

Governance | Individual communication

IC - (21100) - WHAT DRIVES SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION WITH EXTINCTION REBELLION AND COLLECTIVE CLIMATE ACTION IN THE UK

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Background and objectives

Even though concern for climate change and intention to take climate action is on the rise among the UK public, engagement with activist groups remains lower than desired. We investigate how intentions to take collective environmental action can be translated into engagement. We empirically test the social identity model of pro-environmental action to explore what drives social identification with XR, and if social identification in turn, predicts collective climate action intentions.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

We recruit a nationally representative sample of UK adults (N=1098) and collaborate with an active climate movement (Extinction Rebellion i.e., XR).

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

We found that as people's social identification with XR increases, their general pro-environmental intentions become more closely related to them viewing XR as effective advocates (e.g., wanting to learn from XR, trusting the information XR provides, and wanting to join XR-driven campaigns). In other words, amongst those who have strong pro-environmental intentions, those who strongly identify with XR are more likely to be influenced by their advocacy.

When turning to who these people are, we find that younger people, and females, hold a better image of XR, and in turn have taken (and intend to take) more XR related actions. We also found that those self-identifying as white have performed fewer XR-related behaviours, have lower intentions to engage with XR and perceive a lower norm of XR participation. On the other hand, those self-identifying as black performed more XR-related behaviours, performed higher intentions to engage with XR, and perceived a stronger social norm of XR participation.

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

This study is the first to unpack social identification in predicting support for XR in a nationally representative sample, by paying attention to the role of different groups (age, gender, ethnicity) and co-develop a multi-component measure of collective action behaviours with XR (e.g. digital versus in-person actions, effort, visibility, disruptiveness etc.).

Palavras-chave : Collective action, social movements, Extinction Rebellion, climate change, political, activism