



2012-03-26

Are Microfinance Institutions Immune to Science?: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Matthew R. Brigham

William T. Matthias

Chase Petrey

Daniel Nielson

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/fhssconference_studentpub



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

The Annual Mary Lou Fulton Mentored Research Conference showcases some of the best student research from the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences. The mentored learning program encourages undergraduate students to participate in hands-on and practical research under the direction of a faculty member. Students create these posters as an aide in presenting the results of their research to the public, faculty, and their peers.

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Brigham, Matthew R.; Matthias, William T.; Petrey, Chase; and Nielson, Daniel, "Are Microfinance Institutions Immune to Science?: A Randomized Controlled Trial" (2012). *FHSS Mentored Research Conference*. 12.

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/fhssconference_studentpub/12

This is brought to you for free and open access by the Family, Home, and Social Sciences at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in FHSS Mentored Research Conference by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.



Are Microfinance Institutions Immune to Science?: A Randomized Control Trial

Matt Brigham
International Relations

Bill Matthias
International Relations

Chase Petrey
Political Science

Mentor: Daniel Nielson
Associate Professor, Political Science

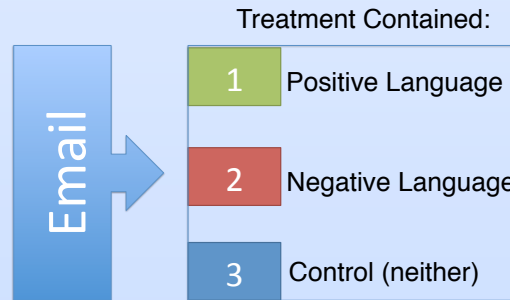
Puzzle

Are Microfinance Institutions effectively combatting poverty?

Theory

- Microfinance Institutions engage in **cognitive dissonance** and **confirmation bias** just like individuals do.
- **Cognitive Dissonance:** When confronted with credible scientific information **inconsistent** with their beliefs, Microfinance Institutions are more likely to rationalize their behavior and ignore the information.
- **Confirmation Bias:** When confronted with credible scientific information **consistent** with their beliefs, Microfinance Institutions are more likely to reinforce their beliefs.

Invitation to Partner



Discussion

- Positive treatment was **twice as likely** to request information
- Microfinance Institutions may be biased against negative information about microfinance
- Donors and academics may have a harder time influencing Microfinance Institutions to pursue “best practices” in microfinance.

Methods

- 1,479 Microfinance Institutions
- **Randomly assigned** emails priming them with either **positive** or **negative** scientific information
- Asked if they would be interested in **receiving information** about impact evaluations in microfinance

Results

