

Regional Queensland is experiencing the effects of climate change sooner, and with greater intensity, than other parts of Australia, and the world, and yet, paradoxically, its residents are some of the strongest opponents of emissions reductions policies (Cave 2019). The failure of previous pro-environmental campaigns in the region, and the identity-based hostilities they produced, point to the need for an alternative approach that is cogniscent rather than dismissive of local interests and identity (Colvin, 2020). Since human attitudes and behaviours are fundamentally shaped by the norms and values of the social groups they belong to, this study sought to investigate whether social-identity based environmental campaigns could be more effective than traditional approaches in Regional Queensland. In particular it aimed to evaluate the efficacy of ingroup messengers as spokespeople for net-zero emissions targets. Whilst the final data is yet to be collected, this poster provides an overview of social-identity based communications strategies, Regional Queensland identity and the experimental design and hypotheses of this study.

Social Identity-Based Strategies for the Promotion of Pro-Environmental Attitudes and Behaviours

Constructing a superordinate identity

Binding superordinate identities coalesce subgroups around collective norms, values and challenges. This promotes more positive inter-group relations and allows for the pro-environmental norms of the superordinate group to overcome the potentially resistant behaviours of subgroups (Gaertner et al., 1993) (Samuelson, Peterson & Putnam, 2000).

Basing arguments for pro-environmental behaviour around specific ingroup norms

Individuals align their attitudes and behaviours with the salient norms of the group (Smith and Louis, 2009). Framing environmentalism in terms of ingroup values and presenting pro-environmental behaviour as a manifestation of these values, could therefore encourage individual pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours (Fielding & Hornsey, 2016).

Using ingroup messengers

Prototypical ingroup messengers have the power to influence group norms and values and as a result of ingroup favouritism are perceived to be more likeable, trustworthy, and credible (Haslam, Platow & Reicher, 2011). They also activate individual's social identification with the group which is an important antecedent to collective action since it enhances perceptions of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

The Nature of Social Identity in Regional Queensland

To gain a deeper understanding into the content of Regional Queensland's unique identity this study conducted a qualitative content analysis of three open letters written by farmers (Somerset, 2019), miners (North Queensland Business Community, 2019) and First Nations people (Wangan & Jagalingou People, 2019). The results demonstrate the heterogeneity of regional identity, but also suggest that the region, and more specifically the region's miners' opposition to decarbonisation policies, may be driven by their significant place attachment, pride in productivity, and pursuit of autonomy.

Intergroup Dynamics

- Metropolitan Queenslanders and Australians from Southern-states employed in white-collar professions were characterised as the outgroup.
- Intergroup relationships were also moderated by whether an individual's abstract values aligned with those of the group. For farmers this concentrated on mateship, for miners this concentrated on loyalty, and for Wangan and Jagalingou people this concentrated on one's respect for the land.

Intragroup Values

- Political autonomy and economic self-sufficiency were an important determinant of regional self-esteem. Stoicism and hard work were therefore characterised as prototypical group behaviours.
- Whilst the nature of farmers', miners' and first nations peoples' relationship to the land was different, all demonstrated significant, inter-generational place attachment as their culture, identity and imagined futures were intrinsically linked to the land.

"Instead of action, we see politicians bending to Southern activism and lawfare" (North Queensland Business Community 2019, 3)

"Our connection to our sacred water, the essence of our being and livelihoods in Country, is severed by coal extraction and climate change" (Wangan & Jagalingou Family Council 2019, 7)

"If farmers can't grow the crops for our cereals and curries and stir-fries we all suffer ... some people in this great state think farmers are looking for a handout, they're not" (Agriculture Force 2019, 23)

Investigating the Efficacy of Ingroup Messengers in Regional Queensland as Advocates for Net-Zero Emissions Targets



Hypothesis: Ingroup messengers will be more effective than outgroup messengers at improving participants a) support, b) attitudes and c) behavioural intentions in favour of a 2050 net-zero emissions target.

Participants: 400 male and female adults from Regional Queensland who are not actively engaged with pro or anti-environmental campaigns will be recruited online using random sampling.

Independent Variable: Ingroup (Regional Queenslander) or outgroup (Non-Regional Queenslander) status of the messenger.

Procedure and Design: This experiment will adopt a one-way between-subject design. After reading the information and consent forms, participants will be asked a combination of focal and distractor premeasure questions to determine their initial attitudes towards net-zero emissions policies. Participants in both the ingroup and outgroup condition will then be asked to read a hypothetical media article supporting the implementation of a net-zero emissions target by 2050. Whilst both articles give identical explanations and arguments for the policy, the regional identity of the messenger will be manipulated.

Dependent Variables: i) support ii) attitudes and iii) behavioural intentions in favour of the policy (Fielding, Hornsey and Thai, et al. 2020).

Mediating Variables: To understand the causality behind the efficacy of ingroup messengers, this study will measure how a) likeable b) trustworthy and c) competent participants thought the messenger was. The strength of participants' social identification with Regional Queensland and their perceptions of the Regional Queenslander's collective efficacy will also be measured following the reading of the stimulus materials.

Moderator Variable: Perceived prototypicality of the messenger.

Data Collection: Ethical approval has been obtained from the University of St Andrews, and data collection is expected to commence in December 2020.

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