

Governance | Individual communication

IC - (20837) - HOW ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS PERCEIVED? AND HOW DO THESE PERCEPTIONS CHANGE BY PERCEIVER? APPROACHING MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF U.S. RESIDENTS' IMPRESSIONS AND STEREOTYPES OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS THROUGH A CONJOINT ANALYSIS

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Background and objectives

Previous research found stereotypes of environmentalists as barriers to public engagement and identification with environmentalism (Bashir et al., 2013; Pearson et al., 2018). What they missed to identify were the attributes of an environmentalist that affect people's impressions and self-identification, as well as how participant's own group membership(s) influence this relationship. The present project tried to fill this gap by measuring responses to diverse fictitious profile descriptions of environmentalists (Stenhouse & Heinrich, 2019).

Process and methods (for empirical research)

More specifically, by investigating the complex influence of environmentalist profiles' multiple features (e.g., gender, occupation, type of pro-environmentalism, etc.) on participants' stereotypes (competence, friendliness, and trustworthiness), perceived typicality, and self-identification with the described profiles. Through applying the (for psychological research) novel method of a conjoint experiment, responses of a sample of 678 U.S. residents were measured and analyzed.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Participants generally perceived, among other results, profiles of women, Asian, cleaners or office clerks, political moderates or liberals, private to moderate behaviors, with mainly global environmental concerns to be more typical for environmentalists. Moreover, participants identified themselves most with profiles of women, cleaners, and who were privately pro-environmental. Atypical profile descriptions only improved the participants' impressions regarding private pro-environmental behaviors and the occupation cleaner. Also, responses were influenced by self-assessed categorizations (e.g., political orientation).

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Despite limitations such as multiple sampling strategies, these findings extend the knowledge on dimension-specific perceptions of the strongly stereotyped and politicized social category of environmentalists in the U.S. Hereby, this project opens new directions regarding impression formation research, and the application of conjoint analyses in psychological research. Moreover, we provide the environmental movement valuable input regarding message source and content in relation to the targeted audience.

Palavras-chave : environmentalists, stereotypes, conjoint experiment, social identity, U.S. residents