

Barry Johnson

And

Thriving USA Initiative for Climate Change

“Country *And* Environment”
Chapter 30 from *And: Volume One*

*Making a Difference
by Leveraging
Polarity, Paradox or Dilemma
Volume One: Foundations*

[Intro](#)[TOC](#)[COVID-19](#)[Economic Recovery](#)[Racial Equality](#)[Climate Change](#)

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Thriving USA Initiative

Polarity Partnerships has created the Thriving USA Initiative specifically to support elected representatives of both parties. Our intent is to optimize your efforts to pass legislation that benefits all Americans.

Polarity Thinking™ is a powerful and proven framework that reduces polarization and minimizes resistance to change. Recognizing and leveraging polarities will help you reach across the aisle, reduce gridlock, and implement legislation that supports a Thriving United States for all Americans.

We value your time. For quick access and easy sharing, we've made Thriving USA materials available to you and your colleagues in several formats and depths.

[Website](#)

The home page of the Thriving USA Initiative. If you visit and share only one link, this is it (www.PolarityPartnerships.com/thrivingusa).

[Videos](#)

Barry Johnson introduces *And*-thinking and the Polarity Map, then illustrates the energy flow, tensions, risks and potentials in all polarities.

[PDFs](#)

Focus on the topic of greatest interest to you. Each of the four chapters in this full PDF are also available separately as single-issue PDFs.

[Books](#)

Barry Johnson's *And: Volume One* and the upcoming *Volume Two* are available in the Polarity Partnerships bookstore.

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We appreciate your service. Polarity Thinking can help. Let's talk.

~ Barry Johnson and Polarity Partnerships

Chapter 30: Country And Environment (11 pgs)

Our elected representatives already have life experience with polarities, and an intuitive appreciation for the tensions within them. Polarity Thinking provides a proven process to help them explicitly build on their wisdom, reduce polarization, and create better legislative outcomes.

~ Barry Johnson

“It’s necessary to have more voices ... because that strengthens the debate and it strengthens the decisions ... and you get a better result.”

~ Speaker of the House
Nancy Pelosi

Interview by Marianne Schnall
Huffington Post, Dec 13, 2013

“The choice between a weak economy and a strong environment is a false choice. That is not the choice I’ll offer America.”

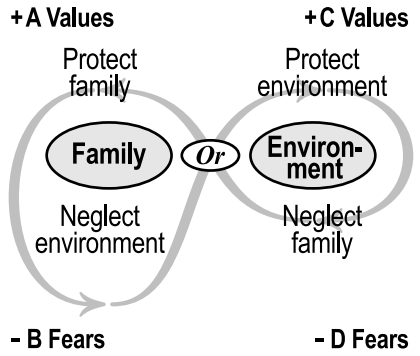
~ Senator
Lindsey Graham

Fox News, Aug 6, 2015

And

Figure 3 summarizes the results of choosing between Family Or Environment. Given that choice, almost everyone will choose Family. It becomes a more obvious choice from the (+A/-D) point of view. The question is, “Do I want to Protect my family (+A) Or Neglect my family (-D)?” The arrow between (-D) and (+A) reflects the choice and indicates the movement of energy on the infinity loop toward Protect Family (+A). Love of family combined with the unconscious, false choice between Family Or Environment leads to an over-focus on protecting the Family to the neglect of protecting the Environment. The result is to neglect the Environment (-B).

Figure 3

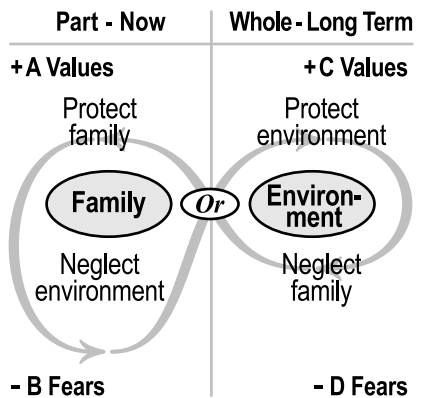


Two important dimensions that impact the decision to choose Family over Environment are connection and urgency.

1. Connection to my Part of the Whole – The Family is a small Part of the Environment which is the Whole. For many it is easier to feel connected to and protective of our immediate Family (Part) than the larger and more abstract notion of the Environment (Whole). This closer connection to Family increases the likelihood that we will choose Family over Environment.
2. Urgency for protecting my part – The connection with Family brings with it an urgency to make sure the Family is protected. The Environment is large and complex, and it feels less urgent and more like a long-term issue. As a result, we are likely to choose Family and get to the Environment later.

Figure 4 shows these two dimensions with “Part – Now” above the left pole and “Whole – Long-Term” above the right pole. This combination of connection and urgency explains why we favor Family when making the false choice between Family Or Environment.

Figure 4



From an Or perspective, those focusing on the Environment (Tree Huggers) appear to have chosen the Environment over Family. From that perspective, it is easy to see why some people would resist seriously looking at the climate crisis. This understandable choice leads to an over focus on protecting Family Now (+A). The result is to Neglect the Environment and the Long-term survival of the family. (-B).

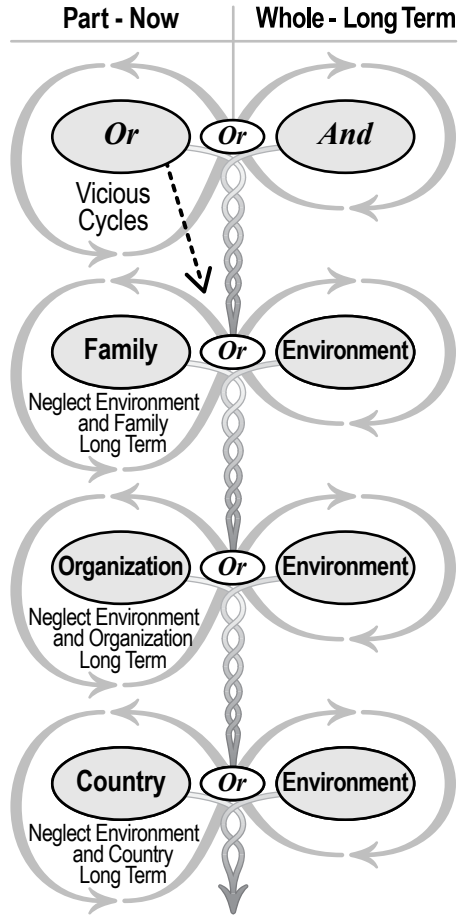
Figure 5 contains the stack of four polarities with *Or* connecting the poles. Moving down the stack, the left poles are expanded from Family to Organization to Country. Though the left pole Part gets bigger, the right pole Whole remains the Environment. As with the Family in Figure 4, we tend to have more direct and immediate concerns for protecting our Organization or Country than for protecting the Environment.

When given the false choice between protecting my Organization and providing work for our employees now *Or* protecting the Environment sometime in the future, I am likely to choose to protect my organization now. This *Or* choice leads us to Neglect the Environment and the long-term interests of my company. An Environment that does not support human life will also not support my company.

The same is true when given the false choice between protecting my Country now *Or* protecting the Environment sometime in the future. I am likely to choose to protect my Country and its immediate needs to be strong and healthy. This choice leads us to neglect the Environment and the long-term interests of the Country. An Environment that does not support human life also will not support the Country.

As mentioned earlier, *Or*-thinking undermines the ability to consider the science behind climate change let alone invest time and energy in addressing it. *Or*-thinking leads to the following assumption: “If climate change is real, I cannot protect my family, my organization, or my country.” With that assumption, I will grasp for any indicator that climate change is not real. I will welcome the possibility that there is still confusion over the issue. Confusion is a form of resistance. It protects us from harsh realities. It can be comforting to think, “Maybe it isn’t true.” I group climate change confusion as a type of climate change denial because they both have the same impact of not giving the climate crisis the attention it deserves. The climate crisis is real, *now*. Denial only makes things worse.

Figure 5



More Extreme Climate Change and Devastation for Future Generations

Or-thinking was an important reason that the U.S. Senate voted 95–0 against signing the Kyoto Protocol. Or-thinking also served as the basis for President Trump’s withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord 20 years later.

Though it is understandable that any of us would choose to protect our Family, Organization, and Country now over choosing the Environment in the future, these are false choices that combine to result in more extreme climate change and devastation for future generations. This is indicated at the bottom of the stack in Figure 5.

Addressing the Climate Crisis Now

Focusing on the Part we feel most connected to (Family, Organization, and Country) gives us an unconscious sense of urgency to take care of those parts. We assume we can take care of the Whole (Environment) in the long-term. Those of us appealing for attention to the climate crisis now have an increasing sense of urgency. It comes from the conviction that climate change already has a negative impact, and in the long-term it will have a disastrous impact on our Family, Organization, and Country. Also, we are concerned about the impact on the other animals and plants that share our planet.

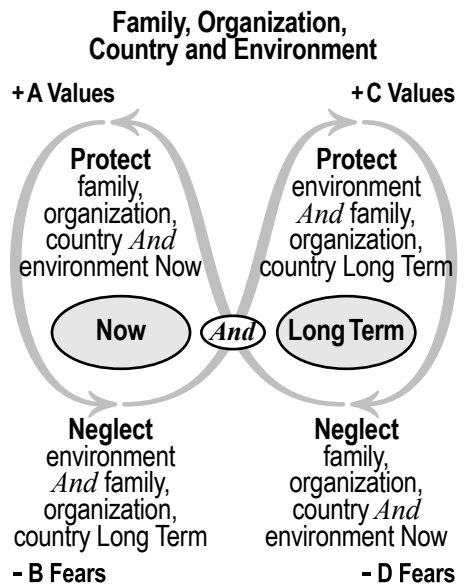
My son, Luke, has been concerned about the climate crisis for many years. His sense of urgency increases with every report on climate change and its impact now and in the future. I have joined him in my own sense of urgency about the climate crisis. This chapter is not intended to convince readers that climate change is real and its impact will be devastating. I encourage you, instead, to look at current reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

I believe the scientists studying climate change are right; we have urgent work to do. The question is not whether we protect our Family/Organization/Country Or the Environment. This is a false choice. We can and must do both. The question is, “How do we protect them And the environment Now And Long-Term?”

Figure 6 reframes the question. This map is a modification of Figure 3. The pole names have been changed to Now And Long-Term. Each quadrant begins in bold with the content from Figure 3 and then includes what is missing to reflect the new poles.

In this map, the greater purpose statement includes Family, Organization, Country And Environment. This reflects

Figure 6



the reality that all of us want to protect our Family, Organization, Country *And* all of us want to protect the Environment. It is a false assumption that those of us wanting to protect Family do not care about the Environment. It is also a false assumption that those of who want to protect the Environment do not care about Family.

When we put *And* between the poles, Family *And* Environment combined with Now *And* Long-Term, notice what happens in each upside of *Figure 6*. We affirm that we can and must protect our Family, Organization, Country *And* Environment now (+A). The natural, sometimes unconscious urgency we feel about protecting our Family, Organization, Country is supplemented with the conscious urgency that we protect them by protecting the Environment. We can and must protect both now.

Leveraging this polarity also affirms that we can protect our Family, Organization, Country *And* the Environment long term (+C). We can maintain an Environment in which our great, great, grandchildren can flourish. For that to happen, we need to ensure that plant and animal life are allowed to flourish.

***And* Brings Possibilities to the Climate Crisis Discussion**

Figure 7 provides the possibilities that come from supplementing *Or* with *And*. In this new stack, we build from the bottom up using the natural tension between the two poles to lift the system toward a Greater Purpose: Sustainability for Family, Organization, Country *And* Environment.

Starting at the bottom, we can solve problems (upside of *Or*) *And* leverage polarities (upside of *And*). The dotted arrow from *And* in the right pole indicates that we bring *And*-thinking to the other polarities going up the stack. We can protect Family *And* Environment now (upside of Family) *And* long-term (upside of Environment); protect Organization *And* Environment now (upside of Organization) *And* long-term (upside of Environment); protect country and Environment now (upside of Country) *And* long-term (upside of Environment). Leveraging one polarity well helps in leveraging the next one well.

Figure 7

Sustainability for Family, Organization, Country and Environment

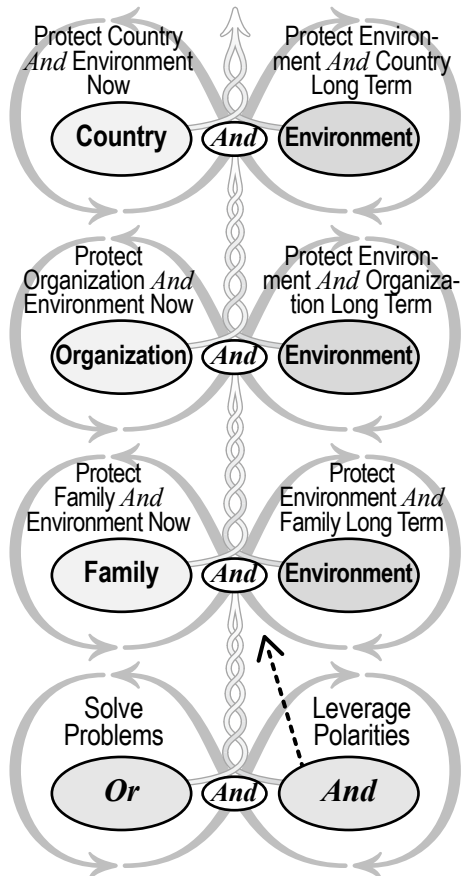


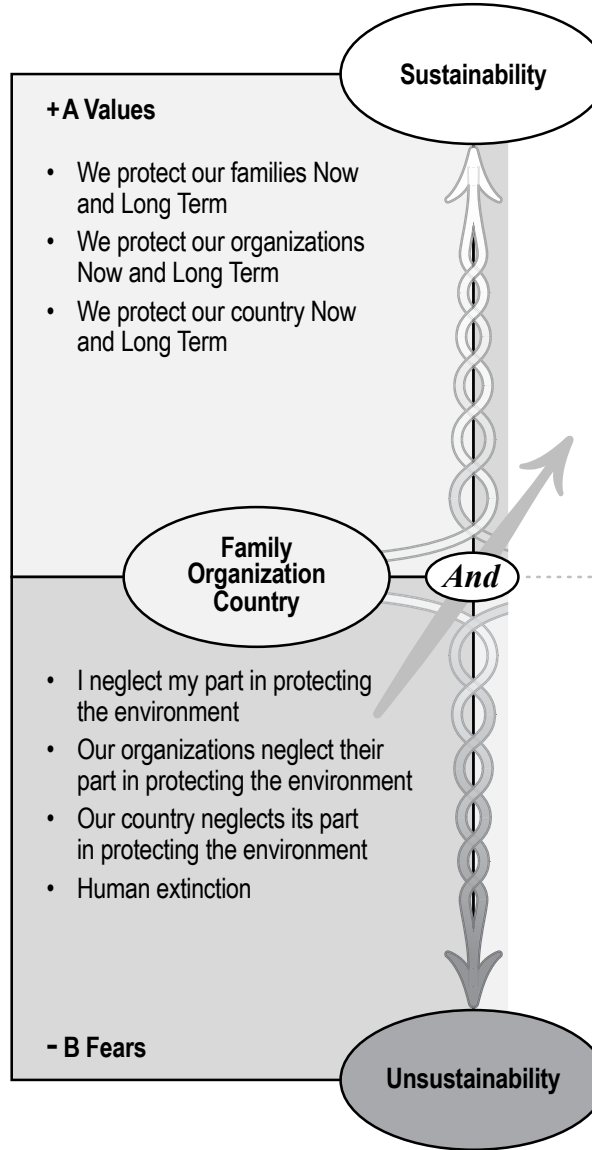
Figure 8

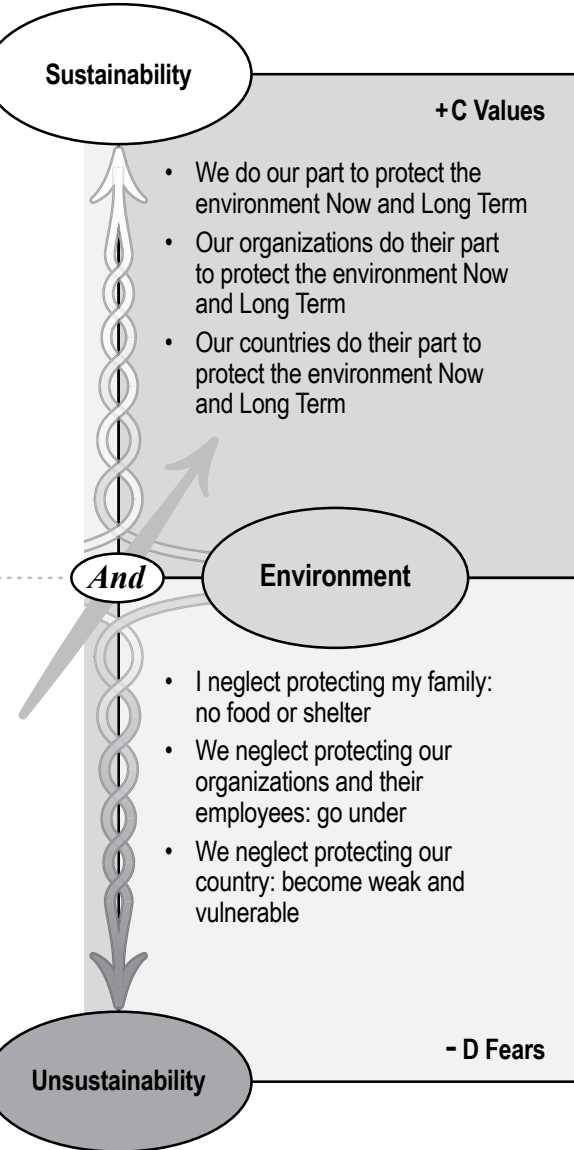
Action Steps

- Provide the basics, including job training for families losing work in transition to renewable energy
- Create renewable energy businesses (HL)
- Retain/gain country strength with renewable energy (HL)
- Explicitly use *And* (HL)

Early Warnings

- Denial/confusion about climate change
- Increase in average temperature, etc.
- USA Senate votes 95-0 not to sign Kyoto Protocol
- Trump pulls U.S. out of Paris Climate Accord 2017





Action Steps

- Retain/gain legislation protecting our environment from pollution and excessive climate change
- Create renewable energy businesses (HL)
- Retain/gain country strength with renewable energy (HL)
- Explicitly use *And* (HL)
- U.S. recommits to Paris Climate Accord and future accords

Early Warnings

- Increase in families losing fossil fuel related jobs without alternative means to care for families
- Increase in fossil fuel and related businesses closing
- Identifying others as “evil” deniers and polluters: feel self-righteous indignation

Taking Action to Address the Climate Crisis – the SMALL Process

Seeing: The first step in seeing is to remember that seeing is loving. If we could see, completely, those denying or confused about the climate crisis and those organizing to address the climate crisis, love would be the result. The second step in seeing is to see relevant polarities. In this chapter, I have focused on a version of the Part *And* Whole polarity: protecting Family, Organization, Country *And* protecting the Environment. Family, Organization, and Country are three polarities stacked with the *Or/And* polarity. The other polarity that emerged as important was Now *And* Long-Term.

Mapping: The reason to map a polarity is to see beyond the two poles connected by *And*. The full map allows us to Assess, Learn, and Leverage the polarity through Action Steps and Early Warnings.

Figure 8, on previous pages 250 and 251, is a full Polarity Map® with Action Steps and Early Warnings.

Family, Organization, and Country is the left pole *And* the Environment is the right pole. Within each quadrant, the focus is on Now *And* Long-Term. The Greater Purpose Statement is Sustainability and the Deeper Fear is Unsustainability: an environment that will not sustain life.

The map does not include all possible content within each quadrant or all possible Action Steps and Early Warnings. Instead, it frames the conversation, valuing and respecting the upsides of both poles.

Assessing: The map uses a “trend arrow”. The trend arrow question is, “At this time, is the energy trending (or needing to trend) toward the upside of Family, Organization, Country (-D toward +A) or toward the upside of Environment (-B toward +C)? In my assessment for the United States in 2020, the energy needs to trend toward the upside of Environment (+C) because we have over-focused on protecting our Family, Organizations, and Country to the neglect of the Environment.

Early Warnings (EW -B) causing me to make this assessment included:

- Denial/confusion about the climate crisis. This denial/confusion comes from wanting to protect Family, Organization, Country combined with the false assumption that we must choose between those things *Or* the Environment.
- Increase in average temperature and growing indicators of problems resulting from climate change.
- In 1997, the U.S. Senate voted 95–0 against ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. This unanimous vote was not an indication that the senators did not care about the environment. It indicated the unconscious bias for *Or*-thinking.
- In 2017, President Trump withdrew from the Paris Climate Accord. Support for this decision came from citizens and legislators who saw it from an *either/Or* perspective and chose Family, Organization, and Country.

These Early Warnings contributed to my assessment that the trend arrow needs to point from (-B) toward (+C). If you see it the other way, switch the arrow so it points from (-D) toward (+A). You also could see it differently for a different country or at a different time. Regardless of where the trend arrow points, Action Steps are needed for each upside.

Learning: If we determine that we need to go to the upside of the Environment (+C), it means, paradoxically, that first we should focus on Action Steps to protect the Family, Organization, and Country (AS +A). Then, we should focus on Action Steps to protect the Environment (AS +C). Before planning to protect the Environment, we need to be very explicit about plans to protect our Family, Organization, and Country. This paradoxical change process was described as “getting unstuck” in *Chapter 13*.

Leveraging: This final step in the SMALL process includes Action Steps to maximize the upsides and Early Warnings to minimize the downsides. Because we are wanting to move to (+C), we begin, below, with identifying Action Steps for (+A).

Action Steps (AS +A) to gain (or maintain) the upsides of Family, Organization, Country (+A) include:

- Provide the basics, including job training for families losing work in the transition to renewable energy. Advocates for the Environment first must be clear that we are committed to protecting families impacted by the switch from fossil fuel to renewable energy. The *And* message is that we can protect Families *And* the Environment. This commitment fits with the polarity of Abundance for Some *And* Basics for All in *Chapter 29*. Coal miners, oil and gas industry employees, and others affected by the shift to renewable energy deserve the basics: food, water, shelter, clothing, education, work with a living wage and healthcare. We can and must protect them *And* the Environment, now and long-term. Legislation to protect the Environment should also protect the Family. We cannot allow legislation to perpetuate the false choice between Family *Or* Environment by addressing only one side of the polarity.
- Create renewable energy businesses. Just as we can and must protect the Family *And* Environment, we must do our best to protect our Organizations *And* the Environment. For example, how might we protect businesses reliant on fossil fuel by supporting them in shifting to renewable energy? How do we address the impact on owners and employees when businesses do not survive the shift? We can and must protect Organizations *And* the Environment. This action step is High Leverage (HL) because it contributes to retaining/gaining the upsides of both poles.
- Retain/gain country strength through renewable energy (HL). Many wars have been fought over access to fossil fuels located within national boundaries. Sun and wind are more widely available. Energy independence

through renewable energy is a good way to protect our Country *And* protect the Environment. We can enhance national security while caring for the Environment.

- Explicitly use *And* (HL). Our communications and actions must be clear that we are leveraging key polarities in order to protect our Families, Organizations, and Countries *And* the Environment Now *And* Long-term. Efforts to address the climate crisis without explicitly leveraging these key polarities undermine those efforts radically.

Early Warnings (EW -D) of over-focusing on the Environment to the neglect of Family, Organization, Country (-D) include:

- Increase in families losing fossil fuel related jobs without alternative means to care for those families.
- Increase in Fossil fuel and related businesses closing. These concerns need to be acknowledged, respected, and addressed by the Action Steps in support of the upside of Family, Organization, and Country (+A).
- Identifying others as “evil” deniers and polluters – feel self-righteous indignation. This is a version of the Justice *And* Mercy polarity. When we have trouble admitting our own contribution to the climate crisis, it is easier to project our shortcomings onto “them.”

Action Steps (AS +C) to gain or maintain the upside of Environment (+C) include:

- Retain/gain legislation protecting our environment from pollution and climate change. What I list here is simply placeholder examples to represent an ongoing need for legislation and enforcement to slow down and reverse the impact of the climate crisis.
- Create renewable energy businesses (HL).
- Retain/gain country strength with renewable energy (HL).
- Explicitly use *And* when addressing the tension within polarities that are part of the climate crisis struggle (HL).
- Re-affirm Paris Climate Accord and future accords.

Planning *And* Implementing

The SMALL process is done with key stakeholders first as a planning discussion in which possible Action Steps and Early Warnings are identified. When moving to implementation, high leverage Action Steps are a helpful place to start because they simultaneously support both upsides. It is also important to make sure that enough Action Steps are implemented to support the upside of the pole you are moving from to avoid the downside of the pole you are moving toward. When that is done, it will be easier to implement the Action Steps to gain or maintain the upside of the pole you want to move toward at this point in time.

Summary

The issue of the climate crisis is more complicated than this chapter can begin to reflect. At the same time, a polarity lens can be useful in addressing complicated issues by identifying underlying tension patterns and leveraging them.

When asked whether we want to protect our Family, Organizations, and Country *Or* protect the Environment, we will likely choose Family, Organization and Country. Connection and urgency drive this choice. For example, we are likely to feel more connected to Family than the Environment and to feel more urgent about protecting Family now than the environment, which we feel we can address long-term.

When we stack Family, Organization, and Country on the left side with Environment on the right side and connect the two sides with *Or*, the Environment pole is neglected. Connecting the two sides with *And* changes how we communicate about, and influences the actions we take, to slow down and reverse climate change.

Both advocates for the Environment and those denying the climate crisis care about protecting Family, Organization, and Country. Also, both care about the Environment. Both also feel a sense of urgency. Those denying climate change unconsciously feel that it is urgent to protect their Family now. Those organizing to reverse the climate crisis consciously feel that it is urgent to protect the Environment Now in order to protect our Families Now *And* Long-term.

The SMALL process is useful. Viewing the issue through a polarity lens encourages respect for the values and fears of *both* those denying the climate crisis *And* the Environmental advocates. When planning, if the present trend needs to move from the downside of Family, Organization, and Country to the upside of Environment, it is important to identify Action Steps to protect Family, Organization, and Country first and then identify Action Steps to protect the Environment. When implementing, it is often helpful to do high leverage Action Steps first because they support the upside of both poles. It is also helpful to make sure enough Action Steps supporting the present pole are being carried out to hold on to the benefits of that pole while going after the upsides of the interdependent pole. In many cases, the Action Steps for both upsides can then be carried out simultaneously.

And-thinking is a framework for making a difference with climate change. Without supplementing *Or*-thinking with *And*-thinking, efforts to reverse the climate crisis in time to protect future generations are undermined radically. The survival of future generations is dependent, in part, upon supplementing *Or*-thinking with *And*-thinking.^{R112}

New Realities in Chapter 30

Reality 112 *And*-thinking is a framework for addressing climate change. Without supplementing *Or*-thinking with *And*-thinking, efforts to reverse the climate crisis in time to protect future generations are undermined radically. The survival of future generations is dependent, in part, upon supplementing *Or*-thinking with *And*-thinking.

Praise for And



“Polarity Thinking has revolutionized how we approach tough problems in our work. There are countless moments – from making a big decision as a management team, to launching an issue campaign that requires navigating fraught political waters, to building deep and lasting coalitions, to building more inclusive and collaborative teams – in which we map out a polarity to push our thinking and hone our strategy. In today’s complex world of politics and advocacy, identifying ways to better leverage key polarities has exponentially increased our impact. We are vocal evangelists and have shared the tool with countless customers and partners who have adopted it to increase the efficacy of their own progressive advocacy work!”

~ **Lanae Erickson**
Senior Vice President for Social Policy & Politics :: Third Way



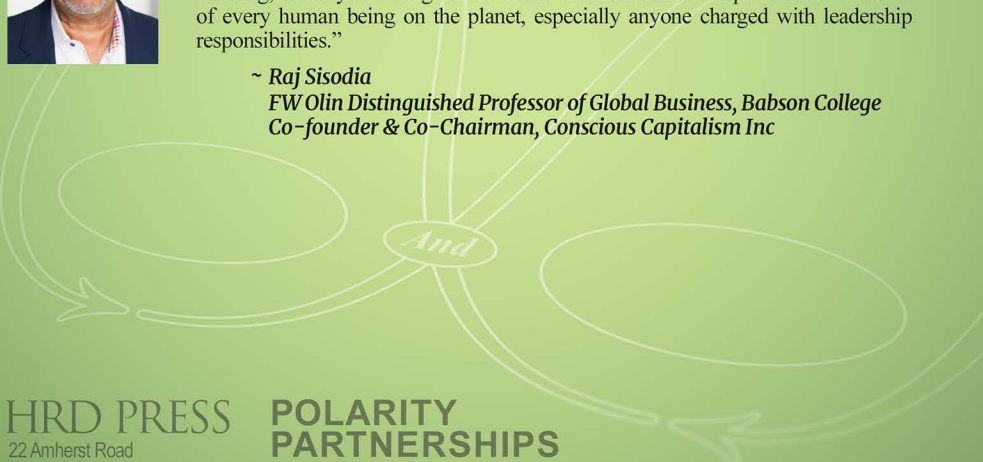
“The fight for equity, inclusion, social justice and humanity is not an ‘or’ argument. It is a ‘must’ argument which can only be achieved when advocates and allies augment *either/Or*-thinking with *both/And*-thinking. These two volumes are uniquely divided between Foundations skill building in Polarity Thinking, and a wide variety of Applications of *both/And*-thinking. The two volumes contain critical information to help us all break the divisiveness that can result from only using *either/Or*-thinking.”

~ **Eddie Moore, Jr., PhD**
Founder/Program Director, The White Privilege Conference



“Polarity Thinking is one of the essential disciplines underlying our vital and never-ending search for win-win solutions to our many challenges and dilemmas. Barry Johnson has given us an invaluable gift in creating – and now deepening – this powerful tool. It can help us arrive at *And* solutions in a world that often seems hopelessly tangled in a bipolar dance within polarities. Along with systems thinking, Polarity Thinking is an essential skill that should be part of the education of every human being on the planet, especially anyone charged with leadership responsibilities.”

~ **Raj Sisodia**
*FW Olin Distinguished Professor of Global Business, Babson College
Co-founder & Co-Chairman, Conscious Capitalism Inc*



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