The Politicization of Knowledge, Concern, and Support for Carbon Removal Technology

Nicholas A. Valentino
Erin Cikanek
Center for Political Studies
University of Michigan
The Puzzle

- Public opinion about technical policies of great consequence.
- Little is known about pace or dynamics of the politicization process.

Goals:
- 1. Baseline and track the politicization of opinion about climate change and policy solutions
- 2. Determine strategies to inoculate against politics
AmeriSpeak Sample

- Representative sample of 1000 U.S. adults 18+
- Fielded Dec 26, 2017- Jan 17, 2018
- Online only, 3027 households sampled, 1001 completed.
- RR equiv. 9.9%.
- 51% Female, 66% White, 10% Black, 16% Hispanic, 3% Asian
- Cost: $30k
Public Knowledge: General Climate Change

Figure 1. Proportion Correctly Answering Questions about General Climate Change

Data: NORC/AmeriSpeak
Public Knowledge: Carbon Dioxide Removal

Figure 2. Proportion Correctly Answering Questions about Carbon Removal

- Trees remove CO2
- 25% of CO2 put there by man
- Pipelines best for transporting CO2
- CO2 can be captured from industry
- Biochar helps reduce CO2
- CO2 can be removed
- Tech exists for removing CO2
- Capture from Power Plants Possible
- Burning Trees Produces CO2
- Injecting CO2 into rock helps

Data: NORC/AmeriSpeak
Party Identification Structures Climate Change but Not CDR Knowledge
Partisan Cues Do Not Influence Support for Carbon Removal Policies
Next Steps

- Knowledge about climate change is politicized, knowledge about CO2 removal is not.
- Policy attitudes about climate change are highly politicized, less so for CO2 removal.
- Continue to track partisan polarization.
- Think about ways to inoculate public against the infusion of partisanship into the debate.