

A Study of Mob Mentality, Herd Mentality, or Groupthink

Why Are so Many Otherwise Intelligent People so Eager to Blindly Follow the Rantings of Climate Change Hysteria

The Psychology of Mob Mentality or Groupthink

Most sensible people who are not financially dependent upon the climate change gravy train are sensible enough to fully realise man cannot control climate and extreme weather. Yet, incredible though it may seem, there still remain some, who are otherwise intelligent, who still believe the claims of reversible impending human caused climatic destruction of the entire globe. How can this be? What drives people to cling to such strange and extreme beliefs?

The overwhelming need for many individuals to blindly and unquestioningly follow others is commonly known as 'mob mentality', 'herd mentality' or 'groupthink' ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#)). Groupthink has been described thus ([6](#)):

"It is the mode of thinking that happens when the desire for harmony in a decision-making group overrides a realistic appraisal of alternatives. Group members try to minimize conflict and reach a consensus decision without critical evaluation of alternative ideas or viewpoints."

Clearly, groupthink is a manifestation of consensus thinking and blind adherence to peer group pressure irrespective of the facts or consequences. Indeed, eight symptoms of groupthink have been established which highlight this abandonment of rational judgement ([8](#)):

1. *Illusion of invulnerability – Creates excessive optimism that encourages taking extreme risks.*
2. *Collective rationalization – Members discount warnings and do not reconsider their assumptions.*
3. *Belief in inherent morality – Members believe in the rightness of their cause and therefore ignore the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions.*
4. *Stereotyped views of out-groups – Negative views of "enemy" make effective responses to conflict seem unnecessary.*
5. *Direct pressure on dissenters – Members are under pressure not to express arguments against any of the group's views.*
6. *Self-censorship – Doubts and deviations from the perceived group consensus are not expressed.*
7. *Illusion of unanimity – The majority view and judgments are assumed to be unanimous.*
8. *Self-appointed 'mindguards' – Members protect the group and the leader from information that is problematic or contradictory to the group's cohesiveness, view, and/or decisions.*

The consensus nature of groupthink and the collective rigidity and irrationality of their attitudes may result in extreme measures to preserve the consensus, even to the point of attacking any who disagree and perceiving them to be enemies who must be silenced (7):

“Mob mentality is similar to groupthink and spiral of silence. Groupthink is a communication theory and term coined by social psychologist Irving Janis (1972). It occurs when a group makes faulty decisions because group pressures lead to a deterioration of "mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment" (p. 9). Groups affected by groupthink ignore alternatives and tend to take irrational actions that dehumanize other groups.....Its symptoms include the illusion of invulnerability. This illusion creates a belief in inherent morality and superiority and in the rightness of their cause. Members in a groupthink atmosphere ignore the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions; they hold a stereotyped views of out-groups, i.e. they hold a negative view of outsiders as the "enemy" make effective responses to conflict seem unnecessary. They put a direct pressure on dissenters and are put under pressure not to express arguments against any of the group's views. Members censor themselves, which is a major symptom of spiral of silence and those in the group, particularly the leader have created an illusion of unanimity. Each group has self-appointed gatekeepers, i.e., members who protect the group and the leader from information that is problematic or contradictory to the group's cohesiveness, view, and decisions.....Groups engaging in groupthink do not allow dissenting voices and are prone to fanatical and dangerous coercion methods.....A government practicing groupthink and the perpetuation of propaganda to control its citizens is demonstrated in communist countries such as [North Korea](#) (Cummings, 2009; Kim, Han, Shanahan, & Berdayes, 2004). The closed regime of Kim Jong Il censors and controls the state-run media and uses propaganda to suppress its citizens by not promoting free-thinking and questioning authority and an unwillingness to voice opposing opinions.”

Climate Change Hysteria and Groupthink

From the above, the connection between climate change hysteria and groupthink is blindingly obvious. This connection has been noted by Paul MacRae, who comments (9):

“But it’s baffling that alarmist climate scientists are so certain that additional carbon dioxide will produce a climate disaster, even though there is little empirical evidence to support this view, and much evidence against it, including a decade of non-warming. This dogmatism makes it clear, at least to those outside the alarmist climate paradigm, that something is very wrong with the state of “consensus” climate science. There are many possible reasons for this scientific blindness, including sheer financial and career self-interest: scientists who don’t accept the alarmist paradigm will lose research grants and career doors will be closed to them. But one psychological diagnosis fits alarmist climate science like a glove: groupthink. With groupthink, we get the best explanation of “how can many, many respected, competitive, independent science folks be so wrong.....It’s obvious that alarmist climate science—as explicitly and extensively revealed in the Climatic Research Unit’s “Climategate” emails—shares all of these defects of groupthink, including a huge emphasis on maintaining consensus, a sense that because they are saving the world, alarmist climate scientists are beyond the normal moral constraints of scientific honesty (“overestimation of the group’s power and morality”), and vilification of those (“deniers”) who don’t share the consensus.....Climate scientists

who dare to deviate from the consensus are censured as “deniers”—a choice of terminology that can only be described as odious. And the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change explicitly aims for “consensus” in its reports—it does not publish minority reports, and yet it is impossible that its alleged more than “2,000 scientists” could completely agree on a subject as complicated as climate.....Climate alarmists will, of course, angrily dispute that climate science groupthink is as strong as claimed here. However, groupthink is clearly identified in the 2006 Wegman report into the Michael Mann hockey stick controversy. The Wegman report was commissioned by the U.S. House Science Committee after Mann refused to release all the data leading to the hockey stick conclusions, conclusions that eliminated the Medieval Warm Period and Little Ice Age in order to show today’s warming as unprecedented. In fact, as mathematician Steve McIntyre discovered after years of FOI requests, the calculations in Mann’s paper had not been checked by the paper’s peer reviewers and were, in fact, wrong. The National Academy of Sciences committee, led by Dr. Edward Wegman, an expert on statistics, identified one of the reasons why Mann’s paper was so sloppily peer-reviewed as follows:

*‘There is a tightly knit group of individuals who passionately believe in their thesis. However, our perception is that **this group has a self-reinforcing feedback mechanism** and, moreover, **the work has been sufficiently politicized that they can hardly reassess their public positions without losing credibility.**’*

In other words, alarmist climate scientists are part of an exclusive group that talks mainly with itself and avoids groups that don’t share the anthropogenic global warming hypothesis and alarmist political agenda. Overall, Wegman is describing with great precision a science community whose conclusions have been distorted and polarized by groupthink.”

MacRae concludes (9):

In short, it is clear that groupthink—a later, more scientific word for “tribalism”—is strongly at work within alarmist climate science, however much the affected scientists refuse to recognize it. As a result of tribalism (groupthink), alarmist climate science makes assertions that are often extreme (polarized), including the explicit or implicit endorsement of claims that global warming will lead to “oblivion,” “thermageddon,” mass extinctions, and the like. Indeed, one of the ironies of climate science is that extremist AGW believers like Gore, Hansen and Schneider have succeeded in persuading the media and public that those who don’t make grandiose claims, the skeptics, are the extremists. Group polarization offers a rational explanation for extreme alarmist claims, given that the empirical scientific evidence is simply not strong enough to merit such confidence. It is likely that even intelligent, highly educated scientists have been caught in what has been called the “madness of crowds.” Indeed, writing in the Times Higher Education magazine, British philosopher Martin Cohen makes this connection explicit:

‘Is belief in global-warming science another example of the “madness of crowds”? That strange but powerful social phenomenon, first described by Charles Mackay in 1841, turns a widely shared prejudice into an irresistible “authority”. Could it [belief in human-caused, catastrophic global warming] indeed represent the final triumph of irrationality?’

There is strong psychological evidence that alarmist fears of climate change are far more the result of groupthink and the group polarization process than scientific evidence and, yes, this alarmist groupthink has indeed led to the triumph of irrationality over reason.”

The diagnosis is clear, but what is the treatment, both curative and preventative?