IMPACT OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGY ON CLIMATE CHANGE

ABSTRACT

Climate change is one of the most serious global challenges currently faced by humanity. Governments worldwide are increasingly interested in addressing this phenomenon, often by instituting policies and programs. Designing effective policies and programs requires us to gain an academic understanding of factors that influence people's perceptions about climate change. In this study, I theorize that people's perceptions about climate change are influenced by their political ideology. The theory is tested using data from a representative survey of the residents in the state of Nevada (NV). Political ideology is measured as being liberal/conservative/moderate. Climate change perceptions are operationalized as the perceived impact of climate change, measured by three questions in the survey. Linear regression using SPSS is used to analyze the data. The results show that people holding liberal political ideology perceive a significantly higher impact of climate change than people holding conservative or moderate political ideology. This finding leads to academic and practical implications. One, this study highlights what is perhaps a very salient individual factor in determining people's attitude toward climate change.

Keywords— Climate Change, Political Ideology, Conservative, Liberals.

I. INTRODUCTION

Climate change is an important issue in today's world and attracting the attention of governments worldwide. Many governments are planning to implement policies on climate change or have

Already done so. People's attitudes towards climate change are a crucial in designing policies to address climate change. This will ensure that any policy addressing climate change will be easily implemented and accepted by the general public of the community. If the policies for climate change face resistance from the local community, then they will not be implementable. So, the first step toward designing effective climate change policies starts with an understanding of the people's perceptions on climate change. Understanding public perceptions of climate change is critical while designing successful policies.

To improve our understanding of the American public's climate change perceptions, this article presents findings from a representative survey of the residents in the state of Nevada (NV). Scholars have identified three concepts concerning climate change that are important to public policy researchers. Climate change, according to Sullivan and White, is a societal problem. It has been noted that climate change perceptions influence governmental and societal action for addressing environmental issues, including climate change policies, and that new governmental and social institutions are required to support collective action on climate change [1]. This study looks into how political ideology affects people's perceptions of climate change. Understanding the effect is critical for our society. Individuals' environmental and climate change behaviors are frequently of interest to researchers in psychology, communication, and atmospheric science [2]. The paper is organized as follows. The section that follows defines political ideology. Politics' Importance Scholars have identified three climate change concepts (important for public policy researchers). Climate change, according to Sullivan and White, is a societal problem. It has been noted that climate change perceptions influence governmental and societal action. Addressing all ideologies to climate change perceptions is also discussed. We proceed by first reviewing the literature on environmental risk insights, paying special attention to studies of climate change attitudes [3]. Following the conceptual review, the theoretical model is presented and hypothesized. The paper concludes with the research's contributions and future implications. How political ideology can influence attitude toward climate change?

A. RESEARCH QUESTION

B. *Research Hypothesis*

- H1: People believing in a liberal political ideology will have higher perceived impact of climate change as compared to

people believing either a conservative or moderate political ideology.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Climate change is a long-term change in the average weather patterns that have come to define Earth's local, regional and global climates [4]. There have been various natural factors for climate change including emissions from volcanoes, variations in Earth's orbit, and levels of pollution. Climate change could interrupt ecologic al, cultural, and economic relationships within the society. Calculating climate change's effects on a particular place requires anticipation of these disruptive relationships and their resulting effects on the community – particularly salient for the development of new policies on climate change [4]. As has been observed, public perceptional threats related to climate change are related to the geographic location and chain of events [5].

Climate change drives long-term decisions regarding potential climate change mitigation processes and policies. Stakeholders to climate change policies include utility companies, companies in the energy and transportation area, protection companies, and governments at different levels [6]. Household and individual decisions can also be dependent upon climate change perceptions or existing climate variables. For example, if a person believes that ocean levels are rising due to climate change, s/he may be less interested in buying a beachfront property. There are several factors that can influence people's perceptions toward climate change. One of the most important is political ideology [7].

Ideology is crucial driver of people's views about many issues including climate change. People's level of worry about the climate change matters and how much people worry about climate change is often determined by which political ideology they belong to. However, ideology has been as alluded to "the most elusive concept in the whole of social science" [8, p. 1]. According to political science and psychology, political ideology is referred to as an interrelated group of political and moral attitudes that have cognitive, affective, and motivational components [9]. Ideology helps to explain why people do what they do in coherence with their political orientation [10]. Political orientation has been explored in previous studies as

an antecedent of consumers' environmentally sustainable behaviors or preference for more sustainable companies and products [11] and in tourism decisions [12]. The definition of political ideology offered by Erickson and Tedin [13] is a "set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved", a definition which has been echoed elsewhere [14]. Denzau and North [15] suggest a similar understanding of political ideology, except that they also highlight the role of social groups or collectivities where "ideologies are the shared framework of mental models that groups of individuals possess that provide both an interpretation of the environment and a prescription as to how that environment should be structured". If one accepts that ideology is shared, that it aids in the interpretation of the social world, and that it normatively specifies (or requires) good and proper ways of dealing with life's problems, it is easy to see how ideology reflects and reinforces what psychologists might call relational, epistemic, and existential needs or motives [16]. Ideologies also attempt to describe or interpret the world as it is (by making assertions or assumptions about human nature, historical events, present realities, and future possibilities), as well as to envision the world as it should be (by specifying acceptable means of achieving social, economic, and political ideals) [17].

Philosophers and social scientists disagree about describing and analyzing ideologies. Most philosophers adopted "value-neutral posture" [18]. Previously, critical tradition descends from the literatures of (Marx and Engels) who observed ideology (in contrast to science) "as a potentially dangerous form of illusion and mystification that typically serves to conceal and maintain exploitative social relations". Along these lines, Mannheim [19] portrayed certain ideologies as "more or less conscious disguises of the real nature of a situation" (p. 55). However, Habermas [20] treated ideology as a form of "systematically distorted communication," and this description remains common in certain circles of social academics. Empirical research in sociology, psychology, and political science reflects an apparently value- neutral conception, according to which "ideology" refers generally to any belief system. According to some scholars, any "configuration of

ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence" [21, p. 206]. In this tradition, ideology is treated as a "relatively benign organizing device" [18, p. 206], and its cognitive function of structuring political knowledge and expertise is emphasized.

Finally, researchers concluded that people will be ideological only to the extent that they hold their attitudes to be stable, logical, coherent, consistent, and relatively sophisticated or knowledgeable [22]. Previous research has stated that political ideology affects human perceptions of range of issues. Therefore, it can be logically inferred that political ideology will affect perceptions toward climate change, including other issues as well. Given the salience of political ideology in any matter of social, governmental, or organizational importance, it is justifiable that political ideology will be an important factor in determining perceptions related to climate change.

In this paper we consider a simple variation of the political ideology: left leaning (liberal) or right leaning (conservative). There are clear distinctions between these different views, namely with respect to the following: (a) advocating for social change instead of tradition, (b) favoring equality versus hierarchy, and (c) emphasis on contextual factors versus personal agency in explaining outcomes and circumstances [13].

As discussed by Swigart, et al. [23], liberalism and conservatism have clear defining characteristics captured by the several scholars. For example some scholars say that liberalism and conservatism have different defining morals, where liberal ideology is mostly concerned with social justice, economic equality, market controls, and planned changes to society [24]. Swigart et al. also note that according to conservative ideology, value means individualism, respect for authority, and differential economic rewards [25]. Values represent what an individual believes. People who are liberal value social change and tend to focus on the situational and contextual factors that obstruct equality of outcomes. On the other hand, those who support conservatism place a value on traditionalism and accept status hierarchy. For example, a liberal person would support LGBT rights more than a conservative, who would find LGBT rights

somewhat anti-traditional [26]. Furthermore, conservatives have more tendency to value meritocracy [23].

Generally, people within a certain ideology perceive others who share the same ideology in a positive light. For example, a liberal can perceive other liberals to be "caring" and "open-minded," whereas they will perceive conservatives to be "prejudiced" and "close-minded." Likewise conservatives see other conservatives as "honest" and "individualistic," whereas they see liberals as "lazy" and "unrealistic [27]. Thus, the two different ideologies – liberal and conservative – create two clearly distinct groups of people who differ on their perspectives, attitudes, and values with respect to governmental and social matters. So, it seems reasonable that these political ideologies will shape different kinds of attitudes toward climate change.

A.   Conceptual Framework

This section elaborates on the theoretical model and proposes hypotheses. The specific political ideology is discussed in the subsection, and it is argued why that liberal political ideology will positively perceived the impact of climate change. Several studies have found that political preferences strongly influence acceptance of the effects of climate change in the United States [28, 29]. Indeed, it has been discovered that relevant social and demographic variables influence views on climate change, and that these variables are ultimately crucial in shaping political views [30]. Indeed, the effect of politic al beliefs on perceptions about climate change is very strong [31]. Therefore, it can be inferred that there is a strong connection between political ideology and perceptions about climate change. Following the inference that political views are connected to perceptions of climate change, the question arises as to how different political ideologies influence perceptions of climate change. In this investigation, we focus on two types of political ideologies: conservative and liberal. The differences between these two types of political ideologies on climate change perceptions is explained below.

The explanation leverages two differences between liberals and conservatives, namely future time orientation. Future time orientation is "the extent to which individuals consider the potential distant

outcomes of their current behaviors and the extent to which they are influenced by these potential outcomes" [32]. Liberals have a high level of future time orientation [33]. Given that liberals are more willing to build an individualized moral foundation based on their inner feelings [34], their actions factor in future impacts on other humans with respect to rights and welfare [35]. Due to placing greater salience of future time orientation, liberals tend to protect other people from potential harm and being mistreated, even if it is in the distant future [36]. Given that climate change has the potential to affect other people, liberals are likely view climate change in a negative manner as it goes against their pursuit for social justice for future generations [37]. Therefore, we can conclude, liberals have a high future time orientation, and care about the future rights and welfare of human beings. Thus, liberals have pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors as the environment is likely to affect people in the future. Put in another way, liberal individuals are likely to acknowledge the greater impacts of climate change and devise precautions and policies to address the impacts.

In contrast to the liberals, conservatives place greater salience on past time orientation [33]. People who are focused more on the past place less importance on what the climate changes would hold for the future. Given that past documentation of climate change are also not always available, conservatives' tendencies to look to the past may rob them of evidence of climate change that may have occurred in history. Therefore, they may not think about it as a real threat. To summarize, liberals have more knowledge, interest, and cognizance of the harmful effects of climate change [2]. It can therefore be argued that a person possessing a liberal ideology will recognize the impact of climate change than holding other ideologies

II. METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of the survey is to inform the general public and policymakers about what Nevada residents think about important issues facing the state. Another goal of the survey is to collect data for scientific work. The survey's main goal was to learn what registered voters thought about important issues.

Nevada is being confronted. Two factors were considered when developing the questionnaire. It was decided that some questions would be drawn from previous questionnaires. After the survey was completed, the statewide random sample had 512 respondents for a response rate of 9%. In general, the sample size provides a margin of error of +/- 4.3% with a 95% confidence level. As previously stated, the survey process for these individuals included three mailings: an initial mailing with the questionnaire, a reminder post card, and a final mailing with the questionnaire.

The dependent variable, perceived impact of climate change was measured by three questions. Five- point Likert-type scales, ranging from 1 = strongly oppose to 5 = strongly support, (with 6 indicating "don't know) developed on the basis of instruments previously validated in the literature were used to measure the constructs. These items were aggregated via summation to yield a composite measure of perceived impact of climate change. The questions are below:

- Climate change has impacted the United States.
- Climate change has already impacted my community.
- Some natural disasters are cause by climate change.

The independent variable, political ideology was measured by one question below:

- Do you think of yourself as a:
- Conservative (respondents chose 1)
- Moderate (respondents chose 2)
- Liberal (respondents chose 3)
- Other (respondents chose 4)
- Don't know (respondents chose 5)

Political ideology was operationalized in the model by dummy coding the responses to the above question, where 1=liberal political ideology and 0=otherwise (i.e., moderate or conservative). The responses with 4 or 5 were filtered from the survey.

The **control variables** were gender, education, income, and age. Apart from gender and age, the other two variables were dummy coded as follows:

- education: 1=some college or above; 0=otherwise

Income: 1=60K and above; 0= less than 60K.

V. Finding

Linear regression, conducted using SPSS, was used to test the hypothesis, that is, the effect of political ideology on perceived impact of climate change. A higher rating on the political ideology indicated that the person was more toward the liberal side, while a lower rating on political ideology indicated that the person was more toward the conservative side. Regression was chosen because the hypothesis was concerned with the effect of one continuous variable on another.

The results show that the hypothesis is strongly supported. The overall F test was significant for the regression model. The variance explained (for perceived impact of climate change) was 17.5%, which indicates an adequate model. The beta coefficient was significant at $p<0.005$.

The results indicate that liberal political ideology significantly predicts (in a positive way) the perceived impact of climate change. Thus, Hypotheses is confirmed. Therefore, the general premise, that perceived impact of climate change is affected by political ideology is supported.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS

TABLE I
MODEL SUMMARY

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	303.072 a	. 208	. 325
2	303.072 a	.210	1.177

a. Predictor (Constant), Liberal_PI

b. Predictors: (Constant), Liberal_PI, Age2, Gender, Ed_Coded, Income_Coded

TABLE III

VARIABLES IN THE EQUATION

	B	.E.	V ald	f	ig.	E xp(B)
S tep 1ᵃ	liberal	1 .590	769	4 .272		039	4 .802
	EDCODE DED	- 1.928	334	3 3.410		000	. 145
	Incomeco de	. 353	308	1 .311		252	1 .423
	Age2	- .170	303	. 316		574	. 844
	Gender	. 753	294	6 .552		010	2 .123
	Age2	- .011	009	1 .674		213	. 989
	Constant	2 .481	678	1 3.379		000	1 2.949

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: liberal, conservative, Income recode, education recode, Gender, Age2.

TABLE N		V Mea n	Std. Dev iation	Std. Error	Bou
Clark	219	3.78 84	1.35359	.0914 7	
Washoe	75	3.86 22	1.27000	.1466 5	
Rural Counties	47	3.01 42	1.36548	.1991 8	
Total	341	3.69 79	1.36159	.0737 3	

TABLE IV
LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODERATOR GENDER LIBERAL

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	352.793 a	.107	.167

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 20 because maximum iterations has been reached. Final solution Cannot be found.

TABLE VI

	Perceived_Impact of _CC		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square
Between Groups	23.750	1	23.750
Within Groups	647.643	362	1.789
Total	671.393	363	

TABLE V

CLASSIFICATION TABLEᴬ

		Climate change Recode		Percentage
	Observed	.00	1.00	Correct
Step1	Climate change-recode	.00	0	81	0

		1.00	0	268	100
Overall Percentage					79.0

TABLE VI
VARIABLES IN THE EQUATION

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
tep 1ᵃ	liberal	.322	.7 45	.725	9	002	10.200
	gender_lliberal	7.425	59 91.614	000	.	998	369553 06.863
	Gender	.782	.2 71	.301	8	004	2.186
	Constant	.673	.1 72	5.313		000	1.961

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: liberal, gender_lliberal, Gender.

TABLE VII
LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODERATOR GENDER CONSERVATIVE

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	313.802ᵃ	.193	.301

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 5 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

TABLE VIII

CLASSIFICATION TABLEᴬ

	Observed		PolicyUn doc Recode		Percentage Correct	
St ep1	Policy Undoc-recode	00	.	4	3	5
			7		4.3	8
	de	.00	1 7	68	2 7.9	8
O verall Percentag e					0.8	8

a. The cut value is .500

TABLE IX

VARIABLES IN THE EQUATION

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
S tep 1ᵃ	Climate change_gender	683	614	.238		266	1.9 80
	Climate Change	2.611	413	9.960		000	.07 3
	Gender	279	504	306	.	580	1.3 22
	Constant	.438	348	9.176		000	11. 444

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: conservative gender, conservative, Gender.

III. CONCLUSION

This study investigates how liberal political ideology will positively affect impact perceptions of climate change. This study contributes to the literature on environmental and social irresponsibility and violation. The study also highlights how personal perceptions and values influence acknowledgement of social and economic crises, like climate change. Our study has important implications on how the government can address issues of climate change.

First, this study shows that people with a liberal political ideology are more likely to take it seriously. Therefore, from a standpoint of implications, this study shows that there may be a need to have educational awareness programs on climate change, specifically in areas where most of the people may be conservative. In other words, governments in highly conservative areas may need to take extra efforts to make people aware of the impact of climate change.

Second, the study shows that developing and instituting climate change policies will require liberal stakeholders to be included in the mix. If the policy development is only in the hands of conservatives, who may not be aware of the impact of climate change, a possible result could be that the policies are not as effective. It is also true that policies on climate change will need to strike a balance between environmental, economic, and social demands. This is where inputs from people with a conservative ideology can be helpful. Therefore, the results of the study clearly show that in order to develop a good policy to address climate change, a mix of liberal and conservative stakeholders are needed. This will ensure a more balanced policy development.

This paper indicates both dimensions of originality and utility. Originality can be categorized as either advancing understanding incrementally or advancing understanding in a way that provides some form of revelation. Originality means "the mission of a theory-development journal is to challenge and extend existing knowledge" [38, p. 491]. "We judge the value-added contribution of every article based on the potential contribution of the articulated new insights" [39, p. 8]. This paper will provide an Incremental insight to the policymakers and other researchers. For example, "The ultimate value-added test of an article is that it has moved scholars in a field or advanced our theoretical understanding" [39, p. 7].

The utility is another key contribution in an academic paper. This paper has revelatory insight that discloses a new way of seeing the attitude toward

climate change with a value-added contribution. Although it is rarely sufficient the insight must be seen as useful as well. This paper will provide a bridge between research, and practice. The theoretical and empirical findings in the study that political ideology influence attitude toward climate change will help devise climate change policies and practices. Again, given the effect of political ideology on attitude toward climate change, governments may explicitly form committees that have an equal percentage of both liberal and political ideologies. That will ensure that any policies regarding climate change will be balanced and acceptable to a wide range of community members. To conclude, this study shows the connection between political ideology, and perceived impact of climate change. It is hoped that it has provided important insights which can inform considerations when designing policies and practices for addressing climate change.

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