

February 21, 2017

CEJS Faculty Fellowship Mid-Year Report

Jonathan Pierce

Institute of Public Service

Description of Research Project

Our research project is to explore and better understand how to persuade climate change skeptics. We focus our research on the general public of the US. Current, Gallop Polls (March, 2016) indicate that about 31% of Americans currently do not believe the main cause of global warming are human activities. This is about the same percentage (33%) as in 2001. In addition, past empirical research has shown that using scientific facts does not persuade skeptics. One line of empirical research shows that there is audience segmentation in that liberals are much easier to convince about climate change than conservatives. Current, empirical research has found that messages to conservatives about climate change tend to cause biased skepticism often leading to a negative response when told about climate change. The purpose of our research is to utilize experimental surveys to measure the persuasiveness of various narratives targeting conservatives in the US.

Activities and Progress to Date

We have a research team of nine people including myself, undergraduate and graduate students from SU, and we are collaborating with a faculty member and Ph.D. student from Oregon State University. No one is getting paid for their participation. As part of this collaboration we have been meeting weekly since June 1 reviewing the empirical literature on public opinion and persuasiveness in relation to climate change. We have developed our survey and continue to work on identifying and crafting narratives to test in our experiments. At this time, we have applied for and been exempt by the SU IRB for our research. Our research utilizes Amazon's Mechanical Turk to recruit respondents that will be paid \$0.50 apiece and Amazon will take an additional fee of 10% per respondent for a total cost of \$0.55 per response. We will be running a test run of the surveys on February 23 and expect a launch of multiple surveys for 700-800 respondents on March 1. We expect to use a vast majority of the funds about \$5,000 to pay for survey respondents.

We have also submitted an application for a CEJS student fellowship for 2017-18.

We have presented our research design at the CEJS brownbag event in February 2017.

Future Activities

We are launching our experimental surveys starting March 1 and will continue to launch the surveys in waves throughout the spring as we test various narratives and other forms of communication in various mediums. The ultimate goal is to find what is the most persuasive about climate change for conservatives and climate change skeptics.

We are presenting our research design at an Institute of Public Service brownbag presentation event in February 2017.

We are presenting two papers on panels and a poster at the Midwest Political Science Annual Conference in April, 2017 in Chicago, IL. As part of this event, an undergraduate student, two graduate students and the Ph.D. student from Oregon State University will take part in the preparation and presentation of these papers. The remaining money from the fellowship will be used to supplement student travel to this conference in addition to funding from SU's ORSSP.

We plan on submitting these first two papers to academic journals for peer-review by June, 2017.

An additional proposed paper has been submitted to the European Consortium for Political Research in September 2017 in Oslo Norway.