
Abstract

Enhancing endorsement of scientific inquiry increases support for pro-environment policies

Aaron Drummond,^{1,2} Matthew A. Palmer,³ and James D. Sauer⁴

¹School of Education, Flinders University, Adelaide, South Australia 5001, Australia

²School of Psychology, Massey University, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand

³Department of Psychology, School of Medicine, University of Tasmania, Launceston, Tasmania 7250, Australia

⁴Department of Psychology, School of Medicine, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania 7001, Australia

Pro-environment policies require public support and engagement, but in countries such as the USA, public support for pro-environment policies remains low. Increasing public scientific literacy is unlikely to solve this, because increased scientific literacy does not guarantee increased acceptance of critical environmental issues (e.g. that climate change is occurring). We distinguish between scientific literacy (basic scientific knowledge) and endorsement of scientific inquiry (perceiving science as a valuable way of accumulating knowledge), and examine the relationship between people's endorsement of scientific inquiry and their support for pro-environment policy. Analysis of a large, publicly available dataset shows that support for pro-environment policies is more strongly related to endorsement of scientific inquiry than to scientific literacy among adolescents. An experiment demonstrates that a brief intervention can increase support for pro-environment policies via increased endorsement of scientific inquiry among adults. Public education about the merits of scientific inquiry may facilitate increased support for pro-environment policies.

From *Royal Society Open Science* (2016) 3: 160360. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rsos.160360>

Available at <http://rsos.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/royopensci/3/9/160360.full.pdf>

Correspondence: a.drummond@massey.ac.nz or matthew.palmer@utas.edu.au