

Professor seeks retraction of Science article he co-authored

May 20 2015, by David Crary

Citing irregularities on the part of his colleague, a prominent Columbia University professor has asked *Science* magazine to retract a study he co-authored last year about the [ability of openly gay canvassers to shift voters' views](#) toward support for same-sex marriage.

Donald Green, who teaches [political science](#) at Columbia, requested the retraction Tuesday after the integrity of the data was called into question by two graduate students at the University of California, Berkeley, who tried to launch a similar study.

"I am deeply embarrassed by this turn of events and apologize to the editors, reviewer, and readers of *Science*," Green wrote in memo to *Science* magazine.

He said his co-author, UCLA graduate assistant Michael LaCour, had been unable to produce the raw data that purportedly was used to come up with the study's findings. According to Green, LaCour said he accidentally deleted the data in question, which pertained to an online survey of voters targeted by the canvassers.

LaCour did not respond immediately to a phone message from The Associated Press, but said on his personal website, "I'm gathering evidence and relevant information so I can provide a single comprehensive response. I will do so at my earliest opportunity."

The [article](#) in *Science* received widespread news coverage in December,

including articles by the AP, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post.

Science magazine's editor-in-chief, Marcia McNutt, issued a statement Wednesday saying the magazine "takes this case extremely seriously and will strive to correct the scientific literature as quickly as possible."

"No peer review process is perfect, and in fact it is very difficult for peer reviewers to detect artful fraud," McNutt wrote. "Given the fact that Dr. Green has requested retraction, *Science* will move swiftly and take any necessary action at the earliest opportunity."

The article detailed a study which concluded that openly gay canvassers were far more effective than straight canvassers in shifting voters' views toward support for [same-sex marriage](#).

According to the article, opinion changes produced by the straight canvassers tended to fade within a few weeks and those voters reverted to their previous views less favorable to same-sex marriage. The article said that the changes produced by the gay canvassers persisted nine months later.

Green updated his online curriculum vita, adding a parenthetical note to say that he had retracted the study that was depicted in the *Science* article.

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Citation: Professor seeks retraction of Science article he co-authored (2015, May 20) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-05-professor-retraction-science-article-co-authored.html>

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