



# **The Socialization of Environmental Conscientiousness**

ANALYSING THE JOURNEYS OF ENVIRONMENTALLY  
CONCERNED & ENGAGED YOUNG ADULTS IN ONTARIO

# ON CLIMATE CHANGE

One of the most pressing issues our generation faces is the climate crisis. This research project explores the personal histories of young adults in Ontario who self-identify as actively engaged in environmental justice. The key question the project inquires into is:

What experiences in an individual's personal history contributed to their heightened concern, engagement, and active response to environmental issues?



# THE RESEARCH QUESTION

01

What inspires young adults to make active changes in their lifestyles in order to contribute to environmental sustainability?

02

What aspects of these influences can be replicated in order to produce collective concern and engagement?

# SIGNIFICANCE



- Contribute valuable insight to existing discourse surrounding how to make change possible on the personal and collective level of the environmental crisis
- Establish systems of education, policy, opportunity, and influence with the capability to promote values and engage action that benefits the environmental state

# THE RESEARCH DESIGN

01

social media &  
snowballing  
recruitment

02

four  
qualitative,  
semi-structured  
interviews

03

narrative analysis:  
transcribing,  
coding

## VALUE-BELIEF-NORM

The analysis of the way values inform beliefs, and beliefs inform behaviour; then through this, collective behaviour creates norms (Zehr, 2014, Stern, 1999).

# theoretical framework

# **METHODS**

## **NARRATIVE**

## **ANALYSIS**

Narrative analysis involves a process of collecting stories from participants through, in this case, semi-structured interviews. I organized each interview into a narrative, creating a chronological collection of data. The analysis is in the collection of themes based on commonalities in the narratives and based on the meaning projected by each participant.



# allie

Allie's first spark for environmentalism came from her pet cat and the bond she developed with him. She also owes her concern of the environment to her new sense of spirituality.



Charlotte grew up rurally, hunting and gardening. She always cared deeply for animals and believes that is where her passion for the environment began.

charlotte





diana

Diana was influenced initially by her aunt who was very eco-conscious, by her experience gardening, and by what she learned through social media.

Evelyn acknowledges the role of her parents' education level and openness for her to determine her own passions and values. She also was influenced by media.

evelyn



- childhood exposure

- chosen community

- media exposure

- urgency/anxiety

- spirituality

- class/economics

- non-human connection

# analysis themes


# IMPLICATIONS



This study has the ability to inform future policy and practice. For example:

- The role of nature exposure in childhood could be more seriously incorporated into school curriculum and infrastructure to promote collective environmental concern among young people.
- It would be interesting to see environmental non-profits utilize media as a significant tool in rallying support and shifting the audience

Perhaps through the implementation of such measures, we are able to engage more of the population to be concerned and active in the climate change movement.

An aerial photograph of a dense forest, showing a mix of green and greyish-brown trees, suggesting some dead or dormant trees. A white rectangular text box is centered over the image.

Future studies have the opportunity to explore the journeys, like this study, of **those who are *not* environmentally engaged**. A comparison of these two groups of contrasting populations could provide more valuable insight into the ways policy and programs can adapt to prove more effective in promoting environmental conscientiousness. Further exploration into **the significance of childhood** would also be warranted. On the other end of the spectrum, one could study **adults who became environmentally concerned in their post-adolescence years**. This is valuable for understanding how to address change among those who have perhaps more ability to change policy, for example.