

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (20997) - CHILL GRETA, CHILL!": STEREOTYPE ATTRIBUTION TOWARDS YOUNG ACTIVISTS

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Background and objectives

Climate change is an increasingly mobilizing issue, brought forward by activists (Murray, 2020). However, activists are prone to negative stereotypes, which leads to resistance by society (Bashir et al., 2013). Youth are particularly interested and innovative in contributing to environmental issues (Arnold et al., 2009), but they feel disregarded by formal environmental movements (Earl et al., 2017). The present research aimed at examining stereotypical dimensions attributed to (youth vs adult) activists, using the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), also including a morality/trustworthiness dimension.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

In Study 1 (N=276), with real public figures, Greta Thunberg or Jane Fonda were the real models used, and randomly assigned to participants, but being attributed the same discourse excerpt. Warmth, competence and trustworthiness stereotypes were measured. In Study 2 (N=228), fictional characters were used, with the same discourse being assigned to an activist presented as teenager or adult.

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

In study 1, the results showed a sanction towards Thunberg in all stereotypical dimensions. This might be due to her characterization in the media. In Study 2, no differences were found in warmth or competence dimensions, only on the morality/trustworthiness dimension, penalizing the young activist as less trustworthy.

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

These results showcase the importance of studying environmental activists in the framework of the SCM, and the interplay between different social categories (age, activism/agency) in stereotypical appraisals. They also contribute to understanding resistance towards environmental activists, thus helping to reduce barriers to social influence and innovation from pro-environmental agents of all ages.

Palavras-chave : Environmental activists, social influence, stereotypes, age