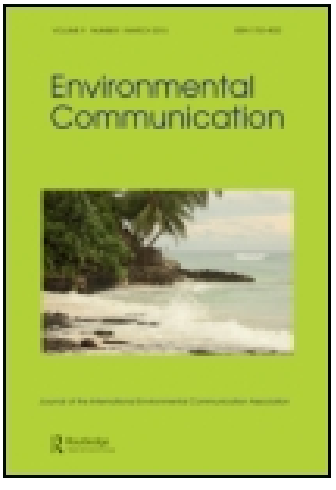

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Climate Refugees or Migrants? Contesting Media Frames on Climate Justice in the Pacific

Tanja Dreher & Michelle Voyer

Climate justice is rarely encountered in Australian media coverage of issues around climate change. The rare coverage of climate justice issues often focuses on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Kiribati and commonly makes use of four main media frames: SIDS as "proof" of climate change, SIDS as "victims" of climate change, SIDS communities as climate "refugees," and SIDS as travel destinations. Yet these frames undermine the desire of SIDS communities to be seen as proactive, self-determining, and active agents of change. This paper explores the way in which Pacific Islanders view the existing media coverage of their concerns over climate change and how they would prefer the media to tell their stories. Through an action research collaboration with a climate change non-governmental organization working in Kiribati and Australia, participants proposed alternative frames for climate justice media, including frames of human rights, active change agents, and migration with dignity.

Keywords: *framing; climate change; climate justice; media interventions*

> A Climate Justice approach will amplify the voices of those people who have done least to cause climate change, but who are affected most severely by it—Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 1997–2002. (Robinson, 2010)

Despite the prominence of climate change debates in global and national media, the climate justice approach advocated by former UN Human Rights High Commissioner Mary Robinson is all too rare. A central contention of the climate justice approach is that those who are most severely affected by global warming are not only those who have done the least to cause it—some of the least developed nations of the Global South (Doyle, 2011)—but are also those whose voices are least likely to be

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heard in international debates and negotiations around the impacts of climate change. "Climate justice" refers to claims for greater equality in both the distribution of climate change impacts, and among the participants in negotiations on suitable responses (Schmidt, 2012, p. 10). A key challenge for climate justice, therefore, is to ensure a hearing for those people and countries that face the impacts of global warming in their daily lives. In this paper we examine the media intervention work of Pacific Calling Partnership (PCP), a non-governmental organization (NGO) working with Pacific Island communities severely affected by climate change and aiming to amplify their voices.

Lakoff argues that the environmental movement needs effective and coherent framing in order to mobilize political action (2010). While much recent research examines the framing of environmental politics in various countries of the Global North (e.g. Brulle, 2010; Lakoff, 2010) this paper analyzes media frames advocated by an NGO working with people in the Global South who are directly impacted by climate change—specifically the people of Kiribati, a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) in the Pacific. This paper seeks to explore the way in which Pacific Islanders view the existing media coverage of their concerns over climate change and how they would prefer the media to tell their stories. This paper addresses the following research questions: how do people working at the forefront of climate change impacts in the Pacific respond to climate justice media coverage? What are their preferred media frames for representing climate change impacts for SIDS? And what are the challenges for a climate justice approach in the Australian media?

The emerging research in this area indicates that the voices of Pacific Islanders are rarely heard in climate change reporting, and climate change impacts in the Pacific are usually framed in ways that center the interests and concerns of more powerful countries, such as Australia. Influenced by action research traditions and grounded in recent scholarship on media interventions, our research sought to maximize opportunities for people working at the front line of climate change impacts in the Pacific to speak on their own terms and to mobilize their own preferred climate justice media frames. The academic literature identifies four frames in climate justice reporting of SIDS: SIDS as "proof" of climate change, SIDS as "victims" of climate change, SIDS citizens as climate change "refugees," and SIDS as travel destinations. Through a variety of qualitative research methods, PCP informants were able to respond to these media frames and propose alternatives, including frames of human rights, active change agents, and migration with dignity.

The selection of PCP is based in an emerging research agenda on media interventions and a commitment to action research. This approach is influenced by our own interest in climate justice; the research seeks to analyze and amplify the voices of people most impacted by climate change, who are rarely heard in mass media, or in academic scholarship. Research on media interventions investigates a very broad range of alternative media strategies whereby a variety of actors who are not media professionals seek to influence or intervene in media representations of their communities and/or issues of concern (Dreher, 2010; Howley, 2013). The focus

on media interventions responds to Couldry's call to "re-center" media studies around alternative media, broadly defined, in order to effectively grapple with the possibilities and limitations for media change (2001). Couldry theorizes the structured break between media producers and media consumers as a symbolic hierarchy in which symbolic power is concentrated in media institutions (Couldry, 2000, 2001). Following Bourdieu, symbolic power is understood as "the power of constructing reality," of naming and defining the social world (Bourdieu, 1991). Alternative media are significant precisely because they challenge and make visible media power "as a systematic structure of symbolic inclusion and exclusion" (Couldry, 2001, pp. 2–3). Media intervention projects such as PCP are significant, therefore, not primarily for their direct impact on mainstream media—which may well be limited—but for their ability to demonstrate that alternative ways of naming and framing the world are possible, and for revealing the exclusions of media power.

The PCP is an amalgam of Christian, community and educational organizations in Australia and the Pacific established in 2006 in response to calls from people in low-lying Pacific Islands. PCP aims to raise awareness and lobby for climate action on behalf of several Pacific Island nations, including Kiribati and Tuvalu. They do so by listening to local voices and amplifying these voices to new audiences. They describe themselves as representing "countries whose voice is usually lost in the din of the world" (Pacific Calling Partnership, 2012). The PCP thus aims to encapsulate the role of alternative media as theorized by Couldry (2001) and the climate justice approach advocated by Mary Robinson (2010)—seeking to "amplify the voices of those people who have done least to cause climate change, but who are affected most severely by it."

News Frames and Climate Change Impacts

The way news is constructed, organized, or presented, emphasizing some aspects while excluding or de-emphasizing others, is often described as "media framing" (Gitlin, 1980). "Frame analysis" was first developed by Goffman (1974) and assumes that frames establish "the fundamental categories in which thinking can take place. It establishes the limits of discussion and defines the range of problems that can be addressed" (Wuthnow, 1989, p. 13).

Like a window focusing attention on only one aspect of the landscape, frames call attention to some aspects of a news story while simultaneously directing attention away from other aspects. Framing can focus attention toward particular policies and interpretations and marginalize or exclude particular voices or solutions (e.g. Entman & Rojecki, 1993; Gitlin, 1980; Gamson, 1992). The framing of environmental issues in the media thus directs both thinking and action (Väliverronen, 2001, p. 41) and media framing "has a decisive role in defining risks and influencing what issues are to be put on the political agenda" (Jönsson, 2011, p. 121). Framing is particularly significant in the case of complex and uncertain risks such as environmental risks, including climate change, as these risks are largely invisible and beyond individual direct experience (Doyle, 2011; Jönsson, 2011, p. 123).

Attention to news frames emphasizes not merely *what* a story is about, but rather *how* that story is told. The news-making process can be understood as a struggle between sources and journalists in order to have a particular "framing" of events adopted in news reporting (Palmer, 2000, pp. 14–15). NGOs such as PCP aiming to amplify marginalized voices often seek to recognize dominant media framing of their issues and communities and develop alternative frames to better represent their preferred interpretations and responses (Palmer, 2000; Wallack, Dorfman, Jernigan, & Themba-Nixon, 1993).

Framing climate change

Climate change has emerged over the last decade as a global crisis that is scientifically and politically contested and as such has attracted considerable international media attention. The mass media have been implicated in the on-going debates over the authenticity or reliability of climate change phenomena in what has been described as the "Scientific Uncertainty" frame (Schmidt, 2012, p. 9). Many news outlets in Australia, the UK and the USA have contributed to the uncertainty around climate science through what has become known as "balance as bias" whereby they provide relatively equal coverage to climate scientists who support and question the likelihood of human-induced climate change despite the fact that the scientific field is not equally divided along these lines (Boykoff, 2008; Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004, 2007). Lakoff suggests that the phrase "climate change" is itself the product of a political strategy of the Bush administration in the USA, designed to reframe "global warming" into a less threatening frame which obscures the role of human causation (2010, p. 71).

Schmidt (2012) finds that scientific uncertainty around climate change is largely confined to the powerful Anglophone countries, and the USA in particular, while news media in Germany and India, for example, largely accept the scientific consensus and focus on debates about appropriate responses (see also Painter, 2011). In Australia, "balance as bias" remains a prevalent trend (Bacon, 2011; Chubb & Bacon, 2010). In April 2012 the national public broadcaster, the ABC, was accused of "false balance" in the production of a reality TV documentary which provided equal airtime for a young advocate for climate change action and a well-known climate skeptic (Ashley, 2012). The politics of climate change also features prominently in reporting both domestically and internationally through UN conferences such as Copenhagen, Cancun, Durban, and more recently Doha, where countries seek to reach some form of consensus on future action on climate change (Schmidt, 2012, p. 10).

Finally, natural disasters or extreme weather events are often linked in some way to climate change in news media (Boykoff, 2008; Lester, 2010). Climate change is therefore largely seen in the USA, UK, and Australian media as an environmental or political issue. Relatively little coverage is given to the human aspects of climate change. Examination of tabloid papers in the UK found that only a very small percentage of articles used frames of "justice and risk," which examined the uneven distribution of climate change risks within society. Journalists interviewed for the

study cited the complexities of such stories when compared with the more straightforward reporting of statements or movements of politicians or links between natural disasters and climate change. Tight deadlines and limited column inches contributed to this preference for simpler content (Boykoff, 2008).

Doyle argues that "one of the difficulties in engaging people with climate change is due to its historical framing as an environmental issue, which has led to a separation of humans and culture from the environment" (2011, p. 3). In particular, Doyle examines the "investment in the visible as evidence of truth" as characteristic of both science and environmentalism, resulting in an over-reliance on iconic or spectacular images to communicate the unseen and invisible characteristics of climate change (Beck, 1992). In response, Doyle locates Mary Robinson's climate justice challenge firmly in the arena of media framing:

> If climate change is framed as an issue of social justice, then the human costs of climate change as a result of the unequal distribution of, and access, to, natural resources, are brought to the fore. Framing climate change as a humanitarian and social justice issue constitutes a moral imperative to act. (2011, p. 6)

While the importance of shifting media frames toward climate justice is therefore increasingly acknowledged, the process by which this can be achieved can be difficult. How do those most severely impacted by climate change gain a voice in the media and how do they ensure their voices are heard?

Climate Justice and the Media

Despite the media framing that predominately treats climate change as an environmental or political issue, there is an increasingly recognition that it is also a social justice and human rights issue (Doyle, 2011; Schmidt, 2012). Climate justice claims in media debates, however, have yet to be systematically analyzed (Schmidt, 2012, p. 13). Preliminary research finds that climate justice features more prominently in media coverage in India than in the USA, with very different interpretations of the significance of historically unequal responsibility (Schmidt, 2012, pp. 17–19).

Some of the communities at the front line of the climate justice debate include SIDS. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) characterizes SIDS as vulnerable to climate change due to a range of factors including their small size, limited natural resources, proneness to natural disasters, relative isolation, and poorly developed infrastructure. Climate change threatens the citizens of these states through groundwater contamination by saltwater intrusion, coastal erosion, habitat loss, and associated food security issues (Cameron, 2011; Intergovernmental Panel Climate Change, 1997). A climate justice framework highlights the fact that developed countries such as Australia or the USA tend to be high per capita polluters, with energy-intensive lifestyles and economies, where the impacts of climate change are still emerging. SIDS, in contrast, tend to be low emitters, with limited electricity, cars, or other sources of carbon pollution, and yet the impacts of climate change on SIDS

are immediately evident and likely catastrophic. Despite this disparity, it is the developed nations that are the most powerful voices in debates over climate change action, while SIDS are marginalized in international negotiations (Ryan, 2010).

While coverage of climate justice issues is only slowly emerging in mainstream media in the USA, the UK, and Australia (Bacon 2011; Boykoff, 2008; Nerlich, Forsyth, & Clarke, 2012; Schmidt, 2012), there is some evidence that media interest in SIDS is growing. In recent years journalists, environmentalists, and documentary makers have converged on SIDS to gather footage of flooding, coastal erosion, and storm surges in an attempt to identify where global climate change theory intersects with local people (Cameron, 2011; Farbotko, 2010b).

This paper examines the way the Australian media frames climate justice in relation to the work of a small NGO, the climate justice advocacy group PCP. It begins by outlining dominant media frames relating to climate justice and their role in the reporting of the work of the PCP. It goes on to explore PCP responses to these frames and the alternative or preferred frames developed by PCP respondents as part of the action research process.

Research Approach and Methods

This study employed a mix of qualitative methods underpinned by action research principles. Action research is well established in the fields of public health and education (Mullett & Fletcher, 2011) and is increasingly adopted in media and communication studies (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1996; Tacchi, Foth & Hearn, 2003). Rather than a single methodology, action research is an approach which positions research as a contribution to social change and seeks to challenge inequalities as well as analyzing exclusions (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1996). Action research aims to democratize the research process by breaking down the hierarchy between research subjects and researchers, by giving voice to the expertise and input of participants in the research, prioritizing the co-creation of knowledge and by ensuring research outcomes which are useful to participating individuals and/or organizations as well as to academic researchers (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1996; Machin-Mastromatteo, 2012; Mullett & Fletcher, 2011; Tacchi et al., 2003). As Herr and Anderson stress, action research "tempers expert knowledge with the expertise of locals [or participants] about their own problems or solutions" (2005, pp. 9–10). Action research therefore does not aim for objective distance from research participants, but rather seeks to maximize opportunities for collaboration and mutual learning, for community development and social change outcomes. The action research aim to facilitate change and improve practice (Machin-Mastromatteo, 2012, p. 572) was deemed essential in researching media and climate justice, where the challenge issued by former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, is to amplify the voices of those who have done least to contribute to climate change, but are the most severely affected.

The qualitative methods employed in this study included interviews and participant observation. A literature search of research articles relating to "climate

change" and "climate justice," "Small Island States" and "Pacific Islands," and other related search terms was conducted. This search revealed a limited but emerging field of scholarly research into climate justice, much of which included discussion of the role of the media in communicating the issues around climate change for vulnerable communities such as SIDS. A review of this literature identified regular references to dominant media frames in discussions about any media coverage relating to climate justice. These frames have been summarized and explored in detail below. The validity of this categorization of frames was tested by conducting a Factiva/Google search, using the search terms "climate change" and "Pacific." This search incorporated Australian news media between the dates of January 2010 and January 2012 and found readily available examples of each of the four frames the literature review identified. The Factiva search was then narrowed to specifically analyze the media surrounding the work of the PCP by refining the search terms to "Pacific Calling Partnership," and other terms directly relevant to the work of the PCP (including the names of key activists and staff within the organization). Content analysis was used to identify the key media frames in these articles to determine whether they conformed to the dominant frames identified in the literature review.

A series of five semi-structured depth interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of staff and volunteers at PCP. Interviews were conducted at the PCP offices, lasting 1–1.5 hours per interview. The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and analyzed thematically. Transcripts were returned to interviewees for clarification and further comments. The interviews discussed the role the media play in the organization's efforts to "listen" and "amplify" Pacific voices. Interviewees included Phil Glendenning, the Director of the Edmund Rice Centre, the Catholic social justice advocacy group that established the PCP. They also included PCP Eco-Justice Coordinator Jill Finnane and three I-Kiribati staff and/or volunteers working with the PCP on climate justice issues: Maria Chi-Fang (PCP Outreach Officer), Kateia Kei Kei (PCP Outreach officer), and Kooba Kakiaman (PCP Volunteer).

In addition participant observation was conducted at a range of PCP events including screening of documentary films and workshop sessions, as well as monitoring the PCP email newsletter. A research diary was used to record notes and observations on public statements by PCP members, and the responses of audiences. The project also included action research activities, whereby University of Wollongong (UOW) researchers and the PCP collaborated on the organization of two media advocacy events. These included a public forum held at the UOW, jointly organized by the researchers and the PCP, which directly addressed the role of media in the work of PCP and how Pacific Islanders responded to the dominant media frames identified in media coverage of their stories. The second event was a Morning Tea with journalists organized in the lead-up to the UN Climate talks in Doha during December 2012. At each event, UOW researchers were involved as organizers, facilitators, and speakers alongside PCP staff. Through these processes the researchers were in regular contact with PCP over a 12-month period, with the opportunity to observe and discuss media strategies at close quarters.

The action research principles adopted allowed findings to emerge that had not been predicted by the researchers at the outset, and ensured practical outcomes for the research partners, PCP. For example, planning for the public forum held at UOW clarified PCP responses to the dominant media frames analyzed below. In preparing for the workshop, the UOW researchers presented to PCP staff the four frames identified via literature review. This precipitated a discussion in which PCP workers responded to the dominant climate justice media frames and explained their concerns. Following this discussion, PCP Outreach Officer Kateia KeiKei developed a PowerPoint presentation for the public forum that clearly and succinctly outlined the responses and suggested alternative framings. This process produced valuable outcomes for the researchers, as issues raised in the interviews were clarified, and further data were made available for analysis. The process also produced valuable outcomes for PCP in the form of a public audience and opportunities to refine media strategies.

Dominant Media Frames

A literature review of scholarly research into climate justice issues identified regular references to dominant media frames in Australian media coverage relating to climate justice. These have been categorized into four main themes, outlined below.

SIDS as "proof" of climate change

The dominance of debates over the legitimacy and accuracy of climate change science in the political and scientific arena has led to a conflicted and highly contested account of what constitutes the "truth" of climate change (Boykoff, 2008; Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007; Cameron, 2011; Cohen, 2012). In response to this confusion a range of international environmentalists and journalists have sought to uncover this "truth" by producing "eye witness" accounts of climate change impacts, facilitated by online news and social media (Cameron, 2011). This has focused global attention on parts of the world considered most vulnerable to climate change including SIDS, such as Tuvalu and Kiribati in the Pacific. Examples of the "proof of climate change" framing include a 2010 newspaper report, "Kiribati to show the world effects of climate change" previewing an upcoming meeting on Kiribati: "About 40 officials from around the world will fly to the tiny atoll nation of Kiribati next week to take a look at the immediate impact climate change is having on the Pacific nation" (AAP, 2010).

SIDS as "victims" of climate change

Another common framing of SIDS communities presents them as "victims" of climate change. Framing islanders in this way is an attempt to link personal ethics and compassion to people both geographically and temporally removed, including future generations (Cameron, 2011; Farbotko, 2010b). The articles draw attention to the many challenges that SIDS communities face and often link them with personal

stories of suffering (Farbotko, 2005, 2010b). In a recent example, ABC Radio featured a report called "A sinking feeling in the Torres Straits" which described the impacts including king tides washing raw sewerage into freshwater lagoons, the growing mosquito population, associated malarial risks, and crumbling sea walls (Cohen, 2012).

SIDS citizens as climate change "refugees"

As climate change threatens the continued habitability of many low-lying islands, attention has turned to how they will be accommodated if sea-level rise and salt water intrusion forces the relocation of SIDS communities. This has led to the identification of SIDS communities as a new and evolving category of refugee—the environmental or climate change refugee (Farbotko, 2005, 2010b; Farbotko & Lazrus, 2012; McNamara & Gibson, 2009). These terms are used to refer to communities and individuals who are forced to move as a result of the impacts of climate change, whether as a result of rising sea levels in the Pacific or increasing drought in parts of Africa. There are numerous examples of this framing in mass media circulations, including a 2012 publication in the *Sydney Morning Herald* "Climate change castaways consider move to Australia," which identifies Australia as a potential home for "a mass wave of climate refugees seeking a new place to live" (Doherty, 2012).

SIDS as travel destinations

Finally, some media promote island locations as a travel destinations encouraging travelers to "see it before it's gone" (Farbotko, 2010a; Farbotko & Lazrus, 2012). For example, in 2006 a story appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*'s Travel section under the title "Toodle-oo Tuvalau!," detailing the unspoilt beauty of the country with "not a single fast-food outlet, and more fresh fish then you can poke a rod at" (Balmain, 2006). Portraying Pacific Islands in this way objectifies islanders as tourism commodities and while it may provoke compassionate responses in the tourists it attracts it also presents a problematic irony in that the travelers arrive via polluting aircraft (Farbotko, 2010a).

Responding to Media Frames

The name "Pacific Calling Partnership" reflects the organization's aims to listen out for Pacific voices, and then to amplify their calls. According to PCP Eco-Justice coordinator Jill Finnane, the PCP grew out of workshops conducted in Kiribati to educate Islanders about mangrove planting, composting and the like. The workshop concluded with a video on global warming, prompting Finnane to apologize for the Australian Government's then failure to sign the Kyoto protocol. She asked the workshop participants if they had a message for the Australian Government—these were recorded on butcher's paper and are now kept, laminated, as the organization's

"sacred texts." The PCP thus began with a commitment to listen out for Pacific voices and amplify them to the world, rather than bringing expertise or education from Australia to Kiribati.

Despite the growing media interest in their plight, Pacific Island nations and other SIDS often feel that their voices are rarely heard and if so, seldom listened to (Kelman, 2010; Paton & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010; Ryan, 2010). Much of the media surrounding these islands are aimed at what Cameron (2011) classifies as "consumer-driven modes of citizenship" or "ecological citizenship" in which individual lifestyle choices are located within a global context. Therefore, the use of the Islanders' stories are not always directly used to the advantage of the Islanders themselves but rather to illustrate a point in a much larger story, focused on the lifestyles and choices of people in the wealthy developing nations. In addition Farbotko and Lazrus (2012) argue that many of these frames impose western views of nature and the "noble savage" on SIDS and SIDS communities, views that are not always consistent with the cultural beliefs and practices of Islanders. This study identifies the ways in which Pacific Islanders viewed the media coverage of their concerns over climate change and how they would prefer the media to tell their stories.

PCP Preferred Frames for Media and Climate Justice

Regular interactions including formal interviews, action research, and participant observations served to identify a number of key concerns in regard to the climate justice media frames discussed above, as well as the preferred frames put forward by Pacific Islanders and their advocates in response to those dominant frames. Rather than framing the story of Kiribati as "victims" or "proof" of climate change, PCP Outreach Officer Kateia KeiKei challenged the media to "portray us as human beings, as real people with dignity and dreams for the future."

Human rights rather than instrumental "proof" of climate change

SIDS provide tangible evidence of climate change and point to their potentially destructive impacts (Cameron, 2011; Farbotko, 2005, 2010a, 2010b; Farbotko & Lazrus, 2012; Kelman, 2010; Paton & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010). Yet Farbotko and Lazrus (2012) argues that much of this coverage is focused more on planetary salvation than the welfare of the islands and islanders themselves and that, in fact, the fate of these islands is incidental, even welcomed, by some within the international community as it is seen as providing evidence to assist in their more global campaigns on climate change action.

In response to the "proof of climate change" frame, advocates involved with PCP asked for respect of the right to exist, arguing that Kiribati and I-Kiribati are more than simply "proof" of climate change for a skeptical world. In slides prepared for the public workshop held at the UOW in 2012, Kateia KeiKei argued for a human rights framing: "by presenting our needs and human rights as important—we are not just proof of what developed countries will face."

In a study of human rights framing in reporting on the global financial crisis (GFC), Chalabi (2010) finds that the GFC was rarely framed in human rights terms, in part because news conventions assume that human rights are esoteric or "soft news" in contrast to the "hard news" of financial indicators and economics. Pacific Islanders face a comparable challenge, in which the physical evidence of climate change impacts on their islands is considered newsworthy, yet the wider human rights implications are rarely addressed. Interviewees identified climate change skepticism in Australia as a key challenge in effectively disseminating their messages and effecting change. The bid to have the voices of Pacific Islanders heard is repeatedly frustrated by media attention focused on the debates over the veracity of human-induced climate change and the government's policy position on climate action:

> the climate issues in Australia are so stark at the moment that there's very little room for the Pacific story. (Jill Finnane, Eco Justice co-ordinator, PCP)

PCP staff and volunteers had concerns over the use of Pacific Islands as the analogous "canary in the coalmine" in public debates on the science of climate change. Partly these concerns centered on the sensationalist element of some media coverage that would potentially expose the group to criticism and detract from the seriousness of the message. The insidious and gradual nature of climate change impacts mean that the "proof" of climate change is often less dramatic than the images that are sought by news media outlets. At the PCP Morning Tea for journalists there was a thoughtful discussion of the pros and cons of attempting to generate media attention around the king tides expected in February 2013. While there was general agreement that the visuals would be compelling and effective, there was also concern that such images leave the organization open to criticisms that they are "exaggerating" or sensationalizing the everyday impacts. PCP members are regularly confronted by climate skeptics and this engenders a degree of caution and difficult strategizing in determining the most appropriate images and stories to pitch to media.

The members of PCP acknowledged, however, that in order for action on climate change to be generated, there is a need to address climate change skepticism, and they saw their stories as being a powerful and convincing tool:

> I know that climate change is not something that people are just making up, even though there are so many skeptic people! And even though they don't believe in climate change, but I really feel that when you go to the place, to the island, and live with the people and see it and experience it yourself, then you know. (Maria Chi-Fang, PCP outreach officer)

> And I think that's the only way we can tell our stories, because nobody can argue our own personal stories and experiences, and I find that very effective. They listen and then how can they argue? (Kateia KeiKei, PCP outreach officer)

The members of the PCP therefore felt that the Pacific Islands provided an opportunity for the world to look into the future and see where climate change could take the planet in an effort to stimulate action. Thus PCP participants recognized the value of telling the stories of Kiribati in the context of "proof" of

climate change, yet they were also concerned that their intrinsic value as a nation, culture, and community should be recognized. They drew attention to the fact that the canary in the coalmine dies before the miners are alerted to the problem and were concerned that casting SIDS as proof of climate change undermined their fundamental right to exist and to continue to exist:

> The greater challenge is those who aren't denialists, who are believers, but are pragmatists and want to say, "Well, we'll just pack up those people and take them somewhere else." […] there's a deeper challenge in allowing the people of Kiribati to be self-determining, in a place they'd like to be self-determining. (Phil Glendenning, Director, Edmund Rice Centre)

The key challenge revealed by PCP responses to the "proof of climate change" frame is to ensure that climate justice reporting can fully represent the human rights and desire for self-determination of Pacific Islanders, rather than reducing their story to its instrumental shock value for complacent wealthier nations.

Active change agents rather than "victims" of climate change

Many SIDS resist being labeled "victims" of climate change, recognizing the risk of vulnerability being equated with helplessness or powerlessness (Kelman, 2010; Paton & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010). In response to the "victims" of climate change frame, people from Kiribati wish to actively participate in decision-making processes that will determine their fate and act early rather than leaving it until crisis point when control is often lost. In her presentation for the public workshop, Kateia KeiKei opened with a focus on agency: "we are active/able agents doing the best we can to adapt" superimposed over an image of an I-Kiribati constructing a sea wall. "Young and old," she explained "are seeking knowledge about the best ways to adapt. We are agents of change advocating for better responses to climate change." This "change agents" frame was illustrated with examples of solar power projects being developed in Kiribati and Tuvalu. Island communities such as Kiribati are dealing with a range of issues related to climate change, including saltwater intrusion into groundwater that threatens drinking water supplies and the ability of islanders to grow food crops. They are also experiencing coastal erosion, prolonged drought, and the decline in availability of seafood resources, which they link to warming water. The challenges are compounding on preexisting challenges of over population and poverty and causing health concerns among the Kiribati community.

Despite these profound challenges, Kiribati is responding by actively developing and implementing mitigation and adaptation strategies such as mangrove planting, installation of solar power, and lobbying developed nations on climate action. They preferred to be seen as "people of hope" (Kateia KeiKei) rather than powerless or helpless victims.

The members of the PCP made an important distinction in how they saw the role of Australia in the fight to save Pacific Islands such as Kiribati. They made it clear in the interviews and the workshop presentation that they were looking for assistance to

manage the problem and develop their own adaptation and defense solutions not for Australia to "be" the solution. The change agents frame positions Kiribati and Australia as partners, rather than the hierarchical dependency relationship of charity offered to "victims":

> We are trying to make our approach as almost like a teamwork, trying to have a team work with the government, or with the people, the audience. (Maria Chi-Fang, PCP outreach officer)

There was also a concern that being seen as victims would undermine the willingness of developed countries to take decisive action on climate change, if they saw the outcome as inevitable or the cause as hopeless:

> but to say to people, "It's not hopeless." *They* don't believe it's hopeless. They believe that they have a right to live on their island home and bring their children up where their ancestors are buried, which is exactly what Australians want, and things can be done about this. We can put the proper processes, adaptation and mitigation in place, buy another fifty years. (Phil Glendenning, Director, Edmund Rice Centre)

PCP responses to being framed as "victims" of climate change thus reveal another key challenge for climate justice media reporting—to approach SIDS as partners in negotiating climate change responses, rather than as victims in need of rescue by more powerful countries.

"*Migration with dignity*" *rather than climate change refugees*

Farbotko and Lazrus (2012) argue that the "climate refugee" narrative not only entrenches established power imbalances by depicting Pacific Island communities as "victims" requiring salvation (with the focus often on the capacity of the host country to respond rather than the welfare of the Islanders themselves), but it also fails to acknowledge the historical and cultural importance of migration in the lives of nations such as Tuvalu and Kiribati. For many Pacific island communities migration is already "ordinary practices of everyday life" (2012, p. 388) and does not in itself represent a crisis for communities who maintain their culture and way of life across a vast network of shifting localities around the globe. Rather the loss of sovereignty, agency, and self-determination are key concerns related to the possibility of forced migration—concerns which can be lost in debates over "refugee" intakes (Farbotko & Lazrus, 2012).

Of all the media frames commonly used to depict Pacific Island people in mainstream media, "climate refugees" was the frame rejected most vigorously by participants. The PCP members interviewed both from Australia and Kiribati were concerned that this terminology was inappropriate for this situation, as explained by Jill Finnane:

> (they said) "We don't want to be refugees. We want a proper, structured, migration program. We want to be educated so that we can come as contributing citizens … we are not in fear of our government, or a war, or persecution. None of those

> things are happening. The very country that we want to go to is the one that is causing the problem in the first place!" … we kept making an issue of it because it was such an emotional, really important thing to people from Kiribati and Tuvalu and other Pacific Islands. (Jill Finnane, Eco Justice co-ordinator, PCP)

Indeed, the term "climate refugees" is critiqued by some experts in the field of international refugee law, such as Jane McAdam who argues that "the governments of Kiribati or Tuvalu are not persecuting their people … the terminology is completely wrong" (Hannan, 2011). Francois Gemenne has found resistance to the term "climate refugees" in a diverse range of contexts, including among survivors of Hurricane Katrina in the southern USA (Gemenne, 2010).

PCP advocates highlight that the people of Kiribati want to stay in their homelands. If circumstances dictate otherwise the I-Kiribati people would prefer any necessary relocation to be managed in a dignified, well-planned, and orderly manner—which includes gaining employment and being an active part of the community to which they relocate. As Kateia KeiKei explained to the UOW public workshop, "relocation is an option of last resort. We want 'migration with dignity.'" KeiKei underscored her argument with reference to a classic Getty Images photo captioned "rising sea levels are threatening the culture and continuity of the Kiribati people, forcing them to relocate" and depicting a small speed boat carrying a dozen Islanders. In response Kei Kei argued, "I don't want to be portrayed in this way. The people of Kiribati and other Pacific islands will never be forced to leave their countries. Offshore relocation is not happening right now. It will be the last resort. It isn't what we want."

Interviewees felt an important distinction between refugees and climate change migration was that climate change was predictable and preventable and steps can be taken now to avoid it, which is not always the case in instances of war and persecution that force people to flee their countries with little or no notice. They also felt that if the worst-case scenario eventuated, and islands like Kiribati became uninhabitable, migration could be planned for well in advance to ensure the islanders made a smooth transition into their new countries:

> The Kiribati government is trying to educate the young people of Kiribati, so that if they move out, or if they are forced to move out because of climate change, at least they have the skills to share in their second home. (Maria Chi-Fang, PCP outreach officer)

Here again, PCP responses to media framing of "climate refugees" present a challenge for climate justice media representations. The challenge is to represent the agency and aspirations of those at the forefront of climate change impacts.

Challenges for Climate Justice Media

Just as Lakoff argues that it matters how we frame the environment and global warming (2010), advocates for SIDS suggest that it matters how we frame climate change impacts and the people most affected. In responding to the dominant climate

justice media frames and suggesting alternatives, people working with PCP highlight a number of challenges for media to amplify the voices of those most affected. Unsurprisingly, the relatively low level of climate justice framing in the Australian media remains a key challenge for PCP. Perhaps more surprising is the persistent challenge of responding to climate change skepticism in Australian media coverage. Most significantly, the media intervention work of the PCP has developed critiques of even the limited coverage of climate justice in mainstream media. Each of these three challenges is discussed in turn.

While PCP has been established since 2006 they have a relatively low media profile. A Factiva search between 2006 and 2012 resulted in 35 responses (excluding duplicates and reports of less than one line), of which about a third (12) occurred during 2011, meaning prior to 2011 the organization featured on average approximately four times per year. In 2011 the media exposure of the PCP increased considerably when they became involved in the development of a documentary on the impacts of climate change in Kiribati, "The Hungry Tide" directed by well-known filmmaker Tom Zubrycki. Since that time media coverage has remained relatively low (seven reports in 2012–2013) in Australia, and overseas. While the number of reports on the work of the PCP has not increased significantly over time the more recent articles have tended to be more detailed and inclusive of the preferred PCP media frames. Content analysis of the articles from 2010 to 2013 indicates that the PCP has had some success in shifting the emphasis of news articles in which they feature toward their preferred frames (Table 1). However, there remains clear interest in the reports examined to continue to frame the voices of the Pacific as "victims" or "proof" of climate change.

Despite the PCP's continuing efforts and savvy strategizing, their preferred climate justice frames remain marginal at best in mainstream Australian media. Indeed, while the PCP seeks to amplify the unheard voices of climate change impacts, highly vocal climate skeptics remain one of the most significant challenges for the organization, and for the I-Kiribati spokespeople in particular. During the interviews Maria Chi-Fang recounted a recent experience at a community presentation by climate change scientists. In the Q&A session after the presentation Maria rose to speak of the challenges her country was facing and to ask a question of the scientists:

Table 1. Occurrence of key media frames in articles or radio transcripts featuring the work or representatives of the PCP (January 2010 to July 2013).

	Dominant frames			Preferred frames		
	Proof of climate change	Victims	Refugee	Right to exist	Agents	Migration
Number of articles/ transcripts in which media frame occurred	7	3	1	6	5	2

> there are so many skeptics and they were, like, booing and "Oh, another lie, another story, Oh, we've heard that before." I was very, very angry and very frustrated and I was just sitting there in tears. If only those people could come to my country or—not just Kiribati, but to other developing countries, very poor countries, and low-lying countries, they will know that climate change is real. (Maria Chi-Fang, PCP outreach officer)

This quote again demonstrates the conflicted position in which PCP activists find themselves—where "proving" the reality of climate change is a barrier to meaningful discussions about avoidance or mitigation responses, a barrier that frequently requires them to offer themselves as evidence to a doubting public. PCP staff and volunteers are keenly aware of the emotional toll on I-Kiribati who are constantly questioned by climate change skeptics at public events and in the media. Rather than setting the agenda and framing the issue, in many cases PCP spokespeople are asked to respond to a media agenda in which they feel uncomfortable and vulnerable to attack. The on-going debate around climate science means that I-Kiribati and their representatives can be questioned on the intricacies of scientific debates and evidence, or the "facts" around rising sea levels and temperatures, salinity, and predictions. One example of this can be found in the online responses of readers to a news article published in the local newspaper *Illawarra Mercury* in relation to the PCP event at UOW. These responses were dominated by skepticism about the reality of climate change and included a comment from one reader, "So the world changes and we are condemned for not giving them money? Go home" (Wachsmuth, 2012). These comments indicate the animosity of the debates over climate change and the extent of the challenge for shifting climate justice frames.

Most significantly, the preferred climate justice media frames put forward by PCP advocates reveal challenges for the small amount of media coverage which does address climate change as a humanitarian or social justice concern, as advocated by Doyle (2011). Many Pacific Islanders are highly critical of media frames which focus on humanitarian impacts of climate change, yet do so via framing which positions SIDS as "victims" or "proof" of climate change and potential "climate change refugees." While media attention to the human costs of climate change impacts is indeed a vital corrective to the more usual separation of humans and the environment (Doyle, 2011), PCP advocates argue that climate justice media must fully represent the agency and aspirations of those at the forefront of climate change impacts. This entails foregrounding the intrinsic human rights and desire for self-determination of Pacific Islanders, and engaging with SIDS as partners in negotiation, rather than framing them as helpless or hopeless victims.

Conclusion

The media advocacy work of PCP identifies "missing" or underutilized frames for media reporting of climate change impacts. These preferred frames focus on key concepts of human rights and the people of SIDS as active "change agents" developing climate change response strategies including "migration with dignity."

Our research suggests that while climate justice framing is rare in Australian media coverage of climate change, these climate justice framings advocated by SIDS themselves are rarer still. As climate change remains the focus of on-going media attention, the challenge put forward by former UN Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson remains largely unanswered. In order to "amplify the voices of those affected most severely by climate change," the dominant media frames of environment and politics must be shifted to accommodate climate justice frames as well. The work of the PCP foregrounds a further challenge: to develop climate justice frames that highlight the agency and dignity of Pacific Islanders addressing climate change impacts.

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