Climate, Capital, and Culture: How Social Class Structures Perceptions of Global Warming and Sustainable Consumption

Author: Thomas Laidley

Persistent link: http://hdl.handle.net/2345/2008

This work is posted on eScholarship@BC, Boston College University Libraries.

Boston College Electronic Thesis or Dissertation, 2011

Copyright is held by the author, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise noted.
CLIMATE, CAPITAL, AND CULTURE:
HOW SOCIAL CLASS STRUCTURES PERCEPTIONS OF GLOBAL WARMING &
SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

a thesis

by

THOMAS M. LAIDLEY

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

August 1st, 2011
Since the 1970’s, social scientists have argued that general pro-environmental attitudes have diffused throughout American society, rendering socio-demographics largely irrelevant in predicting support for such issues. The public reaction to the issue of climate change, however, evades this narrative. While media bias, ideological framing, and business influence, among others, are partial explanations, I argue that ignoring the potential implications of structure and culture—specifically social class—in determining why the issue is so demonstrably divisive is a crucial mistake. Building upon the postmaterialism thesis of Inglehart with the cultural theory of Bourdieu, I examine how the conception of and reaction to the issue varies with economic and cultural capital using data from 42 interviews of Boston-area respondents. The results suggest that climate change may indeed be a ‘classed’ issue—both in how the respondents conceive of it in the first place, and how they speak of social class in the context of it. The political implications are various, but suggest that coalition formation will need to take account of these differences, both real and perceived, in both engendering public support for mitigation efforts and subsequently combating the problem.
Since the 1970’s, social scientists and polling researchers have argued that pro-environmental attitudes and concern have diffused throughout American society, rendering social class and other socio-demographics largely irrelevant as predictors (Buttell & Flinn, 1978; Buttell, 1987; Van Liere & Dunlap, 1980; Morrison & Dunlap, 1986; Samdahl & Roberston, 1989; Dunlap & McCright, 2008a, p. 1051). However, while general environmental concern has become ubiquitous in the U.S., the same cannot be said for anthropogenic climate change. Social scientists have documented substantial declines in public concern over the last decade, particularly among political conservatives (Dunlap & McCright, 2008b). More recently, public polling organizations have similarly chronicled an overall decline in concern about the issue, dovetailing with the recent economic downturn (Jones, 2011; Newport, 2010; Pew, 2009). On a cross-national level, Americans appear to be less concerned about climate change than the publics of almost all other industrialized countries (Brechin, forthcoming). And while the issue is often ranked last among social issues like the economy by the U.S. public, recent surveys indicate it raises less concern than even other environmental problems (Saad, 2011; Saad, 2009). Researchers have offered many reasons for why the issue does not engender greater overall concern. Unlike many other environmental issues, climate change is often conceived of as a spatially and temporally distant problem (Leiserowitz, 2005; Lorenzoni et al, 2006; Lorenzoni & Pidgeon, 2006; Weber, 2006). Media narratives have also portrayed the science as contested, when in reality there is broad consensus about the causes and possible, probable effects (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004). Researchers also point to organized political and business forces who have wielded considerable financial and
political power in promoting a skeptical outlook on the reality of the problem (Jacques, Dunlap, & Freeman, 2008). While these explanations are convincing, there are reasons to suspect social class may also play a role in conceptualizations of and reactions to climate change. Krosnick et al (2006, p. 31) suggest the abstract nature of the issue results in it being perceived as divorced from immediate material concerns in the eyes of the public, making it an archetypal ‘postmaterialist’ issue. This reading of climate change as postmaterialist, according to Inglehart’s theory, would render it a concern predominantly among the ‘new class’ of the educated and relatively affluent (Inglehart, 1981). There is evidence that the lack of concern for climate change is not distributed across social groups equally, with some evidence of class metrics—namely education and income—having positive associations with concern and attitudes (Shrode & Morris, 2009; Leiserowitz et al, 2009), as well as policy support (McCright, 2009, p. 1042; O’Connor, Bord, & Fisher, 1999, p. 469).

Building on Inglehart’s postmaterialism thesis (1981; 1987) and the cultural theory of Bourdieu (1984), this paper examines whether climate change is a ‘classed’ issue, paying particular attention to both consumption patterns and lifestyle practices related to sustainability and climate, and what participants take those to signify. Bourdieu’s theory is valuable because it allows a complex view of social class in the Weberian tradition, rather than an economically reductionist approach. Just as for Weber economic power was not synonymous with social status (Weber, 1946, p. 180), Bourdieu holds that tastes are reified in a manner dependent on both material (economic) and symbolic (cultural) capital. By studying whether and/or how social class conditions
beliefs about climate change, I ask these guiding questions: Is the issue interpreted as an abstract problem that results in those who are materially or symbolically privileged expressing more robust concern for it, or a greater willingness to sacrifice in the end of mitigation? Are ‘green’ consumption objects seen as distanced from the essential, utilitarian considerations one would expect of the lower classes, according to the cultural theory of Bourdieu? Finally, do economic and cultural capital, in an aggregative and compositional sense, condition conceptualizations of climate change and the respondents’ perception of the social response to it? I examine these questions using data from in-depth interviews of a socially, culturally, and economically diverse sample of 42 Boston-area respondents.

Social Class and the Environment: A Complex Narrative

While general ‘pro-environmental’ dispositions have become quite popular in the U.S., a careful reading of the literature reveals the possibility that the relationship between social class and general environmental attitudes is more complex than this narrative would at first suggest. The gap between attitudes and behaviors is one area where social class takes on significance, as researchers frequently theorize that material and cultural constraints play an important role in the actualization (or lack thereof) of attitudes (e.g. Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002, p. 249). In her meta-analysis of the racial dimensions of the attitude-behavior gap, Taylor (1989, p. 199) similarly posits that a combination of resource variables (money, political knowledge, etc.) are an important mediator of behavior. Kennedy et al, using a Canadian sample, found that respondents
often described the gap between their attitudes and behaviors in terms of time and money constraints (2009, p. 156). Indeed, empirical studies have often found associations between income, education—sometimes both—and recycling, a ‘baseline’ environmental behavior (Gamba & Oskamp, 1994; Schultz, 1995; Berger, 1997; Jenkins, Martinez, Palmer, and Podolsky, 2003; Sidique, Lupi, & Joshi, 2010). Researchers have also found education to correlate positively with pro-environmental civic participation (Barkan, 2004).

Social class also appears relevant in terms of attitudes related to climate change specifically. Research which groups the population in six categories related to the issue, ranging from the ‘alarmed’ to ‘dismissive,’ finds those who are ‘cautious,’ i.e. believe climate change is happening but are lukewarm to mitigation efforts, as well as those who are ‘disengaged’ from the issue, were most likely to be low income and have less educational attainment (Leiserowitz, 2009). Shrode and Morris (2009), using 2006 GSS data, found that both income and education were significant, positive predictors of climate change concern. In their survey research, Lubell et al (2007) examined policy support, political participation, and general behaviors related to climate change, and found that education positively correlates with all three dimensions, while income is positively associated with the latter two. O’Connor, Bord, and Fisher (1999), in their analysis of risk perception related to climate change, found that those with higher educational attainment and income support governmental mitigation efforts in greater numbers. In their study of 49 American metropolitan statistical areas, Zahran et al (2008, p. 468) found that the most significant contributors to a sustainability index composed of
factors such as municipal climate group membership and public transportation networks were civic capacity, education, income, and other ‘human capital’ proxy measures. And in their regional study, Dietz et al (2007) found that income was positively associated with general policy support regarding climate change. Taken together, these findings suggest that higher material security and cultural capital are to some extent associated with affirming climate change as a problem, and perhaps more so with supporting certain policy efforts in the U.S. to combat it (i.e. when tangible costs are introduced).

Indeed, affluence on a national level is often used to explain the ascendance of environmentalism more generally in the postwar U.S. (Inglehart, 1981; 1982; Inglehart & Abramson, 1999). As American affluence increased in the post-WWII era, empirical studies began focusing on the rise of the ‘postmaterial’ left, which was embodied by the ‘new class.’ The new class is characterized by a liberal political ideology derived from its position in the realm of production—antagonistic to the business class as a result—along with high levels of cultural capital, i.e. well-educated, middle class professionals whose salaries were not directly dependent on capitalist modes of production (Ehrenreich & Ehrenreich, 1977; Gouldner, 1978; Lamont, 1987). Many theorists have connected the rise of the new class to the success of mainstream environmentalism, arguing that the movement is predominantly composed of middle-class professionals high in cultural capital (but not necessarily income), with ambivalent or negative views of the growth-oriented capitalist economic framework (Abramson & Inglehart, 1994; Eckersley, 1989; Pichardo, 1997, p. 418; Rose, 1997). The embrace of political liberalism by the educated upper middle class signified a crucial inversion of traditional political alignments, which
set the stage for the ascendance of working-class conservatism. This development led some to proclaim a decline in class-based voting patterns (i.e. working classes voting in their apparent economic interest) (Clark, Lipset, & Rempel, 1993; Clark, 2003; Hechter, 2004). Others argue that class-based voting still persists, but is complemented by the rise of ‘cultural’ voting, partly consistent with the postmaterialism and new class theories (Achterberg, 2006; Van der Waal, Achterberg, & Houtman, 2007). This realignment led some segments of the working-class, especially those with lower educational attainment, to increasingly “reaffirm the traditional materialist emphasis on economic growth, military security, and domestic order” (Inglehart, 1987, p. 1297).

When viewed in the context of these findings, important caveats emerge that begin complicating the 'environmentalism as ubiquitous' narrative. While many theories of sustainability center upon efficiency and reform within capitalism—the ‘ecological modernization’ approach being a prominent example of this (Mol, 2003)—others stress ‘sufficiency’ principles, which entail slowing or stopping economic growth (e.g. Princen, 2005; Schnaiberg, 1980). Indeed, the ‘limits to growth’ concept is an integral facet of the ‘New Environmental Paradigm,’ a prolific theoretical concept and related popular empirical metric of general environmental attitudes (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978; Dunlap, 2008). Evidence shows that while Americans embrace environmental protection in a general sense, they are much less willing to sacrifice economic growth for the sake of it. For instance, recent survey data indicates that Americans would prioritize economic growth even if it meant the environment “suffers to some extent,” attitudes likely amplified by the recent global recession (Jones, 2011; Newport, 2009). Uyeki and
Holland (2000) similarly find that while general pro-environmental attitudes are common, there are negative correlations between income, education, and support for the ‘less growth’ paradigm. In their study of activists and the lay public in the Pacific Northwest, Ellis and Thompson (1997) examined cultural divergence between the two groups, and highlighted a clear distinction between affirming general pro-environmental attitudes, which the public did espouse, and rejecting “the acquisitive life of competitive individualism” characterized by neoliberal capitalism, which they did not (Ellis & Thompson, 1997, p. 892). And as Guber notes (2003, p. 44), most Americans seem to affirm the more promethean notion of sustainability as nested within current capitalist frameworks of growth and technological advancement, simultaneously desiring environmental protection but also embracing the ‘dominant’ growth-oriented paradigm. While economic growth and the attenuation of carbon dioxide emissions related to climate change may not be inconsistent with one another, there is evidence that if Americans were asked to sacrifice the former for the latter, they would largely reject the proposition. As such, while Americans embrace the importance of the environment in a general sense, they are far less likely to affirm the principles of steady-state economics and voluntary simplicity that many call for in response to global ecological problems. Finally, there is evidence that social class may be a crucial factor in whether they do affirm this ‘less growth’ approach.

**Cultural Capital and Consumption: The Aesthetics of Asceticism**
Though the postmaterialism thesis contributes to the social understanding of environmentalism by stressing the importance of economics, it nevertheless offers a limited picture of how social class relates to attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, particularly related to issues like climate change. Here, Bourdieu’s multi-dimensional taxonomy of class becomes valuable, as it differentiates economic and cultural capital and illustrates how they may work at shaping dispositions in unexpected ways. This theory can simultaneously explain materialist orientations of the working class, as well as the likelihood that those who possess high economic but low cultural capital are ambivalent toward environmental issues. The materialist preference for utility in those with lower economic and cultural capital—or, a preoccupation with immediate material needs—contrasts with the “asceticism of the privileged,” whereby the affluent distance themselves from the necessity characterizing the lower classes (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 256).

Analyzing both economic and cultural capital is crucial, as the new class narrative of environmentalism in the past few decades indicates. In this formulation, high levels of cultural capital influence political goals and aesthetic dispositions irrespective of economic capital above a certain income. Those possessing high levels of cultural (but not necessarily economic) capital are theorized to exhibit a preference for an abstract aesthetic, and a sophisticated yet ascetic orientation which precludes the distinguishing need for economic capital in the first place.

The application of Bourdieu’s cultural theory to an American context has not been without criticism. Studies have found that those possessing high cultural capital are ‘omnivores’ who consume a range of objects and genres across the popular to high-brow...
spectrum (e.g. Erickson, 1996; Peterson & Kern, 1996). In contrast, Holt (1997) argues that Bourdieu’s theory never posits cultural proclivities as operating monolithically across contexts, nor does Bourdieu claim his metrics of class disposition (e.g. a taste for opera as opposed to jazz) operate in a nomothetic fashion. More importantly, ‘styles’ of consuming rather than status objects are more significant in gauging ‘classed’ dispositions in a postmodern historical context, where mass production affords many the ability to own goods or participate in behaviors which were once rarified (Holt, 1997, p. 104; Peterson & Kern, 1996, p. 904). As Berger and Ward (2010) illustrate, those high in cultural capital often use subtle signals to convey more sophisticated aesthetic dispositions, rather than clear objectified markers. Moreover, people with high levels of cultural capital can co-opt working-class aesthetics in an attempt at distinguishing themselves from the emulation of the middle classes, which illustrates the non-linearity of Bourdieu’s cultural theory and again illustrates the importance of embodied practice over objectified taste (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 282; Trigg, 2001). From this, and various empirical studies which have bolstered the validity of Bourdieu’s theory of cultural consumption in an American context (e.g. Freidland et al, 2007; Holt, 1998), we should expect some material objects and even practices to diffuse across class lines to some extent. Yet this does not preclude more substantive orientations and the calculus behind them from varying across differing levels and compositions of capital.

Bourdieu’s theory is useful in analyzing patterns of environmentally conscious consumption (i.e. ‘green’ material goods: products which are manufactured to contribute to environmental sustainability to some extent). Using this formulation, necessity and
utility (i.e. conventional products) stand in contrast to environmentally friendly goods, which are not merely used for their own sake, but in aid of a larger goal, be it ecological, political, health-related, etc. Moreover, general “material paucity” (Holt, 1998, p. 11) and asceticism is also theorized to be aesthetically desirable to those with high cultural capital, as they experience markedly different relationships with material necessity than those with lower overall levels of capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Consumption itself is an increasingly important vector of reflexive identity-making, which signifies a manifestation of politics and lifestyle pursuits- e.g. buying X or Y product to express individualized political goals or dispositions (Connolly & Prothero, 2008; Giddens, 1991; Guber, 2003, p. 154; Lewis, 2008; Schor, 1998; Shah et al, 2007; Soron, 2010; Trentmann, 2007). Starr illustrates using 2006 GSS data that although positive attitudes toward green or ‘ethical’ products cut across nearly all demographics except sex (with women more likely to express an affinity for them), self-reported practices are significantly and positively associated with income, and to a far greater extent, education (2009, p. 923). Onyango et al found that education and political liberalism were significant in determining organic food purchasing in the U.S. (2007, p. 407), while European research (Brécard et al 2009) examining ‘eco-friendly’ fish consumers similarly found that they were better educated and more affluent than the general population. Nevertheless, studies examining ‘green’ consumption often ignore the role of social class or structure and focus on values (Karp, 1996), identity-making projects (Soron, 2010), affect (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2008), and psycho-social dispositions (Hobson, 2006).
Other research has also focused on these factors rather than socio-demographic and cultural variables. For instance, Tadajewski and Wagner-Tsukamoto (2006) interviewed consumers in the UK and Germany, and concluded that cognitive limitations preclude a complex engagement with and embrace of green consumption practices. In this model, consumers are bricoleurs whose practices hinge upon cognitive, but not structural, limitations. Shaw et al (2005) used focus groups consisting of self-described ‘ethical’ consumers to examine underlying motivations, and stressed values (e.g. benevolence) as integral to this process. Rather than focusing on attitudes or cognition, Brown (2010) sees conscious consumption as a social ritual mediated by emotions and community formation around specific brands. In their study of young Finnish respondents who identify as green consumers, Autio et al do mention the economic and knowledge constraints which may preclude some from engagement (2009, p. 46), yet ultimately frame the issue as a larger-scale collective action problem. Evans and Abrahamse (2009) similarly argue that individualized attempts at consuming sustainably are futile in the absence of structural changes based on their field work examining sustainability advocates in the UK, echoing Moisander (2007), among others. While these approaches contribute to our understanding of the issues involved in consuming ‘sustainably’—particularly collective action dilemmas and the need for structural changes—I argue that neglecting socio-demographics (particularly social class) in discussions of environmental behaviors and structural constraint is a common weakness in the literature.

Qualitative studies have engaged with issues of class and constraint, though sometimes indirectly. In their study of UK consumers and their willingness to purchase
local foods, Chambers et al (2007) found that time, money, and general lifestyle inconsistencies were among the greatest barriers for respondents. Young et al conducted interviews with self-described green consumers in the UK and found financial cost, time for research, and knowledge were among the greatest constraints (2009, p. 29). Guthman (2003) traces the historical transformation of organic food from a countercultural symbol of resistance to ‘yuppie chow.’ Similarly, Johnston (2008) and Johnston and Baumann (2009, p. 149) situate organic and local foods within an elite, refined aesthetic, problematizing its connection with the moral connotations of ‘conscious’ consumer behavior. In her examination of a sustainability advocacy group in the UK, Hobson points out that many respondents reject calls for curtailing consumption practices in light of the economic difficulties they have to endure in their day-to-day lives (2002, p. 111). Strandbu and Krange (2003, p. 190) found that working-class Swedish youth framed environmental issues in more immediate, materialist, and practical terms than their middle-class counterparts, rejecting an abstract ‘romantic gaze’ of nature. And in their U.S. research on Hummer drivers, Leudicke, Thompson, and Giesler illustrate how consumption objects are infused with narratives of morality that are consistent with the signaling of status distinctions and the consequent social antagonism (e.g. ‘the profane Hummer driver,’ or the ‘pious Prius owner’) (2009, p. 1030).

Though the more affluent or educated may consume ‘green’ products with greater frequency than others, this does not necessarily make their lifestyles more sustainable when considering overall energy use and patterns of material consumption (see: Hurth, 2010; Gatersleben et al, 2002). Nevertheless, the symbolic importance of green
consumption patterns related to both objects and practices are a necessary component of examining the ‘classed’ dimensions of attitudes toward sustainability, climate change, and behaviors related to that orientation.

Methods

This study is based on interviews that examined attitudes toward the environment, climate change, and social class. The data was collected over a three month period with 42 Boston-area respondents in the summer of 2010. Respondents were solicited through classified advertisements on craigslist, a popular web-based classifieds service (specifically the ‘volunteers’ section), and given ten dollars in compensation for their time. Interviews lasted from approximately 30 minutes to an hour, were digitally recorded, transcribed, and the results analyzed using the atlas.ti software package. The interviews were semi-structured; the researcher had a core set of questions, while follow-ups varied based on the initial responses of the participants. Data on the participant’s age, sex, ethnicity, income, occupation, educational attainment, parents’ educational attainment and occupations, political affiliation, and home and car ownership status were also collected. From the socio-economic (income, home ownership, and car ownership) and cultural (education, parent’s education) variables, subscales were generated to measure the levels of economic and cultural capital possessed by the respondents.¹ LEC

¹ For determining whether individuals were assigned to LEC/HEC or LCC/HCC categories, points were allocated based on the respondent’s income and home/car ownership status (for economic capital) and total years of tertiary education between the participants and their parents (for cultural capital). If the respondent scored above an 18 in the economic calculation—roughly equivalent to a homeowner who
respondents had an average of $18,000 in self-reported income, compared to $87,000 for the HEC category. LCC respondents reported an average of 4.19 years of tertiary education between them and their parents, while the HCC averaged 15.2 (see Appendix B for detailed descriptive figures for all categories).

The sample consists of 42 adults living in the Boston metro region, with all respondents living within the I-95 belt surrounding the city proper. Participants overall earned an average of $35,881 annually, while the median reported income was $22,500. The presence of a small number of students who reported no earnings, as well as those unemployed in a strong recession, reduced both the mean and median income figures. The median age was 42 years, compared to 36.8 nationally. There were 15 males and 27 females. There were 28 respondents who identified as white, 7 as black or African American, 3 as Asian, and 4 as Hispanic. All of the respondents have at least a high school education, with 16 possessing a bachelor’s, 9 a master’s (including M.B.A.’s), and 2 with J.D.’s. There were no participants with either medical or doctoral degrees (though some respondents did have parents that held these degrees). Eleven of the participants were registered as Independent, 22 as Democrat, and 9 unregistered. Massachusetts is characterized by high levels of Independent enrollment and low levels of Republican enrollment, so while the lack of Republicans is not unexpected, the sample does skew.
Democratic. Eight of the respondents owned homes, 4 were paying off mortgages, and 30 were renters. All names used in this analysis are pseudonyms.

Data and Analysis

Bourdieu’s theory of cultural consumption is based on the notion of a dominant class which is economically insulated from material necessity and culturally inclined to symbolic aesthetics. For those with a higher aggregate level of capital, these “tastes of freedom” are expressed in an antagonistic relationship with the vulgar “tastes of necessity” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 56). While the literature suggests that economic status is related to concern for climate change, the cultural dimension complicates the relationship. That is to say, two respondents with the same level of economic capital but differing levels of cultural capital would theoretically be expected to harbor different views based on their respective capital composition. We begin by exploring respondent’s articulations of ‘sustainable’ behaviors and material goods against the backdrop of climate change, focusing on how the composition of capital (e.g. high cultural but low economic capital) shapes the conceptualization. While I often find similar consumption habits and lifestyle practices across the class spectrum, these were often undertaken with different rationales, strategies, and outlooks.

Means and Ends: Utility, Necessity, and the Aesthetics of Asceticism

---

See the Secretary of State of Massachusetts’ compilation of enrollment statistics: <www.mass.gov/Ador/docs/dls/mdmstuf/socioeconomic/voterregistration.xls> (Retrieved 20 April, 2011).
Many of the respondents with low levels of both economic and cultural capital (LEC/LCC) conceptualized what they saw as environmentally friendly behaviors in terms of frugality and necessity. These respondents connected climate change with environmental problems more broadly, and viewed their actions in the context of a more general pro-environmental attitude. Mostly, these were simpler, ‘baseline’ environmental behaviors, such as recycling and turning off lights when not in use. Elias, a 44 year old unemployed clerk, valorizes those who aim to “mak(e) the world a safer place,” though stresses the difficulty of various behaviors with a limited income:

I think they (people who act or buy ‘sustainably’) got money…‘cause it costs money to be saving the environment and if you’re poor you can’t buy a hybrid and you can’t buy organic foods. So the first impression I get if this guy is recycling and buying a hybrid and going to Whole Foods (is) he can do that, because he has money. I mean…it would be nice to have a hybrid, who doesn’t want to get 60mpg? You can drive around all day.

Abby, a 30 year old finishing her degree in Boston (LEC/LCC), claimed that in her home town of East Los Angeles—a relatively poor and working-class section of L.A.—there is less of a willingness to tackle environmental issues by changing lifestyles, given the immediacy of poverty and material necessity:

And so there is less of a willingness…the only time I think that changes is I heard one time of a family that sent their kid to MIT based on just recycling. Like…yeah. It was like this big thing in L.A., how this family had recycled, they had this whole—that was their full time job. But that wasn’t out of…that was out of necessity, not because they’re concerned with the environment I think. So…if you see people doing a lot of recycling at home and whatnot that- occupy the lower classes, it’s because they need the money.

LEC/LCC respondents did sometimes change consumption strategies in reacting to what they perceived as environmental detriments of certain products, but within their
economic strictures. While unable to make a wholesale revision of their consumption practices in response to environmental issues, they do selectively engage in ‘conscious’ consumer activity when the price is comparable to conventional products. Dan, a 72 year old retired hotel worker, claimed he was concerned about environmental problems and willing to purchase products with that in mind, but only so long as they were comparable in price to more conventional alternatives:

I bought some detergent the other day and it was marked down two dollars, plus I had a coupon for another buck—so I wound up saving three bucks. Because it started out pretty high, at $9.99, so I only paid $6.99, which in terms of value, it was rated the same with everything else, pretty much. And then you know you’re getting really good…a good product, you know, and everything. They’re using biodegradable—using—and they’re all about that stuff, biodegradable, no phosphates, no this or no that. So I guess I am pretty concerned about you know…will I buy…as long as I can afford to, you know?

Laura (LEC/LCC), a 21 year old student finishing her degree and working for an ad agency in Boston, talked about strategies of ‘green’ consumption that hinged on lessening waste and saving money through actions like general conservation rather than buying ‘conscious’ products themselves:

You know, you just have a bottle that you use, a mug that you use, not every time, obviously…but I know for example most of my friends, they’ll just buy, if they have a car they’ll buy like three packs of those huge water bottle things instead of just buying a water bottle and a brita or something. It’ll save them money, save them waste, and it’s probably annoying to have to clean out your water bottle, but why not?

Others similarly focused on relatively modest practices that they viewed as both environmentally friendly and economically prudent. Samuel (LEC/LCC), a 59 year old unemployed former retailer, affirms the importance of environmental problems, but
connects them with what he perceives as more foundational macro-level economic conditions:

S: If we can lower our electric bills, that’ll give us more money to pay for, oh, let’s say, the leap. Or when the gas price goes up at Labor Day, which it will. Or the price of oil goes up this winter, which it will because uh oh we didn’t get any oil stored, we were making gasoline that nobody bought.
I: So you think it just makes good…
S: Good sense. Good economic sense, yeah.

Other LEC/LCC respondents also frame sustainable practices in terms of necessity, but rather than selectively adopting these consumption behaviors or lifestyle changes, they reject them based on their perception that they are decoupled from immediate material conditions, or are merely symbolic overtures that are devoid of substance. While at times these feelings were exacerbated by contentions that the concern over climate change is exaggerated, the disjunction between the issue and material necessity was often highlighted regardless. Rhonda, a 45 year old who is self-employed and thinks warnings over global warming are overstated, sees organic food as symbolizing a signaling of social status:

I think it’s a status thing. Like I said, when I walk into Whole Foods (WF), I say to myself ‘I feel great in here, look at these people—the type of people, more sophisticated, classy people.’ So I think sometimes…I don’t know what percentage, but I tend to think that a lot of people probably see it as a sophisticated status symbol. ‘Oh, I can shop in here.’ You can see the WF bag, see Trader Joe’s—OK, that person is in a certain category.

Ron, a 40 year old plumber who also has an exterminator’s license (LEC/LCC), contends that most of the ‘green’ products he encounters both on the job and in his personal life are devoid of any utility. While he expresses amusement rather than scorn or criticism, he sees these actions as well-intentioned but ultimately ineffective:
Ron: Like the hybrids…oh yeah (laughs). Yeah, I see it. And although I may get…have a little chuckle or something over something, I don’t think bad of them. I mean if you’re going to try to do something to save the planet or to do the best you can, god bless you. I don’t have bad opinions of them, but sometimes I must admit I get a chuckle and be like, well that doesn’t work, but god bless you, go ahead and try.

Interviewer: Like what?
R: I don’t know, like somebody that’s telling me they’re spraying their lawn with rosemary to help their grass be green…I know that’s not going to work. But you know I don’t fault them for trying, because if you’re going to make an effort to do something good, I’m not going to be negative about it. But I have to admit I get a little chuckle.

In cultural terms, this reflects the different views of theory and practice which often characterizes the professional and working classes—“practical, partial, tacit know-how” contrasted with “theoretical, systematic, explicit knowledge,” respectively (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 387). While other social agents feel these strategies (e.g. buying hybrids to mitigate environmental problems on an individual level) are presumably ‘doing something,’ Ron instead sees only ‘useless’ action devoid of practical efficacy.

Similarly, HEC/LCC respondents often stress considerations of practicality and price in buying green goods, commensurate with their capital composition. Richard, a 48 year old accountant (HEC/LCC), expresses less of a financial constraint in terms of consuming, yet frames his consumption patterns in practical health concerns:

I will look, I will try and buy organic…we have a farmer’s market up here on Monday… I’ll try and you know whether it’s organic…so I guess more buying locally, number one. And then if it’s organic, fine. I mean both Stop and Shop and Whole Food. I was there the other day near Mass General seeing a client, and WF is, you know, is supposed to be 100% organic, so just trying to you know…and the quality of the food is good. So I guess for food products, um…. not saying that cost is no issue, but I think it’s easier from a food perspective, because you’re eating the pesticides and things like that.
Ruth, a 55 year old lawyer working for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (HEC/LCC), also stresses practicality when discussing ‘green’ consumer goods, but highlights the efficacy of the product compared to conventional counterparts rather than personal health:

Well…I certainly see them picking out the (green) goods in the supermarket…I don’t talk to them about it, but I’m sure there’s a reason that they’re doing it and they probably think they’re doing a good thing. And maybe they are…so I don’t know. But I don’t think all of the stuff I’ve found so far is great (laughs). I haven’t tried…I haven’t driven a hybrid vehicle…I feel awful saying if I were to do that in the future, it might be more to save on the expensive gasoline which keeps going up and up, as opposed to thinking it was environmentally great.

Yvette, a 42 year old legal analyst (HEC/LCC), reports that she is an avid recycler, uses canvas bags at the grocer, avoids driving whenever possible, and owns a hybrid, but stops short at conceding energy use in the end of curbing her effect on the environment:

So you know, we try to do things like that as much as possible, but am I not going to turn off my air conditioning? No. I mean, we keep the house pretty cold in the winter, but it’s…not as much about preserving the environment as it is to not pay the cost of heating oil. You know it’s a combination of things…but if heating oil was really cheap, we’d probably turn the heat up a little more. So we try to do what we can, but we’re accustomed to an American lifestyle.

HEC respondents do not stress material necessity as many LEC respondents do, yet still retain a materialist orientation with respect to goods and practices based on their capital composition. That is, though differences in economic capital reflect less constraint in consuming certain products and greater insulation from necessity, LCC respondents are still united in a materialist orientation which prides efficacy, practicality, and frugality in approaching environmental problems, even if not borne out of necessity.
Rather than frame their response to climate change and environmental problems in terms of necessity and utility—though many do contend that they have economic barriers to consuming green goods specifically—those with LEC/HCC compositions often stress lowering overall rates of consumption and voluntary simplicity. In this sense, the approach of those with high levels of cultural capital is more abstract than the more immediate and convenient (e.g. recycling) reported behaviors of those with low economic and cultural capital. Britney, a 20 year old student whose parents are scientists that are “into renewable energy” (LEC/HCC), is sanguine about the prospect of technological solutions yet still believes curbing consumption is necessary in combating the problem:

I think people definitely can consume less but of course science…they’ve advanced this far, and I feel like science can definitely help us in the future in terms of renewable energy. You know they come out with…I’m sure science will help, but people have to start now by consuming less, not letting the problem (get) worse.

Other respondents similarly see the problem as material consumption itself, and dismiss the relevance of many ‘green’ products because of their place within larger patterns of American consumption. Charlene (LEC/HCC), a 21 year old student finishing a degree in Boston, expresses her inability to buy organic food consistently due to the price, but sees the root of combating climate change more abstractly:

Well…I ride my bike everywhere. And like I try to buy organic food, but sometimes I just don’t have the money. But…those products I’d say like that label that sells with green and eco-friendly, I think it’s sort of hypocritical, because I think…like one of the problems that’s leading to global warming is also of consumerism, materialism. So, like if you’re…even if you’re buying something that says it’s eco-friendly, you might be better off not buying anything.
Transportation and food choices are a large part of how LEC/HCC respondents conceptualize their behavior related to the issue of climate change, which contrasts with most of the LEC/LCC respondents, who either do not connect these issues with the environment, or if they do, do not consistently engage with them because of economic reasons. Brook, a 25 year old former account coordinator for a private equity firm who lives in New York (LEC/HCC), emphasizes how her neighborhood embraces an environmentally conscious ethos with respect to food and transport:

Brook: Like, we love going to the farmer’s market, we love buying local produce, trying to—they have a compost thing at the farmer’s market. We definitely ride our bikes…I just got a bike, so I’m excited to ride. And, um, yeah…I mean we take the train everywhere, so we’re not doing, you know, jumping in our cars. Definitely the markets in our area are all mostly organic. Trader Joe’s is a huge deal. Um, and I mean every, honestly, like every single new market that’s come in has organic. And all…a lot of the restaurants have local food. So…it’s a really big deal in Brooklyn.

Interviewer: So what are the impressions of those people, does anything jump out?
Brook: I mean people call us hipsters. I would not classify myself as a hipster, but they do. I don’t know, I enjoy it. I like it. I like…you know, taking whatever I can do to help better the planet, yeah.

In contrast, though HEC/HCC respondents also reported that they undertook many behaviors they saw as environmentally beneficial and expressed a fairly sophisticated and abstract view of the problem, they stressed market-based solutions and conspicuously left unmentioned declines in consumption or voluntarily changing transportation behaviors. Sarah, a 28 year old analyst for a major investment firm (HEC/HCC), sees mechanisms like tax incentives as most effective in changing behaviors:

If you give people tax credits if they buy a hybrid…I think people care way more about money than about the environment. The same thing…the recession…so if
you basically have to bribe people to treat the environment, well, then that’s the way you get them to do it and that’s what you gotta do.

Amelia, a 49 year old saleswoman (HEC/HCC), also sees practical incentives and rebates as the key to ameliorating the effects of climate change and environmental issues:

I looked at buying a hybrid…but I did the calculations of how much I would save on gas, and it still cost much more to buy a hybrid. I think the people that buy hybrids are more interested in saving the world than others…it’s not just a matter of saving gas. Household appliances—rebates help. The energy saver rebate, Obama just had a program in place, it’s probably still going if you bought certain windows or certain appliances, dishwashers—they had to be validated for the energy saver.

Donna, a 47 year old engineer (HEC/HCC), similarly views climate change as a serious problem, and engages in a range of efforts from recycling, general household conservation, to walking whenever possible, but associates ‘hard-line’ calls for wholesale social/structural change as extremist:

I mean I try and do what I can, you know the whole ozone layer…I you know, I try…I try not to idle my car and all the fumes, I try to keep the air less polluted with all sorts of chemicals and stuff. So I try to do my part. I try to walk whenever I can, ‘cause I think that’s all affecting nature and the weather that we’re having, but the people that are really worried about it…I got enough worries. I mean I…I can’t control it. I can do my little part, and that’s all I can really do. So…I wouldn’t say I…I associate with extremists like that.

Though many of the respondents described similar lifestyle practices, how they were conceptualized and connected with environmental issues were largely contingent on both the aggregate level and compositional nature of their capital. LEC/LCC respondents described their own behaviors and their perception of others’ in terms of utility and necessity, often connecting these relatively modest actions with saving money and producing tangible benefits. Those LEC/HCC respondents often described material barriers to further engagement with some dimensions of ‘living sustainably,’ yet had a
more abstract view of the problem and how they related to it, while advocating for more structural lifestyle changes such as large-scale social shifts away from consumerism and biking rather than driving. When LEC/LCC respondents did mention not owning cars, for example, it was almost never connected to the environment, but rather framed as an economic constraint or outright inconvenience (e.g. Elias: “…I just got a car and everything’s more convenient and more accessible…it’s a whole different world with the car; before I was taking the T (MBTA), so I wasn’t too happy about it”). HEC/LCC respondents often engaged in behaviors related to climate change and other environmental issues, yet stressed practicality and approached the problem in more materialist terms. HEC/HCC respondents engaged with a range of behaviors they saw as environmentally conscious and often did express goals of frugality, but did not go so far as to question the underpinnings of the American economic system and mostly stressed market-based approaches to mitigation, consistent with both their place in the class structure and their related capital composition.

**Constraining Concern: Material Security and Educational Capital**

**LEC**

While scholars usually stress psycho-social variables in describing attitudes on climate change, the respondents in this study felt social class was a powerful influence regardless of their own class background when directly asked, “Do you think there is a difference in how people view climate change based on their class position?” Nevertheless, patterns emerged when considering whether respondents thought material (economic) or cultural (education and knowledge) constraints affected other’s opinions
regarding the subject. For instance, virtually every one of the respondents who claimed that material (but not cultural) constraints precluded many people from thinking or worrying about climate change had either low economic and cultural capital (11 out of 16), or low economic and high cultural capital (5 out of 16). Those who thought education and cultural constraints precluded thinking or worrying about the issue were less numerous overall, and more likely to possess high levels of cultural capital. The remainder of the sample contended that both material and cultural constraint play a role. Lamont (1992) theorizes that national context influences whether economic or cultural boundaries are drawn between individuals (i.e. the French putting more weight on cultural boundaries because they are given more worth in that national context than economic capital). These findings suggest the possibility that the composition of capital of the individual may also condition the drawing of symbolic boundaries, in this case with regard to who is and is not perceived to be concerned about climate change. Finally, only three of the 42 respondents thought concern about climate change cut across boundaries of social class, with one offering an answer too vague to categorize. Indeed, many respondents had a view of climate change as a postmaterialist issue. Betty (LEC/HCC), an intern working at a children’s hospital, argues that it is superseded by more immediate material concerns:

I don’t think that somebody who…I mean I don’t know, but I probably think that somebody whose main concern is what are we gonna eat, I don’t think they’re going to be thinking of what we’re going to eat that’s green, or what are we going to do to save the environment…they’re thinking how am I going to feed my family? So I think if people- are of limited resources, I don’t think that’s going to be a concern in their mind.
Tim, a 51 year old unemployed former government worker (LEC/LCC), goes a step further and contends that the perceived affluence of those “pushing” behavioral changes results in a backlash, especially in the context of the economic downturn:

I think people, like, don’t agree with it because a lot of the people are…money and celebrities are pushing it. I think it is an issue, definitely. You know, that people are struggling just to get by and you’ve got people, like, with a lot of money pushing organics, food, and stuff…I think it’s kind of hypocritical.

Jessica (LEC/LCC) contends that buying power and consumption preferences motivate some to conceive of climate change as a pressing issue:

I think…it seems to be more of an upper class thing. Who’s really into it. Probably because they have more money to spend on the…the changes that you need to make in your life to buy those expensive products. And like buy different cars, probably can afford it more. Maybe that’s why they believe it.

Abby (LEC/LCC) sees the same material constraint, and also identifies a connection between changing consumption patterns and celebrity. When asked if social class shapes how people view the issue, she answered:

I think possibly, ‘cause you see, like a lot of celebrities and stuff like that buying hybrid cars, or doing something. And I think it’s partially for image and partially because they have the money to…invest in all that. It sounds great, but I’m sure the people that can’t afford stuff like that are less inclined to be a proponent.

Others see both economic and cultural position as intertwined in how people perceive the issue. For instance, Sylvia (LEC/LCC), a 33 year old administrative assistant, sees socio-economic class as a precursor to gaining the cultural faculties needed to comprehend and respond to issues like CC:

I think it…class has something to do with it, because the higher class you are, the more cultured you tend to be, and the more cultured the more likely you are to help contribute to keeping the environment…like, kind of a little more knowledge, a little bit more accessibility toward what can really help. And I think
in the lower classes, they don’t really have that same type of cultural knowledge, and so don’t see as much of a difference, or see how they can change something.

**HCC**

Sophia, a 51 year old foreign currency trader (HEC/HCC), views both income and education as determinants of how people react to the issue, specifically in terms of consumption behaviors, and surmises that because she often finds ‘green’ products unaffordable, those less fortunate would find them even more unattainable:

If I hesitate at buying certain products because I think they’re more expensive than the regular generic products, then I would have to think that people in a different economic bracket than me would be even less inclined than myself to buy green products because of cost. And I think education…I don’t know what they’re teaching in schools now. I’m 51, so this wasn’t even on the radar when I was growing up. Maybe they’re making children more aware…I would hope so…of the environment. But I would also think it varies by education.

Sarah (HEC/HCC) sees education and political liberalism as leading to the kinds of behaviors associated with concern over issues like sustainability and CC, consistent with a ‘new class’ narrative of environmentalism:

I think it’s the hippie-ish granola type of people that are usually…their jobs are usually working in the public sector and non-profits, it’s the…it’s the type of work they go into that gives them the lower to middle class salary which is where they are. Whereas people like ibankers, they couldn’t care less.

Though the respondents who emphasized the material rather than cultural constraints of ‘acting sustainably’ in relation to climate change were universally of more modest economic (but not necessarily cultural) means, there was an across-the-board tendency for them to affirm the importance of social class in shaping how people approach the issue. Still, the overall emphasis on material boundaries and constraint among the sample as a whole suggests its more significant salience in contrast to cultural
faculties in an American context (Lamont 1992, p. 105), perhaps exacerbated by the recent economic crisis.

**People Like That: Fashion, Distinction, and Symbolic Distance**

**LCC**

Respondents also interpret the behaviors of others based on their capital composition, and ascribe an avant-garde orientation to those who are especially concerned about climate change and environmental issues. LEC/LCC respondents were far more likely to have a critical interpretation of those who were conscious or engaged in the issue, seeing it as a fashionable set of attitudes which are wielded in the end of distinguishing one’s self, or signaling “high status exclusiveness” (Lamont, 1992, p. 108). Frank, a 33 year old research assistant (LEC/LCC), states that those who ‘care a lot about the issue of climate change’ are following a trend:

> I get the impression it’s part fashion. And I get the impression there’s a little distortion in the way people go about getting the information they have. I think this is true for a lot of people. For a lot of issues.

Others also characterize the climate movement as preoccupied with appearing fashionable. Jessica, a 20 year old student (LEC/LCC) who characterizes those concerned about climate change as part of a “clique,” sees the proliferation of ‘green’ products as indicative of this:

> Um, I think it’s sort of a fad. That people are catching onto. Like, the whole ‘green’ thing. And I don’t know…I mean, some if it is good, but I think (there) are too much products out there that are saying they are green friendly, and they even have green buildings now. And I think it’s a fad.
Other LEC/LCC respondents had similar reactions, but added that these orientations and behaviors were merely a cynical overture for social status and distinction:

Rhonda: You know…I haven’t really come into contact with people that I feel are genuinely concerned. I think they’re following a fad. Say for example, the just, the reusable bags. You know, it’s what everybody has…it’s like a trend, a cool thing to shop at Whole Foods, health foods. It’s a very small percentage I’ve come across…it’s like a fad, a cool thing to do. But I don’t think at heart they’re true environmentalists. Not that I’ve come across.

**HCC**

Some LEC/HCC respondents also conveyed their feeling that others who concerned themselves about climate change were following a fashion of sorts, yet they framed this as mostly material rather than symbolic distinction, and were less critical overall. Lindsey, a 24 year old public school teacher (LEC/HCC), implies that however stylish, there are substantial economic barriers to consuming with environmental issues in mind:

You see…like a lot of celebrities and stuff like that buying hybrid cars, or doing something, and I think it’s partially for image and partially because they have the money to invest in all that.

Britney (LEC/HCC) expressed a similar perception:

I feel like it’s getting more in fashion to get…to be environmentally friendly. Like if you see celebrities, they talk about buying new hybrid cars, they spend a lot of money on a luxury car and emphasize it’s a hybrid. I feel like it’s more about a trendy thing now to be environmentally conscious.

Consistent with the ‘fashion’ narrative, many in the sample saw concern about climate change as a marker of economic or cultural capital (or both). In contrast, respondents saw those who are dismissive of climate change as either lacking education,
scientifically ignorant, ideologically conservative, generally resistant to change, or under the sway of media outlets who have portrayed the scientific consensus regarding the issue as debatable. Still, most respondents, especially those with high levels of cultural capital, were unwilling to offer their take on ‘deniers’ because they rarely if ever encountered them in their daily life. James (LEC/HCC), a 26 year old healthcare worker, goes even further, actively avoiding discussing the subject because of its sometimes controversial implications:

But if I’m on the T or something—if I strike up a random stranger in conversation… but I’m very careful now what I say and how I say it. There are certain topics that I tend to see as potential triggers… you know. ‘Cause the cuckoos or teabaggers—you can’t see them—you can’t tell right away. They’re very well disguised. They seem like very reasonable people. It’s just scary… you just don’t know where they’re lurking (laughing).

Shirley (LEC/HCC), a 20 year old student, rarely talks about climate change or sustainability with others, but does meet some people that are trying to lessen their “environmental footprint” in the workplace. She describes most of these people as “white, more well-educated, people who, you know, would be concerned about these things.” As for those who dismiss it as a problem, she says she does not encounter them because they are not part of the college setting she spends most of her time in:

I don’t meet so many people like that in… you know, just because of the settings I’m in. When you’re in college most people are environmentally aware more and apt to open their minds to different things, and you know ‘being green’ is a big trend kind of thing. So I don’t interact with people of that opinion very often. But I’ve definitely heard about them, and heard pieces on the news or seen opinions online and stuff like that.
Others also claimed their social circles precluded them from meeting ‘deniers.’ Donna (HEC/HCC) contends that most of the people she comes into contact with are either concerned or ambivalent:

No. No…they’re either neutral or you know they’re more concerned. No…and I think…I personally think that comes from being uneducated and I don’t know if…alright, snobbish, but I pretty much hang out with people that are educated.

Though respondents were willing to offer characterizations of those who were dismissive or skeptical of climate change, the HCC’s almost never engaged with them socially or conversationally. Again, those high in cultural capital often framed the boundary between themselves and those who were distanced from the issue in cultural terms, without mentioning socioeconomic differences (i.e. ‘uneducated’ or ‘ignorant). LEC/LCC respondents were more likely to develop impressions that those who cared about climate change were following fashion, and at times had a cynical view of them, sometimes exacerbated by their own skepticism about the issue. The vast majority of respondents across all social class backgrounds claimed to never or only rarely talk to others about climate change, often characterizing it as a ‘backburner’ problem that was not salient enough to converse or debate about. In this case, the results indicate both that social capital (e.g. the individual social networks of the respondents) at least for this modest sample is characterized by a certain insularity based on cleavages of economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 122), and that climate change does not register as a conversation topic more generally.

**Conclusion**

31
In this paper, I examined data on perceptions and behaviors related to climate change using the cultural theory of Bourdieu. Many key findings emerged which were broadly consistent with the theory. For one, HEC respondents generally took a more materialist approach in their conceptualization and reaction to climate change regardless of their level of cultural capital. LEC respondents also took a materialist approach, but predicated this on necessity rather than parsimony. They were also more likely to express antagonistic views of those who cared about the issue based on their belief that issues like climate change are either less important in light of immediate needs, or that responding to it requires greater expenditures than they could realistically afford. Moreover, status distinctions were drawn such that LCC respondents often viewed those who cared about the issue as seeking a fashionable way to convey their social position. HCC respondents were more likely to view those who denied or ignored the issue as ignorant or uneducated.

These findings suggest that social class may play a more important role in the formation of attitudes related to environmental problems—particularly complex global issues like climate change—than much of the research on the topic would suggest. Clearly the vast majority of respondents cared to some extent about climate change even if they thought it was partially exaggerated (none of the respondents denied it was occurring outright). Nevertheless, social distinctions, often involving cultural and economic differences, seem to affect their own behaviors, their purported solutions (i.e. buying less vs. tax incentives; recycling vs. biking), and their perception of others in relation to climate change and sustainability. Theorists often describe the muted response
to these issues as psychological or cognitive, but these findings suggest the possibility that they are also culturally fraught and contested on the grounds of structural differences, and possess subtle symbolic meanings which convey different things to different groups of people. The class antagonisms Bourdieu describes and which are illustrated by many of the respondents in this analysis—the poorer and less educated seeing environmental concerns as “luxury items” (Taylor, 1989, p. 182)—suggest how important these distinctions may be in coming to a common, collective consensus to act. The potential for a class-contingent variegation how people understand and react to these issues and even social antagonism based on these boundaries suggests that we be fully aware of the material and cultural constraints—both real and perceived—in affirming climate change as one of the greatest social and environmental problems of our time.
References


# Appendix A

## Detailed data for all participants (N = 42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Car</th>
<th>Party Design.</th>
<th>EC</th>
<th>CC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>45000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>30000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elias</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>60000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>100000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>40000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>25000</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>90000</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>42000</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>50000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlene</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvette</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>150000</td>
<td>J.D.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britney</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derek</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brook</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>50000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>29000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>100000</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>40000</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>29000</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>18000</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>29000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>40000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>40000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>50000</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophia</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>100000</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>85000</td>
<td>J.D.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>35000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>HCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>39000</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Reclassification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>LCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>30000</td>
<td>H.S.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>LEC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Home/Car = Homeowners (M = mortgage)/car owners. Party designation is political party affiliation (I = Independent; D = Democrat; R = Republican; N = Not registered). Economic capital categories (LEC/HEC) were determined using a point system, with those scoring above 18 being assigned to the HEC category, and those scoring lower assigned to the LEC category. Income intervals were given the following points (the points are not allocated in linear fashion, to distinguish higher income earners): $0 – 14999 = +2; 15000 – 29999 = +4; 30000 – 44999 = +6; 45000 – 59999 = +9; 60000 – 74999 = +12; 75000 – 89999 = +15; 90000 – 104999 = +19; 105 – 119999 = 24; 120000+ = +30. Homeowners were given +12 points, while those with mortgages were given +6. Car owners were given +2. Cultural capital was determined by years of tertiary education between respondents and their parents (with 12 or more being categorized as HCC). This was determined assuming B.A.’s constituted 4 years, M.A./M.B.A.’s 6, J.D.’s 7, and Ph.D.’s/M.D.’s 9. Students in their final two years of undergraduate education were coded as holding a B.A.’s.
Appendix B

*Descriptive Statistics for EC/CC Categories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LCC (N = 27)</th>
<th>HCC (N = 15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average # Years of Tertiary Education</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>15.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEC (N = 33)</td>
<td></td>
<td>HEC (N = 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Self-Reported Income (2010, U.S.D.)</td>
<td>$18,000</td>
<td>$87,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Self-Reported Income (2010, U.S.D.)</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeowners and Mortgage Holders</td>
<td>4 (12.1%)</td>
<td>8 (89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Owners</td>
<td>12 (36.3%)</td>
<td>8 (89%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>