

Supporters of climate change science face self-doubt in study

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(Phys.org) —Supporting an issue such as climate change can be a daunting task, so what keeps advocates going while avoiding burnout?

New research from Jane Dutton, professor of management and organizations at the University of Michigan Ross School of Business, found that even the most fervent supporters of a social issue—in this

case, [climate change](#)—face self-doubts.

It's one of the first studies to examine a social issue supporter in multiple contexts to paint a full picture of the obstacles faced in their lives.

"Commitment to supporting [social issues](#) like climate change is often a long-term deal with few clear indicators of success and progress," said Dutton, who also is a professor of psychology and the Robert L. Kahn Distinguished Professor at U-M. "We were interested in the bigger story of what keeps social issue supporters psychologically in the game."

Dutton's study, "It's Not Easy Being Green: The Role of Self-Evaluations in Explaining Support of Environmental Issues," was co-authored by Scott Sonenshein of Rice University and Katherine DeCelles of the University of Toronto and was published in the *Academy of Management Journal*.

"People don't leave their environmental selves at the door when they move across the domains in their lives," Dutton said. "Only by considering the fuller life of social issue supporters could we understand both the challenges they faced and how they created the psychological fuel to keep believing in themselves."

They need to see themselves as having the knowledge and experience to be helpful to the cause, she said. The rub is that these are subjective self-assessments and depend heavily on how they see themselves. Yet social issue advocates who were acting in consistently supportive ways saw themselves in more self-affirming ways.

"I think our research reminds social issue supporters to broaden the lens for how they see and evaluate themselves and consider a full range of assets they bring to the table," Dutton said.

More information: The study is available online:
[webuser.bus.umich.edu/janedut/Additional
%20PDFs/It%27s%20Not%20Easy%20Being%20Green.pdf](http://webuser.bus.umich.edu/janedut/Additional%20PDFs/It%27s%20Not%20Easy%20Being%20Green.pdf)

Provided by University of Michigan

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