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Repairing The Human–Nature Relationship Through Nature Connectedness Interventions

Background

Sustainability transformation requires a fundamental change to our relationship with nature. In 2020, the UN Secretary General declared that “Now is the time to transform humankind’s relationship with the natural world” ([UN Climate Change News, 2020](#)). Several meta-analyses now link the subjective closeness of our relationship with nature to higher levels of wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviour ([Barragan-Jason et al., 2023](#)). Accordingly, *nature connectedness*—the psychological closeness of our relationship with nature ([Lengieza & Aviste, 2025](#); [Schultz, 2002](#))—is increasingly emphasized as a critical target for sustainability in a number of global policy frameworks ([IPBES, 2024](#)).

Now, more than ever, research is needed to understand how we can promote greater connection to the natural world.

Aims and Methods

Through a combination of online surveys and in-situ experiments, the suggested project will investigate the psychological and situational factors that can enhance nature connectedness, with the ultimate goal of informing the development of interventions and strategies for repairing the human–nature relationship.

So long as the project focuses on increasing nature connectedness and has the potential to make a novel contribution to the literature, the exact domain of the interventions (e.g., outdoor education, citizen science, positive psychology, emotional reflection.) can be aligned with student interests.

Relevance

In the face of looming environmental crises, the project addresses a timely topic which is gaining increasing attention from global policy entities. Nature connectedness is at

the intersection of several subfields within psychology (e.g., environmental, social, and positive psychology) as well as the intersection with a number of disciplines (e.g., human geography, environmental science, etc.).

Training

The candidate's research activity will be based in Durham, Psychology. Besides a training in general research skills, the candidate will develop a deeper understanding of the psychological aspects of the human–nature relationship, with a grounding in theory from environmental, social, and positive psychology. The candidate will receive an advanced training in multivariate statistics and mediation analyses, and experimental design.

Suitable for

PhD and MSc by Research students.

Further Reading

Lengieza, M. L., & Aviste, R. (2025). Relationships between people and nature: Nature connectedness and relational environmental values. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 62, 101984. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsy.2024.101984>

Lengieza, M. L. (2024). Eudaimonic self-expansion: The effects of eudaimonic reflections on nature connectedness. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 94, 102231. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2024.102231>

Lengieza, M. L., et al. (2023). The human–nature relationship as a tangible target for pro-environmental behaviour—guidance from interpersonal relationships. *Sustainability*, 15(16), 12175. <https://doi.org/10.3390/SU151612175>