

PSYC120 Blog Assessment

Name: Cameron Henry

Student Number: 6433339

The surprising correlation between politics and the views people have of the environment.

Walking along beaches and seeing the amount of rubbish makes one wonder how anyone could be so inconsiderate to the environment. Taking it upon myself out of interest to research, I stumbled across a somewhat unrelated study. Simply put, it blew me away.

The study focuses on how American's views on environment are highly polarised (there is substantial divide in the population) and deeply explores links between political agenda and environmental views.

It was hypothesised based on liberal's environmental rhetoric (attitudes towards the environment) and how they view it morally, that there is potential for conservatives to adopt stronger proenvironmental attitudes when exposed to moral concerns that are directly relatable.

Study 1a. 180 participants completed a questionnaire measuring their political identity and read three scenarios of average days of an individual. Each day consisted of identical components that differed slightly: the target recycles their water bottle one day; on another they don't; and on another, the bottle is absent. Upon rating this target morally on a scale from 1 (immoral) to 6 (extremely moral), in the non-recycle scenario, liberals gave an average morality rating lower (3.59) than what conservatives did (4.50). There was significantly less change in ratings and results from conservatives across all scenarios compared to liberals.

Study 1b. Following *Study 1a.*, 476 students reported their political status and indicated the importance of being environmentally friendly with the same scale previously used. They explained their answer in short sentences, which was reviewed by people unaware of the hypotheses, and they concluded how much each response involved morality compared to perception of the right and wrong thing. Results indicated there was an association between liberalism and morality/proenvironmental attitudes. Both studies supported that liberals, unlike conservatives, view environmental issues in moral terms.

Study 3. The hypotheses were directly tested, presenting 308 conservatives with different conditions and media attempting to increase their proenvironmental attitudes. This included randomly assigning participants with similar messages that focused on different foundations including purity and sanctity, harm and care and neutrality. Participants exposed to the purity and sanctity condition evoked stronger feelings of disgust than others, suggesting proenvironmental attitudes increased due to their ability to moralise more with these issues than they perhaps could have in other conditions. Differing results in alternative conditions supported this claim, and it was found that framing environmental messages in a way that directly relates to conservatives increases their proenvironmental attitudes and eliminates difference between liberals and conservatives.

Despite finding interest in the research; I found it additionally gives insight into how views influence moral beliefs – and how the implications of these views allow us to better understand human cognition/behaviour in all aspects of life.