

1 Representing the majority and not the minority: the 2 importance of the individual in communicating climate change

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20

21 Abstract

22

23 This research presents three case studies, through which a creative approach to developing
24 dialogue around climate change is outlined. By working with three distinct communities and
25 encouraging them to discuss and write poetry about how climate change affects them, we
26 demonstrate how such an approach might be adopted at this level. By analysing the
27 discussions and poetry that arose out of these workshops we show how this community-level
28 approach to communicating climate change is an essential counterpart to wider-scale
29 quantitative research. The engagement of each community with climate change is dependent
30 on the lived experiences of their members; a failure to recognise this results in less effective
31 communications and can also cause communities to feel isolated and helpless. By considering
32 the individual needs and aspirations of these communities we can support effective dialogue
33 around the topic of climate change, and in doing so can better engender positive action
34 against the negative effects of anthropogenic climate change.

35

36 Keywords

37

38 Public Engagement, Climate Change, Dialogue

39

40 1. Introduction

41

42 The communication of climate change has traditionally followed a deficit model (Bickerstaff,
43 2004), in which a one-way, top-down communication process is adopted. In this approach
44 scientists have been tasked as the ‘experts’, whose role is to educate a ‘non-expert’ general

1 public, by increasing their knowledge about a particular topic that the experts deemed to be
2 the most significant (Miller, 2001). However, this one-way approach to the communication of
3 climate change is unlikely to bring about the changes that are needed for adaptation and
4 mitigation, as it fails to consider a series of factors that are key determinants of the way
5 people perceive and react to information (Swim et al., 2009). There is not a one-size-fits-all
6 approach that is able to engage society as a whole in regards to climate change. In addition
7 to the type of information individuals need, the way this information is presented will also
8 have an impact on how it is perceived and taken on board. The source of the information is
9 another factor that influences how it is perceived and assessed, and lack of trust in a source,
10 such as the government, the media, or scientists, has proven to affect responsiveness to the
11 message (Goodwin and Dahlstrom, 2014). Information provided by a source that is perceived
12 as untrustworthy and through one-way communication is unlikely to be effective. For
13 example, a lack of trust in the government can affect how people perceive policies in relation
14 to climate change (Lorenzoni et al., 2007).

15
16 In contrast to the deficit model, a dialogue model of two-way communication highlights the
17 need to explore the identities and social norms of different groups in society, as well as the
18 importance of acknowledging the existence of many publics - in contrast to what the deficit
19 model referred to as a single public (Priest, 2016). Furthermore, it also acknowledges that the
20 'non-experts' that constitute the publics also have their own skills and expertise that might
21 also be utilised in the development of research governance (Burns and Gentry, 1998),
22 particularly in the case of these people's own lives and needs, for which they could and should
23 be considered the experts.

24
25 The Climate Communication Project aims to understand and evaluate existing expertise in the
26 UK on communicating and engaging the public with climate change. A substantial focus of this
27 project is an expert elicitation (see e.g. de Franca Doria et al., 2009) of the climate
28 communication community, to better understand how a range of specialists carry out their
29 work, to share and promote best practice in the UK, and to point to areas where more
30 investment and attention is needed. This project aims to support and enable a wider
31 structural adjustment to how climate change is discussed and communicated. However, as
32 argued by Lorenzoni et al. (2007) alongside this approach there also needs to be a targeted
33 and tailored information provision to, and communication with, individual citizens and
34 communities. Furthermore, it is essential that the voices of these communities are solicited
35 and considered in the construction of this wider structural adjustment. The work that is
36 presented here reports on a series of dialogues that were established with a small selection
37 of communities across the UK, in order to better demonstrate the importance of these
38 individual voices in developing effective climate change communication strategies.

39
40 For this study, a series of three workshops (located in Bristol, Stockport, and Manchester)
41 were coordinated with three distinct and diverse audience groups. Rather than hosting a
42 series of events and expecting members of the community to 'come to us', researchers
43 travelled to established community groups to discuss their needs and potential barriers to
44 considering scientific topics relating to climate change. Three distinct community groups were
45 chosen: the Avonmouth Community Centre in Bristol, Disability Stockport, and a collection of
46 faith groups in Manchester. It is the central thesis of this work that all communities and
47 citizens offer potentially different voices, and as such we did not aim to be representative of

1 'every' community in the UK. Rather we decided to pick a small number of communities in
2 order to demonstrate the value of this approach, and to provide further evidence for its role
3 in developing a more effective communications strategy around climate change.

4
5 These three communities were chosen because of their varied composition, and because
6 previous research has highlighted some of the challenges and opportunities of
7 communicating climate change with similar groups. The Avonmouth and Lawrence Western
8 Ward, in which the Avonmouth Community Centre is located, contains areas that are
9 considered to be amongst the most deprived 10% in England (Bristol City Council, 2015).
10 Previous research has shown environmental concerns increase with social class (see e.g.
11 Norton and Leaman, 2004), although actual environmental footprint tends to increase with
12 wealth (Büchs and Schnepf, 2013). Furthermore, since the early days of the environmental
13 movement in the 1960s, community centres have been seen as a potential focus for effective
14 communication strategies (Burgess et al., 1998). By working with the Avonmouth Community
15 Centre we hoped to better understand the role that community centres could play in
16 engaging with people from different social classes.

17
18 As noted by Heltberg et al. (2009) the impacts of climate change, even in developed countries
19 such as the UK will sometimes fall disproportionately on vulnerable individuals, with the
20 disabled forming part of the population most at risk from the effects of climate change
21 (Maibach et al., 2010). By working with Disability Stockport, we wanted to ensure that we
22 were giving a voice to the potentially vulnerable, and to better understand their perceptions
23 of how climate change would affect them both as individuals and as a community.

24
25 Finally, faith communities tend to share an emphasis on long-term stewardship and can help
26 disseminate information to their publics (Frumkin et al., 2008). By bringing together a group
27 of faith leaders from across Manchester we wanted to get a range of different faith
28 perspectives in relation to climate change, and to better understand how this information
29 was communicated to their respective communities.

30
31 As well as the specific opportunities for dialogue in working with each of these communities,
32 it was the aim of this study to demonstrate that these workshops are an effective way of
33 creating a safe space for discussion around climate change. Furthermore, we wanted to show
34 how such an approach could be utilized by other researchers and how this is a necessary
35 accompaniment to any large-scale plans for communicating climate change at a national level
36 or beyond.

37 38 2. Materials and Methods

39
40 As stated in Section 1, the planned workshops were to take place in the spaces of the selected
41 communities rather than expecting participants to travel to a university or neutral location.
42 The reason for this was so that we could better create a safe space in which participants felt
43 comfortable in discussing how climate change affected their communities, as well as
44 individuals' more general concerns about climate change. In planning these workshops, a
45 two-way dialogue was established between the workshop facilitator (SI) and the community
46 leaders and gatekeepers. Through these dialogues, suitable dates and times for the
47 workshops were decided, with each scheduled to last between two and three hours, and at

1 times that were seen as compatible with the lifestyles of the community members. Based on
2 previous experiences and the nature of the activities that were planned for these workshops
3 (see below), between five and ten participants for each of the workshops was seen as optimal,
4 thereby ensuring that all opinions could be voiced and discussed in the time allowed. This
5 number of participants also helped to increase the relative homogeneity within each group
6 in order to capitalise on people's shared experiences (Kitzinger, 1995) relative to the
7 community that they were representing.

8
9 Following the work of Illingworth and Jack (2018), it was decided that as well as having a
10 facilitator (SI) and a number of community members, these workshops should also involve
11 the participation of one climate communications expert. The reasons for this were two-fold.
12 Firstly, it meant that if any technical questions relating to climate change arose then these
13 experts would be on hand to provide that information, or else recommend a suitable source
14 for further inquiry. Secondly, by involving climate change experts in the workshop, we hoped
15 to demonstrate to them first-hand the diverse nature of the publics that there were
16 communicating with. The recruitment of the participants for these workshops was done
17 through the organisations that we were working with as part of this study, i.e. the Avonmouth
18 Community Centre, Disability Stockport, and the Manchester Cathedral. Participants were
19 recruited directly through the community groups and their gatekeepers, with a very basic
20 flyer provided to each of the organisations so that they could advertise the planned date and
21 time of the event. Prior to the workshops there were no incentives, financial or otherwise,
22 offered to the participants to encourage attendance, other than some basic refreshments.

23
24 These workshops all adopted a similar format, beginning with a pre-workshop questionnaire
25 (see Appendix) to be filled out individually by the participants (It should be noted that this
26 pre-workshop questionnaire actually took place at the beginning of the workshop, prior to
27 the initial conversations, and so would probably have been better named 'pre-discussion
28 questionnaire'). This questionnaire involved asking the participants to first consider the major
29 issues that affected their community (not necessarily related to climate change), and then to
30 think about how climate change affected them at an individual and community level (if it did
31 at all) and the way(s) in which climate change was currently communicated; it was filled in
32 after the initial scope of the research had been explained by SI and the consent forms had
33 been signed. These responses were to form the basis of the initial discussions amongst the
34 participants, with their responses acting as an aide memoire to both help direct the dialogue
35 during the workshops, and also to serve as a record for data collection. Following this
36 discussion, the participants were guided through a series of poetry-writing exercises, which
37 involved them first working as individuals and then collectively to write poetry about two
38 different topics: their community, and climate change. Poetry was used in this way as it has
39 been shown to be an effective tool in developing dialogue amongst underserved audiences
40 (Illingworth and Jack, 2018), whilst offering an alternative form of data collection to
41 complement that recorded in the pre-workshop questionnaire. These poems were then
42 further discussed amongst the participants, following which a post-workshop questionnaire
43 was individually completed. This post-workshop questionnaire was designed to assess the
44 opinions of the participants in relation to the workshop, and to determine if they had any
45 further questions or required any additional information about anything that had been
46 discussed. Throughout the workshops, SI made detailed field notes to later help in the analysis

1 of the responses; this largely took the form of recording and observing the general nature of
2 the discussions that followed the pre-workshop questionnaire and the creation of the poetry.

3
4 Poetry can be used to help reframe and develop dialogue amongst participants and has an
5 established history as a tool that can be used by researchers to both communicate with and
6 elicit engagement amongst different audiences. For example, by turning participant
7 recordings and transcripts into poetic performances, Finley (2003) demonstrated how poetic
8 responses might be used to open up new dialogues with communities, using their own words
9 but presented in an alternative format. Similarly, poetry that is written by participants can be
10 used as data by researchers to better understand the lifeworlds of the authors, serving as
11 powerful narrative examples in the development of education and advocacy goals
12 (Poindexter, 2002). By asking the participants to write their own poetry, we hoped to enable
13 them to consider their thoughts and opinions in a creative space, which could then be
14 analysed alongside their non-poetic responses. The reasons that poetry was used rather than
15 another artistic medium (e.g. sculpture or drawing) were two-fold. Firstly, the workshop
16 facilitator (SI) has experience in both creating poetry and running poetry-writing workshops,
17 as such he was able to play the role of what Vygotsky (1980) termed the 'More Knowledgeable
18 Other', and in doing so could help to extend the social learning of the participants. Secondly,
19 poetry writing is a very accessible activity that only requires paper and pens / pencils, and
20 which can be both easily transported and also supported; for example, with regards to
21 participants who are themselves unable to write. It should also be noted that reading and
22 analysing (as well as writing) poetry can also be used to engage different audiences with
23 specific topics, and that there is a history of such initiatives being used to successfully explore
24 different relationships and opinions across and between communities (see e.g. Furman et al.,
25 2004). However, for the purposes of this research, we chose to focus on writing poetry as it
26 allowed for the most collaborative experience within the framework of the workshops.

27
28 The poetry-writing exercises involved four basic steps:

- 29
301. Participants were asked to write a 'list poem' about the chosen topic (either 'your community'
31 or 'climate change'). In this exercise, the participants were given 90 seconds to list everything
32 that they associated with the chosen topic and were reminded that this need not only be
33 things that they could see, but rather that the list could comprise of any associated sense,
34 emotion, or experience.
 352. Participants were asked to write one sentence about the chosen topic (either 'How you feel
36 about your community' or 'How you feel about climate change', using the list poem as a word
37 bank for inspiration if required).
 383. Participants were then asked to work in pairs and to combine their two sentences. The
39 collaborative effort did not have to rhyme, but it did have to reflect both individuals'
40 observations, and could either be a combination of the two sentences or else something new
41 entirely.
 424. Pairs of participants were then asked to work with another pair, and to combine all thoughts
43 and sentences into a coherent piece. Again, this did not have to rhyme, but all participants
44 had to be happy that their thoughts and opinions were reflected in the finished piece.

45
46 The poetry writing exercises took place after the initial discussion, as it was hypothesised that
47 this initial dialogue would help the community members to explore their opinions in relation

1 to climate change, both as individuals and as a collective. Furthermore, it was theorised that
2 the poetry would be congruent with these discussions, presenting them in an alternative
3 format that could be shared and analysed alongside the responses to the pre-workshop
4 questionnaire.

5
6 All of the questions and prompts that were used throughout the workshops can be found in
7 the Appendix and were also sent to the gatekeepers in advance of the workshops so that their
8 suitability for the participants could be assessed and any necessary provisions to ensure
9 inclusivity could be made. During this study anonymity was preserved by not recording any
10 identifiable information, and during the analysis, any specific or personal narratives that could
11 be seen as identifiable was redacted and destroyed without recording. Furthermore, all the
12 participants were given sufficient time to read the consent forms, so as to avoid assumed
13 consent, and any support workers had access to the consent forms prior to the workshop, so
14 that they could help advise and inform. A suitable line of support was also established through
15 which any distress could be reported and suitably dealt with. By working alongside the
16 support workers all participants knew exactly what the study was for, what it entailed, and
17 what their involvement was. All the support workers were made fully aware of the study, and
18 it was made clear to all participants that they could take part in the activities without having
19 their responses recorded or subsequently analysed. This research project received full ethics
20 approval via Manchester Metropolitan University's Academic Ethics Committee.

21 22 3. Case Studies

23
24 The findings from the three different workshops are presented as three individual case
25 studies, followed by a discussion in Section 4 about general findings and recommendations in
26 terms of what this approach has taught us. As noted by Moser (2010), more case-specific
27 research is required in relation to communicating climate change, mainly because there is no
28 'one-size-fits-all solution', with different audiences requiring different narratives, frames,
29 media and communicators. By presenting the findings of these workshops as case studies we
30 hope to better address this requirement, and to also provide further evidence for the need
31 of this type of qualitative research in order to develop effective climate change
32 communications strategies.

33
34 Each of these case studies will begin with a general overview of the logistics of the workshop,
35 followed by a presentation of the discussion that occurred following the pre-workshop
36 questionnaire. The poems that were written by the community groups will then be presented
37 and contextualized in relation to this discussion, followed by a summary of the key findings
38 for each community group. With regards to the poems that appear throughout this study,
39 other than correcting for spelling they are presented exactly as they were written by the
40 participants during the workshops.

41 42 3.1 The Avonmouth Community Centre

43
44 This workshop was conducted on a Monday lunchtime, and there were five participants,
45 including the climate communications expert. The participants were made up of local
46 residents, volunteers, and people that worked in the area. We spent about 105 minutes

1 discussing the pre-workshop questions, and about 45 minutes writing poetry and discussing
2 what this meant and why it had been written.

3
4 In the initial discussions around what issues the participants considered to be most pertinent
5 to their community, better engagement all community members, health (both physical and
6 mental), and identity seemed to be the most prevalent. In discussing these subjects, the
7 participants revealed that Avonmouth often felt very geographically isolated (“it doesn’t even
8 feature in some local area maps of Bristol”), and as a result many of the inhabitants found it
9 difficult to engage with other community groups such as local industries and policymakers.
10 Furthermore, the issues that people found to be important were acknowledged by them to
11 be relatively transient, likely to change on a daily basis, and dependent on a range of physical
12 and psychological factors; for example, litter might be seen as an important issue because
13 someone threw litter outside their house the previous evening. As well as reporting on being
14 worried about geographical isolation, the participants also highlighted that this was linked to
15 their concerns regarding the mental health of their community members, especially the
16 elderly.

17
18 With regards to whether or not climate change affected themselves and their communities
19 there was initially honest ambivalence, although as one of the participants noted:

20
21 “I’m not sure people talk about ‘climate change’ - they may discuss elements such as
22 pollution, seasonal changes / temperatures, recycling, etc.”

23
24 To corroborate this point of view, when asked to expand on these changes to the climate,
25 two of the participants (who had lived in the area for the whole of their lives) spent time
26 discussing how the area was now a lot less polluted than it had been in their youth. With
27 regards to the pollution of Avonmouth, two of the participants discussed at length how
28 Avonmouth had once been known for the ‘black sheep’ caused by the pollution of the
29 docklands in the 1960s and 1970s. The Clean Air Act of 1970 and its subsequent amendments
30 (Greenstone, 2004) was likely responsible for the improvement in air quality, although the
31 participants revealed that to many people “Avonmouth smells”. This smell is no longer literal
32 (and indeed SI noticed no such odour), but this is a view and descriptor that is set in the minds
33 of many people living in neighbouring districts, thereby possibly contributing to the feelings
34 of geographical isolation. In 2014, the Environment Agency installed a mobile dust monitor in
35 the port at Avonmouth, following community concerns about dust (The Environment Agency,
36 2015). After completing their air quality and dust monitoring work the Environment Agency
37 were able to demonstrate that air quality in Avonmouth is typical of an urban setting and
38 should not give rise to an increased risk of respiratory health problems. This monitoring work
39 was not mentioned by the participants in this workshop but is stated here as further evidence
40 that the pollution, perceived or otherwise, in this area is something that the community is
41 deeply affected by. As Bickerstaff (2004) explains, places can suffer ‘environmental stigma’
42 without there being a clear episode of contamination. Stigmatisation can be derived from
43 perception, and often starts with the very same people who live in that community. Stigma
44 not only affects the place, but also the people who live in it making them feel trapped, isolated
45 and powerless. In terms of climate change mitigation and adaptation, stigma is counter-
46 productive because the feeling of marginalisation and powerlessness can result in inaction or
47 dismissal of the climate change problem altogether. Therefore, including the views of

1 communities that feel stigmatised can also be a tool to break this stigma, stop the feeling of
2 powerlessness, and encourage action.

3
4 In discussing what climate change is, and how it may or may not affect the local community,
5 it quickly became apparent that a perceived conflict within the climate change community
6 puts people off addressing it, as does the language and negativity that is associated with the
7 debate centred on this topic. One of the participants stated that:

8
9 “People treat climate change deniers like holocaust deniers.”

10
11 Whilst another participant stated that the way in which climate change is currently
12 communicated and discussed in the UK:

13
14 “Seems like an argument.”

15
16 These opinions led to a discussion which also revealed that the community members felt that
17 the politicisation of climate change made it difficult to discuss openly, and as such that it was
18 almost impossible to “own” and/or take responsibility for. This would seem to advance the
19 work of Poortinga et al. (2011); i.e. that the acceptance of climate change is not only rooted
20 in people’s core values and worldviews but also what they perceive to be the core values and
21 worldviews of others. Kahan (2012) has likewise argued that people for the most part take
22 their cues from peers and own their cultural group on climate change. During the discussion
23 with community members, it also became clear that the participants were not aware of the
24 true extent of the consensus amongst climate change scientists, and the majority of them
25 were surprised when it was revealed that this number was 97-98% (Cook et al., 2016), having
26 previously believed it to be closer to 50%. The participants also revealed that they were
27 unclear of where to go for honest and reliable information. Furthermore, some of the
28 participants considered scientists to be government and industrial stooges, and therefore not
29 necessarily to be trusted. One participant provided further evidence for this opinion in the
30 following statement:

31
32 “If nutritional scientists are always changing their mind about diet and what is healthy
33 or not, then why should people believe that climate scientists are any different?”

34
35 This opinion further supports why one-way communications from such ‘experts’ will remain
36 unsuccessful (Lorenzoni et al., 2007). However, by the end of the discussion there was a
37 general consensus that climate change was something that affected the local area at both the
38 community and the individual level, and that in order to better relay this information and
39 discuss what could be done to mitigate its effects, there was a need to move away from a
40 ‘one-way forum’ and towards a ‘conversation café’ i.e. the creation of an environment in
41 which these conversations could take place in a shared space and where no one would be
42 judged. Conversations then turned towards what difference a single individual could make,
43 and if asking this question was having a negative effect on discussing climate change and
44 whether or not people could realistically be expected to take on this personal
45 responsibility. This discussion featured input from SI and the other expert in terms of
46 answering technical questions and providing information such as the true figures for
47 consensus amongst scientists studying climate change. However, neither SI nor the expert

1 acted in any way so as to persuade or dissuade any of the participants from a particular way
2 of thinking.

3

4 Following these discussions, the following two poems were written collectively by the local
5 community participants. On the subject of 'How you feel about your local community':

6

7 Looking back through today's eye at
8 an interesting, friendly place full of history
9 appreciating what we have
10 a bit dishevelled, sometimes unloved
11 but with potential to thrive
12 feels caring, friendly, home
13 loving where we live and work.

14

15 And on the subject of 'How you feel about climate change':

16

17 Confused, conflicted, guilty, sad, helpless but I have a
18 responsibility to educate myself, live simply and do whatever
19 I can to affect positive change... we can educate people
20 to the real statistics of what is happening in our world.

21

22 In discussing these two poems, the participants made it clear that for both subjects (i.e. their
23 community and climate change) whilst work was needed to improve the current situation,
24 hope was not lost. In reading these poems, it is clear that the participants have a strong sense
25 of civic pride in their local community, and that it is a place that they are genuinely proud to
26 call home. Furthermore, they believe that they have a duty of care to improve their
27 community and the lives of those people in it, and that this extends to the effects of climate
28 change. Given the lengthy discussion on the consensus of climate change scientists and the
29 surrounding ideas of media bias, it is unsurprising that it features so prominently. On reading
30 these poems it is also evident that the participants believe they have a responsibility to affect
31 positive change and to educate people. The collective poem on climate change that they
32 wrote accurately summarised the previous discussion (even though this was not explicitly or
33 implicitly expressed to the participants prior to the exercise), i.e. that there was a desire to
34 have an open and honest conversation in a safe environment, and that this approach could
35 then be used to educate others so that they could also make up their own minds. It should be
36 noted that throughout this study, there is no emphasis placed on the aesthetic quality of the
37 poetry, and that by emphasising this to the participants it was easier to create a shared space
38 for creativity and sharing.

39

40 From the post-workshop questionnaire, the main issues that people still wanted to address
41 were what they could do to help, whether they were too late to help, and where the best
42 resources were to find out more about climate change and how to mitigate its effects. Overall
43 everyone seemed to enjoy the workshop, although they would have liked even more time to
44 work on their poems. A response of note for this section of the questionnaire was that one of
45 the participants now felt as though they would come to the workshop facilitator (SI) for more
46 information about climate change; previously this participant had been sceptical of trusting

1 scientists for the reasons outlined above. Furthermore, this participant contacted SI a couple
2 of weeks after the workshop with the following request:

3
4 "I have been thinking a lot about the workshop and I was wondering if it would be ok
5 to use the idea of it with other people. I wanted to try doing it with the Quaker
6 children meeting and our lunch group."
7

8 This request serves to underline the effectiveness of the approach that was adopted for this
9 workshop; by creating a safe space in which dialogue could be established and individual
10 voices could be heard and listened to, the perceptions of scientists changed from
11 untrustworthy to valued and reliable sources of information; in this case with the added
12 advantage that the approach was adopted and taken on in another context. This workshop
13 also highlighted the potential roles that community centres can play in providing a safe space
14 for discussions surrounding climate change in a neutral and non-politicised environment.
15 Shortly before the workshop in Avonmouth, SI also spoke to a group of 'Community Payback'
16 young men who were having their lunch in the community centre. In these conversations,
17 they were respectful and honest in informing SI that they did not care at all about climate
18 change, and that there was no point as "the world was going to end anyway". They were
19 perfectly happy to talk to SI and to express these views but did not want to engage further on
20 the subject. Perhaps it is the community volunteers of Avonmouth who are better served to
21 engage this audience around the effects of climate change, and to help demonstrate how
22 despite being "a bit dishevelled, sometimes unloved" they have "potential to thrive". The
23 effectiveness of involving mediators who already have access to harder-to-reach
24 communities, who are already trusted by these communities, and who understand the
25 community's ecology is also highlighted in other studies with a similar purpose (e.g. Ramírez
26 et al., 2015).
27

28 3.2 Disability Stockport 29

30 This workshop was conducted on a Monday afternoon at Disability Stockport, with five
31 participants, including the climate communications expert. The participants were made up of
32 volunteers and patrons of Disability Stockport, including one participant with severe learning
33 difficulties who needed support throughout the workshop. This support was provided by SI
34 who worked with this participant on a one-to-one basis, and then helped to feed back their
35 input to the rest of the group during the discussions and poetry-writing exercises. We spent
36 about 80 minutes discussing the pre-workshop questions and about 40 minutes writing
37 poetry and discussing what this meant and why it had been written.
38

39 In the initial discussions about what the participants found to be important in their local
40 community, social justice and equality for all were the dominant topic of conversation. The
41 participants were finely attuned to inclusivity and wanted to ensure that all of their
42 community members had a strong and discernible voice on matters that affected them, even
43 if they were not necessarily aware that this was the case. In talking to the more vulnerable
44 participants and their carers, it became apparent that they are completely reliant on friends
45 and family members for information on most topics, and so it is vital that these people are
46 equipped with the correct information and tools to help further engender this
47 communication. Any biases, perceived or otherwise, that these carers and volunteers are

1 subjected to will likewise be passed on to the vulnerable members of the community that
2 they help to support. In discussing the issues that were most important to the local
3 community, the importance of living in a healthy environment was raised repeatedly, and
4 what this meant in terms of both physical and mental wellbeing. As with the Avonmouth
5 community, the mental health of the community members, and the risk of isolation and
6 exclusion that this could bring, were also seen as very important issues.

7
8 With regards to climate change, the responses from the participants were varied. The
9 volunteers appeared to be very aware of the subject and how it affected both them personally
10 and also the people that they cared for and the wider community. This is perhaps reflective
11 of the several sustainability initiatives that Disability Stockport has led and been involved
12 with, including its use of compostable recycling and the installation of solar panels on the roof
13 of their building, which they self-funded through fundraising events (Crush and Cameron,
14 2015). However, the more vulnerable members of the community were much less aware
15 about climate change and the effects that it would have on them. This awareness ranged from
16 a feeling that climate change was 'bad' but an inability to articulate why this was the case, to
17 having absolutely no concept of the processes or effects of climate change. This lack of
18 awareness as to the existence of climate change might in part be explained by the way in
19 which it is communicated, with one of the volunteers stating that this was done by:

20
21 "the usual suspects... through interest groups like F.O.E., the UN, The Guardian, and
22 Greenpeace."

23
24 The participants felt that as well as the 'usual suspects' attempting to communicate climate
25 change, the audience that they were communicating to also consisted of the 'usual suspects'
26 and did not tend to include the members of their community, both in terms of Disability
27 Stockport and Stockport more generally. However, as one of the participants pointed out:

28
29 "These people represent the majority, not the minority."

30
31 In order to better engage this majority, participants believed that climate change
32 communication activities needed to happen at other more 'regular' events. A local example
33 of a 'hate crime' awareness event that had a band and other activities and was not advertised
34 as a 'hate crime awareness event' was discussed as a good model, as it had attracted a large
35 cohort and generated effective and meaningful discussion. According to one of the
36 volunteers, Stockport used to have a very good local environment fair that did communicate
37 issues relating to sustainability and environmental change, in an accessible manner and to a
38 wide audience; this fair was allegedly very popular, but austerity and local government cuts
39 meant that it was cancelled. This failure of the local and central government was a topic that
40 was repeatedly brought up in this workshop, and there was a strong belief that there was a
41 need for policymakers and government to shoulder the majority of the blame for the negative
42 effects of climate change; as one participant put it:

43
44 "When will our social leaders agree to effect change and find ways to overcome collective
45 greed?"

1 Stockport is part of Greater Manchester, and Devolution to the Greater Manchester
2 Combined Authority (Copus et al., 2017) was seen by the participants as a great opportunity
3 for enacting positive change in terms of both equal rights and mitigating climate change. The
4 approach that was adopted by Ken Livingstone whilst he was the Mayor of London (2000 –
5 2008) was stated as a good standard to follow (Shove and Walker, 2010), and the participants
6 hoped that Andy Burnham (the first Mayor of Greater Manchester) would use his newfound
7 responsibilities and power in a similar fashion. This discussion featured input from SI and the
8 other expert in terms of answering technical questions. However, neither SI nor the expert
9 acted in any way so as to persuade or dissuade any of the participants from a particular way
10 of thinking.

11
12 Following these initial discussions, two poems were written collectively by the participants.
13 On the subject of ‘How you feel about your local community’:

14
15 I think community is being lost, everyone's too busy.
16 I feel close to my community and part of it.
17 I feel like there are many selfish people
18 But there are people who help.
19 My community is a lonely concrete desert where desert flowers bloom,
20 sometimes,
21 if they catch a bit of warm rain.

22
23 And on the subject of ‘How you feel about climate change’:

24
25 Some will profit as suffering increases.
26 Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry children of the future!
27 We have one Earth, if we don't save it, all else is lost.
28 I feel like if I give as hard as I could
29 My friends will live in a world that's good.

30
31 In discussing these two poems, the participants again returned to themes of social justice and
32 what was and was not perceived to be ‘fair’. They found it grossly unfair that a minority of
33 people were spoiling both their community and the local and wider environments for the
34 majority. They also discussed how despite this selfish minority, there were other people who
35 were acting as a force for good, and who could, and should, be relied upon to help enact a
36 positive change. As was the case with the Avonmouth poetry, both of these poems were
37 reflective of the previous discussions (although it was perhaps surprising that local and
38 national authorities, and their perceived failings in terms of austerity and sustainability, were
39 not explicitly mentioned). In particular, the last two lines of the collective poem about climate
40 change effectively summarised the prevailing mood of the group, which was ultimately one
41 of hope and empowerment. Rather than a burden that caused them to feel belittled and
42 helpless, the volunteers in the group saw it as an opportunity to provide the support that was
43 needed to help the unaware and the vulnerable, both within their own community and
44 beyond. As with the previous discussion, it became apparent that this community was
45 comprised of two distinct groups of people: the volunteers and carers, and the people that
46 they helped. Whilst certain circumstances dictated that some of the participants spent time
47 in both of these groups, the poetry that was created and the subsequent discussions made it

1 clear that any climate change communication strategy that aimed to effectively work with
2 this community must target both of these publics.

3
4 Given the restrictions that Disability Stockport, and other communities like them, have faced
5 because of funding cuts brought about by austerity measure in the UK (see e.g. Cross, 2013),
6 it is perhaps unsurprising that the volunteers within this community are aware of the
7 responsibilities of both local and national government, and that they are willing to take them
8 to task on the matter. In contrast to the participants at the Avonmouth workshop they did
9 not express a restraining sense of guilt, but rather an acceptance that they could not, and
10 should not, be held individually responsible for the effects of climate change and our attempts
11 to mitigate these changes. This community is very firmly attuned to a sense of justice, and
12 they want to ensure that everyone has a strong and discernible voice in discussing climate
13 change, not least because they recognise that whilst many of their members are contributing
14 the least to climate change, they will be amongst the ones that are most affected by it.

15
16 From the post-workshop questionnaire, the main questions that participants still had were
17 related to how they could help others (especially locally policymakers) to take collective
18 responsibility for their actions. The participants appreciated the “egalitarian, respectful, and
19 non-judgmental” creative approach to the workshop, and its success in “including disabled
20 people fully.” One request that was made was for links to local groups and information
21 relating to the communication of climate change to be made available, which further
22 corroborates the desire of the participants to help others take notice and “motivate those in
23 charge”.

24
25 This workshop demonstrated how important it is to fully consider the vulnerable members of
26 our society when thinking about how climate change and its effects are communicated. As
27 well as ensuring that any communication strategy is not just aimed at the ‘usual suspects’ it
28 is essential that the carers are also well equipped with the tools and information to help
29 engender meaningful and unbiased debate on the subject. Furthermore, by giving these
30 communities a voice, any efforts to communicate the effects of climate change would stand
31 to benefit from a motivated collective that is willing to highlight issues of social injustice and
32 help to enact positive change.

34 3.3 Manchester Faith Communities

35
36 This workshop was conducted on a Thursday afternoon, and there were eight participants,
37 including the climate communications expert. The workshop took place in the refectory of
38 the Manchester Cathedral, with representatives from the Catholic Church, Protestantism,
39 Judaism, and the Bahá'í Faith. Each of these representatives were leaders within their faith
40 organisations and the initial discussions lasted approximately 80 minutes, with 60 minutes
41 spent collaboratively writing and discussing poetry.

42
43 Initial discussions with this group focussed on what was meant by the word ‘community’, with
44 participants discussing which communities they did and did not belong to. For the faith
45 leaders that were represented here, they all felt part of their faith communities, but also the
46 local communities where they lived, as well as more regional, national, and even global non-

1 faith communities. This attitude of belonging to a global community was summed up by one
2 participant:

3
4 "We all belong to the wider community of humanity. We all bleed red blood, we all
5 breathe the same air."
6

7 With regards to issues that were seen as pertinent to their local faith communities, the
8 environment and food awareness (i.e. food waste and food poverty) were highlighted and
9 discussed at length. All of the participants felt that these issues could be addressed in a
10 meaningful and effective manner by first better developing educational awareness around
11 these topics, and by promoting better interconnectedness, both between the communities
12 and across the topics of importance. As with the other two workshops, the importance of a
13 healthy environment was discussed at length, and all of the participants expressed (without
14 being prompted) that the effects of climate change were amongst the greatest issues that
15 they were currently tackling in both their local and wider faith communities.
16

17 This was a very informed group in terms of climate change and its effect on both individuals
18 and their wider communities. Given that this workshop was advertised as an opportunity to
19 discuss climate change, this might be expected, but as was revealed in the discussions, many
20 of the faith communities are already taking considerable steps to address the effects of
21 climate change at both a global and a more local level. Organisations and initiatives such as
22 Green Bishops (Dakin, 2004), the Public Issues Team at Methodist Church House (The
23 Methodist Church, 2012), and Pope Francis' *Laudato si* (Francisco, 2015) were all discussed
24 as both sources of inspiration and useful references for further information. From these
25 discussions it was apparent how each of these faith leaders belonged to a much larger
26 community that they could work with and on behalf of, and as with the volunteers within the
27 Disability Stockport community, these participants believed they had a duty of care to help
28 improve the environments of the more vulnerable members of their communities. There was
29 also an extended discussion about how many of the more vulnerable members of these
30 communities were seen as "problems that needed to be solved", whereas they should instead
31 be viewed as potential solutions to many of the issues facing the communities, especially
32 those surrounding the effects of climate change. As one of the participants noted:
33

34 "If people knew then they could make any informed decision."
35

36 Despite their own knowledge on the subject of climate change, and the resources that were
37 available to them through their faith communities, the participants still expressed a need for
38 reliable and unbiased information that they could then direct their communities to. All of the
39 participants believed that whilst the effects of climate change were going to have a negative
40 effect at both a global and local level, these challenges also presented an opportunity to bring
41 people together and empower the impoverished by working in unison to tackle the negative
42 effects of climate change. This discussion featured very little input from SI and the other
43 expert in terms of answering technical questions, and nobody acted in any way so as to
44 persuade or dissuade any of the participants from a particular way of thinking.
45

1 Following the initial discussion, the participants were split into two groups of four, and
2 worked in these groups to create two sets of poems. Two on the subject of 'How you feel
3 about your local community':
4

5 Community is the space where we
6 are cherished and appreciated, a place
7 of encounter where all belong,
8 Supporting each other with a
9 common vision; we are a kaleidoscope of life.

10

11 And

12

13 I like my community - its resourceful people with familiar sparkling eyes of hope,
14 sensing potential to beautify.
15 Strangers need not feel alone
16 Where diverse community cherishes home.

17

18 And two on the subject of 'How you feel about climate change':

19

20 I have come to see that climate change affects us all
21 My consumption is at the expense of my neighbour's lack
22 And my recklessness may lead to my neighbour's danger
23 My careless lifestyle causing so much natural beauty to be lost
24 I sense the urgency that I change to help save the planet
25 For the future me that this haunts drives me, transfuses my life.

26

27 And

28

29 There are too many of us
30 Disposing of too much fare
31 Into our atmosphere and our world
32 We need to take more care,
33 Fossil industrial growth
34 That diminishes water soil and air
35 Grow to green and clean
36 To make the world more fair.
37 We need to change behaviour
38 It is urgent that we share,
39 The joy is living simply
40 Right here and not out there.
41 We must reduce the harm we cause
42 Both personal and corporate ware
43 A better carbon footprint
44 Before our world we tear.

45

46 These poems, and the discussions that followed, served to further highlight the congruence
47 between these participants. Unlike the participants in the Stockport and Avonmouth

1 workshops, this group did not all belong to one common community, but the similarities in
2 their beliefs with regards to their collective responsibility was striking. From these poems it is
3 clear that the faith leaders consider communities to be places of strength and belonging, and
4 that we should work hard to connect these communities so that nobody is ostracised; it is the
5 similarities between communities rather than their differences that should be cherished and
6 nurtured. These participants accepted their collective guilt with regards to the effects of
7 climate change, but also saw it as an opportunity to develop cohesion and belonging amongst
8 the most vulnerable. As with the Stockport group, they realised that they had a responsibility,
9 but saw this as something that was achievable rather than overbearing.

10
11 Both of the poems written about climate change recognise that the negative consequences
12 to climate change (and any response to it) have come about because of an imbalance. The
13 line “My consumption is at the expense of my neighbour's lack” is very similar to the ideas
14 that were expressed by the Stockport group, i.e. that the privileged minority has been living
15 at the expense of the disadvantaged majority, and in many instances has been responsible
16 for maintaining and even strengthening that disparity. On reading the lines “There are too
17 many of us / Disposing of too much fare”, Thomas Malthus and the relationship between
18 population growth and climate change might initially spring to mind (Kelly and Kolstad, 2001).
19 However, these lines should also be read alongside “The joy is living simply / Right here and
20 not out there”. It is not necessarily rapid reductions in population growth that are being
21 advocated in this poem, but rather the notion that we need to better consider exactly what
22 is meant by ‘sustainable living’ and the changes to our personal lifestyles that might be
23 necessary in order to mitigate the negative effects of climate change for everyone (Carley and
24 Spapens, 2017). These poems do not promise easy answers, and they also point to a sense of
25 immediacy, i.e. that something needs to be done now, and by the authors of these poems,
26 rather than waiting and hoping for a future solution or future author to present itself.

27
28 As with the Avonmouth group, these poems (and the surrounding discussions) pointed to a
29 need for open and honest debate, and with it an interconnected approach to educating
30 people in a safe environment; one in which they felt welcome and cherished. Throughout all
31 of the discussions there was a willingness to assume collective responsibility, and a desire
32 amongst the participants to use their positions of responsibility to not only help their
33 communities, but to work together so that they might better tackle the negative effects of
34 climate change. As one of the participants noted:

35
36 “It is about overcoming prejudices.”
37

38 This comment was made in relation to how different faith communities could more effectively
39 work together, but it is also relevant in regards to the need to go beyond the ‘usual suspects’
40 when determining the audiences and the associated messages for the effective
41 communication of climate change.

42
43 From the post-workshop questionnaire, the response of the participants was similar to that
44 of the Stockport group, as they mainly wanted to know more information about “how to
45 inspire more behaviour change and faith-based action”, with both groups explicitly wanting
46 to know how they could “activate hope”. The participants enjoyed the creative elements of
47 the workshop and liked the “focus on participation” and the “fun and accepting” nature that

1 accompanied the “serious discussion”. As with the Stockport group, they would have liked
2 some practical examples of what they could do to enact change, both within their faith
3 communities and beyond.

4
5 This workshop succeeded in bringing together a group of faith leaders from across
6 Manchester, to present a range of different faith perspectives in relation to climate change.
7 These are strong and interconnected communities that want what is best for all of their
8 members, but not at the expense of other more vulnerable members of society that might
9 not belong to their community. The participants in this workshop represented a well-
10 informed and powerful agent with regards to the effective dissemination and communication
11 of climate change and working with these faith leaders to develop dialogue within and across
12 their communities is something that should be better considered by climate communication
13 strategies.

14 15 4. Discussion

16
17 In reading these case studies, and by analysing the discussions and the poetry that were
18 generated in the workshops, it is evident that each of the three communities has a clear and
19 distinctive voice. These distinct voices mean that there are distinct challenges in effectively
20 developing dialogue around climate change, but as can be seen from Section 3, there are also
21 diverse opportunities in working *with* each of these communities to better develop this
22 dialogue.

23
24 In all three of the communities there was a sense of collective guilt, centred on a recognition
25 of personal responsibility; that we as individuals were at least partly to blame for the negative
26 effects of climate change that were observed at both an individual and community level.
27 However, how each of those communities reacted to notions of personal and community
28 responsibility was distinct and serves to highlight why a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to
29 communicating climate change, or even developing dialogue around the subject, would not
30 work. The participants in the Avonmouth workshop initially largely felt overwhelmed and de-
31 motivated by their guilt. So much had already gone wrong how could they as individuals now
32 help to set things right; it seemed like potentially an overwhelming task, and they felt
33 “Confused, conflicted, guilty, sad, helpless”. But through discussions amongst themselves and
34 a sharing of that guilt they came to the realisation that they “have a / responsibility to educate
35 myself, live simply and do whatever / I can to affect positive change”. In order for a
36 community like the Avonmouth Community Centre to enact positive change, they need to be
37 freed from any individual guilt, which itself has maybe been deepened by previous (one-way)
38 climate change communication efforts.

39
40 In contrast to the Avonmouth group, whilst the Stockport group also acknowledged their
41 guilt, they recognised that they were not solely responsible for the current negative effects
42 of climate change. Furthermore, they recognised that through their actions they could make
43 a positive difference: “I feel like if I give as hard as I could / My friends will live in a world that's
44 good.” Contrast this to the “we can educate people / to the real statistics of what is happening
45 in our world” of the Avonmouth poem. There is a greater degree of certainty (still not
46 absolute) that they can enact positive change, both as individuals and as a collective. In
47 working with a community like Disability Stockport, effective communications would likely

1 highlight ways in which others (e.g. governments and policymakers) could be held to account
2 for their collective failings.

3
4 The community of faith leaders had a similar outlook to the Stockport group, recognising that:
5 “We must reduce the harm we cause / Both personal and corporate ware / A better carbon
6 footprint / Before our world we tear.” And that “To make the world more fair. / We need to
7 change behaviour”. As with the Avonmouth group, they also realised the need for education,
8 and given their own positions within their communities they recognised that any initial
9 activity likely needed to be driven by them. This was arguably a different type of individual
10 responsibility than was evidenced in the other two workshops, as the faith leaders recognised
11 that in some instances without their guidance and support for a particular topic action might
12 not be instigated or even possible. In working with this community, it could be argued that
13 effective climate change communications would provide reliable resources and frameworks
14 for engagement that could then be shared by the individuals amongst their own communities
15 and organisations. As was indicated by the participants themselves during this discussion,
16 their sense of community is intertwined with their own religious worldviews, and as such
17 several of these attitudes (e.g. ‘overcoming prejudices’ and ‘addressing consumption’) might
18 be driven by religious practices rather than environmental concerns. It would also be
19 interesting to further investigate what would happen if recommendations for successful
20 climate change mitigation strategies at the local community level clashed with the religious
21 ideologies or discourses of a particular group. As Maxwell (2003, pp. 257) observed:
22 “reductionist perceptions of reality are proving inadequate for addressing the complex,
23 interconnected problems of the current age”, and in addition to the benefits of working with
24 such groups in tackling climate change, it would be worthwhile for future workshops to
25 investigate the extent to which religious world views potentially clashed with climate change
26 communications, and how different faith leaders reacted as a result.

27
28 The manner in which guilt about climate change was attributed, and the extent to which it
29 oppressed individual and collective action, is just one example of the different ways in which
30 these communities responded to climate change and how it is communicated. People’s
31 individual roles within these communities also need to be considered. For example, are they
32 resident or employee; volunteer or patron; faith leader or community member? These roles
33 may change depending on circumstance, and many of us belong to several communities, in
34 which we might have different roles and react accordingly. Given these different communities
35 and the roles within them, how do we go about categorising them in terms of developing
36 effective climate communications? Helm et al. (2018) have suggested using an approach that
37 splits people’s values into egotistic, altruistic, and biospheric, but is even this approach too
38 broad? As noted by one of the participants in the Manchester workshop:

39
40 “Different people respond to different stimuli. Express themselves very differently, so
41 how to engage will vary according to the audience / psychological makeup of hopes
42 and fears.”

43
44 By making generalisations about how to effectively communicate climate change we are
45 missing these reactions, and in doing so we are arguably contributing to a perceived malaise
46 on the subject. Furthermore, but not working at the community level we are missing out on
47 all of the opportunities that these communities (and their individuals) present in terms of

1 developing effective dialogue around the negative effects of climate change and mobilising
2 collective action against them. Whatever the theoretical perspectives on how people's
3 opinions and values can be categorised, they are typically unable to recognise the very
4 particular circumstances that are present in individual communities. Nevertheless, each of
5 the three communities in this study represent effective allies towards the mitigation of
6 climate change. The Avonmouth Community Centre were willing to engage their own
7 member base and wanted to depoliticise climate change so that they could educate their
8 community how best to combat its negative effects. Disability Stockport understood the
9 social injustice of climate change and were willing to bring to task local government in order
10 to protect the vulnerable. The Manchester faith leaders were eager to use their positions
11 within their own communities to educate, support, and enact change. These are all positive
12 experiences and opportunities, which serve to highlight the question of why we are not
13 working with these communities instead of telling them what they should be doing and how
14 they should be feeling.

15

16 The approach that was adopted in this study has helped to give voice to a small selection of
17 different communities, and in doing so has helped us to better understand why there is no
18 'one-size-fits-all' approach to communicating climate change. It also highlighted why two-way
19 dialogues are needed to help capture and understand these approaches, as opposed to one-
20 way communications which can instead instil negative feelings and attitudes. By creating a
21 safe space in which dialogue could take place, these workshops helped to empower the
22 community members, and in using poetry as part of the process the participants were
23 presented with a creative approach to solidify their thoughts and communicate and discuss
24 them with others. The poetry also acted as a powerful tool in helping participants to explore
25 the lifeworlds of their associates and enabled them to reflect on what had been discussed
26 and what they might decide to do in the future. Whilst poetry can at times be perceived as
27 elitist and 'difficult', these workshops demonstrated that given the correct environment and
28 facilitation, writing poetry can instead be accessible and empowering. None of the workshops
29 participants had any issues in composing their poems, and indeed almost all of them took
30 great joy in creating and sharing them.

31

32 The creative nature of these workshops was enjoyed by all of the participants and
33 demonstrates how poetry can play a powerful role in helping to develop effective dialogue
34 around climate change. During the workshops, several of the participants noted that this kind
35 of activity should be run elsewhere and that it was needed to help ensure that all voices could
36 be heard. Based on these experiences the following recommendations are offered to people
37 wanting to adopt a similar approach:

38

- 39 1. These workshops need to happen in the communities themselves. It is not desirable
40 (both in terms of logistics and the creation of a safe space) for these workshops to
41 happen at a university or even a neutral venue;
- 42 2. Any workshop questions or planned exercises should be passed to a community
43 representative or gatekeeper in advance of the workshop, so that provisions can be
44 made to be fully inclusive;
- 45 3. In order for everyone to be equally involved in the discussions an upper limit of 10
46 people, or 10 people per facilitator, would be advisable;

- 1 4. The role of the facilitator is not to be overlooked. This needs to be someone who can
2 respond to questions, support groups discussions, assist in poetry writing, and quickly
3 synthesise information. Several facilitators, each with a slightly different specialism
4 (e.g. poetry writing and group discussions) might be advisable;
- 5 5. Having regular breaks, and creating an informal atmosphere helps to breed creativity
6 and also reinforce the notion of a safe space for all.

7
8 As discussed in Section 1, we hoped that by involving climate communications experts in the
9 workshop, we could demonstrate first-hand to them the diverse nature of the audiences and
10 publics that there were communicating with. In conversations with the experts following
11 these workshops this was clearly the case; in all instances it was useful to have someone who
12 could not only provide statistics and in-depth information if required to do so, but who could
13 also offer an alternative opinion and voice in terms of their own communities. In future
14 workshops it might also be worthwhile to include a climate communications expert who
15 identified as also being part of the community group that is being worked with, so as also to
16 provide local information and an additional representative voice.

17
18 This study is limited in its findings, in that we only report on the outcomes of three workshops
19 run in three different community groups. The findings would likely be very different were
20 these workshops to be run again but with different communities. However, this further serves
21 to underline the thesis of this study, i.e. that qualitative research at the community level is an
22 essential accompaniment to larger scale research projects that look at the way in which
23 climate change is communicated. One-off workshops were used in this study, as we believe
24 that it represents a model that could be most easily adopted by other researchers and for
25 other communities. Additionally, this study was not designed to monitor the long-term
26 impacts of these workshops; however, given the responses of the participants (and in
27 particular the comments made by the Avonmouth group – see Section 3.1), such a study
28 would likely yield interesting results. In addition to working with different communities and
29 monitoring any long-term impacts, future studies could also adopt a similar approach to
30 running workshops with several communities at a time. Furthermore, future workshops could
31 also involve an element of reading and discussing poetry that had already been written (either
32 by well-known poets, or by other communities in similar workshops) about issues that the
33 community identified as being important, as doing so would allow participants to explore and
34 discuss different perspectives and lifeworlds. As demonstrated in this study, the collaborative
35 poetry writing worked well in allowing participants to explore each other’s lived experiences
36 in a creative and non-confrontational manner. Such an approach would also likely be
37 successful in helping to bring together different (and perhaps opposed) communities by
38 enabling them to discuss their lifeworlds in this way, as was exemplified by workshop
39 involving the Manchester faith leaders (see Section 3.3).

40 41 5. Conclusion

42
43 This study has presented a framework for engaging communities in an effective dialogue
44 around the effects of climate change. In presenting the results of these discussions via three
45 case studies, we have also highlighted the need for such initiatives, both in terms of better
46 understanding the needs of these communities, and also the opportunities that they present
47 in mobilising effective action against the negative effects of climate change. In addition to the

1 specific needs and opportunities for each of these communities, this study has also
2 demonstrated how poetry can help community members to explore their own and each
3 other's lifeworlds in a creative environment, and in doing so has shown how workshops such
4 as these are an effective way of creating a safe space for discussion around climate change.
5

6 This approach has also provided evidence for how a dialogue model can help to break down
7 some of the barriers that are created via one-way communication exercises. By creating a
8 safe space in which dialogue could be established and individual voices could be heard and
9 listened to, the perceptions of 'experts' changed from untrustworthy to valued and reliable
10 sources of information. In developing this dialogue, it is vital to also realise the different roles
11 that individuals play within different communities, and when working with carers and other
12 gatekeepers a consideration needs to be given to how they too can be supported in
13 developing their own effective dialogues.
14

15 The three communities in this study represent only a small fraction of the different audiences
16 and publics that need to be engaged with, in order to effectively develop a dialogue around
17 communicating climate change and bringing about the changes that are needed for mitigation
18 against its negative effects. The small-scale, creative, and personal qualitative research that
19 is presented here is essential to help contextualise and develop larger impersonal
20 quantitative work, demonstrating that whilst we are multitudes we are also individuals, and
21 that all voices should be listened to and taken into account. Such engagement should not
22 simply be done as a box-ticking exercise but should be encouraged because diversity and
23 inclusion acts as a powerful tool for empowering citizens and enacting change (see e.g.
24 Stevens et al., 2008). By telling individuals what they can and cannot do, and how they can
25 and cannot feel in relation to climate change, we are arguably contributing to a feeling of
26 collective guilt that can entrench feelings of defensiveness and despair. By listening and giving
27 voice to each of these communities we can not only help to break down these barriers, but
28 in doing so can benefit from their unique skill sets and experiences as future allies in our battle
29 against anthropogenic climate change.
30

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32

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38

39 Author contributions

40

41 SI designed and delivered the workshops, analysed the responses, and co-wrote the paper.
42

43 AB, SC, AC, PF, RL, MLL, CM, HR, and ES helped design the workshops, analyse the responses,
44 and co-wrote the paper.
45

1 Competing financial interests

2

3 The authors declare that there are no competing financial interests. It should be noted that
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7

8

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7
8

1 Appendix

2

3 *There is no demographic information on this questionnaire for two reasons. Firstly, it assures*
4 *that the responses are fully anonymised. Secondly, we are interested at communicating with*
5 *people as people, and as such generalisations relating to gender, race, age, and any other*
6 *socio-demographic factors should be discouraged.*

7

8 **Pre-Workshop Questions**

9

10 Write down three random words. This question is needed to help analyse the responses.

11

12 What are the three most important issues that need addressing in your community?

13

14 Does climate change affect your community?

15

16 Does climate change affect you?

17

18 What is climate change?

19

20 How do you think climate change is currently communicated?

21

22 What do you want to know more about with respect to climate change?

23

24 How would you find out this information?

25

26

27 **Workshop Questions**

28

29 Write a list poem about the things in your community.

30

31 Write down one sentence that captures how you feel about your community.

32

33 Combine this sentence with a neighbour.

34

35 Combine this pair of sentences with another pair

36

37 Write a list poem about climate change.

38

39 Write down one sentence that captures how you feel about climate change.

40

41 Combine this sentence with a neighbour.

42

43 Combine this pair of sentences with another pair.

44

45 Write down one question that you have about climate change.

46

47

48

1 **Post-Workshop Questions**

2

3 What did you like about this workshop?

4

5 What could we have done differently?

6

7 What is climate change?

8

9 What do you want to know more about with respect to climate change?

10

11 How would you find out this information?

12

13

14

15