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### Psychological Apathy on Climate Change

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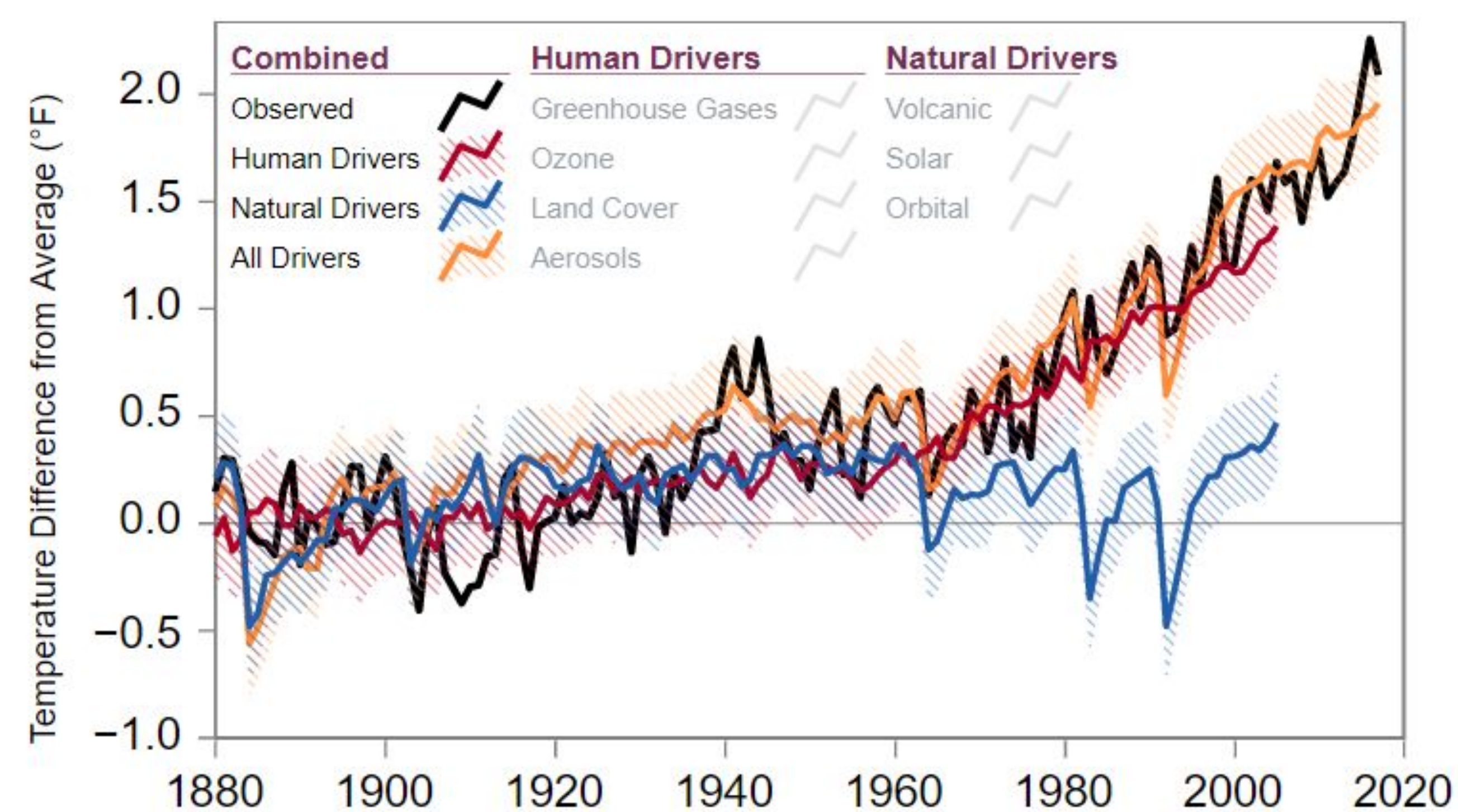


# Climate Change: Cognitive Dissonance and Apathy

## Background

Climate change is something that affects the whole globe. If actions aren't taken against it, the consequences will be felt by everyone and be irreversible after a certain point. I explore and suggest that there is a connection between the apathy people feel towards climate change and the psychological concept of cognitive dissonance. Without addressing cognitive dissonance, movements against climate change won't progress much further than it has currently.

Human and Natural Influences on Global Temperature



Reidmiller, D. (2017). *Human and Natural Influences on Global Temperature* [Chart]. National Climate Assessment. <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/2/>

## Method

- Conducted research reviews on the topics of **climate change** and **cognitive dissonance**.
- Gathered **personal stories** about experience with climate change

## Results

- Cognitive dissonance is a phenomenon that is a byproduct of evolution. Cognitive dissonance is the **uncomfortable feeling when dealing with something contradictory**, whether it be between beliefs and actions or between beliefs and the truth. The typical method to remove these uncomfortable feelings is to deny the contradictions by ignoring it, putting the blame/responsibility onto others, or just distracting themselves from the issue that is causing this feeling.
- Cognitive dissonance manifests itself in many different forms, most commonly of which are **denial** and **displacement**. These are common reactions people have when addressed with climate change too. There are people who claim that **climate change doesn't exist** and others that say they **support the fight against climate change** but **don't do anything** about it, sometimes verbally stating that **others** (e.g. the government or organizations) should be the ones to **deal with this issue**.
- When asked about climate change, most people only knew the basics like what can **cause** climate change and what can **result** from climate change. Few people thought about what can be **done** with climate change/solutions. There are many people who understand the basics of climate change but they don't change their lifestyle choices because others in society don't make the sacrifice themselves. There's also the group of people who feel like their actions **don't make a significant difference**.

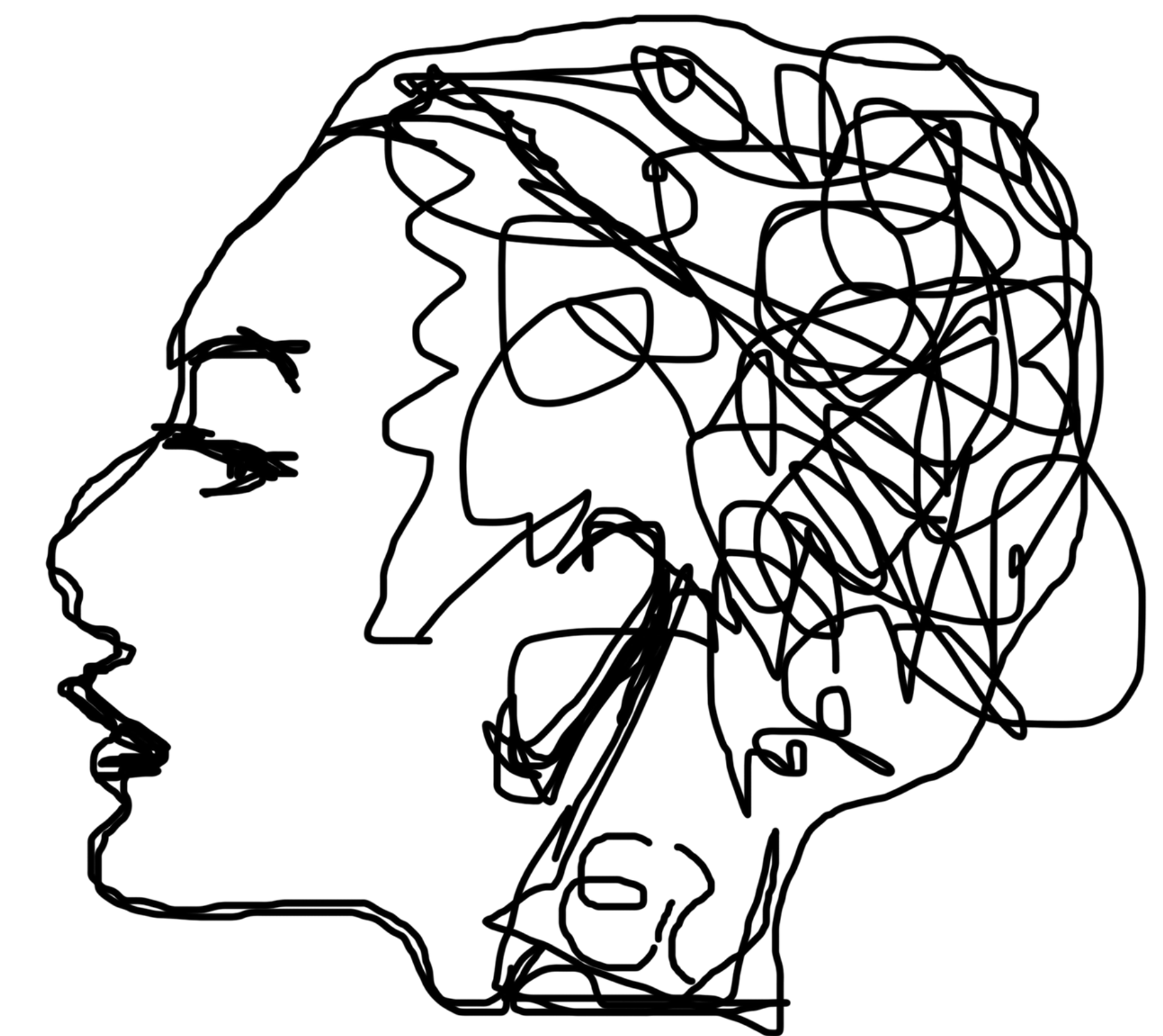


Falconer, S. (2017). *Hidden Stories* [Digital Collage]. Inspiration Grid. <https://theinspirationgrid.com/hidden-stories-amazing-illustrations-by-sam-falconer/>

## Main Findings/Conclusion

The traits exhibited as a result of cognitive dissonance matches up with the reactions towards climate change. However, **cognitive dissonance is immensely difficult to overcome**, being a byproduct of evolution and being inbuilt into our nature as humans. In fact, most people are unaware of the effects of cognitive dissonance since it can be manifested at a subconscious level. It seems the best answer to cognitive dissonance is to be a **more open-minded person**. This is an issue because cognitive dissonance can manifest itself as denial which is the opposite of being open-minded. My research hopes to spread awareness of this issue so further research can be done on combating cognitive dissonance and the relationship with climate change. Although I do not have the ability to help people get rid of cognitive dissonance, I hope that a digital exhibit that outlines the findings of my research will help spread awareness about the issue.

Riva E. (2017). *Psychology Mind Thoughts* [Digital]. Pixabay. <https://pixabay.com/illustrations/psychology-mind-thoughts-thought-2422442/>



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