



**Colorado  
State**  
University

# Floods, Communication, and Climate Change

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CSU Water Center Meeting

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# Background: How People Perceive Climate Change Through Weather Events

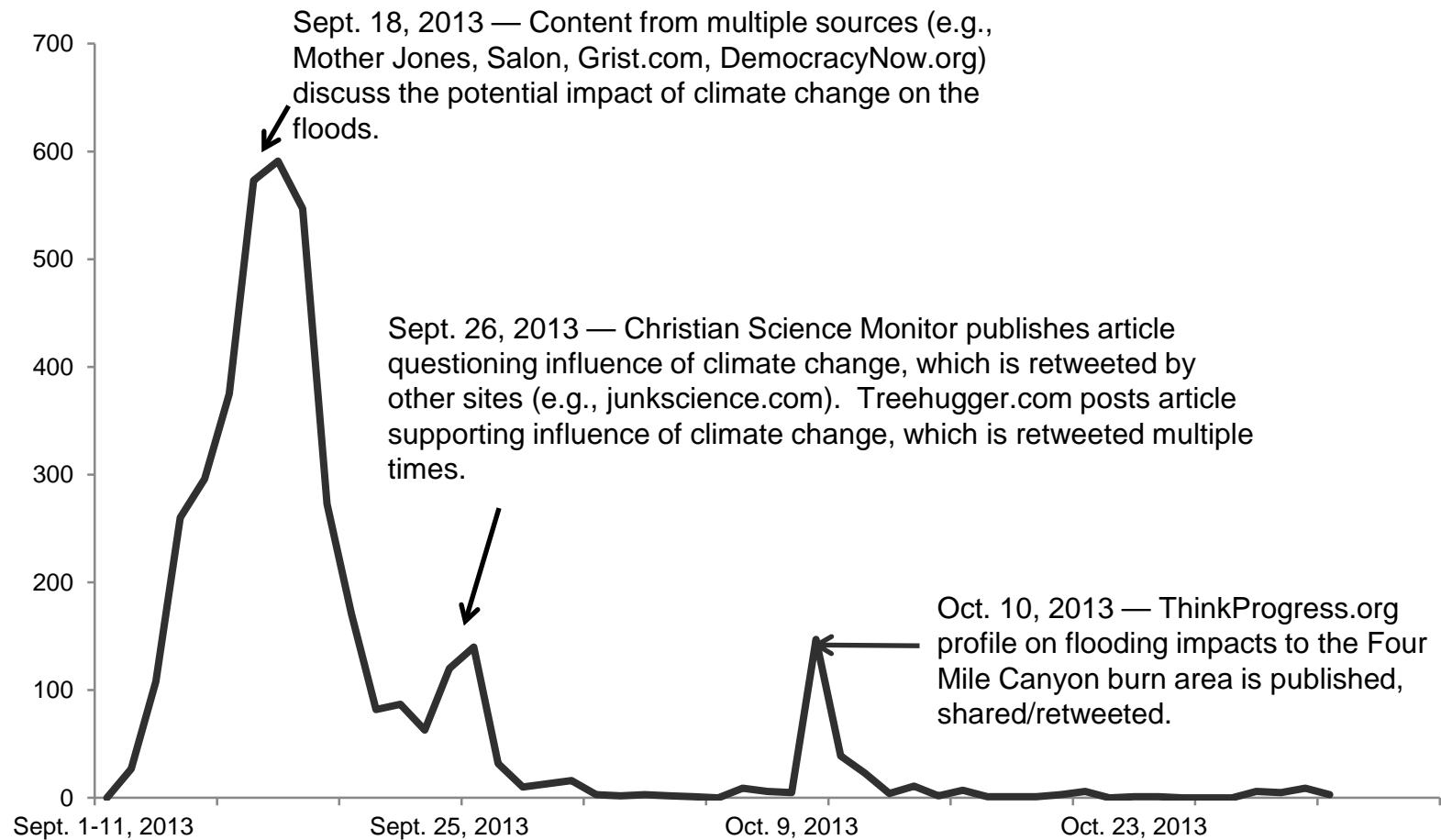


- TV broadcast using a trusted source (weathercaster) and a familiar analogy increases risk perceptions of global warming among viewers

# Objectives and Goals

- Exploration of *communication* around extreme weather events and perceptions of climate change
- How does communication use during the flood event play a role in how people perceive, discuss, and seek information about climate change?
- Data sources:
  - Content analysis of social media discussions (Twitter)
  - Survey of Coloradans

# Twitter posts mentioning Colorado floods in the context of climate change (n = 4,085)



# Preliminary Analyses of Themes in Social Media Discussions

- **Posed connection to climate**

- “Green News: Colorado Flooding: Did Climate Change Play A Role In Recent Disaster? <http://t.co/bISJloxLi8>”

*[link to Huffington Post article]*

- **Opinion expression: Belief or Denial**

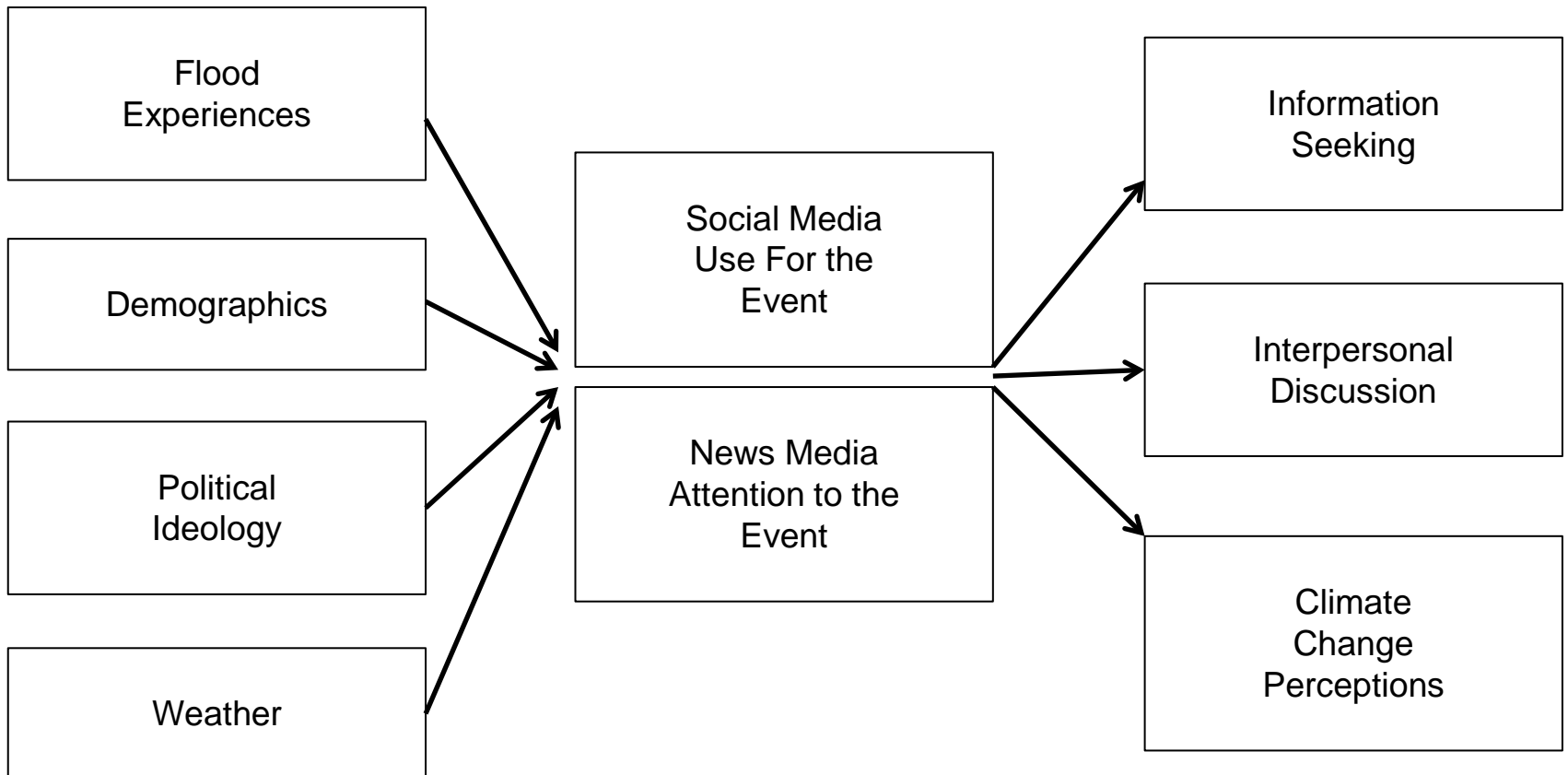
- “Global warming causes extremes. Remember how Colorado has suffered severe droughts and now it's flooding there? #boulderflood #GlobalWarming”
- “Now watch what happens. The AGW propagandists screaming eternal drought in Colorado last year, will claim the flooding now is climate change”

- **Opinion expression in conjunction with information sharing**

- “I'm weary of connecting specific weather events to climate change, but the Boulder floods should be an eye opener. <http://t.co/VPOAKfchcj>”

*[link to article on [www.climatecentral.org](http://www.climatecentral.org)]*

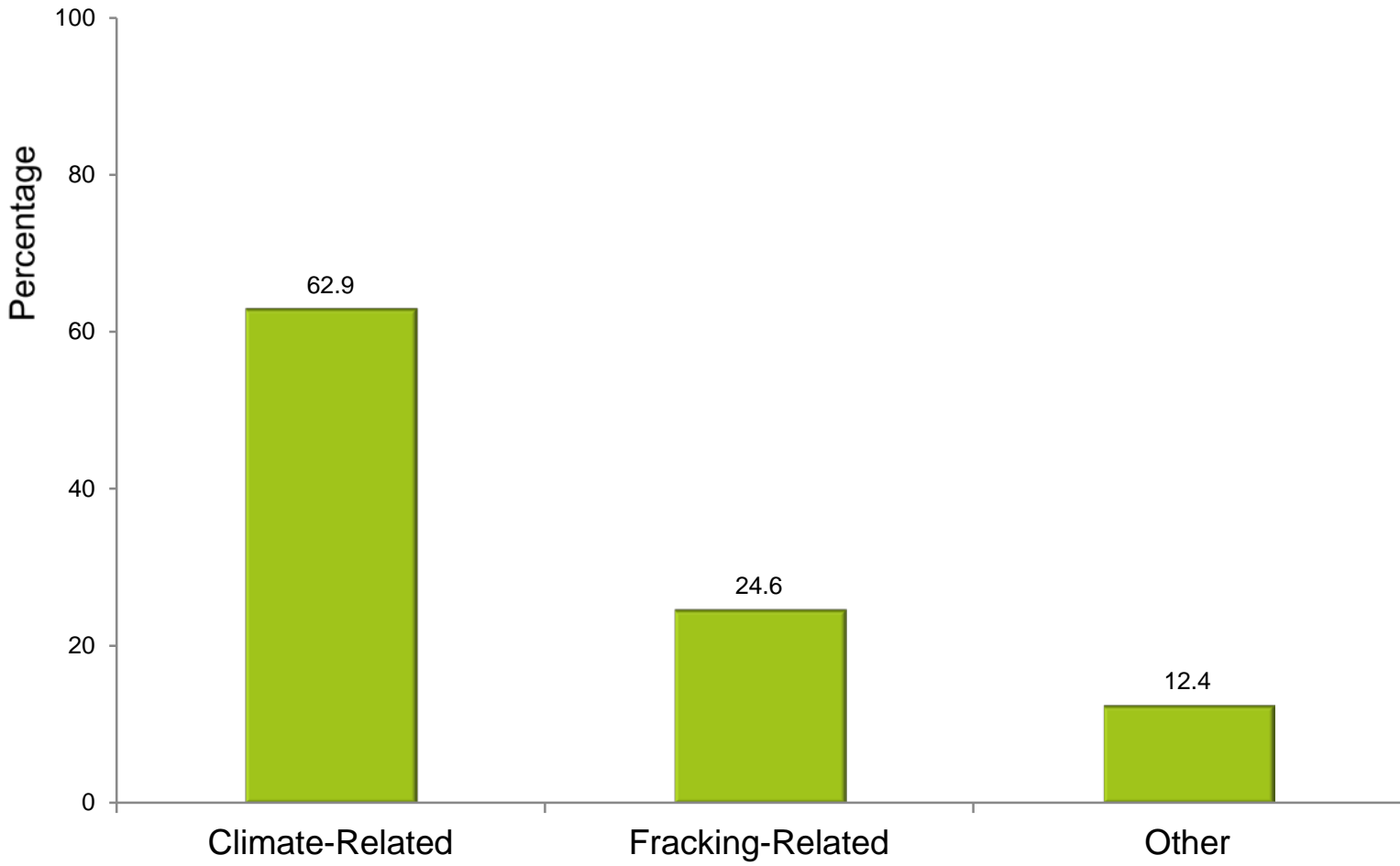
# Predicting Engagement Outcomes with Survey of Coloradans



# Project Outcomes

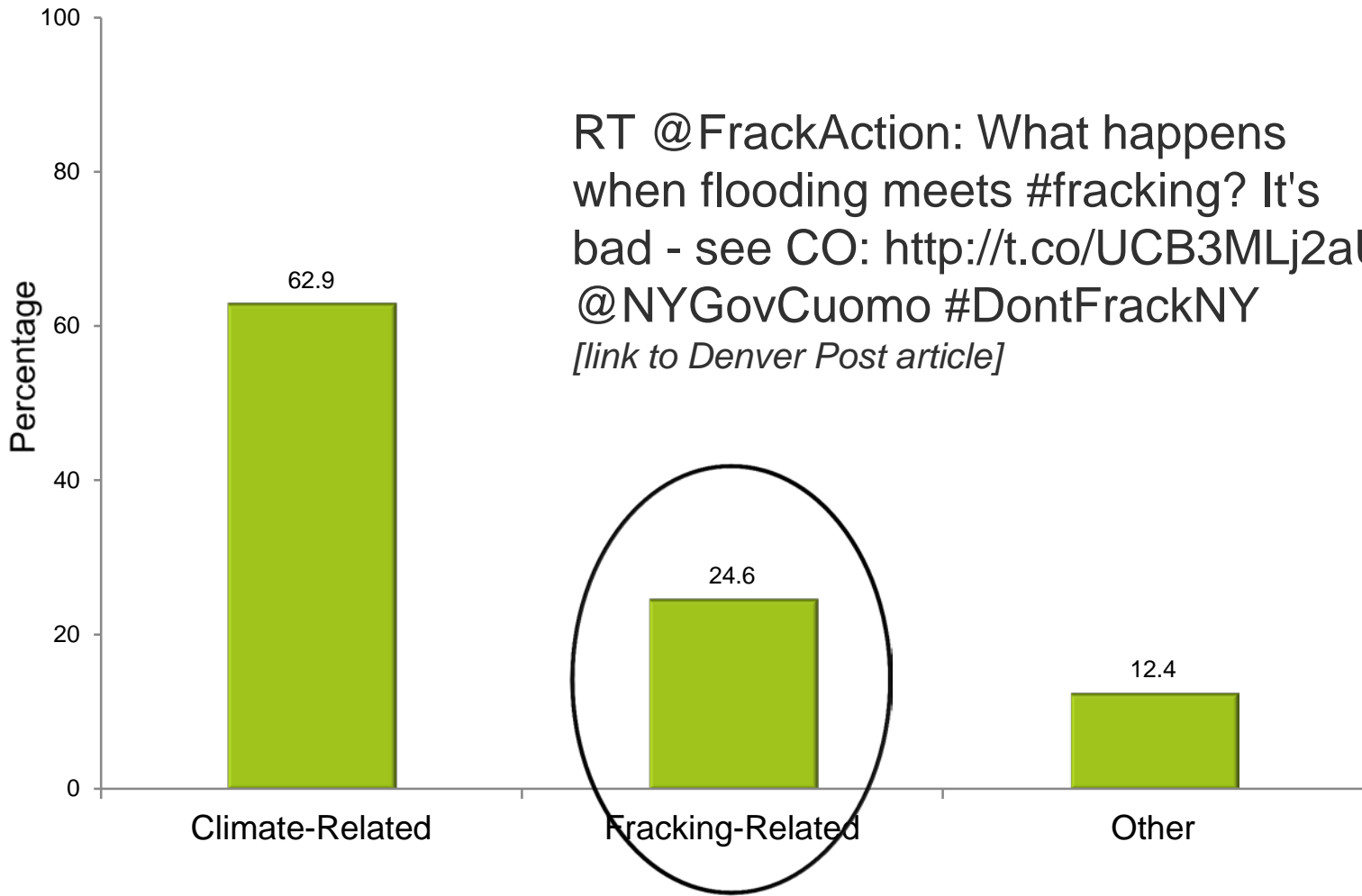
- Paper submission to Society for Risk Analysis Annual Conference – Risk Communication Division (Denver, December 2014)
  - Major themes and discussion in social media data (due May 10)
- Paper submission to International Environmental Communication Association Annual Conference (Boulder, CO, June 2015)
  - Analysis of model using survey data (due September 2014)
- Manuscript submissions to *Weather, Climate and Society* and *Science Communication*

# Environmental Topics in Tweets During the Flood



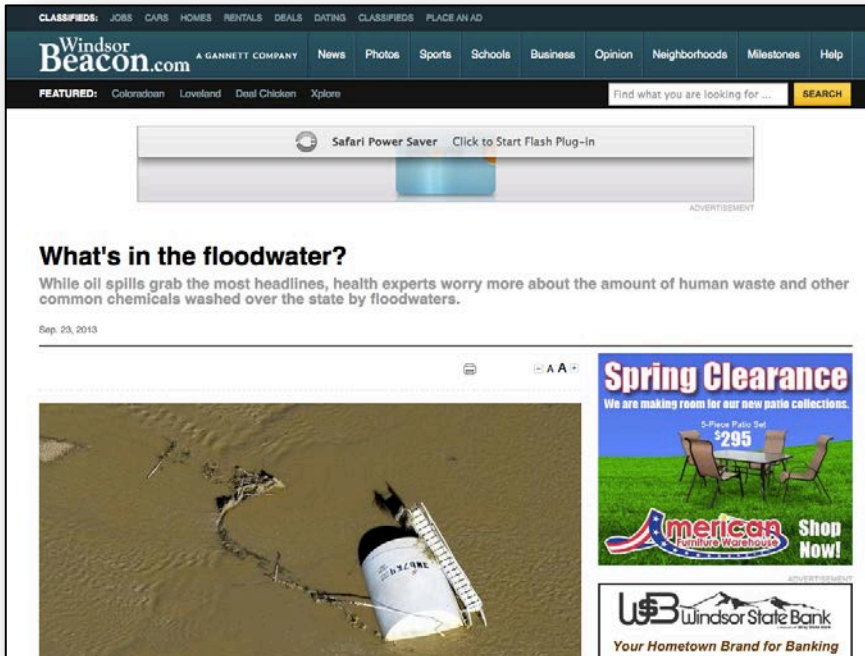


# Environmental Topics in Tweets During the Flood



RT @FrackAction: What happens when flooding meets #fracking? It's bad - see CO: <http://t.co/UCB3MLj2aU> @NYGovCuomo #DontFrackNY  
*[link to Denver Post article]*

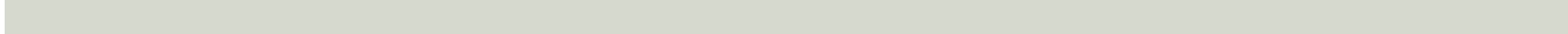
# Next steps: Exploring public perceptions around water quality, fracking, environmental communication



- Exploring public perceptions of water quality across various areas of Colorado
  - Non-fracking vs. fracking
  - Flood-affected vs. non-flood affected
- Analysis of social media posts and news media articles

# Future Directions

- Establishing cross-institutional collaborations
  - Dr. Kajsa Dalrymple, University of Iowa Water Sustainability Initiative and School of Journalism & Mass Communication
  - Dr. Leticia Bode, Georgetown University Communication, Culture & Technology Program
- Immediate Award Opportunities
  - Association for Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication – Mass Communication & Society Division Research Award
  - Georgetown University Environment Initiative (with Dr. Bode)
- Long-term Opportunities
  - Advancing Informal STEM Learning (AISL) Program at the National Science Foundation



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*[link to Huffington Post article]*

- Could climate change make massive fires and epic flooding more frequent in #Colorado? <http://t.co/4VWZmxipk8>

*[link to content from Rocky Mountain PBS]*

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*[link to article on [www.climatecentral.org](http://www.climatecentral.org)]*

- “Harry delusional Reid Blames Colorado Floods On 'Climate Change'. <http://t.co/00CDcCpJQT> #moron #insane”

*[link to [breitbart.com](http://breitbart.com)]*

# Preliminary Analyses of Themes in Social Media Discussions

- **Advocacy**

- “RT @ForecastFacts: Watch: @SenatorReid talks #coflood, #climate: "Climate change is here. We're doing nothing about it." <http://t.co/yPeZ7o>”

*[link to [climatecrocks.com](http://climatecrocks.com); retweeted by Twitter account for Climate Hawks Vote]*

- “Stop asking, start asserting RT @ClimateDesk: Did climate change worsen the Colorado floods? <http://t.co/xMKUuCpoig>”

*[link to Mother Jones article; tweeted by @SallyStrange, blogger]*