

CGD SEMINAR



DATE: Tuesday, 1 May 2018, 11:00 am

LOCATION: NCAR Mesa Lab, Main Seminar Room

TITLE: Belief in dissenter messages vs. anthropogenic climate change acceptance: A hard lesson in climate education

SPEAKER: Andrew Bentley, University of Northern Colorado

ABSTRACT:

Organized climate change dissention dedicates a considerable amount of resources to spread misinformation regarding anthropogenic climate change (ACC). Anti-ACC messages work in opposition to the efforts of formal and informal climate educators. Misinformation produced by organized dissention covers a wide range of topics.

My research focuses on the relationship between ACC dissenter message agreement, and the rejection ACC. In this talk I will discuss the results of my most recent distribution of the Anthropogenic Climate Change Dissenter Inventory. This inventory contains several authentic dissenter messages collected in a previous study. The dissenter messages in this instrument cover a wide range of topics which I factor into six themes (e.g., ACC is beneficial, mankind's actions have no impact on climate, etc.). Respondents who agreed with the 'recent warming is only part of a larger cycle' messages were the most likely to reject ACC when compared to agreement with other dissenter message themes. Other stronger correlations included participants' preferred news network and political ideology. Interestingly, belief in claims that scientists unethically conduct research or that a warming climate would be beneficial were not significantly correlated with dissent.

A portion of this talk will examine the claim that ACC knowledge is not a strong predictor of dissent. Researchers making this claim often use self-assessed knowledge (e.g., "how much do you know about ACC") in lieu of an ACC assessment when making claims. The prevalence of misinformation may be driving these researchers' results—that belief or concern is lower for those with a higher understanding of the science of ACC. With that said, our results agree with these researchers' assertion that knowledge is not the strongest predictor of dissent. Thus, teaching "just the science" when conveying climate change may be misguided. Recommendations for effective K-16 will be discussed.

Live webcast: <http://ucarconnect.ucar.edu/live>

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