

Big Blue Goes Green

Department of Psychology Environmental Club Newsletter



Welcome!

We are excited to introduce the first issue of the Department of Psychology's Environmental Club newsletter! For those of you who are unaware, a small group of graduate students have come together under the guidance of Dr. Fanli Jia in an effort to make our department more environmentally friendly. In order to spread awareness of current initiatives and upcoming events, we decided to create a monthly newsletter. We will also include current research regarding social and cultural psychology and environmentalism.

On the Horizon

Recently, we have created a list of initiatives to help our department Go Green! Our primary focus this semester is to limit the amount of paper waste and facilitate recycling efforts. We recently met with the Ecology Club, the undergraduate division at Seton Hall headed by Professor Wanda Knapik, and asked for guidance and support. She volunteered to donate recycling bins to our department. Thanks to planning by Dan Curtin, recycling bins will be added to high traffic areas where garbage bins already exist. New recycling bins will be placed outside of Room 380 and Room 350 and by the service elevator. We are hoping that the increased presence of recycling bins will increase participation in our effort.

Join the Green Team!

Being a part of the movement to be environmentally conscious may seem like a daunting task when you consider your impact on a global scale. You might ask how adding a recycling bin or opting not to print out a ten-page research article will reduce carbon emissions. Well, it won't. At least not right away. However, these simple actions can provoke others to engage in a similar behavior. This chain reaction is what leads to change on a larger scale. We believe that our efforts are small, but important (hence our motto: Major Impacts in Minor Ways).

We also believe that everyone can contribute in their own way. Whether it's modifying your day-to-day habits or encouraging your colleagues, you can join the Green Team!



If you are interested in joining the Psychology Department's Environmental Club, please contact us at EnvironmentalClubSHU@gmail.com.

CAMPUS EVENTS

Get Involved!

For those of you who are new to campus or recently happened upon your love of nature, let me introduce the Ecology Club. The Ecology Club is a group of students and staff that work with the student body, department faculty and university administration to make Seton Hall an example of a green campus. The club is headed by Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, Wanda Knapik. She is the founder of My Local Garden, a company that creates landscapes and gardens in suburban and urban communities. She has worked with numerous community organizations, public, private and charter schools and universities to create green spaces and educate people about local and global ecological issues.

To learn more about the current efforts of the Ecology Club on campus, contact Professor Knapik at wanda.knapik@shu.edu and attend a meeting! Ecology Club meetings are held once a week. For further information on My Local Garden and community projects headed by Professor Knapik, check out <http://www.mylocalgarden.com> and <http://www.wandaknapik.com>.

Earth Day Celebrations

As we spring ahead into April, nature begins to reveal itself and emerge from the frostbitten soil. We are reminded of nature's beauty and respond with longer walks to class and study sessions out on the Green. For Seton Hall, April marks the beginning of Earth appreciation events. Last year, the Ecology Club hosted Eco-fest on the Green and invited their fellow Pirates to participate in games and contests and enjoy organic foods from local farms, like Bee the Buzz. **This year the 4th Annual Eco-Fest on the Green will take place on April 18th.** Environmental Studies students will be spreading awareness about topics like genetically modified foods and the benefits of eating less red meat and more fermented foods. Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream, Empanada Guy and Gourmet Dining will have food trucks starting at 12:15pm (ice cream will be FREE for all students). The events this year include a Hula Hoop contest, Kan Jam competition, and a yoga class. Hope to see you there!

Farming in South Orange

The notion of a farm in the middle of South Orange might raise a couple eyebrows. We don't typically think of green spaces in urban and suburban areas, but Seton Hall is aiming to defy that stereotype. We are working to transform the way people interact with the environment by prioritizing green spaces and incorporating them into our classrooms.

Currently on campus, there are two important spaces dedicated to this mission, the campus garden and the greenhouse. The campus garden, located between Xavier Residence Hall and the University Center, was created nearly five years ago as a place for students to reconnect with nature. Today, not only has it lived up to its expectations, but the campus garden has become an outdoor classroom for students interested in agriculture, biology and permaculture design. The campus garden is home to organic plants, like kale, spinach and parsley. The plant selection is carefully chosen in order to encourage natural wildlife to engage with the garden and promote natural processes, like pollination.

The greenhouse, located on the roof of McNulty Hall, is another green space home to various seedlings. Environmental Studies students and members of the Ecology Club use this space throughout the year to raise young plants that will later be transplanted to the campus garden. Additionally, the greenhouse acts as a laboratory for students in the chemistry and biological sciences departments. Earlier this year, Daniel Piatek, a physics and biomedical engineering student, received a grant from NASA to investigate the effect of atmospheric pressure plasma jets (APPJ) on growth stimulation. Once the greenhouse is equipped with APPJs, he plans on administering APPJ treatments to the seeds, roots and leaves of plants for various lengths of time and recording the growth rates.

Not only are green spaces beautiful and remind us of what Mother Nature has to offer, but they have become a vital tool for Seton Hall to fulfill its mission and become a leader in the community.

ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH

Can Your Moral Identity Predict Your Level of Environmental Engagement?

Previous research has established a positive link between social values and environmentally conscious behaviors. Schultz et al. (2005) identified two moral categories, self-transcendence and self-enhancement, and found that people who fell in the self-transcendence category were more likely to practice environmentally-conscious behaviors. However, social values didn't directly account for a person's level of environmental engagement. Nordlund and Garvill (2002) found that an individual's personal beliefs were a mediating factor and more directly predicted a person's actions. Research on morality and identity support these findings. A study conducted by Blasi (1983) found that moral values were most influential when a person internalized these ideals and strongly predicted prosocial behavior. Another study by Krettenner and Hertz (2015) posited that the internalization of moral values leads to greater intrinsic motives for getting involved in environmentally conscious behaviors, as opposed to extrinsic motivations like social expectations.

However, most of the research investigating the mechanisms behind environmentally conscious behavior focuses on environmental activists. Jia, Souis, Alisat, Curtin, and Pratt (2017) sought to investigate the relationship between morality and environmentalism in non-activists and compare their motives to those of activists. Could non-activists behavior be a result of a lesser degree of moral internalization or alternative motives?

Jia and colleagues conducted two studies. In the first study, a questionnaire was used to assess participants level of environmental involvement and moral identity. Three moral identity clusters were found, self-transcendence, mixed, and self-enhancement. Participants in the self-transcendence category scored high in concern and care domains, while participants in the self-enhancement category scored high in self-direction and achievement domains. Participants in the mixed moral category scored high in tolerance and dependability domains. They also found that participants in the self-transcendence category scored

significantly higher on level of environmental involvement than participants in the mixed and self-enhancement categories. Participants in the self-enhancement group scored the lowest on level of environmental involvement, however the results didn't significantly differ from those in the mixed category.

However, these results don't answer the question of *why*. Why are participants in one category more likely to be environmentally conscious? What are their motivations, and do they differ from the other two groups? The second study sought to answer these questions and provide a more complete picture. Jia and colleagues collected narratives from each participant that related to personal experiences with the environment. Each narrative was analyzed for themes and patterns of thought to provide insight into the participants' motivations. Three motivations for participants who scored high on level of environmental involvement were identified, concern for other species, vigilance for the environment, and disgust toward environmentally irresponsible others. These participants expressed concern and a sense of duty toward the environment in addition to demonstrating strong emotional responses toward irresponsibility. In contrast, the narratives from participants in the self-enhancement category showed themes of apathy and self-interest. These participants placed significance on monetary gain and the value of their personal time or felt indifferent toward the environment.

This research suggests that there are differences in the motivating factors either for or against environmental involvement and that these motivating factors are strongly correlated with a person's moral identity. Jia and colleagues found that ideals closely held by participants were strong influencers on a person's behavior. People who exhibit high levels of concern and care toward others generalized those moral ideals to the environment and demonstrated higher levels of environmental involvement. However, people that valued achievement and self-enhancement were less likely to generalize their behaviors to the environment. People who emphasized personal achievement were more likely to demonstrate apathy toward the environment and place concern for themselves or their family above those related to the environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH

Does this mean people who don't act environmentally responsible are amoral? No. According to this study, people who are less environmentally involved are concerned with other daily influencers, like finances. This analysis sheds light on the mentality of non-activists and informs others who may not understand the intrinsic motivations of people who elect not to participate in environmental initiatives. Looking forward, this information is helpful to consider when developing environmental initiatives and asking people to participate in environmental tasks. We may need to frame it such that the benefits for the individual become more salient.

Jia, F., Soucie, K., Alisat, S., Curtin, D., & Pratt, M. (2017). Are environmental issues moral issues? Moral identity in relation to protecting the natural world. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 52*, 104-113.

Can Participating in Environmental Acts Decrease Loneliness?

Environmental acts can be thought of as social acts. Caring for the environment and participating in environmental initiatives are behaviors that contribute to a greater goal, to support the environment and the people within it. Previous research found that social engagement reduces feelings of loneliness (Lucas et al., 2010). Therefore, it seems plausible that engaging in environmental acts would reduce the feeling of loneliness. A current study conducted by Dr. Fanli Jia investigated this idea and hypothesized that environmental engagement would negatively predict loneliness.

A mixed-methods study was employed that utilized a survey and interview. The survey includes measures on environmental engagement and loneliness gathered from previous studies. The interview was used to provide insight into mechanisms that could explain the relationship between environmental engagement and loneliness, like the feeling of being a part of a larger social act.

Analysis of the surveys revealed a negative correlation between environmental engagement and

loneliness. However, is this trend a result of the social nature of environmental acts or might there be another aspect of environmentalism that decreases the feeling of loneliness? Analysis of the interviews revealed three themes, solving environmental problems with peers, passing environmental knowledge and skills to future generations, and a feeling of connectedness to nature. Two of the three themes support the social aspect of environmentalism. Many of the anecdotes noted the importance of other people's benefit from the act and involvement in the act. This could contribute to someone's sense of involvement and purpose within the fabric of society and provide them a sense of connectedness. The third theme, connectedness to nature, highlights a different motivation. Participants who exhibited this feeling often referred to the tranquility and beauty of nature. Therefore, engaging in environmental acts was a way to preserve these qualities of nature. Although this theme is not directly in line with the social hypothesis, it could be indirectly supporting it. If we think of Mother Nature as the personified version of nature or think of the environment as a whole, living being, the act of caring for and advocating for it might be considered a social act.

One limitation of this current study is the limited generalizability of these results. The survey and interview data were collected from environmental activists. This raises the question, do non-activists rate higher on measures of loneliness because they elect not to participate in environmental acts? Could engaging in environmental acts decrease non-activists' feeling of loneliness if their motivation is different from activists? These are all questions Dr. Fanli Jia aims to investigate in subsequent follow up studies.

DeRonda, A., Medina, V., & Jia, F. (March 2018). Environmental Engagement and Loneliness among Young Adulthood. Poster Presentation at the Eastern Psychological Association. Philadelphia, PA, USA.

If you are interested in becoming involved in environmental research on campus, please contact us at EnvironmentalClubSHU@gmail.com.

MEET THE GREEN TEAM



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