

March 28, 2018: Anderson & Kahan on Cultural Cognition

Tension between Epistemic Responsibility and Democratic Legitimacy

Democracy vs. Epistocracy (Brennan) [[WaPo article](#) on Brennan's book, of possible interest]

Anderson's defense of democracy relies on claims about testimony

Value Judgments in Science: Some Questions

- Is it possible for there to be non-value-laden scientific judgment?
- If you are a scientist, should you make your value-laden assumptions explicit?
- Should you only defer to people who share your values?
- What if people don't share the 'right' values?

Gap Between Disposition and Capacity

1. Biased media
2. Segregation by political opinion
3. Cultural cognition ("a tendency of people to assess risks on the basis of cultural values, and to distrust experts who present testimony inconvenient to those values." (Anderson, p. 145))

Other causes?

Solutions

Review

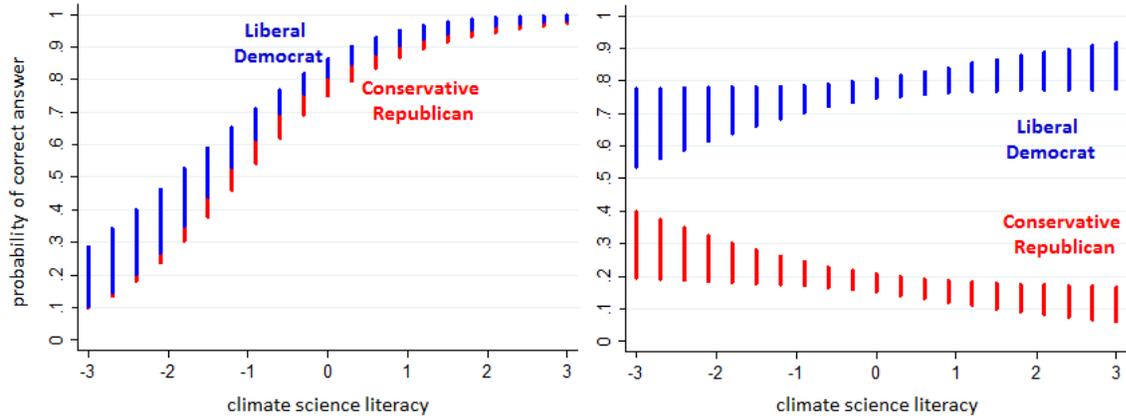
Other solutions?

Increase Science Curiosity? See, e.g. Dan Kahan, "[Climate science literacy, critical reasoning, and independent thinking...](#)"

“Climate science literacy”: item response theory

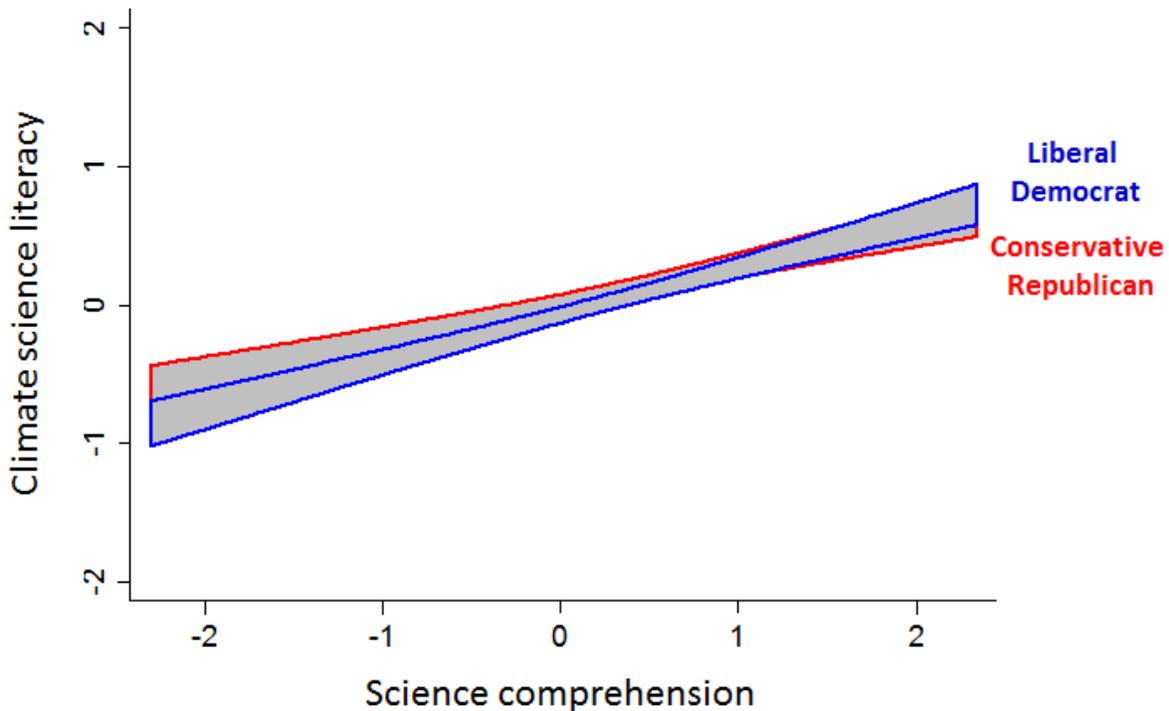
“What gas do most scientists believe causes temperatures in the atmosphere to rise? Is it [hydrogen, helium, carbon dioxide, radon]?”

“[Is the earth] getting warmer (a) mostly because of human activity such as burning fossil fuels or (b) mostly because of natural patterns in the earth’s environment?”



Annenberg Center for Public Policy & Cultural Cognition Project. $N = 1,769$. Predicted probabilities derived via Monte Carlo Simulation based on logistic regression. Nationally representative sample, April/May 2014 (YouGov). Political outlook predictor set at -1 SD & +1 SD on “Left_right” scale for “liberal democrat” and “conservative Republican,” respectively. Colored bars reflect 0.95 confidence intervals.

“Climate science literacy” and science comprehension



Discussion Questions:

002 - Alfred: Are there any other issues like those of evolution and climate change that you believe to be divisive culturally in the same ways?

003 - Jake:

1. How can we prevent people from forming opinions based off of biased media?
2. Why do people base many topics such as scientific theory on the common consensus of their political or social party opposed to formulating their own opinion through factual information?

[polarmtimbers.png](#)

[Cultural cognition of risk1-512x356](#)

Solutions - Review

Anderson's

To Biased Media

- Don't use 'balancing norm' when there's consensus
- Be careful re: placement of claims (e.g.

To Segregation of Political Opinion

- Redistricting (get rid of gerrymandering)
- Cultural changes - increase 'fraternization'

Cultural Cognition

- Spokespersons of various backgrounds
- Policies should be developed that affirm the values of multiple ideological groups
- Websites promoting a political viewpoint should link to sites with opposing views

Kahan's (or Kahan-inspired)

- Detach Discussion from Politicized Meaning
- Affirm identities of participants
- Be aware of fact that people trust in-group members