Cultural cognition and the problem of science communication

Description

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[also titled â??Cultural dissensus over scientific consensusâ?•]

These are the titles of a very interesting 50 minute presentation by Dan Kahan of the Yale Law School, available here on YouTube. It is part of a wider body of work by The Cultural Cogition Project, also at the Yale Law School.

It is about how what might be described as some core cultural values affect peopleâ??s attitudes towards evidence, both new evidence and perceptions of where the consensus lays in regard to existing evidence, in relation to a number of fields of scientific inquiry which have been the subject of some public debate. It is very relevant to evaluation because it could be argued that at the heart of much evaluation work is â??rationalistâ?• theory of change, that if people are presented with evidence about what works, where and when and how, then they will adjust their policies and practices in the light of those findings. The findings presented by Dan Kahan suggest otherwise, quite dramatically. Fortunately, he also touches on some ways forward, about how to deal with the problems his work has raised.

> â??Its a deliberative climate that needs environmental protection, just as much as the physical environment, and providing it as a kind of public goodâ?¦So this is a science of science communication, to create conditions in which people, the likelihood, of converging on the scientific truth has no connection to these kinds of values , how to do that is kind of complicated, but I do want to start by appealing to you that is the kind of goal we should haveâ?•

There is also an associated paper, available as pdf: â??Cultural Cognition of Scientific Consensusâ?• by Dan M. Kahan,Hank Jenkins-Smith, Donald Braman, Journal of Risk Research, Vol. 14, pp. 147-74, 2011, Yale Law School, Public Law Working Paper No. 205

Category

1. Uncategorized

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