

Environmental Peer Persuasion: How Moral Exporting and Belief Superiority Relate to Efforts to Influence Others

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Introduction

- Much of the work on factors that influence the likelihood of successful persuasion attempts has focused on researcher-induced persuasion efforts, even though most persuasion efforts that occur in the real world are not from authorities, but rather from peer-to-peer

- Thus, we know little about *who* tries to influence others' environmental behaviors; the individual differences of environmental moral exporting (EME) and environmental belief superiority (EBS) may be of particular relevance when studying these efforts

- People high in moral exporting tend to have both strong beliefs about moral issues and an action orientation toward influencing others (Peterson et al., 2009); moral exporting was originally conceptualized as a general orientation, yet people may vary in how much they try to export their moral values in distinct domains, including their environmental values

- Belief superiority is the belief that one's own views are more correct than other positions; those high in EBS endorse more extreme views on everything from climate change to energy independence (Raimi & Leary, 2014)

- Both constructs should relate to efforts to influence others' environmental behaviors, including conversational experiences when discussing environmental issues with others, past efforts to influence others' behaviors, the perceived effectiveness of confronting environmental transgressors (i.e., trying to change someone's behavior to be more environmentally friendly), and willingness to confront transgressors

Method

- Participants were 295 adults from MTurk: 56% women; *M* age = 34.32 (*SD* = 10.87); 82% White

- In the present study and two earlier studies, participants completed a new seven-item measure of EME with a single factor structure ($\alpha = .86$; example item: "I would take time to teach someone how to live their life in a way that is more consistent with my environmental views")

Method (continued)

- Participants also completed the nine-item measure of EBS ($\alpha = .95$; example item: "In your view, how much more correct are your beliefs about each of the following issues than other beliefs about these issues? My views on climate change are:"); EME and EBS were correlated $r = .48$

- As outcomes, participants completed nine items related to experiences while engaging in environmental conversations (which broke out into four subscales: preference for two-way conversations; conversational frustration, confidence, and enjoyment), nine items measuring past efforts to influence others' environmental actions (e.g., "During the past month, I talked about environmental issues generally with other people), and adapted measures of perceptions of the effectiveness of confronting environmental transgressors and willingness to confront (Nolan, 2013)

Results: Conversational Experiences

- Linear regression models tested EME, EBS, and their interaction when predicting key outcomes
- EME predicted preference for two-way environmental conversations and conversational enjoyment, but also frustration during conversations
- EBS predicted preference for one-way environmental conversations, marginally stronger conversational confidence, and again frustration during conversations

Regression models with environmental moral exporting, environmental belief superiority, and the interaction between the two measures predicting environmental conversational experiences, Study 2

Variable	Two-Way Conversations			Pessimism / Frustration			Conversational Confidence			Conversational Enjoyment		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>d</i>
EME	.36**	.07	.60	.30**	.06	.61	-.01	.07	-.01	.72**	.08	1.06
EBS	-.19*	.08	-.29	.24**	.06	.46	.14	.07	.22	-.05	.09	-.06
EME x EBS	-.03	.05	-.06	-.04	.04	-.10	.05	.05	.14	-.04	.06	-.08
<i>F</i> (<i>df</i>)	8.73 (3, 282)			27.32 (3, 282)			1.92 (3, 282)			34.44 (3, 282)		
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²	.08**			.22**			.01			.26**		

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. EME = environmental moral exporting. EBS = environmental belief superiority.

Results: Past Efforts and Future Confrontations

- Both EME and EBS predicted past efforts to influence others' behaviors; EME also predicted perceived effectiveness of and willingness to confront environmental transgressors; their interaction predicted willingness such that people high in EBS but low in EME were least willing to confront

Regression models with environmental moral exporting, environmental belief superiority, and the interaction between the two measures predicting past efforts to influence others, perceptions of confrontation efforts, and willingness to confront transgressors, Study 2

Variable	Past Efforts			Perceived Effectiveness			Willingness to Confront		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>d</i>
EME	.58**	.07	.95	.29**	.03	1.04	.65**	.06	1.37
EBS	.19*	.08	.31	-.01	.04	-.04	-.06	.06	-.11
EME x EBS	.07	.05	.18	.02	.02	.12	.08*	.04	.26
<i>F</i> (<i>df</i>)	40.79 (3, 280)			33.16 (3, 281)			57.58 (3, 282)		
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²	.30**			.25**			.37**		

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. EME = environmental moral exporting. EBS = environmental belief superiority.

Conclusion

- People high in EME were more active in their efforts to influence others' environmental behaviors, and although sometimes frustrated they preferred two-way dialogue and enjoyed the interactions

- Relative to high EME individuals, individuals high in EBS put less effort into influencing others; when high EBS individuals did engage in conversation, they were also likely to get frustrated and preferred to have a one-way conversation

- Future research should next records interactions between individuals, including whether EME and EBS relate to efforts to influence others' behaviors and the strategies used during such interactions

- Future work should also consider how people approach discussing environmental issues perceived to be controversial, such as climate change

- Giving individuals tips on how to frame interpersonal messages regarding climate change may be effective, such as highlighting the scientific consensus about climate change (van der Linden et al., 2015) or focusing on free market strategies to address climate change (Maki et al., in preparation)

Reference and Notes

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This poster was presented at the 2017 Society for Personality and Social Psychology Annual Conference in San Antonio, TX. For further information regarding this study please contact: Alexander Maki: alexander.maki@vanderbilt.edu

Original article: Maki, A., & Raimi, K. T. (2017). Environmental peer persuasion: How moral exporting and belief superiority relate to efforts to influence others. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 49, 18–29.