16. It is important to note that while some writers discussing climate change do not use the specific phrase “lived experience”, the concept is nonetheless salient to their work.

17. Gordon Wilson, “The Lived Experience of Climate Change: Expanding the Knowledge Base through Collaborative Master’s Curriculum in the European Union”, *International Journal of Innovation and Sustainable Development* 6, no. 1 (2012), 47.

regarded as “the first mainstream text on climate change”,¹⁸ and marked the beginning of a new paradigm of climate change journalism. While primarily a work of environmental science, McKibben does engage with the lived experience of climate change in an abstract sense, arguing that “the end of nature” actually means the end of “a certain set of human ideas about the world and our place in it”.¹⁹ He contends that this epochal shift is “filled with implications for our philosophy, our theology, our sense of self”.²⁰ Our responses to these implications are important, and essentially “psychological or cultural”.²¹ However, *The End of Nature* is not concerned with investigating these important psychological-cultural aspects of people’s experiences of climate change.

In an Australian context, paleontologist-turned-climate-change-activist Tim Flannery’s *The Weather Makers* (2005) is one of the most significant works on the subject. Where McKibben’s response to climate change was existential and abstract, Flannery’s work is action-oriented and urgent: “individuals, industry and governments need to act on climate change now: the delay of even a decade is far too much”.²² Flannery is also aware of the importance of non-scientific factors in our understanding of climate change, including “lack of understanding” and “the pessimism and confusion generated by special interest groups that is stopping us from going forward”.²³ However, the concept of “lack of public understanding”—which is far more complex and ‘super-wicked’ than it might initially seem—is not discussed in any depth. Moreover, Flannery’s book, while accessible and engaging, nonetheless functions as an expert monologue: a top-down view of the climate change situation, written by an expert and directed at a somewhat monolithically-conceived ‘public’. Other Australian climate science publications that provide important background context for this project include: Ian Lowe, *Living in the Hothouse* (2005); David Spratt and Phillip Sutton, *Climate Code Red* (2008); Tim Flannery, *Here on Earth* (2010); Ross Garnaut, *The Garnaut review 2011*; and Peter Christoff (ed.), *Four Degrees of Global Warming* (2014).

In popular accounts of climate science, it is a common narrative strategy to include a

18. See, for example, Margaret Ronda, “Mourning and Melancholia in the Anthropocene”, *Post45*, 10 June 2013, <http://post45.research.yale.edu/2013/06/mourning-and-melancholia-in-the-anthropocene/>. (Accessed 10 May 2014.)

19. Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 7.

20. McKibben, *Nature*, xiv.

21. *Ibid.*, 212.

22. Tim Flannery, *The Weather Makers: The History and Future Impact of Climate Change* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2005), 297. Note that it has been nine years since Flannery’s pronouncement.

23. Flannery, *Weather*, 7.

small amount of personal anecdotes and reflections. This is a way for authors to personalise the otherwise-abstract climate issue, and draw attention to the ethical implications of their arguments. These autobiographical lived-experience moments usually occur in a book's preface, introduction and/or conclusion. Representative examples include: McKibben (1989); Flannery (2005); George Monbiot, *Heat* (2006); Guy Pearse, *High and Dry* (2007); Mark Lynas, *Six Degrees* (2008); and Clive Hamilton, *Requiem For A Species* (2010). Taking this climate science/autobiography trend further, James Hansen's book *Storms of My Grandchildren* (2009) and David Guggenheim's documentary, starring Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), contain large amounts of anecdotal material. In *Storms of My Grandchildren*, Hansen's life story as a climatologist-turned-climate-activist permeates the entire narrative, leading some reviewers to describe the book as a "climate change memoir".²⁴ Similarly, Al Gore's personal history is a significant element of *An Inconvenient Truth*, which has been defined as "part documentary, part biography, and part campaign ad".²⁵ More recent hybrids of climate science/biography include: Jeff Orlowski's documentary about photographer James Balog, *Chasing Ice* (2012;) and Bill McKibben, *Oil and Honey* (2013). While all these public figures recount their experiences in an attempt to make climate change 'relevant' to a general audience, they remain the life narratives of *experts*: white, male, university-educated members of an intellectual and socio-economic elite. This indicates that a comparable biographical approach could be taken with the life narratives of non-experts, with less homogenous, more inclusive results.

Climate change as a cultural phenomenon

In the past decade, climate change has come to be regarded as not just a scientific issue, but also a cultural phenomenon. In *M/C Journal's*²⁶ 2009 "Climate" issue, cultural geographers Andrew Gorman-Murray and Gordon Waitt note that "there has recently been a 'cultural turn' in climate change science and politics", and argue that "climate change research and action has been hindered because it has not fully accommodated cultural values that give everyday meaning to climate".²⁷ Mike Hulme elaborates on this 'cultural turn' in *Exploring Climate Change Through Science and*

24. See, for example, *Green@Stevens*, "Dr. James Hansen Receives 2011 Green Book Award", 4 May 2011, http://web.stevens.edu/green/news/single_news.php?news_events_id=3031. (Accessed 10 May 2014.) Also see Travis Metcalfe, "James Hansen's Climate Future", 7 February 2011, <http://starstuff.blogspot.com.au/2011/02/james-hansens-climate-future.html>. (Accessed 1 May 2014.)

25. Jeffrey Masters, "Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*", *Weather Underground*, <http://www.wunderground.com/resources/education/gore.asp>. (Accessed 10 May 2014.)

26. Formerly "*M/C – A Journal of Media and Culture*".

27. Andrew Gorman-Murray and Gordon Waitt, "Climate and Culture", *M/C Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (2009), <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/184>. (Accessed 9 May 2014.)

Society (2013), claiming: “All of human life is now lived out not just in the presence of a physically changing climate/planet, but in the new discursive and cultural space which has been created by the idea of climate change”.²⁸ Hulme also asserts that climate change “has become a new *medium* through which human life is now lived”.²⁹ I contend that “medium” is not quite the right description here; climate change is no more a “medium” than are democracy, terrorism or nationalism. However, climate change does arguably function discursively as an organising *frame*, or *theme*, or *meta-narrative* around which people structure the events of everyday life. This (renamed) idea, of climate change as a meta-narrative in contemporary culture, is central to the development of this research project. Hulme’s earlier work, *Why We Disagree About Climate Change* (2009), stresses the importance of how different people “frame”³⁰ climate change, and traces these conflicting frames to cultural roots: people’s different values, priorities and life experiences. This will provide a theoretical context for my analysis of climate change as a cultural phenomenon.

Deb Anderson’s forthcoming book, *Endurance: Australian Stories of Drought* (2014), applies oral historical and cultural studies perspectives to the lived experience of climate change. *Endurance* is based on oral testimony collected in Victoria’s Mallee region between 2003 and 2007, and is the first significant study of the lived experience of climate change in Australia. Drawing on the work of Hulme (and others), *Endurance* seeks to “underscore the significance of cultural and historical dimensions in understanding of climate”.³¹ Anderson examines the culturally mediated discourses through which people ‘experience’ climate, arguing that “discourse on drought as climate change has the power to disrupt a narrative” of ongoing rural endurance.³² In an overseas context, Kari Norgaard’s *Living in Denial* (2011) is the first sociological work to undertake “an open-ended, ethnographic approach to the question of how people experience climate change”.³³ Following research conducted in a small Norwegian town of Bygdaby, Norgaard concludes that Eviatar Zerubavel’s concept of “socially organized denial” best explains the Bygdaby residents’ reactions to climate change. She argues that “public nonresponse to global

28. Mike Hulme, *Exploring Climate Change Through Science and Society: An Anthology of Mike Hulme’s Essays, Interviews and Speeches* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 11.

29. Hulme, *Exploring Climate Change*, *ibid.*

30. Hulme, *Why We Disagree*, 229.

31. Deb Anderson, “Climate Lived and Contested: Narratives of Mallee Women, Drought and Climate Change”, *Hecate* 38, no. 01n02 (2013), 25.

32. Deb Anderson, “Drought, Endurance and ‘the Way Things Were’: The Lived Experience of Climate and Climate Change in the Mallee”, *Australian Humanities Review* 45 (2008), 2.

33. Kari Marie Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), 3.

warming is *produced* through cultural practices of everyday life”.³⁴ The themes of Norgaard’s and Anderson’s work—rural endurance and socially organised denial—are both relevant to this research project, and will be explored further.

A notable example of the ‘cultural turn’ in Australian climate change research is public intellectual Clive Hamilton’s *Requiem For A Species* (2010). Hamilton’s book ostensibly focuses on the social aspects of climate change, namely, “why we resist the truth”³⁵ about the severity and urgency of our predicament. The introduction to *Requiem For A Species* contains some insightful, and depressing, personal revelations. “For some years I could see intellectually that the gap between the actions demanded by the science and what our political institutions could deliver was large and probably unbridgeable, yet emotionally I could not accept what this meant,”³⁶ Hamilton writes. However, Hamilton then attempts to universalise his own personal lived experiences, suggesting that the general public needs to follow his lead and “face up to the truth”.³⁷ According to Hamilton, “that means allowing ourselves to enter a phase of desolation and hopelessness, in short, to grieve”.³⁸ This one-size-fits-all approach to lived experience is prescriptive in the extreme. Ultimately, the arguments in *Requiem For A Species*—about the lamentable effects of economic rationalism and consumerist culture—rest on broad (pop-)psychological generalisations that are less convincing, and less interesting, than Hamilton’s own personal admissions. Perhaps ironically, this highlights the value of a more research-based approach, which seeks to do justice to the specificity and complexity of a range of different people’s experiences of climate change based on extensive analysis of those experiences.

A more nuanced account of the cultural aspects of denial can be found in Jonathan Rowson’s report *A New Agenda on Climate Change: Facing up to Stealth Denial and Winding Down on Fossil Fuels* (2013). Rowson, who draws upon Hamilton’s work, conceptualises climate change as a “collective action problem”,³⁹ or rather a series of interlinked problems, which are extremely difficult to resolve. The report disaggregates the concept of ‘denial’ into three sub-categories: interpretive denial; implicatory denial; and emotional denial. Rowson also stresses that denial is central

34. Norgaard, *Denial*, 207.

35. Clive Hamilton, *Requiem For A Species: Why We Resist the Truth About Climate Change* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2010), iii.

36. Hamilton, *Requiem*, x.

37. *Ibid*, xi.

38. *Ibid*, 211.

39. Jonathan Rowson, *A New Agenda on Climate Change: Facing up to Stealth Denial and Winding Down on Fossil Fuels*, (London: The Action and Research Centre, 2013), 3.

to human life: “We deny all sorts of atrocities all the time”,⁴⁰ from wars in other countries to the gritty details of the meat industry. This is a beginning of a more fine-grained analysis of how and why people disavow different aspects of the climate change conundrum, and my research project will investigate the efficacy of these distinctions.

Journalism about people’s lived experiences of extreme weather events

In the past six years, a number of long-form cultural journalism and/or oral history accounts have been written that deal explicitly with people’s lived experiences of extreme weather events, such as bushfires or hurricanes. In an Australian context, Adrian Hyland’s *Kinglake-350* (2011) is the first significant example of this trend. *Kinglake-350* is a work of narrative journalism that concerns Victoria’s 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, in and around the town of Kinglake. Hyland’s narrative explicitly locates the bushfires within the context of climate change in Australia. Roger Wood, *Kinglake-350*’s protagonist, reflects on “years of drought” and “devastating climate change”,⁴¹ just hours before the fires. Wood’s understanding of climate change informs his experience of the subsequent (un)natural disaster, which affects its ‘meaning’. As narrator, Hyland spells out the links between Australia’s changing climate and fire behaviour (see chapters: “Balancing Act”, 20-22; “Red Wind”, 27-32; “Fire: An Illuminated History, 144-162; and “A Reflection”, 242-250). Hyland also frames people’s responses to bushfire and climate change as a *cultural phenomenon*. Discussing people’s lack of disaster preparation, Hyland writes: “None of this is to blame individuals. When the level of unpreparedness is that high, it becomes a matter of culture.”⁴² Hyland concludes: “our cultural awareness of the environment has not kept pace” with changes to that environment; therefore, our “failure to engage with fire is a failure of our culture”.⁴³ Hyland’s cultural analysis of climate change is highly relevant to this research project, and suggests the need for further studies of Australia’s “cultural awareness of the environment”—or lack thereof.

By contrast, two US books about Hurricane Katrina’s 2005 destructive impact on New Orleans—Lola Vollen and Chris Ying (eds.), *Voices From the Storm* (2008); and Dave Eggers, *Zeitoun* (2009)—recount a range of lived experiences of an extreme weather event, but without any reference to global warming. In *Voices From the Storm* and *Zeitoun*, oral testimonies about Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath are

40. Rowson, *Stealth Denial*, 37.

41. Adrian Hyland, *Kinglake-350* (Melbourne: Text, 2011), 19.

42. Hyland, *Kinglake-350*, 141.

43. *Ibid*, 244-5.

represented within the cultural contexts of US racial inequality, racism and “governmental indifference and incompetence”.⁴⁴ In *Zeitoun*, a further context for the storm is provided by the protagonist Abdulrahman’s Islamic faith. The absence of a climate change frame within these narratives is noteworthy for this review, considering that Hurricane Katrina’s unprecedented intensity has been linked to increased ocean surface temperatures, which are in turn linked to climate change.⁴⁵ The above observation is not a criticism of Eggers, Vollen and Ying’s work *per se*, nor a judgement of their interview subjects. However, a comparison with *Kinglake-350* underlines that how a ‘natural’ disaster is framed—by survivors and by authors—profoundly affects that event’s cultural meaning. It suggests the value of an *interpretive* approach, such as cultural journalism, where interviewee’s responses are actively compared, contrasted and analysed as contingent cultural phenomena.

Documentaries about people’s lived experiences of climate change

In recent years there have been two significant documentary projects—one produced for cinema, the other for television—that seek to represent people’s lived experience of climate change, focusing on cultural dimensions of the issue. Franny Armstrong’s *The Age of Stupid* (2009) focuses on the everyday life experiences of seven individuals living in six different countries: India, the UK, Nigeria, France, Jordan and the US. These personal narratives are juxtaposed to draw attention to how people’s seemingly disparate lives are in fact interconnected under global capitalism. The documentary also focuses on a range of seemingly insurmountable “self-justifying myths” that “prevent us from engaging with climate change”.⁴⁶ *The Age of Stupid* has an overt narratorial presence, in the form of actor Pete Postlethwaite. Postlethwaite, speaking from a speculative future version of 2055, asks the question: “Why didn’t we save ourselves when we had the chance?” The answer Armstrong provides is essentially *cultural*: we are living in “an age of stupid”. Armstrong’s documentary demonstrates the value of representing the climate change experiences of a range of non-experts. *The Age of Stupid* is an important model for the composition of my own research project, which will seek to intercut the life stories of a wide range of Australians together in a comparable fashion, although in textual

44. Lola Vollen and Chris Ying (eds.), *Voices From the Storm: The People of New Orleans on Hurricane Katrina and its Aftermath* (San Francisco: McSweeney’s Books, 2008), 1.

45. See Kerry Emanuel, “Anthropogenic Effects on Tropical Cyclone Activity”, *Position Paper, Program in Atmospheres Oceans and Climate: MIT* (2006). For popular representations of Hurricane Katrina within a climate change frame see: Guggenheim/Gore, 2006; and Franny Armstrong, *The Age of Stupid*, 2009.

46. George Monbiot, “Global warming is a brutal truth”, *The Guardian*, 21 July 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/jul/21/climatechange.scienceofclimatechange>. (Accessed 7 May 2014.)

rather than cinematic form.

In April 2014, the first episode of *Years of Living Dangerously*, a nine-part television program produced by James Cameron and Arnold Schwarzenegger, aired in the US. *Years of Living Dangerously* is a combination of investigatory and cultural journalism, simultaneously breaking news stories and focusing on “the real effect of climate change in real people’s lives around the world”.⁴⁷ As with *The Age of Stupid*, *Years of Living Dangerously* juxtaposes narratives from diverse locations: Syria, Texas, Indonesia and Montana (so far). The show seeks to make connections between the long-term trends of climate change, medium-term events such as droughts, and the social effects of drought, including unemployment, economic instability and, in Syria, civil war. *Years of Living Dangerously*’s methodology, with its intercutting between multiple locations and its a focus on personal experience, resonates with my own research design, and is a sign of the power and application of such an approach.

Conclusion

Writing on the lived experience of climate change can be found across a number of academic disciplines and in a range of journalistic formats. The above review has shown how “the lived experience of climate change” began as a minor concern within works that focused on climate change as a scientific phenomenon, using personal anecdotes to make the issue more relevant to audiences. An inadvertent result of this was the privileging of the lived experiences of a white, male, scientifically-literate, Baby Boomer elite, typified by figures such as Al Gore and Tim Flannery. Within the past decade, a ‘cultural turn’ in climate change studies has focused attention on the cultural dimensions of how people understand climate change. There has been a concomitant acknowledgement that the lived experiences of non-experts are an important and as-yet neglected part of how climate change functions as a cultural phenomenon. This is reflected in recent works of sociology, oral history, cultural journalism and documentary filmmaking, which all explore how ordinary people make sense of climate change. The review also found while studies have been written that engage with the lived experience of climate change in Australia—notably Anderson’s *Endurance* and Hyland’s *Kinglake-350*—these works focus on the *symptoms* of climate change (drought and bushfire respectively). To date, no significant study has been undertaken that takes *the lived experience of climate change in Australia* as its main subject. This will be the subject of my study.

47. John Doyle, “The Governor’s got a new foe – Climate Change”, *The Globe and Mail*, 16 January 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/television/the-governators-got-a-new-foe-climate-change/article16373468/>. (Accessed 7 May 2014.)

2. The Methodology

2.i. Theoretical and conceptual framework of research component

Hot Cold Hot: The Lived Experience of Climate Change in Australia is a work of interpretive cultural journalism that utilises a hybrid methodological approach, drawing on oral history, literary journalism and ethnography. Evidence will primarily be gathered through extended, semi-structured interviews, a practice that is central to both journalism and oral history.⁴⁸ The oral testimony will be supplemented by authorial commentary (a mixture of narrative analysis, discourse analysis, observation and autoethnography) that will contextualise the interview material within a meta-narrative of climate change as an unfolding cultural phenomenon in Australia.

Framework of cultural journalism

I have chosen cultural journalism as my primary mode of interrogation and representation because it is an effective method to engage with climate change both as a cultural phenomenon, and as an ongoing presence in people's everyday lives. In the context of this project, "cultural journalism" is not to be confused with "arts journalism";⁴⁹ nor does it mean "*cross-cultural* journalism".⁵⁰ It is also not limited to the cultural-journalism-as-pedagogy practices that originated in the 1960s with Eliot Wigginton's *Foxfire* project.⁵¹ The type of cultural journalism relevant to this project is defined by journalism scholar Maarit Jaakkola in two useful ways: firstly, as "the journalistically sound production of literary journalism or nonfiction", via "the use of fictional techniques in journalistic writing";⁵² and secondly, as "the anthropological method of writing about communities and cultures in a journalistic context", which

48. See Mark Feldstein, "Kissing Cousins: Journalism and Oral History", *The Oral History Review* 31.1 (2004), 4-5.

49. For arts-focused definitions of cultural journalism, see: Tyler Green, "Re-thinking cultural journalism", *Blouin Art Info*, 2010, <http://blogs.artinfo.com/modernartnotes/files/2009/08/ArtJournalismWhitePaper2010.pdf>. (Accessed 6 May 2014). Also see Maarit Jaakkola, "Witnesses of a cultural crisis: Representations of media-related metaprocesses as professional metacriticism of arts and cultural journalism." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* (2014), 1367877913519308. (Accessed 5 May 2014.)

50. See Kathryn Olmstead, "Breaking the Cocoon: Cultural Journalism in a Global Community", *Journal of Popular Culture* 25, no. 2 (1991): 153-65.

51. See Olmstead, "Expanding Cultural Awareness: Wigginton on Cultural Journalism", *English Journal* 77, no. 3 (1988): 32-35.

52. Steve Jones and Kevin Featherly, in Jaakkola, "Cultural Crisis", 6. There are similarities between the above definition and Sims' description of "literary journalism" in *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* (2007), particularly with regard to literary journalism's "attention to ordinary lives" and its quest to bring the "feelings and the drama of everyday life to the surface" (12). However, Sims insists that literary journalism "can deal with any topic" (19), which makes it a broader and more nebulous category than cultural journalism, and of less analytic value for this study.

has the “potential to increase understanding among different groups of people”.⁵³ Although Jaakkola equates cultural journalism with anthropology, the approach is equally relevant to sociological investigation. Scholar Jason Waite identifies “two different orientations from which cultural journalism can be practiced”:
introspective/ sociological, documenting “the customs, values and traditions of one’s own community”; and *extrospective/anthropological*, a comparable process applied “to a completely different culture”.⁵⁴ This project will engage in both introspective and extrospective cultural journalism, shifting between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ positions as I investigate a range of communities across Australia.

The value of applying cultural journalism to reporting on climate change

Media scholar Kathryn Olmstead argues that cultural journalism “focuses on ... everyday experiences and traditions in a community, as described by its residents, more than on the extraordinary ... described by reporters as news”.⁵⁵ The methodology also identifies “the significance of cultural heritage on political and social events, as well as on individual lives”.⁵⁶ A journalistic framework that takes account of contextual factors such as everyday life and personal history is therefore suitable for in-depth, long-form studies of lived experience. When it comes to the subject of climate change, such journalism is needed; some would say, desperately so. This is because climate change is such an “awkward fit for the conventions and institutions that make up today’s media”.⁵⁷ Journalism scholar Harold Gess argues that in this “fast media” world, “environmental stories are most often challenging to journalism practice, in that they are complex and ongoing”.⁵⁸ Climate change is the slowest of all environmental stories, “moving at a pace that won’t mean much over an editor’s career but will profoundly reshape human habitats over centuries”.⁵⁹ Both Gess and Roberts argue strongly for a journalistic framework that has more capacity to *contextualise* climate change as the ‘super-wicked’, and super-important, problem it is. Roberts asserts that, “what’s needed is more discussion of the meaning of what’s happening, the context ... the narratives unfolding”.⁶⁰ Similarly, Gess contends that the “context of climate change needs to be built up in such a way that events resulting

53. Kathryn Olmstead, in *ibid.*

54. Jason Waite, *Identifying Agency: The Construction of Rhetorical Agency in Foxfire* (ProQuest, 2007), 49-50.

55. Kathryn Olmstead, in Elizabeth Bird, “The Journalist as Ethnographer: How Anthropology Can Enrich Journalistic Practice”, *Media Anthropology* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2005), 302.

56. Olmstead, *Breaking the Cocoon*, 154.

57. Roberts, “How to Write About Climate”.

58. Gess, “Slow Journalism”, 55.

59. Roberts, “How to Write About Climate”.

60. *Ibid.*

from it (be they political, social, agricultural, ecological or economic) can be understood within that context. This requires a sophisticated form of journalism”.⁶¹ Cultural journalism is one such “sophisticated form of journalism”, that extends its range of sources well beyond the political elite, climate scientists and celebrity ‘sceptics’.

Framework of oral history

The second significant methodological framework this project uses is oral history. Historian Lynn Abrams defines oral history as “a practice, a method of research. It is the act of recording the speech of people ... and then analysing their memories of the past”.⁶² Abrams points out that “oral history” refers both to a particular *process* of interviewing, i.e. asking people about their past, and the *product* of such interviews, i.e. written narratives. Oral history is thus “both a research methodology (a means of conducting an investigation) and the result of the research process”.⁶³ Extrapolating from this, Abrams argues that oral historical “practice and analysis cannot be separated”.⁶⁴ Importantly, the production of oral history accounts is a complex subjective process that occurs in the ‘here and now’ of the interview, rather than a simple recovery of some independently existing, quasi-objective ‘past’. Oral testimonies “are not static recollections ... but are memories reworked in the context of the respondent’s own experiences and politics”⁶⁵ Oral history, then, is not only about historical reconstruction: it is about the complex and contested relationships between history and memory, past and present.

The value of applying oral history within a cultural journalism framework

The insights of the oral historical method are of particular value to this project because, as an unfolding cultural phenomenon, the meaning of ‘climate change’ necessarily changes as people’s understanding of it change. As a research method, oral history is particularly attuned to the passage of time and to the vagaries and acuties of memory. Oral history’s diachronic perspective provides cultural journalism with a valuable *temporal context* for people’s experiences of climate change, both in the past and in the present. By incorporating oral historical methods within a cultural journalistic framework, this project will articulate how people’s present understanding of climate change is profoundly affected by their past

61. Gess, “Slow Journalism”, 62-63.

62. Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2010), 1.

63. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 2.

64. *Ibid*, 3.

65. *Ibid*, 7.

experiences and, at the same time, how people's pasts are 're-written' in light of their climate change experiences in the present. Oral testimonies are subjective and selective, necessarily full of distortions and omissions. This points to the limitations of such an approach; it cannot provide comprehensive or 'objective' accounts of the past. However, these 'weaknesses' of oral history are also its strengths, because the ways people (mis)remember the past are an important part of the climate change 'story', and therefore are worthy objects of analysis in themselves.

Conceptual framework: lived experience

The category of *lived experience* is central to this project—and to much oral history and cultural journalism practice, as discussed above. It is important to acknowledge that 'lived experience' has often been defined in opposition to other, more mediated forms of experience. *A Dictionary of Media and Communication* (2011) characterises lived experience as personal "knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed from other people".⁶⁶ However, in the case of climate change—and climate itself—that kind of unmediated experience is just not possible. As Hulme notes, climate is a fundamentally conceptual and discursive phenomenon, which "cannot be experienced directly through our senses. Unlike the wind which we feel on our face or a raindrop that wets our hair, climate is a constructed idea that takes these sensory encounters and builds them into something more abstract."⁶⁷ This suggests that an oral historical approach, which is expressly concerned with people's constructed narratives of their lived experiences, is an appropriate methodological framework in this instance. Development studies scholar Gordon Wilson defines the lived experience of climate change as:

knowledge shaped by the temporal dimension of personal and collective histories gathered over generations, the broader political and economic influences which shape one's lives, engagements with other knowledges, and perceptions of direct biophysical impacts associated with climate change that challenge lives and livelihoods either of poverty or of affluence. Such knowledge is further filtered through individual standpoints and power relations in local and wider society (for example, those arising from gender and race).⁶⁸

66. Daniel Chandler and Rob Munday, *A Dictionary of Media and Communication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199568758.001.0001/acref-9780199568758-e-1552?rskey=CT9d6T&result=1556>. (Accessed 10 May 2014.)

67. Hulme, *Why We Disagree*, 3-4.

68. Wilson, "The Lived Experience of Climate Change", 49-50. Also see Gordon Wilson and Paula Bacelar Nicolau, "T869 Climate change: from science to lived experience. Module 2: The lived

The theoretical frameworks of cultural journalism and oral history don't necessarily provide access to all the aspects of lived experience mentioned above. For example, oral testimony in and of itself might not shed much light on "the broader political and economic influences which shape one's lives". That said, sociological/anthropological analysis of this testimony can provide the otherwise-missing context for people's responses. On the other hand, the oral historical method, with its focus on people's first-hand observations and how these change over time, is ideally suited to provide insights into people's "perceptions of direct biophysical impacts associated with climate change", as well as "the temporal dimension of personal and collective histories". On balance, a theoretical approach combining cultural journalism and oral history is a suitable method to engage with the conceptual category of lived experience, in the context of climate change.⁶⁹

2.ii. Journalistic and research approach/design

Selection of interview locations

One of my first project design decisions is to interview a range of people living in different locations across Australia. I am not seeking to be representative of the full 'Australian experience', but merely to compare and contrast a diversity of personal narratives. To this end, I sought out geographical locations with a mix of climates (tropical vs temperate; coastal vs inland), and a mix of urban/ suburban/ regional/ rural locales. I focused on areas that are associated with climate change in the media and public sphere. My initial inspiration was the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Australia map of climate change "hotspots" (see appendix: "Australian climate change hotspots"), which is based on the IPCC 4th assessment report (2007). The WWF map identifies "some of Australia's most environmentally iconic and biodiverse areas" that "are at significant risk"⁷⁰ from the impacts of climate change, including the Great Barrier Reef and south-western Australia. However, since the WWF map focused exclusively on *ecological* hotspots, I augmented their criteria to include *cultural* hotspots for climate change. The current locations for my research are:

experience of climate change. Textbook" (United Kingdom: Open University, 2012).

69. In my exegesis, I will further interrogate the limitations and potential flaws of my chosen methodology. There is not sufficient space to do so here.

70. WWF Australia, "Australia's climate change hotspots", WWF Australia website (2013), http://www.wwf.org.au/our_work/people_and_the_environment/global_warming_and_climate_change/impacts/australias_climate_change_hotspots/. (Accessed 10 May 2014.)

- the **Cairns** region, far north Queensland (near the Great Barrier Reef⁷¹)
- the **Perth** region, southwest Western Australia (exposed to reduced rainfall⁷²)
- **Inner Melbourne**, Victoria (a cultural hotspot containing the highest concentration of Greens voters in Australia⁷³)
- **Kinglake-Marysville**, Victoria (sites of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, Australia's worst natural disaster⁷⁴)
- the **Mullumbimby** region, northern New South Wales (a cultural hotspot for "self-funded retirees, hippies and burnt-out tree-changers"⁷⁵ aspiring to low-carbon lifestyles)
- the **Morwell** region, Victoria (site of the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire, "one of the largest, longest running and most complex fires in the State's history"⁷⁶).

Because this is fundamentally a journalism project, the research design needs to remain flexible so I can respond to future climate change 'events' as a newsroom journalist might. For example, following the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire in February 2014, the Morwell region has been selected as an additional location. If further significant events occur between now and June 2015, they will be considered for inclusion.

Selection of participants

Within each of the above regions, I will interview a range of people aged 10-99, including adolescents (10-17 years old) and indigenous Australians. In keeping with the concerns of both cultural journalism and oral history, my main focus will be on 'ordinary people'. While one aspect of this project involves interviewing climate change experts, I am not interested in their expertise *per se*; rather, I am specifically

71. According to the latest IPCC report, the "combined impacts of warming and acidification associated with atmospheric CO₂ concentrations in excess of 450-500 ppm" on the Great Barrier Reef "are projected to be associated with increased frequency and severity of coral bleaching, disease incidence and mortality" (19). Andy Reisinger and Roger Kitching (lead authors), "Chapter 25. Australasia", IPCC Working Group II AR5 (2014), http://ipcc-wg2.gov/AR5/images/uploads/WGIAR5-Chap25_FGDall.pdf. (Accessed 10 May 2014.)

72. The latest IPCC report's list of "Hotspots of high vulnerability by 2050" projects "significant loss of biodiversity" and "water security problems" for south-western Australia, as a result of decreasing rainfall. Reisinger and Kitching, "Chapter 25. Australasia", 6.

73. See Antony Green, "The Greens versus Labor – Geographic and Educational Dimensions", *Antony Green's Election Blog*, ABC, <http://blogs.abc.net.au/antonygreen/2012/09/the-greens-versus-labor-geographic-and-educational-dimensions.html>. (Accessed 10 May 2014.)

74. See Andrew Rule, "Our Darkest Day", *The Age*, 9 February 2009, <http://www.theage.com.au/national/our-darkest-day-20090208-810q.html#ixzz31I8RVwoq>. (Accessed 10 May 2014.)

75. Daniel Browning, "Melissa Lucashenko's *Mullumbimby*", ABC, 25 February 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/booksandartsdaily/melissa-lucashenko/4532786>. (Accessed 1 May 2014.)

76. CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson, "In Gratitude, Hazelwood Mine Fire, Board of Inquiry", CFA website, 23 March 2014, <http://news.cfa.vic.gov.au/blog/In-Gratitude-Hazelwood-Mine-Fire-Judicial-Inquiry.html>. (Accessed 1 May 2014.)

concerned with how a person's expertise affects their own personal experiences of climate change. In selecting the participants, I seek to capture a *diversity* of responses, without presuming to be representative or comprehensive. My sampling method will be a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling. I will interview up to seven participants in the six regions listed above, as well as up to seven climate change experts, giving a total of up to 49 interviewees.

Design of interview process

Interviewing procedures for this research have been designed with serious reflection on ethical issues arising from oral history practice, in accordance with the Oral History Association of Australia's guidelines. The Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this research. The interview process is based on standard oral history methodologies without any notable variations, and for reasons of space will not be discussed in detail here. The procedure can be summarised as follows: prior to the interview, participants will be sent a list of potential interview questions, giving them time to prepare their responses. The interviews will be approximately one hour long and will be semi-structured, allowing the participants to actively shape their narrative. I will endeavour to conduct the interview in what anthropologist James Spradley calls "native language", i.e., the interviewee's own vernacular. A "native language" approach aims to allow "informants to speak in the same way they would talk to others in their cultural scene" so they can "describe a culture on its own terms".⁷⁷

It is important to acknowledge that my own subject position as an interviewer will necessarily affect the content and tone of the interview responses I collect. Abrams stresses that "the interview itself is not just a means to an end; it is a communicative event ... which means two worlds, or subjectivities, are colliding".⁷⁸ Factors such as my socio-economic status (middle-class), gender (male), ethnicity (naturalised New Zealander of British ancestry), age (35) and political orientation (disaffected left-wing) will all affect how participants interact with me. Perhaps most importantly, my own understanding of climate change will influence the "communicative event" of the interview. This effect can be minimised, but not eliminated; the very fact that I am researching a PhD on climate change is a strong indication of my beliefs, i.e., that I think climate change is worthy of extended study. That said, this potential limitation is also arguably a strength, in line with media theorist David Weinberger's

77. James Spradley, in Sharon Mascall-Dare, "An Australian Story: Media and Memory in the Making of Anzac Day", PhD diss., University of South Australia (2013), 46.

78. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 10.

proposition that “transparency is the new objectivity”⁷⁹ (see p25: **Narrative analysis, autoethnography**).

Design of manuscript

The research component of this PhD will culminate in a book-length manuscript, approximately 80,000 words in length. *Hot Cold Hot: The Lived Experience of Climate Change in Australia* will consist of ten chapters, each between 4,000 and 12,000 words long. The material will be arranged chronologically, to construct a provisional meta-narrative of how Australians have experienced climate change in their lifetimes. Each chapter will consist of authorial analysis and oral testimony from a range of participants, juxtaposed so that “cross-cut voices recount a shared experience or epoch”.⁸⁰ The precise content of each chapter will be determined by the interviews, rather than vice versa. However, based on initial research,⁸¹ broad trends and themes can be determined, which suggest a provisional chapter plan:

Chapter plan

INTRODUCTION: The super wicked problem of living with climate change

PART ONE: Life before Climate Change

Chapter 1 (1930s – 1980): The good old predictable days

Chapter 2 (1980 – 1990): Ozone holes and warming globes

Chapter 3 (1990 – 2000): The gathering data-storm

PART TWO: A Change is Gonna Come ...

Chapter 4 (2000 – 2005): The IPCC and OSA (Other Scary Acronyms)

Chapter 5 (2005 – 2008): High water mark: Al Gore, Kevin Rudd and the dream of decisive action

79. David Weinburger, “Transparency is the New Objectivity”, *Joho the Blog*, 19 July 2009, <http://www.hyperorg.com/blogger/2009/07/19/transparency-is-the-new-objectivity/>. (Accessed 10 May 2014.) Also see Jay Rosen, “Covering Wicked Problems”, *Jay Rosen’s PressThink*, 25 June 2012, <http://pressthink.org/2012/06/covering-wicked-problems/>. (Accessed 10 May 2014.)

80. *Guardian* review of Jonathan Green, *Days in the Life: Voices From the English Underground 1961-71* (London: Minerva, 1988). Quoted on back cover of *Days in the Life*.

81. In *Exploring Climate Change Through Science and Society*, Mike Hulme sketches a rough periodisation of climate change as a cultural phenomenon—pre-1988; 1988-2000; 2000-2008; and 2008 to the present (see 10-11)—this has informed my provisional chapter plan. Analysis of Australian newspaper coverage of climate change reveals an uptick in coverage from 2000, with a ‘peak coverage period’ occurring from 2006 to 2011; this has also informed my chapter plan. (See Maxwell Boykoff and Ami Nacu-Schmidt, “2000 – 2013 Australian Media Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming”, The Center for Science and Technology Policy Research (University of Colorado), 18 January 2014, http://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/media_coverage/australia/graph.jpg (Accessed 12 May 2014.)

PART THREE: ... Or Not

Chapter 6 (2008 – 2009): My junk science is better than your junk science

Chapter 7 (2009 – 2011): Natural and unnatural disasters

PART FOUR: The Best of Times

Chapter 8 (2011 – 2012): Business as usual, or, What went wrong?

Chapter 9: (2013 – 2014): Climate change as cultural phenomenon, climate change as freak-out

Chapter 10: (2015): The future, or lack thereof

CONCLUSION: Climate Change: You're Soaking In It!

2.iii. Analytical techniques

The research component of my PhD takes a mixed-methods approach to analysis. The primary analytical technique will be discourse analysis, in particular narrative analysis; this will be supplemented by autoethnography, and framed by oral history documentation techniques. In the composition of the final manuscript, there is also a suite of narrative strategies that function as analytical techniques.

Narrative analysis, autoethnography

Oral history is distinct from other historical approaches because oral historians actively *produce* their primary source material—their interviews—rather than accessing or discovering pre-existing source material (in libraries, archives, etc.). Because oral history interviews are uniquely “dialogic ... discursive and creative”⁸² sources of information, they need to be analysed accordingly, as linguistic and narrative constructions. Once the interviews have been written up, I will engage in the process of narrative analysis, defined by Abrams as the “identification and interpretation of the ways in which people use stories to interpret the world”.⁸³ Oral historian Daniel James argues that “life stories are cultural constructs that draw on a public discourse structured by class and gender conventions ... As such, we have to learn to read these stories and the symbols and logic embedded in them if we are to attend to their deeper meaning”.⁸⁴ My discourse analysis will draw on ‘close reading’ and textual analysis practices from literary theory and cultural studies to make sense of oral history interviews as texts.

82. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 16.

83. *Ibid*, 176.

84. Daniel James, in *ibid*, 8.

A second analytic technique in this project is autoethnography. According to Heewon Chang, autoethnography “is an ethnographic inquiry that utilizes the autobiographic materials of the researcher as the primary data ... autoethnography emphasizes cultural analysis and interpretation of the researcher’s behaviors, thoughts, and experiences in relation to others in society”.⁸⁵ This is comparable to modes of literary journalism where the journalist’s own experiences supplement the larger story being told. Articulating my own subject position in this project is a conscious strategy, which corresponds to what David Weinberger identifies as a shift in journalism away from claims of ‘objectivity’ and towards ‘transparency’. “What we used to believe because we thought the author was objective, we now believe because we can see through the author’s writings to the sources and values that brought her to that position,” Weinberger argues. “Transparency brings us to reliability the way objectivity used to”.⁸⁶ The disclosure of your subject position is particularly important when writing about climate change as a cultural phenomenon, because the subject is the site of emotionally-charged, often vexatious interpretive contests. To presume that you can somehow sit ‘outside’ of culture and report in a neutral and objective manner—what Professor of Journalism Jay Rosen disparagingly calls “the View from Nowhere”⁸⁷—is to invite scepticism and distrust. Autoethnography, then, is an effective way to let readers know “where I’m coming from”.⁸⁸ As both a descriptive and analytical technique, it allows my experiences to be understood in a *cultural* rather than a *personal* context.

Narrative strategies as analytical techniques

In *Tales from the Field*, John Van Maanen argues that transforming ‘raw’ experiences into a written document “is a complex matter, dependent on an uncountable number of strategic choices and active constructions (e.g., what details to include or omit; how to summarize and present data; what voice to select; what quotations to use)”.⁸⁹ This statement is especially relevant to oral history, because the many steps involved in the oral historical process each rely on “strategic choices and active constructions” and therefore function as analytical techniques.

The question of omission is central to works of literary journalism, where there is an unavoidable tension between the journalistic impulse to ‘tell the story’, and the literary maxim to ‘show, don’t tell’. The goal of the ‘show, don’t tell’ technique is for

85. Heewon Chang, *Autoethnography as Method* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008), 1.

86. David Weinberger, “Transparency”.

87. Rosen, “Covering Wicked Problems”.

88. *Ibid.*

89. John van Maanen, *Tales from the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 73.

meaning to be *implicit yet unambiguous*; in this way, successful writers manage to “do their editorializing through their imagery”.⁹⁰ The reader’s active interpretation of an image, or situation, or conversation, enables them in a process that is simultaneously affective and analytic. Creative writing scholar Paul Dawson argues that the ‘show, don’t tell’ rule “arises from romantic anti-didacticism, an evaluative ethos which asserts that overt morality ... is to be equated with aesthetic failure”.⁹¹ I would push this point further, arguing that the refusal to overtly moralise can reflect an author’s reluctance to ‘talk down’ to their readers, and a concomitant faith that those readers are smart enough to work (some of) it out for themselves. Much of the appeal of Studs Terkel’s work lies in his adherence to such a principle. According to Abrams, Terkel “provided limited analysis and editorial and just let the words be heard”.⁹² However, Abrams’ statement belies the fact that Terkel painstakingly selected, edited and arranged his interviews so that their full significance—the latent as well as the manifest meaning—“speaks for itself”.⁹³ Terkel’s editorial and compositional decisions can be seen to function as a suite of deliberate analytical techniques, which are effective precisely because of their relative ‘invisibility’ to the reader. This corresponds to Hemingway’s famous “theory of omission” in writing, popularly known as the “iceberg theory”. For Hemingway, only the ‘tip’ of a story should be visible, while 8/9ths of the work goes on ‘beneath the surface’, that is, off the page. “You could omit anything if you *knew* that you omitted [it],” Hemingway claims, “and the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people *feel something more than they understood*”.⁹⁴ This research project will at times apply this “just let the words be heard” aesthetic theory to composition. I do so fully cognizant of the risks involved: i.e., some of the time, some readers might not ‘get it’. However, I am convinced of the analytic value of the technique, which prompts readers to take a more active part of the interpretive process, enabling them to feel more and ultimately learn more.

90. Joseph North, in Sims, *True Stories*, 10.

91. Dawson, “Creative Writing Pedagogy”.

92. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 155.

93. *Ibid.*

94. Ernest Hemingway, in Jeffrey Meyers, *Hemingway: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 114.

3. Sample of research project

Introduction: the super-wicked problem of living with climate change

In March 2012, my partner Laura Jean McKay and I made an unscheduled stop in the town of Napier, NZ. We had signed on as passengers on a 28,000-tonne container ship called the M.V. Natalie Schulte, thanks to a mixture of old-fashioned adventurousness and the newer phenomenon of climate-guilt. Back in Melbourne twelve months earlier, I had made Laura watch a depressing climate change documentary called *The Age of Stupid*. This caused her to have a “climate change freak-out”, a not-uncommon occurrence these days among middle-class, liberal and inadvertently hypocritical types. *The Age of Stupid* made Laura feel particularly guilty about the hundreds of hours she’d spent flying on planes while untold tonnes of carbon dioxide steamed into the atmosphere that she decided to try to go without air travel for a year. So there we were, on this glorious, albeit expensive, boat ride⁹⁵ to Auckland for my sister’s wedding, fraternising with the obligatory drunken Russian sea captain and learning to appreciate Filipino hip-hop, when we found out that the Auckland docks were shut due to a maritime strike. The M.V. Natalie Schulte was diverted to Napier, and we got a few hours of “shore leave”.

We ate fish and chips on the beach, admired the Art Deco buildings and remarked on how lucky it was—for us—that the old Napier had ben flattened by an earthquake in tasteful 1931, not architecturally brutal 1971. We were having a quiet drink outside a bar when we were accosted by a garrulous local. It was Monday night, the end of a long weekend, and this guy was a little worse-for-wear. He would’ve been about ten years older than us; his red cheeks showed through the stubble, and he was clinging to his glass of red wine like it was a life preserver. The man launched into his life story, which involved growing up in the South Island, working shitty factory jobs, having a honeymoon in Melbourne (vague allusions to a messy divorce), then settling down in Napier. He’d lived there for the past two decades. He was passionate about fishing, boringly so; apparently he spent all his holidays in big gumboots, standing around in the rivers up the road, casting for wild trout. His cheeks got redder and it wasn’t long before he accused us of being “greenies”. We didn’t deny it. “You probably believe in all that climate change too,” he spluttered. We didn’t deny that.

The guy railed against politicians and “greenies” for a bit.

95. Unlike passenger jets, which fly based on customer demand, commercial container ships sail between Australia and New Zealand—and all around the world—with or without passengers. We were essentially paying thousands of dollars to *hitchhike* carbon-neutrally across the Tasman.

“I’ve been around for 43 years,” he said. “I know these rivers like the back of my hand. And let me tell you: the climate *is* changing, it’s definitely changing. But it’s *not* because of climate change!”

This left me gobsmacked; I didn’t know how to agree and disagree with someone at the same time, so I kept my mouth shut. The man slurred something about having to work in the morning, finished his wine and staggered off into the Art Deco dusk. As we walked back to the M.V. Natalie Schulte, Laura shook her head.

“That guy ... almost everything he said was crazy,” she said quietly. “But he just stays in Napier. He’s only flown overseas *once*, in his life. His carbon footprint would be a fraction of ours. Even if he eats red meat for every meal of his life and drives his ute everywhere and votes National every chance he gets, he’s not the climate terrorist ... *we’re* the climate terrorists.”

I didn’t know what to say to that, either.

“The climate is changing, it’s definitely changing. But it’s not because of climate change ...”

That man’s words lodged in my mind. Years later, I still chew them over. Was he saying, “Yes, the climate is different now than it was 43 years ago, but *no*, it’s not because of human activities”—the climate is changing because that’s what climates do, they change, and anyway ‘climate change’ is a load of greenie rubbish? Or did he mean, “I *do* believe in climate change, but I can’t call it that, because that’s what you greenies call it, and I’m not a greenie, so ...” Or was he just a bit pissed and muddle-headed? I wish I knew. I wish I could go back to that bar on that autumn night, and ask him to please explain. Because I think there’s something profound in his words. It’s like a maddening, incomprehensible Zen paradox that just might contain a secret truth: a key to how we can believe something with one half of our brain, while denying it with the other half. How I can *know* that flying on planes, in this day and age, is the worst possible thing for me to be doing, then go ahead and book that next flight anyway. If a drunk fisherman in a Napier bar can help us make sense of the climate mess we’re in, he deserves Al Gore’s Nobel Peace Prize.

This book is a conversation between dozens of ordinary people scattered across Australia, most of whom haven’t met each other, about what climate change means to them in their everyday lives. Basically, it’s a lot of really long interviews, cut and pasted together to tell a patchy story about how, over the past couple of decades, we have lived with, ignored, been traumatised by, avoided, gotten confused by,

frustrated about and obsessed with climate change. Some of these stories will be familiar to you. It'll be like listening to an old friend from high school, the one who posts idiotic stuff on Facebook; or like Skyping with your slightly annoying auntie. Every now and then, it might be like hearing yourself speak. But other stories will seem strange, even outlandish: as if you're eavesdropping at a bus stop in an unfamiliar town, or hiding under the table listening to a genuinely crazy person. And these "crazy" stories are the most important, because they will help you, hopefully, understand what makes other people tick. They will give you a sense of why we—as individuals, as families, as communities, as nations—disagree about climate change. Because, despite what a thousand opinion polls may have told you, the question: "Do you believe in climate change?" is not very helpful, or even meaningful. It is far more important to ask: "What *kind* of climate change do you (not) believe in?"

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Appendix: Australia's climate change hotspots

(From http://www.wwf.org.au/our_work/people_and_the_environment/global_warming_and_climate_change/impacts/australias_climate_change_hotspots/.)

12/13 **CLIMATE**

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HOT SPOTS

