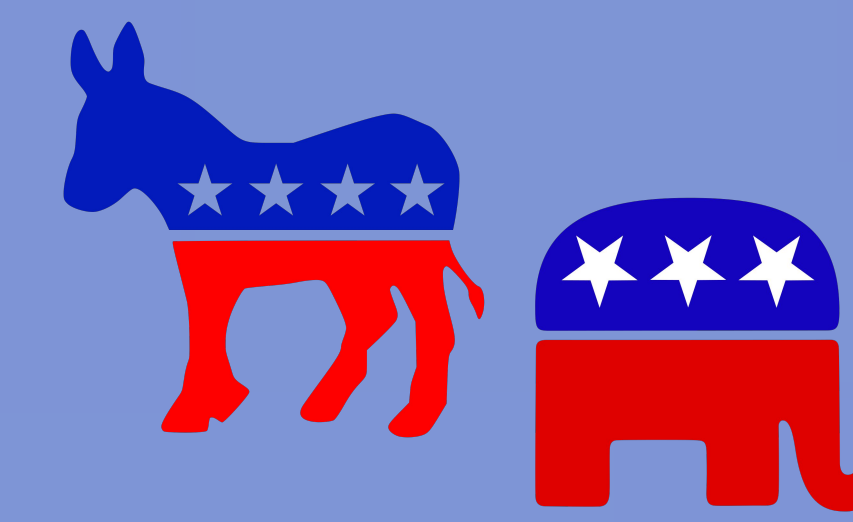


Performing Truth

The Navigation of Climate Change Reality in the US



Roan Shea
 Capstone Project
 ENVS, Spring 2018
<https://ds.lclark.edu/roanshea/>

Framing Question: How might an increased consideration of the performance of truth help provide a more comprehensive picture of reality?

Focus Question: How does performance within the United States Congressional Hearing on Climate Science contribute to audience understanding of the reality of climate change?

Background

Post-Truth

- Oxford Dictionary 2016 Word of the Year.
- Fear in the US that we are losing our valuation over the truth.

Reality/Objectivity

- “God’s eye view” of science/reality creates a division between social influences and traditional objectivity. (Hayles 1995)
- “Everything we know about the world we know because we interact with it” (the “unmediated flux”). (Hayles 1995)

- Demeritt argues science is socially influenced, but it is only the science/social distinction itself which is problematic (Demeritt 2001).

- Objectivity is desirable, but not with our current definitions.

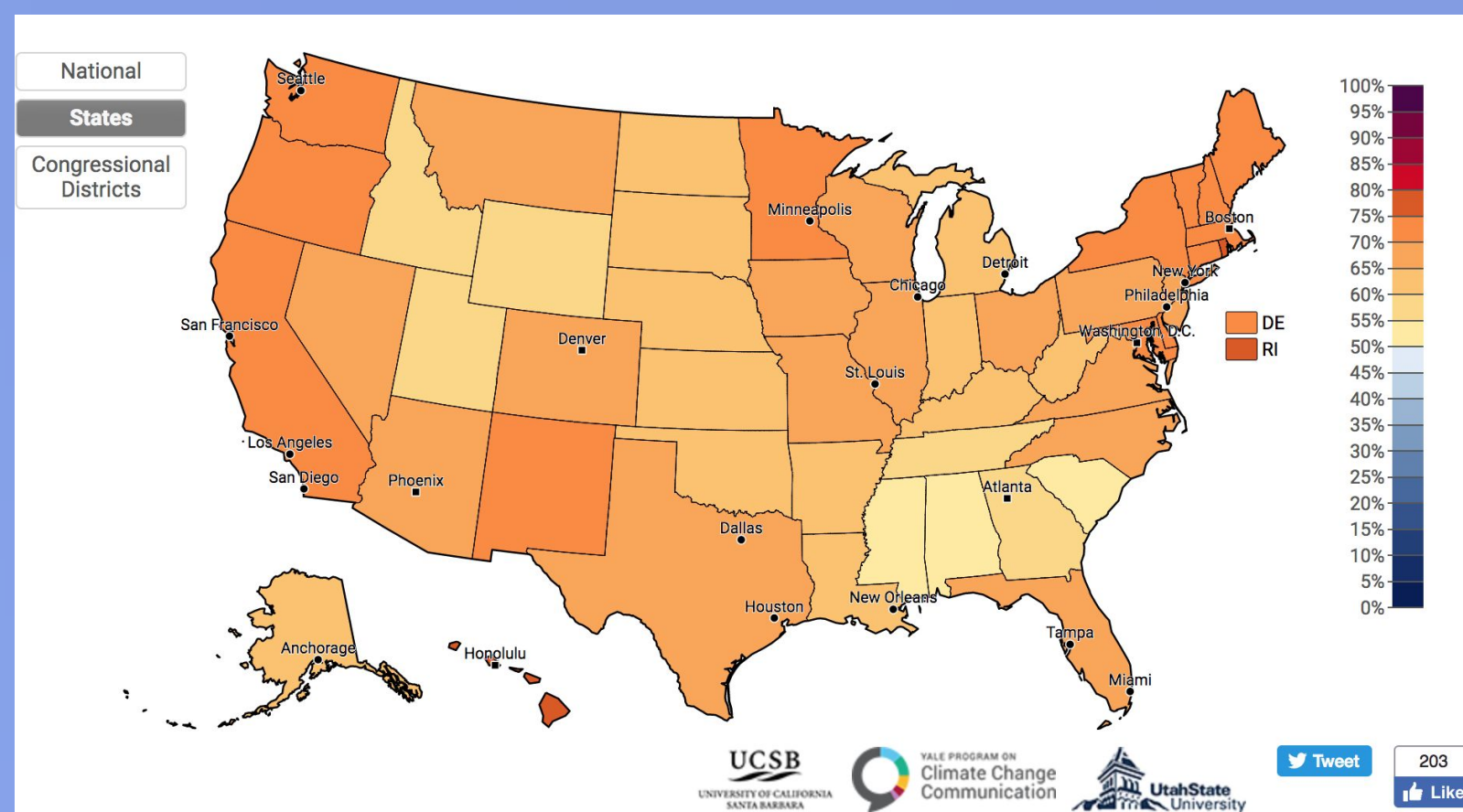
Performance

- Common definition is complicated by Hit and Run Theatre.
- “Performance moves between the As If and the Is, between pretend and new constructions of the “real.” (Taylor 2016)

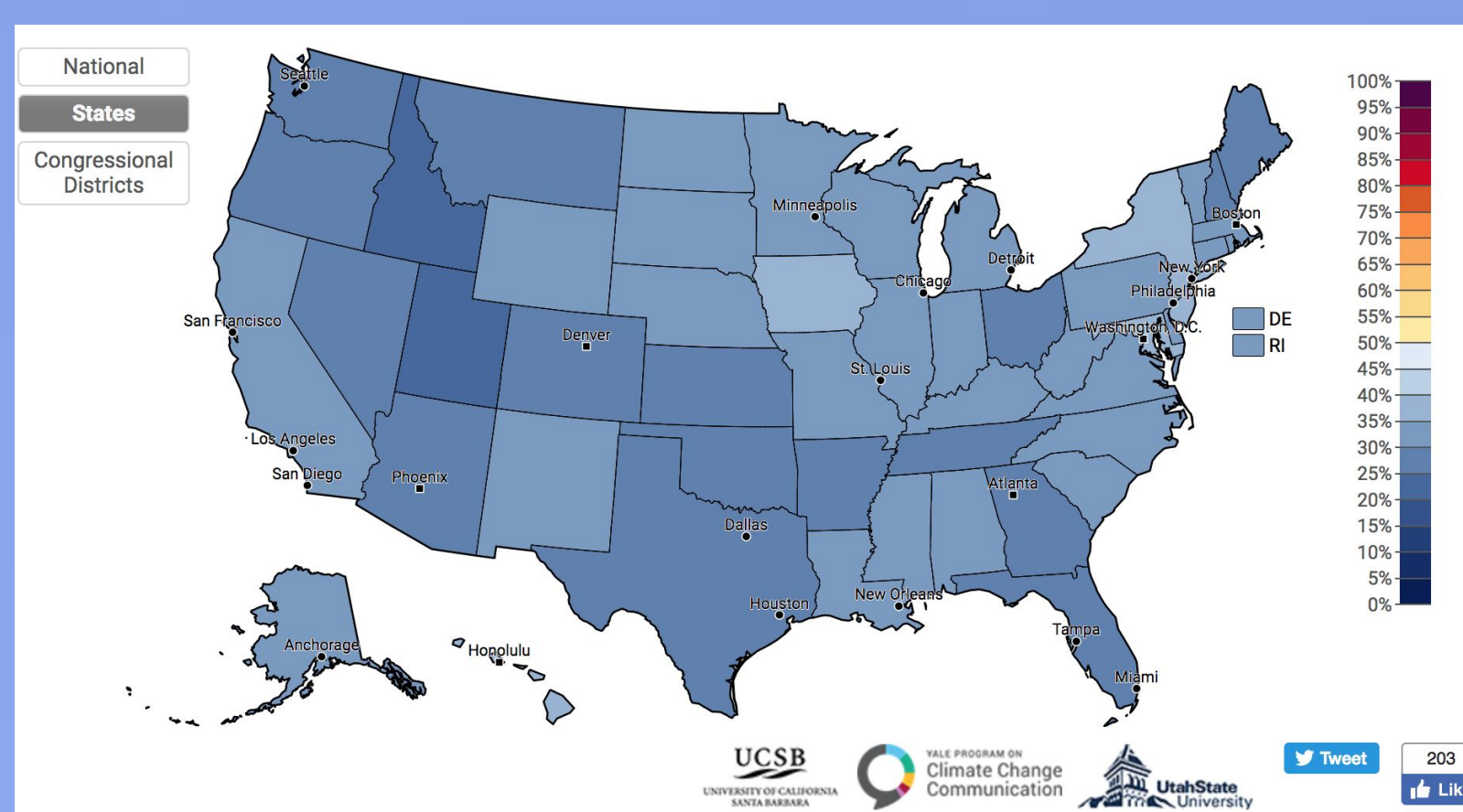
Climate Change: What’s up with the US?

US is less convinced of climate science than other developed nations, but is where inaction matters the most (Noorgard 2011)

Percentage of Democrats by State who believe climate change is caused mostly by human activity



Percentage of Republicans by State who believe climate change is caused mostly by human activity



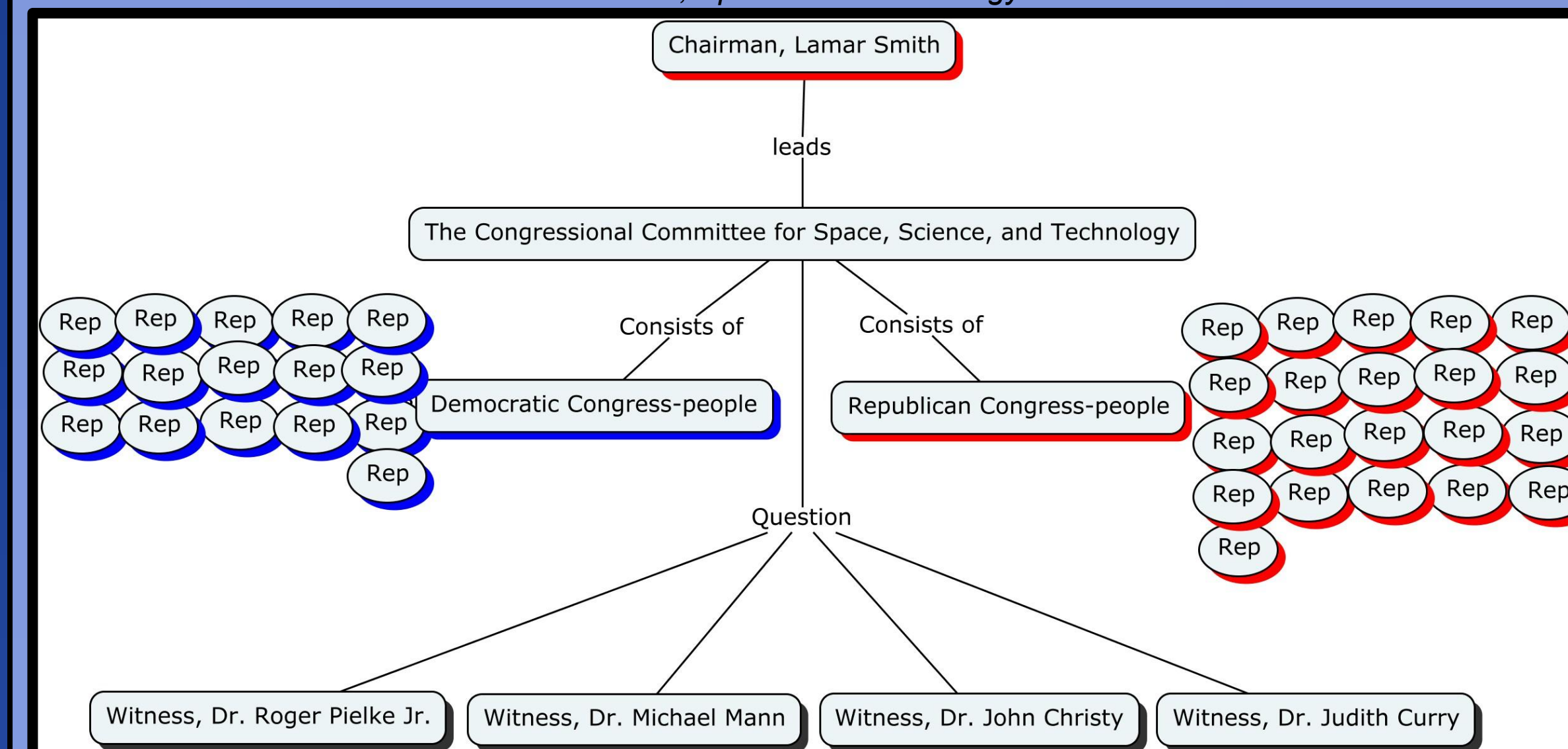
(Partisan Climate Opinion Maps 2016 Yale)

Procedure

- Narrative Analysis
 - How is the story being told, and why is this significant?
- Performance Analysis
 - How does the performance of this narrative impact audience understanding?

The Congressional Hearing on Climate Science

“The purpose of this hearing is to examine the scientific method and process as it relates to climate change. The hearing will also focus on the underlying science that helps inform policy decisions.”
 -Committee on Science, Space and Technology. March 29th 2017.



Narrative of the Hearing

“Alarmists” operate outside of scientific method and silence/shame others.

We should “follow the science”, stop the “name-calling”.

Climate models have overestimated rate of climate change.

We do not understand climate change.

Climate debate should continue; Obama’s climate/energy policies should be reconsidered.

The Performance

- Trump’s recent executive order to roll back the Clean Power Plan is one of many performances of power (Thiong’o 1997) at work in the hearing.

- Performance of victimhood from “alarmist” abuse.

- Performance of certainty through dismissal, scoffing, smirking, mixed with courtroom professionalism.

The performance created a space in which the selected information could stand as a cohesive story.



Jay Horita-Chu Photography

Knock Sniff was an original piece of theatre I devised and performed with collaborators Skye Telleen (middle), Aria Wiedmann (right) and Evan Howell (not pictured) on March 16 and 17, 2018. This artistic outcome of my research was a movement-based investigation into truth and objectivity in the US. For a video see my website linked in the top right.

Conclusions/Implications

The success of the hearing’s narrative relied on the performance. The importance of this performance suggests that rather than attempting to strip down and simplify the truth into objective facts OR disregard the possibility of something being objectively true, an increase in our understanding of the performance of truth will allow us in the end to have a more objective understanding of reality.

Suggestions

- Rather than attempt to eliminate performance from our truth-seeking, we should increase efforts to understand it.
- Application of simulation and analytical performance based material in education.
- More research needs to be done on the processing of information and how physical performance factors in.

Key References

Demeritt, David. 2001. *The Construction of Global Warming and the Politics of Science*. Association of American Geographers. Blackwell Publishers.
 Harding, Sandra. 1992. “RETHINKING STANDPOINT EPISTEMOLOGY: WHAT IS ‘STRONG OBJECTIVITY?’” *The Centennial Review* 36 (3): 437–70.
 Hayles, N. Katherine. 1995. “Searching for Common Ground.” In *Reinventing Nature?: Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction*, edited by Michael E. Soule and Gary Lease, 47–63. Island Press.
 Noorgard, Kari Marie. 2011. *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life*. MIT Press.
 “Partisan Climate Opinion Maps 2016.” n.d. Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. Accessed December 6, 2017. <http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/partisan-maps-2016/>.
 Wiles, David. 2000. *Greek Theatre Performance: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press.