

Michael E. Mann's *The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars*

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In his book (2012), *The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars* Michael E. Mann, one of the world's most renowned and prolific climate change scientists, discusses his own journey of shifting from a skeptical climatologist to an outspoken advocate of evidence for human-caused climate change.

Mann has a way of writing that condenses complex issues into something easily readable. By mixing in his own experiences in the field as well as small anecdotes from his childhood and early career, Mann makes the issue of climate change more human, more relatable.

In his early career, Mann worked with other scientists to create a graph depicting global temperature during the last 1,000 years – later to be known as the 'Hockey Stick' – that would not only jumpstart his own career but would also direct the climate change discourse for years to come. Over the past two decades – the formative period where the issue of climate change has begun to cling to public consciousness – Mann and his colleagues have been beleaguered by fellow 'scientists' and badgered by government and public officials. However, they have also been supported and encouraged for their honest and necessary efforts to inform the world about the reality of climate change – it is definitely happening and humans have had an undeniable impact on global climate change.

The publication of the 'Hockey Stick' graph was normal procedure for a group of climate change scientists. However, the widespread publicity it received outside of the expected academic journals jettisoned their research into the public eye where it remained, despite the best efforts of parties ranging from fossil fuel industry executives to homegrown skeptics, as a foreboding fixture in the global discourse of climate change.

In the book's *Prologue*, Mann introduces the readers to the 'war' that informs the book's title. The 'Hockey Stick' was published, revised, and published again in the 2001 IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) assessment report, leading to the graph's international recognition. By 2009, climate change scientists were beginning to win.

After years of hard work and evidence-based, peer-reviewed scientific progress, Mann and his colleagues were finally starting to peak in public consciousness. However, the

opposition forces – mostly composed of secret politicians with their hands deep in the pockets of the fossil fuel industry – used the information taken from Mann and his colleagues to mount the strongest counter-attack in the war thus far. He and his colleagues' emails were hacked by an unknown server and their information was manipulated and disseminated in an attempt to sabotage climate change science. It is a fitting beginning to a book that focuses on the truth of climate change and the so-called battles that have taken place over the years to make sure the truth about climate change is available and accurate.

The 'Hockey Stick' graph of global temperature increase, based on several different studies from various parts of the world, attempts to roughly outline the undeniable impact that humanity has had on the changing climate. The graph does not undermine the fact that there are natural cycles that influence temperature fluctuation in general. El Niño and La Niña are common knowledge. However, the graph shows the definitive impact that humanity – specifically in congruence with the rise of industrialization – has had on the recent increase in temperature over the past few decades. Hence, the name 'Hockey Stick' refers to the shape of the graph with the end abruptly curving upwards to demarcate the anthropogenic forces involved in the unprecedented climate change that has become a global reality over the last few decades.

As the first chapter of his book *Born in a War* infers, the global climate change discourse is controversial. It means we have to change the way we live. It means that the critics about industrialization may be right. To borrow from Al Gore's more or less informative catch phrase, climate change is an *inconvenient truth*. It is not easy to hear, to digest, or to understand. A graph as simple as the 'Hockey Stick' serves to drive the reality of climate change home.

Initially published as a project with his colleagues at the University of Massachusetts (U.S.) coincidentally on International Earth Day in 1998, Mann's work was picked up by popular media outlets in the U.S. such as *Time* and *Rolling Stone* magazines. Rather than remaining hidden in the annals of academic journals, his work was immediately put in the public eye, receiving both positive and negative attention. Although the climate war was already raging, Mann's contribution stoked the flames of both sides of the argument. Sticking with the metaphor of a climate 'war,' the 'Hockey Stick' graph was the heavy artillery for the supporters of climate change having anthropogenic causes.

After the publication of the 'Hockey Stick,' the tit-for-tat tactics from both sides of the war began. Large institutions, such as the Global Climate Coalition (GCC) – a coalition formed in the late 1980s by more than fifty companies and trade associations representing an array of exploitative industries – were at the forefront of the opposition. The 'deniers' (a name given to those who continue to deny the reality of climate change) attempted to snub Mann's credentials, essentially undermining the academic tradition of peer-review, a pillar in the scientific community for centuries.

Counter-arguments were published across the internet as well as suspiciously finding its way into some well-respected academic journals, creating a well-armed opposition. In his book, Mann refers to this constant struggle to defend the truth about climate change against the 'deniers' as fighting a Hydra, a creature from Greek mythology that continuously sprouts new heads in battle, making it nearly impossible to defeat.

By 2009, the climate change argument was beginning to shift in favor of Mann and his colleagues. Extreme weather conditions coupled with some definitive supporting arguments in favor of human-caused climate change were making waves in Washington DC and globally. Yet, as mentioned in the *Prologue*, the 'deniers' fought back by breaking into Mann's databases and manipulating his information.

However, Mann and his colleagues persevered, garnering the support of various publications, celebrities, politicians, and the scientific community at large. Although the attack was strong, the evidence for human-caused climate change is seemingly too large for rational deniers to continue the fight. Yet, the war rages on. Published in 2012, Mann's book was met with immediate criticism, both positive and negative. As of 24 October 2012, Mann will be in court fighting two organizations that mounted accusations of fraud against his work. The lines are still drawn – supporters praise his work while the opposition continues to vehemently deny climate change.

As a scientist, Mann explains that it was not his initial lot in life to be a public figure. He wanted to remain ensconced in a lab, meticulously running proxies and formulas. But, after his work was published, that was no longer an option. In order to defend his research, livelihood, and even his family, Mann has moved from the lab to the center stage of the global climate change debate and encourages others to do the same in order to save the planet.

There are still many people – in fact most people – on the fence about climate change. However, as the war rages on and the effects of climate change continue to ravage the globe, people will soon *have* to choose sides. The reality of climate change, depicted in Mann's 'Hockey Stick,' is that there are undeniable human causes. Unless we accept this verdict, thereby changing the way we live our lives, it is hard to remain optimistic about the future. The indicators are all around us – melting glaciers, an increasingly acidic ocean, and extreme weather patterns to name a few.

Mann's book is not only an informative jaunt into the heart of the global discourse on climate change, but it serves to expose the deniers for who they are – corporations, politicians, and others with invested interest in continuing to veil the truth. Mann's book is a call to arms in what may be the most important debate in human history.