

A Longitudinal Examination of Generativity and Environmental Engagement

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Introduction

- The effects of climate change may be the greatest threat to global health
- As many environmental crises are caused by human action, a change in human behaviour is needed to solve them
- Consequently, it is important to foster care for the environment in younger and futures generations
- Discrepancy between pro-environmental attitudes and pro-environmental behaviours

Generativity

- Positive outcome of Erikson's 7th stage
- “The concern for establishing and guiding the next generation” (Erikson, 1968)
- Also expressed as a legacy of the self – as a gift for future generations
- Majority of research focuses on generativity in parents, however, generativity can be exhibited by adolescents and young adults as well
- Generativity significantly related to psychological adjustment and prosocial behaviours

Generativity & Environmental Activism

- Environmentalism may be an expression of generative concern for needs of future generations
- Environmentalism as “ultimate generative orientation” (Horwitz, 1996)
- Our research shows environmental activists scored higher on generativity than non-activists (Matsuba et al., 2012)
 - Generativity also significantly predicted environmental involvement

Research Gaps & Purpose

- While the link between environmental involvement and generativity has been established, it has not been examined longitudinally.
- It remains unclear whether generativity leads to environmental involvement, or if environmental involvement might instead help to foster generativity.
- **Purpose:** to examine the relationship between generativity and environmental involvement over time, in a sample of environmental activists

Participants

- 44 environmental activists
- Activists were recruited through various environmental groups from Ontario and BC
 - Must have exhibited a long-term, active commitment to environmental issues
- Participants were interviewed in 2009 (T1) and followed-up by interview in 2012 (T2)

Questionnaire Measures

- **Generativity:** Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS)
 - 20 items, scored from -4 (“not at all true of me”) to 4 (“very true of me”)
 - “I try to pass along the knowledge I have gained from my experiences”
- **Environmental Involvement:** Environmental Inventory of Involvement Scale (EII)
 - 6 items, scored from 0 (“never”) to 4 (“a lot”)
 - Asked to report how often actions were performed over last year
 - “Taken steps to reduce energy use (ex. turn off water, lights)”

Results – Correlations

	Environmental Involvement T2	Generativity T2
Generativity T1	.45**	.65**
Environmental Involvement T1	.61**	.31*

** $p < .001$

* $p < .05$

Results - Regressions

- Regression analyses showed that generative concern at T1 predicted a significant increase in environmental involvement 3 years later at T2 ($p < .05^{**}$), as hypothesized
- However, environmental involvement at T1 did not predict increased generativity at T2 ($p > .05^*$)

** controlling for education and T1 environmental involvement

*controlling for education and T1 generativity

Discussion

- The results suggest that generative concern leads to future environmental involvement, and not vice versa
- Generativity appears to be a motivator for environmentally responsible actions and behaviours
- This study suggests that many environmental activists may partly dedicate themselves to environmentalism because they are concerned about the future of the Earth and its future generations

Implications and Future Research

- Generativity, environmental and civic engagement are important positive attributes
- Can we encourage future environmental and civic engagement by fostering generativity in youth?
- Does generative concern help activists to *stay* engaged and involved over time, as these findings over 3 years seem to show?

Thank You

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