Jennifer S. Lerner

GRFP Recipient: 1993

Undergraduate Institution:
B.A. 1990, University of Michigan

Graduate Institution:
M.A. 1994, Ph.D. 1998;
University of California, Berkeley

Graduate Field of Study:
Psychology

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Current Position:
Professor of Public Policy and
Management, Harvard Kennedy
School of Government; Director,
Harvard Laboratory for Decision
Science

RESEARCH INTERESTS //

Jennifer S. Lerner investigates judgment and decision-making, emotion, accountability, leadership, and the application of psychology to policy problems. She is best known for how human feelings influence risk perception, everyday economic transactions, and legal judgments. Her work has demonstrated that fear increases perceived risk while anger decreases it, a finding with strong implications about how public officials communicate risk to constituents and other decision-makers.

A FOND MEMORY FROM MY EXPERIENCE AS A FELLOW //

Receiving the NSF fellowship may be the best thing that has happened in my entire career. I can honestly say that I would not have achieved the position I am now in (tenured Harvard professor) were it not for the fellowship. It means so much to me that I still remember the moment when I received the notice.

The fellowship provided tangible resources that I needed in grad school, but just as importantly, the NSF fellowship told me that I "belonged" in science even when I doubted my scientific ability. There were many times in grad school when I doubted my ability to succeed. At such times, one of the main things that kept me going was the knowledge that some people out there (i.e., the NSF reviewers) believed in me. This knowledge carried me through until I could eventually believe in myself.

AWARDS/ HONORS //

-National Research Service Award, National Institute of
 Mental Health (1998–1999)

- Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers
 (PECASE), National Science Foundation

- Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program
 award, National Science Foundation (2003-2008)

POSITION PROFILE //

1998-1999 National Institute of Mental Health postdoctoral
 fellow, University of California, Los Angeles

1999-2004 Assistant professor, Carnegie Mellon University

2004-2007 Estella Loomis McCandless Associate Professor,
 Carnegie Mellon University

2007-Present Professor, Harvard University