

Discussion Groups Tues May 18th

Coalition-building (notes by Josh Uretsky)

Facilitator Michael Brown - Sustaining Way in South Carolina

Mixed group in terms of experience in Coalition building in work

Coalitions forming around education in New Mexico and in beginning phases, still trying to figure out how to build diversity into their work

Partnership for Working Families Dieynabou, built it into their work. Mostly women of color lead. Focus on process as opposed to outcomes. Decolonizing how we think and how we work. Operate in network that is not as aligned

Struggle between efforts that diversify membership base without

Changes to public engagement perspective to involve public in ways that don't assume access to internet and other privileges.

Evidence based coalition building. Need evidence but also lived experience. Groups feel like they are doing a better job of collecting data in case studies that in applying Social Science research.

Talking about building coalition to decouple New Mexico Education funding from oil and gas. Hard to find teachers/ educators who are willing to take the risks of speaking about their funding source.

Our tendency is often to operate in our little silos, but how do we look more at the people part of our work and look outside of our specific goals. Thinking about how labor coalitions that the Partnership for working families is in can support the oil and gas work in NM.

Polling in audience-based campaigning (notes by David Gold)

What do we already know about this topic?

Understanding of polling and utilization of polling both vary widely within the climate advocacy community

- Advocates often underestimate how much the public supports climate action
- It is important to look beyond the overall numbers in polls – a policy that a key constituency cares deeply about can get more visible public support than a policy with broad consensus
- Research shows that congressional staff underestimates support for climate action

Main uses for polling in day-to-day climate advocacy work:

- Strategy – Use polling to guide messaging and targeting
- Direct advocacy – Use polling to show policymakers that people care about climate and want action
- Organizing – Use polling to highlight social norms and give people a permission structure (e.g., telling Republicans that a high % of Republicans support climate action)

What is the desired end outcome(s) if we really tackle this topic well? Is it essential to winning? Why?

- It may not be “essential” but it increases the efficiency of everything else we're doing and therefore speeds up the timeline on our goals
- Polling is listening at scale and it's important for our movement to listen to the public

What are next steps for researchers/organizations/the overall community to better explore this topic? Is there a specific project idea or suggestion that people are interested in pursuing?

- Surveys that measure the effectiveness of our work
- Surveys of actual policymakers

Ethical storytelling in advocacy work (notes by Keith Kozloff)

Storytelling as an organizing tool ranges from two individuals exchanging personal stories as a core component of a deep canvassing campaign to producing professional video documentaries about the impacts of climate change on a community. Storytelling has become an increasingly important tool in the climate advocacy community due to the recognition of its power in reaching target audiences in ways that climate facts and arguments do not – by amplifying the voices of people harmed by climate disruption who might not otherwise be heard, stimulating emotional reactions such as compassion, processing in our brains that is more memorable than facts, building trust by using relatable storytellers from the community, motivating activism, dispelling misunderstandings that people don't understand their own needs, etc.

At the same time, ethical issues can arise when we take stories from others to use for organizational purposes – whose stories are used, who takes them, and who hears them. There is the potential for misrepresenting the interests and intent of the storytellers, or even cultural appropriation, especially given the storytelling traditions of indigenous communities. Telling a personal story puts someone in a vulnerable position, and that vulnerability itself constitutes a privilege that is not accessible to everyone due to their life circumstances. For example, undocumented immigrants may be reluctant to tell a story due to legal risks, or victims of climate disasters might face too much pain in telling their stories. The capturing of climate stories can even become formulaic, losing nuance and complexity.

Ethical principles and good practices in storytelling strategies include being transparent about intent in collecting the story, authenticity, mutual respect, and being clear about starting assumptions and willingness to change them.

What don't we know? Top research questions in climate advocacy (notes by Justin Rolfe-Redding)

Shared Research Agenda and Principles and Vision

- How we do research can be as important as what we research

Temis: Researching efficacy

Temis: what are barriers to climate conversations?

Robin: Need to move beyond test/re-testing same message; need to examine downstream, impact, if changing opinion even matters

Eliza:

- Do you have to be born an asker, or can be trained?
- What is state of the art measuring impact?
- Research on efficacy of policymaker contact to give to activists?

How we do research can be as important as what we research

Temis: Researching efficacy

Robin:

- Need to move beyond test/re-testing same message; need to examine downstream, impact, if changing opinion even matters
- back-and-forth on consensus outcomes
- Also Pierce & Cook made point in paper
- Turning opinion change into policymaker action

Eliza: Influence the influencers (Thinktanks)

- No low bar actions; only "hour of action" per week, team sport
- Developing personalized talking point
- Week 2: Policymaker contact
- Need more "askers", "28% movement"
 - Do you have to be born an asker, or can be trained
- Testing if Slack vs. email is more effective
- Democratizing grasstops advocacy
 - "Grass-blades-y"
- What is state of the art measuring impact?

Temis: what are barriers to climate conversations? What are key polling questions?

How do we make academic work actionable?

- Developing political will
- Joshua: Hahrie Han