

DAILY KOS

Big Oil Denies That Ford and GM Funded Denial As New Study Demonstrates Impact Of Those Campaigns

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On Monday, [Maxine Joselow at E&E](#) published an extensive investigation into the climate research done decades ago by Ford and GM scientists, and the auto giant's decision to fund denial organizations in the '90s to oppose climate action that might cut into their gas-guzzling SUV sales, specifically things like the Kyoto Protocol. Ford gave over a million dollars to the American Enterprise Institute between 1985 and 1997, and it along with GM shelled out hundreds of thousands to groups like the Competitive Enterprise Institute, Heritage, Heartland, Cato, and the US Chamber of Commerce.

Later that day, the oil industry's blog dedicated to fighting these sorts of exposes, Energy in Depth, [had a post up](#) with their now-standard response, claiming this is hardly news. The PR page was eager to dish about the "activists behind the story," and (falsely) claim that because actually everyone knew about climate change back then, "the idea that a small handful of scientists and executives singlehandedly misled the entire world is complete bunk."

Putting aside the irony of an oil PR blog claiming that past oil PR efforts were ineffective, is it though? Is it bunk that these organizations "misled the entire world"? Yes.

But only because this handful of industry-funded (pseudo-)scientists didn't mislead the entire world, just a handful of rich, english-speaking countries. And it's less "misled," and more "weaponized their conservative, anti-government ideology."

The proof can be found in a new study published [in Nature Climate Change](#) that shows how effective such campaigns have been. Well, sort of.

What Gabriela Czarnek and co-authors set out to do was see if people around the world responded to climate change information in the same way as relatively well-studied Americans - where the more conservatives learn about climate change, the more opposed to climate action they become.

Based on surveys of 100,000 people across 64 countries, they found that in general, no. Most people, in both well-developed and developing countries, respond reasonably to climate change education, becoming more concerned about the problem as they learn more about it. (Yay! Good!)

But in those countries at the richer end of the spectrum, "the positive effects of education become attenuated by right-wing ideology," the study says. It found that there were only "a small number of countries" in which the results showed a heavy left-right politicization where more

information triggered denial on the right: “the US and other highly developed, mainly English-speaking countries.”

In other words, the US, UK, Australia and Canada are the primary places where climate change has been politicized in this way. What a coincidence that Murdoch media thrives in these countries, and that they also happen to be the native language and home of the denial campaigns funded by Big Oil and Big Auto!

Another definite coincidence is that the study showed the greatest difference on the question about supporting climate change policies.

“This confirms previous findings,” study authors write, “indicating that when it comes to issues such as climate change, what is most divisive is not the characterization of the problem itself but the proposed solutions associated with the problem.”

Now who would possibly be motivated to generate opposition to the solutions to climate change?

Oh right, the industries profiting off of climate change.