

The first peer-reviewed academic study on the topic added further detail. Robert Brulle, a Drexel University professor of sociology and environmental science, discovered that between 2003 and 2010 over half a billion dollars was spent on what he described as a massive “campaign to manipulate and mislead the public about the threat posed by climate change.” The study examined the tax records of more than a hundred nonprofit organizations engaged in challenging the prevailing science on global warming. What it found was, in essence, a corporate lobbying campaign disguised as a tax-exempt, philanthropic endeavor. Some 140 conservative foundations funded the campaign, Brulle found. During the seven-year period he studied, these foundations distributed \$558 million in the form of 5,299 grants to ninety-one different nonprofit organizations. The money went to think tanks, advocacy groups, trade associations, other foundations, and academic and legal programs. Cumulatively, this private network waged a permanent campaign to undermine Americans’ faith in climate science and to defeat any effort to regulate carbon emissions.

The cast of conservative organizations identified by Brulle was familiar to anyone who had followed the funding of the modern conservative movement. Among those he pinpointed as the largest bankrollers of climate change denial were foundations affiliated with the Koch and Scaife families, both of whose fortunes derived partly from oil. Also heavily involved were the Bradley Foundation and several others associated with hugely wealthy families participating in the Koch donor summits, such as foundations run by the DeVos family, Art Pope, the retail magnate from North Carolina, and John Templeton Jr., a doctor and heir to the fortune of his father, John Templeton Sr., an American mutual fund pioneer who eventually renounced his U.S. citizenship in favor of living in the Bahamas, reportedly saving \$100 million on taxes. Brulle found that as the money was dispersed, three-quarters of the funds from these and other sources financing what he called the “climate change counter-movement” were untraceable.

“Powerful funders are supporting the campaign to deny scientific findings about global warming and raise public doubts about the roots and remedies of this massive global threat. At the very least,” he argued, “American voters deserve to know who is behind these efforts.”

Instead, by the time Obama took office some of the biggest bank-

Justice, the libertarian legal center whose start-up funds had been supplied by Charles Koch. They functioned as a central committee, coordinating grant making.

What Brulle noticed as he studied the money behind climate change denial was that as criticism of those blocking reform increased around 2007, tens of millions of dollars of contributions from fossil fuel interests like Koch and ExxonMobil seemed to have disappeared from the public fight. Meanwhile, a growing and commensurate amount of anonymous money from DonorsTrust started funding the climate change countermovement. In 2003, for instance, Brulle found that DonorsTrust money was the source of only 3 percent of the 140 groups whose financial records he studied. By 2010, it had grown to 24 percent. The circumstantial evidence suggested that the fossil fuel interests bankrolling climate change denial were deliberately hiding their hands, but Brulle couldn't prove it. "We just have this great big unknown out there about where all the money is coming from," he said.

Relations between the Kochs and DonorsTrust were close. Disclosures showed that the Kochs' foundations made sizable gifts to DonorsTrust, which in turn dispersed large amounts of cash to their favorite nonprofit groups. In 2010, for instance, the single largest grant that it made to any organization was a \$7.4 million gift to the Americans for Prosperity Foundation, whose chairman was David Koch. These funds accounted for about 40 percent of the AFP Foundation's funding that year, belying the notion that it was a genuine grassroots organization. AFP, meanwhile, not only took a lead role in organizing the Tea Party rebellion but also spearheaded a national drive to block action on climate change, aiming in every way possible to merge the two movements.

What much of the stealth funding bought was the dissemination of scientific doubt. The fossil fuel industry thus followed the same deceptive playbook that had been developed by the public relations firm Hill & Knowlton on behalf of the tobacco companies in the 1960s, in order to fabricate uncertainty about the science linking smoking to cancer. As the firm's memo had notoriously put it, "Doubt is our product." To add credibility to their side, the tobacco companies funded a network of official-sounding institutes and smokers' rights groups. This strategy soon characterized the global warming denial movement, too.